CHAPTER 2

African Seaports in Transition, 1850–1880s

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2.1 Introduction

The role played by the African continent in global history during the Early Modern Age (1450–1850) was based on the *globalization* of economic exchanges (Bayly 2002, pp. 47–73, 2004; Marnot 2012a). It was chiefly a process relating to the exportation of slaves to the American markets (Morgan 2009, pp. 223–248) as well as to the Arabic markets in the Indian Ocean (Clarence-Smith 1989). Moreover, the shores of the continent also represented an essential nexus connecting the seaports located among Europe, India and China. Nevertheless, Africa's maritime facilities varied greatly and they did not share a common feature in terms of historical seaborne trade evolution: the Mediterranean coast had a long history of seaborne trade since Ancient times, and a similar kind of development could be seen along the Oriental coast from the Middle Ages. On the contrary, along the Atlantic coastline, seaborne trade had been historically limited (except for Morocco) and extremely focused on short-sea shipping. Despite these limitations and the differences among

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coastlines, it is important to note that the African political and economic players retained their agency role throughout the Early Modern Age, and more broadly from the perspective of exchange terms (Northrup 2002; Saupin 2014, pp. 7–30, 439–445).

During the transition phase between the consolidation of Western Imperialism and the scramble for the continent, three factors allowed the previous dynamics to continue, also equipping them with facilities both locally and regionally. The first factor was the replacement of the slave trade and the progressive but constant increase in demand for raw materials from European industry. This scheme replaced the former seaborne trade designed to chase and capture African slaves from *razzias*, intra-African wars as well as legal sanctions (Law 1995; Law et al. 2013). It was also the result of an increase in economic liberal thought in favour of abolitionist movements inspired by liberal philosophy as well as religious constraints. Great Britain led the anti-slavery banner from the early nineteenth century, challenging the other European nations involved in the slave trade. The corresponding African kingdoms and their elites were hostile to abolitionism due to the fact that their political and economic power highly depended on this activity. Thus, this economic, social and political upheaval was about to modify the institutional structure for both the African natives and the European expatriates acting as middlemen for their colonial commercial companies.

The second point relates to the agency role in seaborne trade. After an initial stage of relative wealth for African producers and traders built on the increased demand for raw commodities from European industry, we found a second phase dominated by the consistent decline in prices between 1873 and 1893 (Eltis 1987). Nevertheless, the issues related to the deterioration of exchange terms were more important in terms of African agency. The regional institutions and the African economic agents began to lose control of seaborne trade in favour of large imperial companies heavily funded by the Western capitals and supported by the metropolitan industrial sectors. Port cities located in a privileged position were the spaces where this phenomenon took place. They were the gateways where the local and the global met.

The third factor was related to the adaptation of African port infrastructures to the demands of international shipping and seaborne trade. However, this process was not equal everywhere and it depended on the technical legacy, the degree of seaborne trade development and the interface between sea and land. African institutional geopolitics and the existing balance between slaves and commodities exportation emphasized these differences (Law and Strickrodt 1999). In addition, the creation of the Colonial State and the modernization of infrastructures during the early stages of the colonization process marked the path of transformation between 1850 and 1890 (Llinares and Saupin 2020).

These privileged locations were dedicated to being transformed in key elements during the globalization period of 1880–1914 (Suárez Bosa 2014). This chapter focuses on an overview of the degree of transformation of African seaports, addressing the aforementioned three elements relating to this transition period of European colonization.

2.2 The African Seaport: An Interface Between Sea and Land for a Globalized Economy Dominated by Europe

The diplomatic support of the United States and the international observance of the Treaty of Vienna (1815) reinforced the anti-slavery movements supported by the British government since 1807. Their former rivals accepted the new institutional framework reluctantly (Pétré-Grenouilleau 2004). French merchants continued to smuggle African slaves until the 1830s but its definitive institutional abolition was confirmed in 1848. The slave trade and traditional forms of slavery were interdicted throughout the French empire. Nevertheless, Portuguese traders continued trading slaves until 1839. They traded clandestinely with slaves from Angola, Sào Tomé and Principe or Mozambique, shipping them to Brazil, Zanzibar, the Afrikaner States and the sugar-based economy of Spanish Cuba. Despite all of these regulatory policies, the slave trade continued until the last third of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, this activity rapidly declined since the 1840s (Eltis and Richardson 2008). Figures for the 1811–1867 period showed that at least of a quarter of all deported slaves in the long term was moved during this phase (Tables 2.1 and 2.2). On the contrary, from 1851 to 1867 the overall figure descended to 8.5%. During these later years, Central and West Africa provided the majority of human trade (68,345) from Bénin (13,266), Mozambique (12,126) and Sierra Leone (1640). This illegal trade took place in secondary ports outside of political and military control. This was the case for Cabinda, Loango (Angola) and the remote shores along the Congo estuary. Hence, the clandestine

Table 2.1 The Atlantic slave trade after British abolition (nineteenth century)

Years	*Slaves embarked (Atlantic Africa)*
1811–1820	718,824
1821–1830	810,990
1831–1840	524,307
1841–1850	429,091
1851–1860	176,884
1861–1867	54,941
1811–1867	2,712,037

Source Author's elaboration building from Slavevoyages.org

trade hampered the technical transformation of old wharves even when vessels' tonnages grew. Klein estimated that the average slave ship moved from 200 tons (eighteenth century) to 300 before 1850. By that date, the average tonnage reached 600–800 tons (Klein 2002). In the Bay of Benin, the Abomey kingdom artificially confirmed the predominance of Ouidah as its major seaport to the detriment of others like Lagos, Badagry, Keta or Popo (Strickrodt 2015). On the Eastern side, the Island of Mozambique, which retained a significant share of the Atlantic trade, moved towards the maritime Indian networks from 1850 onwards (Alpers 2005; Capela 2002).

One of the major obstacles to abolition came from the African elites, whose economic and political power was chiefly based on the revenues obtained from the boom in the Atlantic slave trade during the eighteenth century. Their wealth and political status were closely tied to the control of external trade, geared towards the exportation of captives and the virtual monopoly of imports. Institutional adaptation was a key issue for their political survival as the ruling elites. A common solution was the modification of traditional, centralized institutions to structures based on a relatively shared structure of power between the centralized dynasty and major state-cities. On the other hand, they were also able to encourage agricultural reconversion to cash-crop productions. Nevertheless, traditional slavery was even reinforced once the Atlantic markets closed. These tensions were sometimes alleviated by way of diplomacy between the African rulers and the European colonizers. If diplomacy failed, the violence and *gunboat policies* came into force. The siege and bombing of Lagos by the Royal Navy in 1851 warned the local elites that colonial action was on the way. In 1861, this smuggling centre for slave trade was taken by the British, creating the colony of Lagos (Mann 2007, pp.

Table 2.2 The major Atlantic slave-trade centres during the final phase (1851–1867)

Years	*Coast of Angola*				*Angola*		*Mozambique*		*Bay of Benin*			
	Riv. Congo	*Congo (north)*	*Cabinda*	*Loango*	*Ambriz*	*Benguela*	*Moz. Island*	*Qulimane*	*Ouidah*	*Lagos*	*Keta*	*Popo*
1851–1860	28,264	2659	4397	2060	5237	4698	9030	1250	4961	1516	1173	1093
1860–1867	14,717	763	2504		584	3			2936			

Source Author's elaboration building from Slavevoyages.org

60–61, 82–83). Once the colonial rulers took power, they interdicted slavery but transformed it into compulsory and indentured work structures (McSheffrey 1983).

On the other hand, major resistance was found along the eastern coast and more broadly at the Sultanate of Zanzibar and Portuguese Mozambique. These slave centres joined the pro-slavery movements of the Soudanese and Ethiopian slave trade in the Red Sea (Médard 2013). This increasing trade was parallel to the Atlantic decline, causing geographical displacement throughout the nineteenth century. The production of clove spices from the Moluccas (via the Mascarene Islands) from 1820 onwards boosted the economic wealth of Zanzibar and its political importance. Due to this fact, the capital of the Sultanate of Oman was transferred from Muscat to the island. In addition, this cash-crop required a significant workforce. The solution was to import slaves. Slave traders chased them from the interior of the continent and chiefly around the Great Lakes. In the middle of the nineteenth century, fifteen thousand slaves were disembarked in Zanzibar. Many of them were then re-exported to the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf markets (Clarence-Smith 1989). It is important to note that the British government pressured the local institutions to hamper this activity, as seen in the Moresby (1822) and Hammerton (1845) Treaties. The latter formally prohibited the exportation of slaves out of the Sultanate. Nevertheless, the commercial flows continued, until the real threat came from the Royal Navy. In 1873, the Bargash Sultan (coming from his exile from Mumbai in 1870) officially ended the slave trade by law.

If we take into account the whole nineteenth century, some compelling evidence can be found regarding a significant increase in slave trade in the Indian Ocean (Lovejoy 2002, pp. 47, 61–62, 155–158). The overall figures, including Madagascar (accounting for 200,000 captive slaves) affected more than two million victims, where 440,000 were destined for the Americas (Table 2.3). Nevertheless, the 1850–1890 period also was marked by a rapid decline. The major change during this phase was the replacement of the American market by the Zanzibar Sultanate and the increasing importance of the maritime route concerning the Island and the port of Kilwa. In addition, the slave trade in the Red Sea has been estimated to have had a minimum of 500,000 victims during the whole nineteenth century. Around half of them were shipped to the Gulf of Aden and less than a quarter to Massawa and Suakin (Austen 1988, pp. 21–44). In contrast, the Persian Gulf received three thousand

Table 2.3 The slave trade in East Africa (annual average) (1820–1889)

Decades	*Swahili Coast*	*Arabia, Persia*	*Mascarenes Islands*	*Americas*
1820s	4000		6000	11,400
1830s	6000	3500		7800
1840s	14,700	4000		2000
1850s	11,100	6500	2500	1300
1860s	14,200	6500		
1870s	18,800			
1880s	2800			

Source Author's elaboration from Lovejoy (2002)

slaves per year, where seventy per cent of them were imported from the Swahili Coast. The Red Sea, which took slaves captured from the Soudan, Ethiopia and the Gulf of Aden, absorbed no less than 2500 slaves per year throughout the century.

2.3 Exporting Raw Commodities by Sea: Continuity and Innovation

The export of slaves was imposed as the most important African "commodity" during the eighteenth century. However, key exports such as gold were also added to this, which had encouraged exploration and the settling of Portuguese pioneers since the fifteenth century. Around forty-two maritime forts were found along the Gold Coast up to the late seventeenth century, which is representative of the intensity of European competition before the rise of Brazilian gold. On the other hand, this factor, which compensated for the recession in the slave trade, was hampered by the Californian gold rush in the mid-nineteenth century. In addition, the discovery of gold fields in the Transvaal (South Africa) in 1866 opened a new phase of mining exploitation for the continent.

African exports by sea also included other natural resources. The trade of gum and ivory was predominant, as well as those based on hides, ostrich feathers, wax, rhinoceros' horns, coral and sponges. Gum was dominant in northern semi-arid territories. One of the most important production centres was the Senegal Valley and sea exports were carried out at the port of Saint-Louis. The trade of Arabic gum in Senegal began to decline in the 1830s due to the increasing competition from Egypt and Zanzibar (copal gum). Nevertheless, the gum crisis was more or less resolved through the expansion of groundnut crops in West Africa from the early 1840s (Pasquier 1987). For ivory, once again, Zanzibar benefitted from its strategic location, supplying the increased demand from the Indian, European and American markets. Portuguese Angola also increased the value of its natural resource exports, and by 1850, its value was bigger than the slave trade (Johnson 1986). However, the Sultanate of Zanzibar experienced a phase of economic expansion based on the slave trade, the imports of firearms and the continuing capture of slaves in the Great Lakes region (Alpers 1975; Sheriff 1987).

In terms of basic agricultural crops, it is important to note the historical exportation of grains (wheat and barley) from the Mediterranean seaports to European markets. Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia had been the wheat stores for Southern Europe for many years. However, a structural crisis heavily damaged this essential economic sector once the Ukrainian and later American grains flooded the world markets in the second half of the nineteenth century. To combat the crisis, the king of Tunisia forced the conversion of exports to focus on olive oil. Moreover, the export of wool also complemented the trade balance for the Maghreb countries and they experienced yet another crisis once South Africa began mass exports of wool for British industry from the early nineteenth century. Before the gold and diamond rush, wool exports constituted no less than sixty per cent of Cape Town's exports. The cargo mix of this port was also complemented by hides, wax and vegetables as well as the wines from the Stellenbosch region. In contrast, the settling of French colonizers pushed up the export of cheap wines from Algeria from the late 1830s onwards.

In terms of economic innovation during the nineteenth century, a number of commodities could be noted. The most important commodities were related to vegetable oils. The industrialization process in Western countries demanded an increased amount of lubricant for machinery, railways, steamers, candles, glycerine, soap and margarine (1870). The British demand was mostly met by the mass export of palm oil from West Africa (Lynn 1997). The Niger Delta (known as the Oil Rivers) was transformed into the first global producer from 1830 to 1920, with a predominant role played by Bonny, which replaced the former port of Calabar (Lovejoy 2004). This profitable activity extended to the former Slave Coast and boosted the renovation of seaports such as Lagos, Ouidah, Porto Novo and Petit-Popo (Strickrodt 2015, pp. 195–224). By the early 1850s, regular steamship lines connected the Nigerian seaports to the British and

European markets. Export figures are representative. British demand grew from 220 tons in 1800 to 36,600 tons in 1854. During the second half of the century, the demand reached an average of 38,000–49,000 tons per year. In addition to the British market, an increase in international competition reduced its share from sixty-four to fifty per cent of the global demand from 1860 to 1880.

Another interesting product was the exportation of palm nut and kernel oils from the 1850s onwards. This was a result of the increasing demand from industrial companies from Marseilles (soap) and Germany (cakes). The boom was rapid, but it did not represent the same capital value due to the fact that their prices remained much lower than palm oil (Mann 2007). The same applied to the groundnut revolution in West Africa from the 1840s onwards. The mass production of groundnuts rapidly expanded throughout Senegal (Senegal Valley, Fatick region, Casamance), Gambia, Portuguese Guinea and the northern regions of Sierra Leone (Daumalin 1992, pp. 26–60, 111–121; Marfaing 1991). The groundnut market drove port expansions in Senegal, where the small island port of Gorée remained the main regional hub ahead of Saint-Louis (Castillo Hidalgo 2019; Pasquier 1960). From 1859 onwards, the port of Rufisque began to concentrate its commercial activity on groundnut producer regions like the Sine-Saloum thanks to Bordeaux traders moving in there. The competition between British and French commercial agents was significant but the second had the advantage of colonial exclusivity.

The acclimatization and export of cloves on the island of Zanzibar represented the finest agricultural trade prospect of the nineteenth century, ensuring the fortune and supremacy of the sultanate on the East African coast (Cooper 1977). The success of Egyptian cotton (15,000 tons in 1820 and 300,000 tons in 1900) resulting from the transformation of the Nile Delta was one of the main bases for the spectacular development of the port of Alexandria, which also benefitted from the cotton crisis in the South of the United States during the Civil War (Owen 1969). The production of cotton was also unsuccessfully attempted in the Senegal Valley, reaching the High Volta (Burkina Faso) where production was expanded throughout the twentieth century. In contrast, Angola rapidly expanded their exports of cotton through the Luanda seaport. Lastly, the discovery of diamonds in Kimberly mines (South Africa) by 1867 led to inland migrations from the Cape Town province to the northern side of the country. In 1880, the British colony of the Cape finally annexed the Afrikaner state.

In comparative terms, the production of other products was quite limited and their size was reduced to just local developments. This was the case for coconut, sesame and sugar cane in Zanzibar, or the gum for rubber in Angola in the second half of the nineteenth century, accounting for three quarters of the value of exports in 1885. The most spectacular, both for its results and for the abhorrent social conditions of its conduct, was the boom in cocoa plantations, followed by coffee at a much lower level, in the Portuguese archipelago of Sao Tome and Principe.

2.4 The Transition and Evolution of Exchange Terms

The introduction of Africa to a globalized economy was conditioned by the structure of imports, where Europe obtained the majority, not forgetting America and the Indian continent. In agricultural products, the slowness of the slave trade supported shipments of tobacco and alcohol, both from Brazil and North America, with a deep geographical redistribution towards the Indian Ocean coasts. Furthermore, Western fashions of new drinks and costumes seduced the African elites. Tea benefitted more than coffee, especially in the Maghreb, which led to the mass purchase of cane sugar. Semi-crafted products were also dependent on the modernization policy of the states, both African sovereign powers and the first colonizers. Iron imports dominated that of other metals such as copper wire in Zanzibar, but the essential change came from the fairly rapid adoption of the steam engine, which has led to other industrial machinery (flour mills and textiles) and railway equipment. Over the course of previous centuries, the introduction of manufacturing products ready for consumption remained a major factor, without upsetting the old structure. The demand for cotton or silk-like fabrics imported from India, North America and, above all, Western Europe, remained dominant, along with the supply of hardware and work tools, glassware and the decorative form of porcelain. Rising demand for guns represented a major shift, with the boom in ivory consumption hot on the heels of the captive slave seizure, increasingly for the African domestic market. It was first favoured by the flow of all the stock resulting from the revolutionary and imperial wars, and then prolonged by the specialization of industrial centres in gun trading, such as Birmingham or Liege. This trade was then relaunched by technical innovation in manufacturing (shotgun steel in the 1870s, repeater rifle in the 1880s) which downgraded the old models sent to the African markets. The interpretation of a transition crisis from the slave trade to the legitimate trade of African products was abandoned in favour of the analysis of adaptation strategies adopted by African economic and political elites (Law 1993; Lynn 1995). The two trades did not follow one after the other, but rather were concomitant and intermingling (Mann 2007, pp. 117–129; Northrup 1976; Reynolds 1985).

This versatility is particularly evident in the second third of the nineteenth century, with pioneers such as in the Niger Delta (Dike 1956) and late-comers such as Ouidah (Soumonni 1995) and Zanzibar (Sheriff 1987). This gradual transition was facilitated by the maintenance of a favourable African balance of trade during three quarters of the century, sharply until 1850, and then weakened further. The prices of agricultural products and raw materials from Africa have tended to vary between rise and stagnation, while those of imported manufactured goods have been sinking due to technical progress and competition in a free trade regime during the Industrial Revolution. The adverse economic downturn in Africa was a consequence of the Great Depression affecting the Western economies from 1873 to 1895, leading to a protectionist escalation and ultimately the partition of Africa in the colonial rush.

2.5 Sociopolitical Conditions and Organization of External Exchanges

Along the Mediterranean coastline, the main shift came from the rise of Egypt under the authority of Mehmet Ali, governor then viceroy of this great Ottoman province from 1805 to 1848. It had built a militarized and centralized authoritarian power that enabled it to mobilize the Egyptian demographic force for the major works required for the modernization of the country, based on a transfer of Western technology, not forgetting the significant use of Sudanese slaves (Alleaume 2012; Montel 1998). This political strategy was extended by his son Mehmet Said Pasha (1854–1863) trained at the Saint-Simonian Economic School, and his grand-nephew Ismail Pasha (1863–1895), but with the growing pressure of European capitalist interests, in an Anglo-French rivalry (Saul 1997). In the Egyptian model, the holder of authority became the country's leading capitalist as a large owner and trader, and industrial and financial investor, thus blending dynastic and state affairs. It was the same in Tunisia and Morocco, in a smaller but representative replica.

The return to a policy of open trade with the Moroccan sultan Moulay Abd al Rahman (1822–1859) corresponded to the desire to derive the greatest benefits for the state-*Makhzen* (sultan, dynasty and top-staff elites). Imports were placed under the state monopoly in order to establish the best profit margin by authoritatively fixing prices on the domestic market. Exports, heavily taxed, were suspended according to economic and social endowments. *Makhzen* used the services of the largest traders to secure the functioning of the system (Miège 1961, pp. 210–258).

In sub-Saharan Africa, the boom in the slave trade in the eighteenth century had strengthened the small coastal political entities, from chiefdoms with a lineage structure, city states to monarchies with councils of elders, sometimes gathered in confederations such as the Fanti cities on the Gold Coast or in the sacred society Epke of the cities of Calabar, facing the ambitions of more powerful states like the kingdom of Abomey on the Slave Coast or the Ashanti confederation behind the Gold Coast. The Atlantic slave trade most often provided the small coast units with the means to resist the imperial appetencies of the larger domestic states. The largely collective exercise of power prevented the concentration of resources in the main or royal lineage, which stifled any modernization policy. The Sultan of Zanzibar concentrated on other means, associating trade and plantations (Sanchez 2015), even if his authority was hampered by the rivalries between the old Swahili elites and the new Omani rulers (Middleton 2004), with the main point of attachment being the port city of Mombasa, where the opposition of the Mazrui family was reduced in 1837 after a century of resistance (Berg 1968). The abundance of slaves played against modernization.

2.6 The Effects of the First Colonization Phase

The permanent establishment of Portuguese settlers was the oldest. The Brazilian contribution had been major for the social and morphological shaping of port cities like Luanda and Benguela. The independence of Brazil in 1822 revived Portuguese imperialism in an attempt to penetrate the interior regions through a network of fortified markets, replacing the role played by former African vassals. However, the financial insufficiency of the monarchy stifled this attempt. The creation of the southern pioneer front, based on the opening of the new port of Moçamedes, appeared to be a priority over port modernization (Brichta 2016).

The final installation of the British at the Dutch naval base in Cape Town in 1806 opened up a rivalry between the old and the new masters, reviving the dynamics of the border under the effects of migration by the Boers, of which the Great Trek of 1836 was the major expression. This competition, illustrated by the British annexation of Natal in 1843, found a point of transitional equilibrium in 1854 with the recognition of the Afrikaner states of the Orange Free State and the South African Republic (Transvaal). This upward climb from the Cape Colony to the northeast was against Cape Town by lengthening distances. The opening of Port Elizabeth on the Indian Ocean in 1820 followed by Port Natal (Durban) was the physical representation of those major shifts. The growing sluggishness of its trade did not encourage significant works. Only the threat represented by the breakthrough of the Suez Canal gave rise to an initial awakening, but this was accelerated by the diamond rush after 1867.

Along the Mediterranean coastline, the difficult French conquest of Algeria, marked by the resistance of Emir Abd-el-Kader until 1847 and a succession of revolts including that of Kabylie in 1871, meant that there was a long-imposed military priority. The result was a collapse of the traditional economy, illustrated by the dramatic famine of 1866–1868. Land confiscation fuelled redistribution to European settlers throughout the western Mediterranean. The political project of Napoleon III of an Algerian kingdom associated with France disappeared with the defeat of 1870–1871. Exploitation to the detriment of the native population would be able to trade with the publication of the code of the *indigénat* in 1881 and 1887 (Bouveresse 2010, pp. 7–24).

In Senegambia, subjected to rivalry between France from the Senegal River and Great Britain from the Gambia River, the three main initiatives were the installation of the British naval base at Bathurst (now Banjul), the French control of the Senegal River from Saint-Louis according to the programme of Governor Faidherbe and the seizure of the peninsula of Cape Verde, in front of the Gorée Island, in 1857.

The protectorate on Lagos Island in 1851 led to the settlement status ten years later. The king of Porto Novo, preferred to secure his interests by negotiating the French protection in 1863, confirmed in 1876. After a long time, for the continuation of a simple alliance with the Fanti confederation, Britain switched to the protectorate in 1874. In East Africa, the emergence of German ambitions in the 1880s led to sharing with the British, who established their protectorate on the island of Zanzibar in 1890, while letting their rivals develop the new seaport of Dar el Salaam on the mainland.

2.7 European Economic Pressures and Imperial Competition

A European offensive seeks to impose a free trade policy on mercantilist African states. Economic diplomacy was not averse to the much-needed military threat. Faced with the bad will of the kings of Abomey regarding the abolishment of the slave trade, the Royal Navy replicated the blockade of Ouidah port in 1851, 1865 and 1876. By 1830, the *bey* of Tunis was obliged to give up its monopoly of foreign trade under French pressure. In Egypt, Mehmet Ali had to accept the principle of free trade imposed by the imperial powers to the Ottoman Gate in 1840. In the Sultanate of Zanzibar, the 1839 Treaty of Commerce with Great Britain fell in the middle of the installation of consuls from the United States, Great Britain and France. In Morocco, the treaty of commerce obtained by the British consul John Drummond-Dray in 1856 was a model that all competitors wanted to obtain: abolition of royal monopolies, reduction of customs duties to ten per cent, property rights granted to British subjects, tax exemptions and extraterritoriality and free movement within the country for British subjects (Saladhine 1986, pp. 34–39). In addition to this, Spain succeeded in 1861 by taking advantage of the military conflict, marked by the seizure of Tetouan. France also benefitted from the Bérard convention of 1863 (Miège 1961, pp. 261–409).

A vicious circle was then underway. The loss of the monopolies weakened the finances of the State, which tried to compensate by reinforcing taxation, which also opened up the risk of social tensions and revolts as happened in Tunisia in 1864. The infrastructure modernization policy was then forced to turn increasingly to foreign capitals, which also inflated the public debt excessively (Saul 1997, pp. 5–19, 49). Everything depended then on the ability of trade to rebalance that of the payments. When Morocco managed to pay back its British loan imposed by the war indemnity to Spain, Egypt skidded to bankruptcy in the 1870s, justifying the establishment of an international financial tutelage in 1878. An ensuing nationalist military uprising caused the bombardment of Alexandria in 1882, in reaction to the establishment of British economic and political control, despite the fictional promise of its maintenance as an Ottoman province, until 1906.

From a structural point of view, the main shifts came from the disappearance of the old big charter and monopoly European companies in favour of the commercial and shipping companies, the industrial companies and the commercial banks which took a leading role. In the French example, this dynamic was also supported by the rivalries between Bordeaux and Marseilles. Senegal had become the promised land of Bordeaux once again in a competition dominated by Maurel et Prom over its rival Devès et Chaumet (Marnot 2012b, pp. 130–134). The political influence of Maurel et Prom was considerable, including the exchanges of services with the top staff of the colonial administration such as Faidherbe or Pinet-Laprade (Casey 1981, pp. 306–316). The Marseilles company of the Pastré brothers was also very influential in Alexandria and Tunis, benefiting from their personal connections with the Lesseps brothers. Beyond trade, Pastré invested in shipping and industrial companies such as the Moulins d'Egypte, a steam mill working on imported equipment, first established in Alexandria and then in Cairo in 1865. The company of the Régis brothers switched from underwater sailing in the Gulf of Guinea to the importation of palm oil, with its installation in the former French fort of Ouidah in 1841, after signing an agreement with King Ghezo, which was renewed in 1851. At the same time, the company sent an exploratory ship to Zanzibar for tramping (1847–1852), attempted to penetrate the Mozambican market in 1855 and led the exploitation of factories in the 1860s with the financial support of Fabre, one of the leading French shippers. It created a joint venture with Rabaud and Roux houses, creating a shipping line linking Zanzibar to Madagascar seaports (Daumalin 2016).

African sovereigns readily used European firms as relays for their own affairs and those of the state: the border between the two being very blurred. The Pastré brothers at Marseilles operated as shipbrokers for the lines sailing from Alexandria and Marseilles, carrying Mehmet Ali's cotton exports. They granted him a commission of 4.5% in addition to financial advances to the Viceroy. Under the reign of Mehmed Saïd, they were included in the first board of directors of the Suez Canal Company created in 1858, and they were also shareholders in Dussaud brothers, the company chosen for the breakthrough. In Tunisia, the same company benefitted from economic gains in the export of olive oil and they received the contract for the maintenance of the *bey* fleet in the shipyards of Marseilles due to the fact that they provided financial services to the Regency, which allowed them to play a key role in the creation of a *Hôtel des Monnaies* in 1846–1848 (Daumalin 2016, pp. 94–95). On the other hand, the Omani sultans of Zanzibar regularly appointed the management of their customs within the Indian trading elite, mainly from Mumbai and Goa, this medium being the great financier of caravans bringing slaves and ivory from the Great Lakes regions to the mainland Swahili ports (Marissal 1978).

2.8 The Exchange Dynamics and the African Port-City Societies

The rise of international trade was attracting many migrants to the port cities, from the richest and most powerful to the poorest and more exploited, since the influx of slave and indentured workers mixed with the voluntary exodus in a variety of ways. The heterogeneity of the maritime places came out strengthened, with a cosmopolitanism that was fairly dense and differed in its composition according to the geographical position of the port. Ouidah offers a good example of this coexistence between various African and Atlantic migrations (Law 2004, 2013). The economic elites of some communities played a vital role in the organization of import–export trade. Rich Jewish merchants played a traditional role in Mediterranean cities. Alexandria allowed for flocking to all the foreign trade minorities in the Ottoman Empire: Greeks, Armenians and Syro-Lebanese, which were also emerging at the West African coast. They met migrants from the western Mediterranean basin, mainly Italians (Ilbert 1987, 1996). The old legacy of Euro-African or Afro-Brazilian brokers was more or less destabilized by the changes of the nineteenth century, depending on the degree of colonization progress. In those sub-Saharan states which retained their sovereignty for the longest time, they continued to play an essential role in hampering or accelerating commercial change. The *cha cha* Félix de Sousa, a Luso-Brazilian favourite of Ghezo, the king of Abomey, after he helped him to seize the throne in 1818, dominated Ouidah until his death in 1848 while remaining very focused on the slave trade (Law 2003). His successor, Domingo José Martins, who died in 1864, understood better the obligation of transition by intermingling both types of trade. Samuel Collins Brew (c.1840–1881), heir to an increasingly Africanized hybrid dynasty founded by his Irish ancestor at Anomabu, abandoned the slave trade against gold and ivory issued by the Ashanti. Meanwhile, his father had devoted himself primarily to the slave trade (Priestley 1969). The same goes for George Lawson at Petit Popo (Gayibor 2014, pp. 153–175; Strickrodt 2015, pp. 210–224).

When European trading houses enlarged their presence with the support of imperial armed forces, most African brokers suffered from economic and social downgrading. From independent operators, they were progressively integrated as wage-earning employees of those trading houses which placed them as internal market middlemen. Similar processes are found among the *signares* of Saint-Louis and the rich Luso-African or Afro-Brazilian Luanda traders.

2.9 The Port Transformation: Creation, Reconversion and Improvements

2.9.1 The Typological Evolution of African Seaports and Their Adaptation to the Demands of International Shipping

In the legacy of maritime practice in the days of a navy with wooden boats and sails, a good port site had to add several advantages: an anchor harbour protected from the strongest winds, a muddy and sandy bottom facilitating anchoring, ending with a beach, an absence or a limited number of reefs, the protective heights not only of the wind, but also of the fevers of the low zone and favourable to the implantation of mostly fortified commercial equipment, and finally, the resources necessary to repair and refuel or refresh ships and crews: water, timber, fruit and food crops. The only form of transhipment used was that of the mooring off large units, requiring the use of small boats of various types depending on the site to make the connection with the coast, with hauling as a point of attachment. In the Gulf of Guinea, mainly in front of the low and straight coasts, the violence of the bar made the operations perilous, but African expertise was valued, particularly that of the Krumen of Sierra Leone or *piroguiers* of the Gold Coast. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, most African maritime sites looked more like havens than ports, in a contemporary western vision of infrastructure (Saupin 2020). During the nineteenth century, four major changes affected port transformations in Africa. The first was the transfer of wood and sail shipping to steam shipping with iron hulls and steam propulsion, which also massively increased tonnages. These technical improvements helped to overcome the bars, but the key issue was the water depth and the safety of larger vessels anchoring. For example, the port activity of Lagos facing the lagoon façade switched to the sea shore of the inlet canal (Mann 2007, p. 250, Olukoju 2004). The second driving factor of change came from the establishment of regular steamship lines, from postal functions and passenger transport in addition to that of cargo. The early use of steam, first mixed with sailing, quickly imposed the issue of coal supply warehouses. The effect on the nature of traffic was sometimes radical, as it was for the ports of the Portuguese archipelago of Cape Verde. Their activity moved from hub ports for slave trade to stopover seaports for coal bunkering (Santana Pérez 2019). More broadly, for the long-distance traffic, the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 redefined the equilibrium of regional port systems by promoting access to the Indian Ocean via the Mediterranean, to the detriment of the Atlantic bypass; however, this resisted the exploitation of sub-Saharan natural resources and the mining revolution in South Africa and the Copper belt. As an example, it still took forty days to get to Cape Town from London in the early 1860s. The 23-day record set in 1873 became the usual norm from 1876 onwards.

The third major shift was the increasing importance of commodities built on agricultural or mining resources. The physical transformation of port infrastructures was related to changes in the nature of seaborne trade. Ensuring the guarding and transhipment of human beings did not have the same technical nor infrastructural requirements as loading inert goods in rapidly increasing volumes. In fact, illegal trafficking delayed port modernization. Finally, we must not forget the differences in financial and technical resources between the places entering into the European colonial project, those belonging to large African states and all those remaining associated with coastal chiefdoms.

2.9.2 Port Transformations: Renovation and Creation

The old ports and the main slave-trade bays experienced little transformation during the first half of the nineteenth century. The European or American shippers were part of the continuity of the former mercantilist companies, dedicating the minimum possible investment due to a traditional exploitation of the site. It meant traditional techniques of hauling, building warehouses ranging from the European fort to African type stores and especially the intense mobilization of the available native workforce. This organizational model was maintained for a long time on the sites of the smaller States and has even remained predominant under the mercantile power of Zanzibar where Sultan Bargash was more concerned with the opening of a new port in Dar es Salaam to escape the British anti-slavery surveillance. However, in the early 1880s, the French Hilarion Roux supported several unfinished projects in Tanganyika: the creation of a state bank, a modern port, a railway to Lake Tanganyika and the establishment of a mining company (Daumalin 2016, p. 109).

Thus, the main works accompanied an initial colonial push between 1840 and 1880, including the example of Egypt, caught in the grip of financial imperialism. The port of Alexandria first benefitted from the ambitious policy of Mehmet Ali to build a modern fleet and army (Burie 2003). The establishment of a cannon foundry in 1805, the construction of a national shipyard for river vessels, the opening of the Mahmudiyya Canal in 1821 and the creation of an arsenal in 1829, with the technical support of French engineers, laid the first foundations (Alleaume 2012). The latter equipment, with its 5500 workers, was the first engine of port development for the entire country. The boom in cotton exports and the breakthrough of the Suez Canal saw the expansion of commercial facilities to counter the potential competition from Port Said, which remained only a stopover port (Piquet 2008). In 1869, the construction of a large breakwater of 2340 metres from Ras-el-Point marked the port modernization at Alexandria. The breakwater was accompanied by other additional works permitting the safe calling of larger steam vessels. These works were entrusted to the British company William Bruce Greenfield & Co and were completed in 1880. The works offered a stretch of water divided into two sectors by the thirty-metre wide coal mound, called "outside" to the west and "inside" to the east because it reached up to the waterfront interface (Breccia 1926). The cotton activities took place on the former *onion pier* (specialized terminal for vegetables). The planning programme had also permitted the early establishment of railway connections linking Cairo in 1856, then Suez in 1870. The junction area with the Mahmudiyya Canal attracted the main industrial factories, creating a port sector similar to those existing in Great Britain.

On the other hand, the corsair refuge of Algiers was only a small shelter protected by two jetties, one connecting the Old Peñon to the mainland and the other advancing towards the south. The bay was subjected to the violence of the north winds, but had a good mooring bottom and a particularly good depth. The military priority of a difficult conquest was imposed until the 1870s, to replicate an "African Toulon". The construction of a 500-metre protection jetty was begun in 1838 under the direction of the French Engineer Victor Poirel. This jetty was an impressive leap in port technology. Its prefabrication system, consisting of 2.2 tons of concrete blocks made from a mixture of volcanic pozzolan and lime, substituting the traditional stone blocks, was validated by the French Academy of Sciences in 1840. Despite difficult relations with his administration, which sanctioned him with a recall that same year, he was re-assigned in the direction of the yard from 1842 to 1846 thanks to the protection of Marshall Soult, the French Minister of War. He obtained the position after a competition with other five competitors. His new technical process would be known as the "French System" and it was employed in the enlargement of the ports of Marseilles and Cherbourg. The new port of Livorno also was built following the Poirel methodology and under his direction from 1852 to 1860. In 1848 the jetty reached six-hundred metres at the time that a port project of ninety hectares was adopted in water, partially completed. In 1870, two enlarged jetties enclosed a body of water to increase the safety of operations. Moreover, two refit tanks were also installed in the southern part. The layout of the wharves had been harmonized with the 1860 urban plan, the major structure of which was the construction of the Boulevard de l'Empress, tied to the port by two staircases and specifically horse-drawn ramps. An important number of stores and warehouses were established at the Boulevard and many former buildings located in the port area were underused. A railway station came into operation in 1865. The fall of the Empire in 1871 and the contraction of seaborne trade opened up a phase of relative stagnation in its maritime activity just before the take-off of the economic colonization of the territory. In 1892, the inner harbour of Agha was planned and works began in 1897 (Lespès 1921, plan p. 199).

In Senegal, the ensemble formed by the river port of Saint-Louis and the small hub of Gorée continued to operate using its old equipment: wood and stone old wharves, two-storey stone storehouses, anchorage in harbour or in the estuary and transhipments by lighterage services. From 1856 onwards, almost all the attention of the Second Empire was concentrated on the development of the Cape Verde peninsula, just in front of Gorée. The need for a naval base for the navy and a stopover port for bunkering for the *Méssageries Impériales* steamship company, which had been awarded the Bordeaux-Rio de Janeiro line in 1857, drove the port's reform. The changes in international shipping demands were also a factor, as well as the expansion of groundnut culture in Senegal. These port infrastructures were inadequate and a first jetty was built in the Bay of Dakar between 1863 and 1865. A second jetty was completed in 1867, including the erection of three lighthouses. In addition to the port of Dakar, the modernization of Rufisque was chiefly led by private investors from Bordeaux. Four wooden wharves were built in order to facilitate the evacuation of agricultural products from the mid and southern regions of Senegal (Charpy 1958, 2011). However, the rise of Dakar did not begin until the construction of its arsenal in 1892 (completed in 1898) which allowed it to exceed its function as a bunkering port for the South America lines. On the contrary, the old port of Saint-Louis was the main victim of these developments. The opening of the railway line linking Rufisque to Saint-Louis (via Dakar) caused its economic shutdown (Castillo Hidalgo 2014, 2019).

In South Africa, the bay of Cape Town had not received any relevant improvements, despite the memory of terrible storms like those of 1799 and 1865. The advance of the frontier kept sheep farming away, opening up inter-port competition. The prospect of the Suez Canal, however, provoked a burst (Burman 1976). A port modernization plan in 1858 preceded the launching of a railway line to Wellington, completed in 1863. Commercial docks were enlarged in 1870 in order to support the increased trade flows caused by the diamond rush. In 1874, the Parliament approved a five-million-pound loan for the modernization of the railway network. The enlargement of Cape Town port infrastructures continued and a dry shipyard was built to repair steamships of up to 2000 tons. The entire port area was protected by a breakwater in 1905 (Van der Cruysse 2010, pp. 305–328).

2.9.3 Gridding the Hinterlands

The maritime outlets of the old caravan routes continued to benefit from this ancient traffic circulation, with a redistribution of roles according to the evolution of geopolitics. For trans-Saharan caravans, the Algerian French conquest reinforced flows to Morocco and Tripolitania. In southern Morocco, the port of Essaouira captured the essential flows ahead of Agadir. Angola's Portuguese ports tried to retain their centrality while they advanced to Central Africa, in the utopian thought of connecting Angola to Mozambique. It was a failure on all fronts as they collided with the expansion of Zanzibar and the British interests. The solid advance of caravan traders at the service of the ports of the Sultanate of Zanzibar through the Great Lakes became the most important shift during the nineteenth century. Three main roads were used for the flow of ivory and evolved according to the significance of the demand for slaves. The main one linked the port of Bagamoyo to the regions around the Tanganyika lake and even the Victoria Lake. The southern road runs from the port of Kilwa to the Nyassa Lake and it was a key route for slave traffic. The northern route linked the bay of Pangani to the Masai countries, which were involved in ivory trade (Sheriff 2005). Their relative power and influence contrasted with the erosion of Mozambican trade networks, disrupted by the anarchistic and destructive autonomy of the mixed *prazeiros* of the Zambezi Valley and the ravages of the Zulu expeditions from the South.

On the other hand, the great African rivers have long been centres of attachment for African mercantile activities. There was little modernization in the methods of management and technical exploitation except for the two larger ones. From 1818 to 1821, Mehmet Ali had Rosette's western branch of the Nile Delta linked to the port of Alexandria, thus opening a strategic axis to Cairo, which was used by modern river barges. Moreover, the introduction of steam navigation on the Niger River was delayed until the second half of the century with serious setbacks among the pioneer companies. In 1876, John Goldie joined all the small companies together to create the United African Company, renamed the National African Company in 1886 after the granting of sovereign rights. In the Gulf of Guinea, the lagoon traffic did not lose its intensity, adapting to the new port hierarchy. On the Slave Coast, the ascendancy of Lagos was also boosted by the introduction of a complex inland transport network formed by interconnected land tracks and waterways (Mann 2007, p. 139).

The link between port development and the establishment of railways was obviously the most crucial action for the future, even though the first lines only appeared in the second half of the nineteenth century. Egypt was the pioneer with the Alexandria-Cairo line, which opened in 1856, then extended to Suez. The ramifications of the network rapidly advanced to the Delta. The Algiers-Blida (1858–1862) and the Cape Town-Wellington (1859–1863) lines were almost contemporary and the latter was extended to the Kimberley minefields in 1885. In that year, the Saint-Louis-Dakar railway was opened. Later, the Portuguese port of Lourenço Marques (now Maputo) took advantage of its rail link with the South African Republic, newly rich with its gold mines. The establishment of railways, the arms-based international division of labour gave rise to fierce competition between European imperial powers. They were linear operating axes, far removed from the reality of the rail network according to the European standard (Marnot 2012a, pp. 195–196).

2.10 Conclusion

In the precolonial transition phase (1850–1880), African seaports had to adapt to a major transformation in African supply, leading from a domination of slave exports to that of primary products, mainly agricultural but also mining. This reversal, at the initiative of the Western powers, took place more quickly on the Atlantic coast and later on the eastern coast. It gave rise to unequal resistance from African sovereignty, was fairly rapid in its reconversion and was mostly operated without too much of a transition crisis by intermingling of both types of trade.

In addition, the transformation of long-distance maritime transport had an impact on port operation methods and infrastructure stock. The modernization policies pursued by some African Mediterranean States, the rise of foreign commercial and financial companies, which reduced the essential and old role of the Euro-African or Afro-Brazilian brokers and the first colonial upsurges, are more or less reflected in port developments.

The relatively uniform model of the natural harbour operating through the massive utilization of human force with limited construction facilities, where local construction techniques mostly prevailed over European contributions, broke before the convergence of all these mutations. Port creations or recreations according to European technical standards were then differentiated from other sites that remained close to the traditional models. Overall, the old port geographical distribution was not reversed, but rather a new port hierarchy redefined its profile.

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