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From Design to Consumption: The Export Trade in Printed and Dyed
Textiles to British West Africa, c.1870-1914.

By

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degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History

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Abbreviations

APM – Application Per Mark

BT – Board of Trade

CFAO – Compagnie Française de L’Afrique Occidentale

CO – Colonial Office

CPA – Calico Printers’ Association

CUST – Customs Office

DRO – Derbyshire Record Office

MOSI – Museum of Science and Industry

NMS – National Museums of Scotland

TMA – The Manchester Archives

TNA – The National Archives

UTR – United Turkey Red Company

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Declaration

I confirm that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

Abstract

This thesis examines the export of British printed and dyed textiles to West Africa from the 1870s to 1914. Economic histories of trade within the British Empire have emphasised the commercial advantages of the colonies and the ways in which the Empire facilitated British overseas trade. It has been argued that the accessibility of colonial markets, and the privileging of British goods within these markets, allowed British merchants to unload surplus production and unsuitable goods on passive colonial consumers. However, these narratives have failed to acknowledge the material evidence of the trade, in the extant pattern books and textiles samples. This thesis examines these artefacts of the trade as a lens through which to reconsider the potential agency of colonial consumers and the extent to which British trade responded to the demands of these markets.

This thesis concludes that the printed and dyed textiles exported to West Africa during this period were designed to suit the tastes and demands of West African consumers. The material evidence of the trade illustrates that the British textile industry employed a number of mechanisms to produce goods which met the specific demands of the West African markets. This was achieved through the creation of specialist designs, technological innovations and the adaptation of existing manufacturing processes. British merchants understood the importance of satisfying the tastes of the consumer and the industry adapted to meet these requirements. The production, distribution and marketing of textiles for West African markets became increasingly specialised as the textile industry responded to growing foreign competition and the decline of British dominance in global trade. The expansion of the British Empire in West Africa did not lead to the indiscriminate export of surplus production or unsuitable goods. This thesis argues that while the imperial framework offered some advantages, British merchants continued to recognise the importance of the consumer and the need to cater to their tastes.

Introduction

The British cotton industry has been the subject of numerous studies, across a diverse range of disciplines, from business history, economic history, textile history and social history. The extent of this research reflects the role of the cotton industry in shaping Britain's past and present. The global networks which facilitated and grew in response to the cotton trade have been well documented by historians such as Sven Beckert and Giorgio Riello, who have mapped the movement of cotton, in its raw and finished form across the world.¹ That cotton was a global commodity, and arguably the first global commodity, is widely accepted.

British cotton goods were exported to diverse markets across the globe. The distribution of British cotton goods was determined by many local and global factors, including international conflicts, individual relationships between manufacturers, merchants and foreign agents, and changing tastes and fashions. However, the history of the cotton industry of Britain has largely focused inwards, mostly concentrating on the local development of the industry and the impact this had on the British economy.² The importance of the export trade to the success of the British cotton industry is

¹ Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A New History of Global Capitalism* (London: Penguin, 2015); Giorgio Riello, *Cotton: The Fabric that Made the Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

² Stanley D. Chapman and Serge Chassagne, *European Textile Printers in the Eighteenth Century: A Study of Peel and Oberkampf* (London: Heinemann, 1981); Stanley D. Chapman, 'Quantity Versus Quality in the British Industrial Revolution: The Case of Printed Textiles', *Northern History* 21/1 (1985), 175-92; Toshio Kusamitsu, 'British Industrialization and Design Before the Great Exhibition', *Textile History* 12/1 (1981), 77-95; Steven Toms, 'Windows of Opportunity in the Textile Industry: The Business Strategies of Lancashire Entrepreneurs, 1880-1914', *Business History* 40/1 (1998), 1-25; David J. Jeremy, 'Survival Strategies in Lancashire Textiles: Bleacher's Association Ltd to Whitecroft plc, 1900-1980s', *Textile History* 24/2 (1993), 163-209; Peter Temin, 'Product Quality and Vertical Integration in the Early Cotton Textile Industry', *The Journal of Economic History* 48 (1988), 891-907.

implicit within this history but little research has been undertaken which directly addresses the international dimension of the trade in British cotton textiles.³

The economic history of Britain's international trade in the late nineteenth century has been characterised by decline and has largely focused on the increasing pressure from foreign competition and Britain's reliance on colonial markets.⁴ The narrative of the decline of the British textile industry from the 1870s also points to an overreliance on colonial markets arguing that the advantage afforded to British goods resulted in the complacency of British merchants and ultimately the inability of British products to compete in the global market.⁵ British firms failed to supply suitable products which met the tastes and demands of their foreign consumers and as a result lost their position of dominance to foreign competitors.⁶ In this narrative the colonial markets have been portrayed as soft markets which provided an outlet for the surplus production of industrialised nations whose domestic markets had reached saturation point.⁷

Recently, the representation of captive colonial markets exploited by European traders to absorb surplus production in a climate of economic decline has been questioned. The work of Gary B. Magee and Andrew S. Thompson, Jeremy Prestholdt,

³ See Frederika Launert, 'The Role of Design in the Lancashire Cotton Industry, 1900-1939' (PhD Thesis, University of Central Lancashire, 2002); Katherine Frederick, 'Global Competition in the Local Marketplace: The Impact of Foreign Cloth Imports on British West African Cotton Textile Industries during the Pre-Colonial and Colonial Eras' (RMA Thesis, Utrecht University, 2013); Christopher B. Steiner, 'Another Image of Africa: Toward an Ethnohistory of European Cloth in West Africa, 1873-1960', *Ethnohistory* 32/2 (1985), 91-110; Shinya Sugiyama, 'Textile Marketing in East Asia, 1860-1914', *Textile History* 19/2 (1988), 279-98.

⁴ Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire: From 1750 to the Present Day* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), p. 191.

⁵ J. A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (New York: Gordon Press, 1975); John Cunningham Wood, 'J. A. Hobson and British Imperialism', *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 42/4 (1983), 483-500; Peter Mathias, *The First Industrial Nation: An Economic History of Britain 1700-1914*, 2nd edn (London: Methuen, 1983), pp. 413-4; M. W. Kirby, *The Decline of the British Economic Power Since 1870* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1981), p. 7.

⁶ David Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus: Technological Change and Industrial Development in Western Europe from 1750 to the Present* 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁷ Sven Beckert, 'American Danger: United States Empire, Eurafica, and the Territorialization of Industrial Capitalism, 1870-1950', *The American Historical Review* 122/4 (2017), 1137-70, (p. 1155).

Christopher Steiner and Kazuo Kobayashi has demonstrated the importance of revisiting aspects of these grand narratives in order to move beyond the simple binaries of coloniser-colonised, industrialised economy-undeveloped and civilised-uncivilised.⁸ There remains a need therefore, to consider the complex and distinctive contexts of the trade between Britain and each of the colonies, through which can be gained a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between trade and Empire.

This thesis re-examines these debates through the lens of Britain's textile trade with the colonial markets of West Africa. It argues that despite the advantages afforded to British trade by the Empire the tastes and needs of the consumer remained central to the trade. British manufacturers and merchants exported goods which were specially tailored to the tastes of West African consumers. Instead of relying on the Empire for protection from foreign competition the textile industry responded to growing external pressures with increasing market specialisation.

The thesis takes a qualitative approach, drawing on methodologies from design history, to analyse the material evidence of the textile trade with West Africa. Few scholars have considered the potential of these objects to contribute to these debates; they are often seen as subsidiary to quantitative data and documentary evidence. It argues that there is a growing need to consider the 'things' of global exchange as a means of reframing narratives of trade and globalisation and continuing to challenge Eurocentric perspectives.⁹ The surviving material evidence of the trade offers a new

⁸ Andrew S. Thompson and Gary B. Magee, 'A Soft Touch? British Industry, Empire Markets, and the Self-Governing Dominions, c.1870-1914', *The Economic History Review* 56/4 (2003), 689-717; Jeremy Prestholdt, 'On the Global Repercussions of East African Consumerism', *The American Historical Review* 109/3 (2004), 755-81; Jeremy Prestholdt, *Domesticating the World: African Consumerism and the Genealogies of Globalization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); Steiner, 'Another Image of Africa'; Kazuo Kobayashi, 'Indian Cotton Textiles and the Senegal River Valley in a Globalising World: Production, Trade and Consumption, 1750-1850' (PhD Thesis, LSE, 2016).

⁹ Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello (eds), *The Global Lives of Things: The Material Culture of Connections in the Early Modern World* (London: Routledge, 2016); Jeremy Prestholdt, 'Africa and

perspective of how merchants and manufacturers engaged with global consumers and the mechanisms used to specialise goods for specific markets.

0.1 Historiographical Frameworks

The thesis engages with three key historiographical frameworks; the history of economic decline in the late nineteenth century, the relationship between British manufacture and the Empire, and the dissemination of Western design through global trade. These debates form the historiographical foundation for the chapters which follow.

0.1.1 Economic History of Decline

Histories of British textile production from the second half of the nineteenth century have been dominated by the narrative of increasing competition in overseas markets and the declining ability of British goods to compete in the global market.¹⁰ The eventual collapse of Britain's textile industries in the mid-twentieth century has been linked to the declining rates of growth and the loss of markets in the late nineteenth century.¹¹ The last decades of the nineteenth century have been characterised as a period of gradual decline which lacked technological development and entrepreneurial

the Global Lives of Things', in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Consumption*, ed. by Frank Trentmann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 85-110.

¹⁰ Kirby, *The Decline of the British Economic Power*, p. 3; Las G. Sandberg, *Lancashire in Decline: A Study in Entrepreneurship, Technology, and International Trade* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1974), p. 140 & 73; Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A New History of Global Capitalism*, p. 381; D. A. Farnie, *The English Cotton Industry and the World Market, 1815-1896* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 173.

¹¹ Steven Toms, 'The English Cotton Industry and the Loss of the World Market', in *King Cotton: A Tribute to Douglas A. Farnie*, ed. by John F. Wilson (Lancaster: Crucible Books, 2009), 64-82 (p.65).

spirit.¹² This is presented in stark contrast to the intense innovation of the previous century and the advantages the Industrial Revolution brought to the British economy.

As an important contributor to the British economy, the performance of the textile industries from the 1870s has been fundamental to the development of the economic decline thesis. The economic history of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has been dominated by the narrative of economic decline and the loss of Britain's dominance in global trade. The role of the textile industries in the economic boom following the Industrial Revolution has led to the industry being used as a measure of British economic growth and stability.¹³ As a result, the history of textile production in Britain and the debate on economic decline are closely intertwined and the cotton industry has been used as a case study to explore the strength of the British economy during this period, and the reasons for the economic problems faced by the government and British manufacturing.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries British cotton goods were exported across the globe. The industry supplied a significant domestic market but the sector during this period can be characterised as export-orientated.¹⁴ By the late nineteenth century the growth of British textile exports had slowed and the global

¹² D. H. Aldcroft, 'The Entrepreneur and the British Economy, 1870-1914', *The Economic History Review* 17/1 (1964), 113-34, (p. 125); Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus*, p. 337; Kirby, *The Decline of the British Economic Power*, p. 8.

¹³ W. R. Garside, 'Regional vs National Perspectives on Economic 'Decline' in Late Victorian and Edwardian Britain', in *The British Industrial Decline*, ed. by Michael Dintenfuss and Jean-Pierre Dormois (London: Routledge, 1999), 139-52 (p.140).

¹⁴ Robert Millward, 'Industrial Performance, the Infrastructure and Government Policy', in *The British Industrial Decline*, ed. by Michael Dintenfuss and Jean-Pierre Dormois (London: Routledge, 1999), 47-64 (p.84); David M. Higgins, 'Was the Lancashire Cotton Textile Industry Competitive? An Alternative Analysis', in *King Cotton: A Tribute to Douglas A. Farnie*, ed. by John F. Wilson (Lancaster: Crucible Books, 2009), 83-92; Andrew Marrison, Stephen Broadberry, and Tim Leunig, 'Selling English Cotton into the World Market: Implications for the Rationalisation Debate, 1900-1939', in *King Cotton: A Tribute to Douglas A. Farnie*, ed. by John F. Wilson (Lancaster: Crucible Books, 2009), 47-63 (p.52).

market share of British goods was in decline.¹⁵ For William Lazonick this is evidence of the economic decline of the late nineteenth century identified by the likes of M. W. Kirby and Martin J. Weiner.¹⁶

The deceleration of the growth of the cotton trade has been linked to the development of cotton industries overseas such as in India and the United States. The inventions and technologies fostered in Britain were also exported during the nineteenth century, allowing other nations to build successful textile industries and reducing their reliance on British imports.¹⁷ North America, once one of Britain's most important markets quickly grew into one her biggest competitors.¹⁸ Germany and France also began to be seen as significant threats to British industrial supremacy, particularly because of their success in some key sectors of the Second Industrial Revolution such as steel and chemical production.¹⁹ India was also becoming more self-sufficient as industrial technology and knowledge was transferred from Europe enabling the industry to mechanise and exploit cheap labour costs.²⁰

However, despite the challenges of increasing foreign competition total exports of British cotton cloth continued to grow until the outbreak of war in 1914. The rate of growth slowed considerably from its peak in the 1850s and 60s but stood at just over 20 percent between 1905 and 1913.²¹ In 1913, 7.1 billion yards of cotton

¹⁵ Farnie, *The English Cotton Industry*, p. 171; William Lazonick, 'The Cotton Industry', in *The Decline of the British Economy* ed. by Bernard Elbaum and William Lazonick (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1986), 18-50 (p.42).

¹⁶ Kirby, *The Decline of the British Economic Power*, pp. 3-7; Martin J. Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1980*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

¹⁷ Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus*, p. 127.

¹⁸ Charles P. Kindleberger, 'Foreign Trade and Economic Growth: Lessons from Britain and France, 1850 to 1913', *The Economic History Review* 14/2 (1961), 289-305, (p. 293).

¹⁹ Donald McCloskey, 'Did Victorian Britain Fail?', *The Economic History Review* 23/3 (1970), 446-59, (p. 448).

²⁰ Farnie, *The English Cotton Industry*, p. 178.

²¹ Sandberg, *Lancashire in Decline*, p. 140.

cloth were exported, the highest figure ever reached by Britain.²² The cotton industry remained a significant contributor to the British economy throughout the period leading up to the First World War.

Revisionists of the economic decline thesis have also highlighted the need to see Britain's economic performance within the context of developing economies in Europe, the Americas and Asia and technological and resource limitations. Donald McCloskey and Sidney Pollard have argued that the late-nineteenth-century economy was more robust, growing in line with available resources and technology and proving stable and adaptable in the face of increasing external pressures.²³²⁴ Although W. D. Rubinstein recognises a significant downturn in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, he argues that the narrative of economic decline is too narrow in focus and fails to recognise a number of important indicators of economic stability.²⁵

Nonetheless, the economic decline narrative remains a powerful discourse in histories of trade, which continues to inform our understandings of industry particularly in relation to the performance of British commodities in the export trade. The ability of British merchants and manufacturers to adapt to the changing conditions of global trade has been a key factor in the development of the narrative of economic decline. British manufacturers and merchants have been described as adverse to change and overly confident. David Landes went so far as to state that British enterprise during this period was characterised by amateurism and complacency.²⁶ Landes also argued that Britain's 'merchants, who had once seized the markets of the

²² Ibid.

²³ McCloskey, 'Did Victorian Britain Fail?', p. 448.

²⁴ Sidney Pollard, 'Capital Exports, 1870-1914: Harmful or Beneficial?', *The Economic History Review* 38/4 (1985), 489-514, (p. 492); see also Peter Temin, 'Capital Exports, 1870-1914: An Alternative Model', *The Economic History Review* 40/3 (1987), 453-58, (p. 455).

²⁵ W. D. Rubinstein, *Capitalism, Culture, and Decline in Britain, 1750-1990* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 3.

²⁶ Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus*, p. 337.

world, took them for granted; the consular reports are full of the incompetence of British exporters, their refusal to suit their goods to the taste and pockets of the client, their unwillingness to try new products in new areas, their insistence that everyone in the world ought to read English and count in pounds shilling and pence.’²⁷ D. H. Aldcroft agreed stating that responsibility lay in the hands of British entrepreneurs who had failed to adapt to the changing market conditions.²⁸

The ‘cultural critique’ was largely led by social and cultural historians who looked beyond statistical analysis for evidence of poor business leadership.²⁹ Several studies have argued that the British education system, which did not produce inspired and capable entrepreneurs and businessmen, along with prejudices within the class system towards industry and commerce, led to a lack of economic leadership.³⁰ Similarly, Bernard Elbaum and William Lazonick argued that nineteenth-century Britain was anti-capitalist, anti-industry and anti-business.³¹ The contention that British merchants were not only incapable but were wilfully condescending has remained a powerful narrative which continues to influence the history of trade in the nineteenth century.

Lars Sandberg’s seminal study of the relative decline of the cotton industry examined the accusation of technological conservatism put forth by Aldcroft and

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Aldcroft, ‘The Entrepreneur and the British Economy’, p. 115.

²⁹ Rubinstein, *Capitalism, Culture, and Decline*, pp. 1-2.

³⁰ Michael Sanderson, ‘Education and Economic Decline 1870-1914: An Innocent Suspect?’, in *The British Industrial Decline*, ed. by Michael Dintenfass and Jean-Pierre Dormois (London: Routledge, 1999), 155-74; Michael Sanderson, *The Universities and British Industry, 1850-1970* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972); Hartmut Berghoff, ‘Public Schools and the Decline of the British Economy 1870-1914’, *Past & Present* 129 (1990), 148-67; Michael Dintenfass, ‘The Voice of Industry and the Ethos of Decline: Business Citizenship, Public Service and the Making of a British Industrial Elite’, in *The British Industrial Decline*, ed. by Michael Dintenfass and Jean-Pierre Dormois (London: Routledge 1999), 175-88.

³¹ Bernard Elbaum and William Lazonick, *The Decline of the British Economy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 46.

Landes.³² While Landes argued that technological backwardness had cost British businesses market shares, Sandberg argued that the decision made by many cotton manufacturers not to adopt ring frames and automatic looms was economically rational.³³ Although these new technologies were significant in the development of the cotton industry in the United States, easier access to skilled labour in Britain meant that the potential returns on investment into these new machines would have been much smaller.³⁴

The characterisation of late-nineteenth-century merchants as ineffectual and apathetic has significant implications for the study of textiles for export and the homogenisation of global design to conform to Western tastes. The argument that manufacturers and merchants were unable or unwilling to cater to the demands of foreign markets implies that the British goods which were exported to China, South America, India or West Africa were unsuitable and a reflection of the tastes of European and North American consumers. This can be identified as the increasing globalisation of visual and material cultures with Western tastes dominating the global markets.³⁵ As a result, women in Japan, Sierra Leone, Russia and Britain could wear the same textile design regardless of the cultural and geographical distances between them.

However, studies by Cherry Gertzel, F. V. Parsons and Christopher Steiner indicate that British merchants were aware of the necessity to cater to the demands of foreign markets, were conscious of the increasing pressure from overseas competition

³² Sandberg, *Lancashire in Decline*, p. 52.

³³ Ibid. p. 53.

³⁴ Timothy Leunig, 'A British Industrial Success: Productivity in the Lancashire and New England Cotton Spinning Industries a Century Ago', *The Economic History Review* 56/1 (2003), 90-117, (p. 90).

³⁵ Riello, *Cotton: The Fabric that Made the Modern World*, p. 278.

and had detailed knowledge of the markets they served.³⁶ Increasingly the causes put forth by the economic decline narrative are being questioned with a growing number of studies reflecting the effort of merchants to procure products which met the specific needs of a particular market. Although the styles and fashions of Europe became more common across the globe, in part facilitated by imperial expansion, they were by no means ubiquitous.

0.1.2 Trade within the Empire

The growth of Britain's export trade coincided with periods of formal and informal European imperialism. This has led historians like S. B. Saul and Kirby to suggest that the Empire provided British merchants with markets which could be easily exploited and used to offload surplus production.³⁷ The growth of the Empire allowed merchants to become complacent as they benefitted from the protection afforded to British goods in the colonies. For Saul the accessibility of colonial market led to a decline in the ability of British merchants to compete in global trade.³⁸

The apparent advantages of trade within the Empire has also prompted Marxist readings of imperialism that argued British merchants and industrialists actively encouraged imperial expansion.³⁹ More recently P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins' theory of Gentlemanly Capitalism revised earlier ideas of capitalist imperialism by focusing

³⁶ Cherry Gertzel, 'Relations Between African and European Traders in the Niger Delta 1880-1896', *Journal of African History* 111/2 (1962), 361-66, (p. 362); F. V. Parsons, 'The North-West African Company and the British Government, 1875-95', *The Historical Journal* 1/2 (1958), 136-53, (p. 141); Steiner, 'Another Image of Africa', p. 98.

³⁷ S. B. Saul, *Studies in British Overseas Trade, 1870-1914* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press 1960), p. 230; Kirby, *The Decline of the British Economic Power*, p. 3; P. J. Cain, 'Economics and Empire: The Metropolitan Context', in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, ed. by Andrew Porter (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1999), 31-52 (p.45).

³⁸ Saul, *Studies in British Overseas Trade, 1870-1914*, p. 229.

³⁹ Hobson, *Imperialism*; Vladimir Ilich Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism: A Popular Outline* (London: Penguin, 2010).

on the role of London's financiers in the development of British imperial policy.⁴⁰ Historians examining the motivations for British imperialism, have considered the role of British merchants and manufacturers in encouraging the state to protect their commercial interests abroad.⁴¹ The concepts of New Imperialism and Gentlemanly Capitalism both emphasise the economic dimension of European imperial expansion in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁴² The economic impetus for formal and informal empires is seen as a fundamental characteristic of the European empires of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁴³

The interest in economic narratives of British imperialism is closely linked to the economic decline thesis. It is in the context of growing anxiety around Britain's economic performance, increasing competition for export market shares and growing tension between the dominance of the free-trade discourse in Britain and a desire to respond to protectionist measures overseas, that economic motivations for imperial expansion have been understood. Warranted or not, the growing anxiety around the protection of new markets is visible in the archives. In 1887 the President of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce stated that, 'we could not afford to lose sight of even small markets when some of the largest markets were getting more or less closed against us.'⁴⁴ The role of trade and merchants in the formation and growth of many

⁴⁰ P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: 1688-2015* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

⁴¹ C. C. Wrigley, 'Neo-Mercantile Policies and the New Imperialism', in *The Imperial Impact: Studies in the Economic History of Africa and India*, ed. by Clive Dewey and A. G. Hopkins (London: Athlone Press, 1978), 20-34 (p.22); John MacKenzie, *The Partition of Africa: And European Imperialism 1880-1900*, (London: Methuan, 1983); P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, 'Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Expansion Overseas II: New Imperialism, 1850-1945', *The Economic History Review* 40/1 (1987), 1-26.

⁴² Barbara Bush, *Imperialism and Postcolonialism* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2006), p. 20; Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*; Raymond E. Dumett, 'Introduction: Exploring the Cain/Hopkins Paradigm ', in *Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Imperialism: The New Debate on Empire*, ed. by Raymond E. Dumett (London: Longman, 1999), 1-43.

⁴³ Wrigley, 'Neo-Mercantile Policies', p. 23.

⁴⁴ 'Manchester Chamber of Commerce', *Manchester Guardian*, 1st November 1887, p.7.

European empires has long been the focus of much imperial and economic history.⁴⁵ The extent to which trade influenced the growth of the British Empire in the second half of the nineteenth century, plays an important role in understanding the relationship between British merchants and manufacturers and their consumers overseas.

Beginning during the period of decolonisation in the middle of the twentieth century and continuing until the early 1990s, the arguments of the likes of P. J. Cain, Anthony Hopkins, J. A. Hobson, Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher continue to shape the way that historians view the relationship between British trade and manufacturing and the colonies.⁴⁶ Characterised as the increasing willingness of states to intervene politically and militarily in order to protect economic interests overseas, often as a direct result of pressure from merchants, industrialists and manufacturers, New Imperialism has been seen as a distinct shift from earlier forms of Western imperialism.⁴⁷ Historians, such as W. G. Hynes and F. V. Parsons, have identified sustained effort on the part of manufacturers and merchants in the second half of the nineteenth century to open new markets and to gather government support, where possible.⁴⁸ Hopkins also demonstrated the potential for internal pressures, such as lobbying from those with mercantile interests overseas, to impact the decisions of the state in relation to the Empire.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, 'Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Expansion Overseas I: The Old Colonial System, 1688-1850', *The Economic History Review* 39/4 (1986), 501-25; Cain and Hopkins, 'Gentlemanly Capitalism II'; Stanley Chapman, *Merchant Enterprise in Britain: from the Industrial Revolution to World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus*; Parsons, 'The North-West African Company'.

⁴⁶ Cain and Hopkins, 'Gentlemanly Capitalism II', p. 5; Hobson, *Imperialism*; John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade', *The Economic History Review* 6/1 (1953), 1-15, (p. 7).

⁴⁷ Wrigley, 'Neo-Mercantile Policies', p. 23.

⁴⁸ W. G. Hynes, 'British Mercantile Attitudes Towards Imperial Expansion', *The Historical Journal* 19/4 (1976), 969-79, (p. 974); Parsons, 'North-West African Company', p. 138.

⁴⁹ A. G. Hopkins, 'Economic Imperialism in West Africa: Lagos, 1880-92', *The Economic History Review* 21/3 (1968), 580-606, (p. 581).

Often, the primary objection for formal possessions overseas, was an unerring belief in free-trade.⁵⁰ However, by the 1870s proponents of free-trade had to face the increasing competition of Germany, France, the United States and others.⁵¹ In this context arguments in favour of free-trade were becoming less convincing, especially after protectionist measures were introduced in a number of other European countries.⁵² Furthermore, although the British economy of the nineteenth century is often characterized by *laissez-faire*, in practice it sometimes deviated significantly from some of the basic principles of free-trade.⁵³ British financiers received preferential returns for investing in India, a decided attempt to stimulate investment in the colony and the British economy.⁵⁴

Proponents of economic motivations for imperial expansion have argued that annexation only occurred where informal means produced no results. This can be seen in West African where European powers introduced preferential conditions for their own goods in markets not covered under the various free-trade treaties.⁵⁵ However, Robinson and Gallagher have argued that the preference for informal measures was neither an indication of the state's reluctance to expand the Empire, nor an abandonment of free-trade principles.⁵⁶ As such, they see a continuity between informal and formal empire in the desire to secure and protect the interests of the imperial power.⁵⁷

⁵⁰ M. E. Chamberlain, *The Scramble for Africa*, (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 59.

⁵¹ Arthur Redford, *Manchester Merchants and Foreign Trade Vol.II 1850-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1956), p. 120.

⁵² For instance, the high tariffs brought in during the Civil War remained in the United States and after unification Germany implemented protectionist tariffs in 1879; Chamberlain, *The Scramble for Africa*, p. 59.

⁵³ Gallagher and Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade', p. 4.

⁵⁴ Ibid. pp. 4-5.

⁵⁵ Redford, *Manchester Merchants II*, p. 67.

⁵⁶ Gallagher and Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade', p. 3.

⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 4.

The motivations for building empires, and for shifting from informal to formal rule, are diverse and dependant on the specific temporal and geographical contexts. These motives may have not be shared equally by colonial officials, the public and manufacturers or merchants. Furthermore, while some empires were the result of a clear and determined imperial logic, others developed organically, as a response to political, social and economic forces.⁵⁸

Cain and Hopkin's development of the concept of 'gentlemanly capitalism' further revised the role of commerce in the imperial question, by identifying the significance of financiers and foreign investment in the Empire.⁵⁹ Importantly, Cain and Hopkins' thesis acknowledged that within the commercial sphere, there were a number of different interests groups, ranging from provincial industrialists, to merchants and investors in the capital.⁶⁰ Gentlemanly capitalism, therefore, makes the distinction between the influence and opinions of those involved in the management of money and those manufacturing goods for export and emphasises the danger of viewing British commerce as a unified force.

The concept of Gentlemanly Capitalism highlights the difference between the industrial North and the service sector South. Cain and Hopkins' idea of Gentlemanly Capitalism emphasises the power held by the financiers of London and the South East and the close relationship between the financial elite and political actors. Conversely, the ability of provincial industrialists to directly influence the attitudes of the state and policy, has been questioned.⁶¹ For Cain and Hopkins economic influence in the expansion and administration of the Empire derived from London and the South East.

⁵⁸ Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, p. 36.

⁵⁹ Cain and Hopkins, 'Gentlemanly Capitalism II', p. 7.

⁶⁰ Cain and Hopkins, 'Gentlemanly Capitalism I', p. 503; Cain and Hopkins, 'Gentlemanly Capitalism II', p. 4.

⁶¹ Wrigley, 'Neo-Mercantile Policies', p. 25.

Although trade is often cited as a motivation for imperial expansion the direct influence of the provinces remains peripheral to the debate. In Cain and Hopkins' analysis, towns and cities like Manchester are dismissed as manufacturing centres which by the mid-nineteenth century were secondary to the City. Cain and Hopkins focus on notions of duty and privilege to define the occupations of gentleman capitalists, traits which do not characterise the merchants and businessmen of many Northern commercial towns and cities.⁶²

Manufacturing and industry certainly played an important role in the development of Manchester. However, by the 1850s, Manchester was no longer dominated by manufacturing, as factories and mills moved to the peripheries and merchants and commercial services developed. As a result, Manchester was integrated into the culture of elite and commercial society and no longer felt far removed from the political decisions of London. Yet, the tension between the regional commerce and the politicians and financiers of London is visible in the discussions of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce.⁶³

The distinction between the traditional landed elites, far removed from the actual production of goods, and the new money of industrialists involved in the day-to-day managing of manufacture and distribution, is convincing when considered on a national scale.⁶⁴ Yet, it ignores the extent to which, within cities like Manchester and Liverpool, the roles of manufacturer, merchant and investor overlapped. From the mid-nineteenth century the increasing importance of merchants in Manchester, Birmingham and Liverpool, diminished the power of industrialists. Increasingly

⁶² Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, p. 53.

⁶³ See chapter 5 for a detailed discussion of the relationship between the Manchester Chamber of Commerce and the government.

⁶⁴ E. H. H. Green, 'Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Economic Policy, 1880-1914: the Debate Over Bimetallism and Protectionism', in *Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Imperialism: The New Debate on Empire*, ed. by Raymond E. Dumett (London: Longman, 1999), 44-67 (p.48).

Manchester became the home of the offices of commission merchants, shipping houses, accountants and foreign investors.⁶⁵ The Mancunian industrial city, lost its manufacturing character as the few remaining factories and mills located in the city centre moved to villages and towns like Oldham and Stalybridge.⁶⁶ There are also many examples of the direct involvement of Northern industrialists in national politics, from Edmund Potter, textile printer and MP for Carlisle from 1861 to 1874, and influential figures like Richard Cobden.⁶⁷ The extent to which commerce influenced the building of the British Empire must be understood within the specific context of each trade.

The history of the export trade in printed textiles in the late nineteenth century is intertwined with concepts of economic imperialism. Analysis of the artefacts of the trade, in the form of pattern books and samples, questions the extent to Britain's relationship with colonial markets can be characterised by an over-reliance which resulted in complacency. Examination of the structure of the industry and the institutions which aimed to facilitate trade, like the Chamber of Commerce, further demonstrate that colonial markets were not outlets for surplus production, less demanding or safe. The study of the export of British printed textiles to West Africa reinforces Magee and Thompson's belief that the relationship between the Empire and trade can only be understood in the specific context of each market.⁶⁸

As historian Barbara Bush has argued, 'no simple binary divisions or blanket generalizations suffice to address the complexities of the colonial legacy; not all colonized peoples were victims and neither were all Europeans oppressors.'⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Chapman, *Merchant Enterprise in Britain*, p. 129.

⁶⁶ Farnie, *The English Cotton Industry*, p. 186.

⁶⁷ John G. Hurst, *Edmund Potter and Dinting Vale* (Manchester: Edmund Potter & Co. Ltd, 1948), p. 51 & 56.

⁶⁸ Thompson and Magee, 'A Soft Touch?', p. 713.

⁶⁹ Bush, *Imperialism and Postcolonialism*, p. 42.

Likewise, the image of the passive colonial consumer, placed in binary against the economic force of the imperial power does not explain the complex global relationships of exchange of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It also does not correspond with the material evidence of this trade, embodied in the thousands of cloth samples depicting a myriad of designs for the export markets.

The sources examined in this study illustrate the complexity and sophistication of the West African markets and the importance of recognising the diversity of the region. The arbitrary borders which were created across Africa under European imperialism bore little relation to the economic, social, cultural and political life of West African communities. For local people living and trading in the region, the movement of goods and people across these borders continued and the ramifications of imposed boundaries continue to be felt on the continent today as local communities struggle against European concepts of national identity. The textiles examined in this study were not confined by the boundaries of British colonies in West Africa. British textiles were traded and consumed across the region of West Africa, including in other European colonies and free states.

The expansion of European imperialism and the creation of these borders did not dramatically change the tastes of consumers and the demand for imported cloth, but the administrative systems established as part of the process of colonisation did influence the way trade was managed and controlled in the region. This study examines the trade with British West Africa, with particular focus on Nigeria, the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone as a case study through which to explore the relationship between imperialism and trade. However, it acknowledges that the imperial economic policies which developed in many West African colonies were complex and varied as each reflected the influence of local and international forces. British West Africa was

not a homogenous economic or cultural entity and the material evidence of the trade demonstrates the continuing diversity of the market. The accounts of Manchester's Chamber of Commerce also attest to the importance of understanding the specific local contexts. Nonetheless, as the following chapters illustrate, an analysis of British colonies in West Africa illustrates how the imperial framework shaped the local administration and how trade interacted with imperial structures at a macro and micro level.

0.1.3 Histories of Design and Commodity History

It is within this broader economic context that the history of the export of printed and dyed textiles has been understood. Drawing on the narratives of economic decline, entrepreneurial failure and economic imperialism, scholars of textile and design history have argued that the textiles produced in the North-West of England for the export markets had little aesthetic value and were of poor quality.⁷⁰ It has been argued that the lack of investment in design and innovation contributed to the slow decline of textile printing in Britain.⁷¹

However, the dismissal of mass-produced printed textiles by contemporary commentators and modern scholars is not unique to the export trade. From the mechanisation of textile printing in the 1830s, the industry was criticised for producing poor quality goods which were devoid of artistic merit.⁷² The industry became infamous for a pervasive culture of copying and imitating the designs of rival firms in

⁷⁰ Mary Schoeser, 'Shewey and Full of Work': Design', in *The Lancashire Cotton Industry: A History Since 1700*, ed. by Mary B. Rose (Preston: Lancashire County Books, 1996), 187-209 (p.198).

⁷¹ Adrian Forty, *Objects of Desire: Design and Society 1750-1980* (London: Cameron Books, 1986), p. 42.

⁷² Lara Kriegel, 'Culture and the Copy: Calico, Capitalism and Design Copyright in Early Victorian Britain', *Journal of British Studies* 43/2 (2004), 233-65, (p. 240).

attempts to limit investment in design and increase potential profits.⁷³ The debates surrounding the registration of designs, and the eventual establishment of copyright legislation for decorative designs in 1842, came to signify the lack of taste exhibited by the industry and the decline in design quality as a result of mechanisation.⁷⁴

The development of textile printing in Britain was directly influenced by the importation of Indian calicoes from the sixteenth century. As exotic, luxury goods Indian chintzes were highly valued and successful attempts to reproduce printed and painted cloth with fast dyes followed in the seventeenth century.⁷⁵ The British textile printing industry developed significantly during the eighteenth century, producing examples of highly skilled block printed cloth. During this period the industry was centred in London and the South-East, catering for the upper and middle classes.⁷⁶ However, by the early nineteenth century the North-West had developed as an important centre for the finishing industries, including bleaching, dyeing and printing. The transition from the South to the towns that surrounding the cotton capital of Manchester, coincided with the growth of mechanised printing and the increasing availability of printed cottons to working-class consumers and an expanding export trade.⁷⁷ By the middle of the nineteenth century the textile printing industry was characterised by contemporary cultural elites as producing low-end, unimaginative textiles for foreign and domestic consumers who lacked taste.

In recent years the extent and impact of mechanisation in the textile printing industry of the nineteenth century has been challenged. Research has illustrated that

⁷³ Lara Kriegel, *Grand Designs: Labor, Empire, and the Museum in Victorian Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), p. 74.

⁷⁴ Kriegel, 'Culture and the Copy', p. 241.

⁷⁵ Beverly Lemire, *Fashion's Favourite: The Cotton Trade and the Consumer in Britain, 1660-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 29.

⁷⁶ Chapman, 'Quantity Versus Quality', p. 176.

⁷⁷ Hazel Clark, 'Design and Designing of Lancashire Printed Calicoes During the First Half of the Nineteenth Century', *Textile History* 15/1 (1984), 101-18, (p. 101).

textile printers in the North-West continued to employ a wide variety of manufacturing techniques, including hand-block work and tried to meet the tastes and demands of their domestic consumers.⁷⁸ However, little is known of the way manufacturers and merchants understood and adapted to the needs of foreign markets. Evidence of the interactions, direct and indirect, between manufactures and overseas consumers is fragmentary. However, research demonstrates that as the flow of global commodities intensified so to did the exchange of visual cultures and design. The cross-fertilisation of design is evident in the printed patterns exported to India during the second half of the nineteenth century which depict the influence of both Indian and European visual cultures.⁷⁹ Similarly, the domestic and exports markets were not always distinct, some designs were worn by consumers in Manchester, Japan and South America alike.⁸⁰

Nonetheless, there are few indications that the wholesale distribution of designs to domestic and export markets was a common practice in the industry. For instance, extant correspondence suggests that merchants and manufacturers gathered information on the tastes and demands of the export markets.⁸¹ The work of Manuel Llorca-Jaña, Sally Tuckett, Stana Nenadic and Sarah Fee illustrate the importance to European traders of understanding the South American, Indian and East African markets and the ways in which the textile industries responded to foreign demand.⁸²

Understanding the extent to which British textile printers specialised their designs to suit the tastes of specific markets and the mechanisms they employed to do

⁷⁸ Josephine Tierney, 'Design Quality, Mechanization and Taste in the British Textile Printing Industry, 1839-1899', *Journal of Design History* 30/3 (2017), 249-64, (p. 256).

⁷⁹ John Styles, 'Indian Cottons and European Fashion, 1400-1800', in *Global Design History*, ed. by Glenn Adamson, Giorgio Riello, and Sarah Teasley (London: Routledge, 2011), 37-46.

⁸⁰ Riello, *Cotton: The Fabric that Made the Modern World*, pp. 280-2.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* p. 279.

⁸² Manuel Llorca-Jaña, 'Knowing the Shape of Demand: Britain's Export of Ponchos to the Southern Cone, c.1810s-70s', *Business History* 51/4 (2009), 602-21; Stana Nenadic and Sally Tuckett, *Colouring the Nation: The Turkey Red Printed Cotton Industry in Scotland, c.1840-1940* (Edinburgh: National Museums of Scotland, 2013); Sarah Fee, 'Cloths With Names': Luxury Textile Imports in Eastern Africa, c.1800-1885', *Textile History* 48/1 (2017), 49-84.

so, is crucial to how we perceive the performance of British industry in the late nineteenth century and the relationship between trade and Empire. This thesis will demonstrate that, in the case of the trade with West Africa, British manufacturers and merchants were keenly aware of the need to cater to the tastes of foreign consumers, tailoring their designs, production techniques, methods of distribution and marketing practices to maximise their success in the global market. In doing so this thesis challenges the narrative that British merchants failed to adapt to increasing foreign competition and were complacent. It also argues that, while the Empire did facilitate British trade to an extent, the colonial markets were not simply outlets for surplus production and unsuitable goods.

Locating the consumption of British printed textiles in the West African markets poses a number of challenges. West African consumers left little evidence of the choices they made, how they valued European imported textiles or of how they integrated these goods into their every-day lives. This lack of evidence has led to the absence of West African consumers in the history of the textile trade. Yet, they were vital actors in the network of exchange. This thesis draws on the concepts of agency and hybrid material cultures as theoretical frameworks through which we can trace the influence of West African consumers on the design of British printed textiles.

0.2 Theoretical Frameworks: Agency and Hybrid Objects

Agency, the principal that an individual has control over their actions and decisions, has proven a useful tool for historians of consumption. The concept of agency highlights the relationship between objects and people and the human networks that are created through objects. The increasing interest in working-class consumption and

the consumption of every-day objects has raised questions surrounding the potential agency of consumers when these decisions and actions are made within the confines of constructions, such as class, capitalism and gender. While the potential of an individual to act with agency may be limited by these structures, using agency as a lens offers opportunities to engage with new narratives of consumption.⁸³

Within the context of imperial history, agency has been used to refer to the capability of colonised people to resist the tyranny of Empire.⁸⁴ The term has proven contentious amongst postcolonial scholars in the light of post-structuralist understandings of the construction of power within the imperial framework.⁸⁵ Imperial power structures represent some of the most evidently oppressive and racially determined structures of the modern world. In moving beyond the confines of these structures, colonised communities faced many challenges unique to the imperial context. Yet, from a structuralist perspective all human activity occurs within the confines of these constructions.⁸⁶ The structures which bind the actions, thoughts and decisions of individuals are both universal and culturally specific.

The potential for colonised subjects to break from the imperial structures which subjugate them is visible in the actions of individuals and communities who resisted, in various forms, imperial authority. Imperialism extended across the political, economic, social and cultural life of colonised communities and 'although it may be difficult for subjects to escape the effects of those forces that 'construct' them,

⁸³ Maxine Berg, 'Global History: Approaches and New Directions', in *Writing the History of the Global: Challenges for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. by Maxine Berg (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2013), 2-16 (p.12); Jan De Vries, 'Reflections on Doing Global History', in *Writing the History of the Global: Challenges for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. by Maxine Berg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 33-47 (p.41).

⁸⁴ Gareth Austin, 'Africa: Economic Change South of the Sahara since c.1500', in *Global Economic History*, ed. by Tirthankar Roy and Giorgio Riello (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 251-70 (p.252).

⁸⁵ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *Post Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 10.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* p. 9.

it is not impossible.⁸⁷ Following decolonisation, as the ability of African communities to self-govern was questioned, histories of African agency in the pre-colonial and colonial eras fought to overcome the 'Eurocentric scepticism' which continued to reinforce imperial understandings of Africa. Agency is integral to the theoretical framework of many recent histories of Africa and has proven an effective tool in the study of Africa's colonial history in moving beyond the binary of coloniser-colonised.⁸⁸

Agency is a particularly appropriate lens through which to consider the history of trade with West Africa. African history has drawn on ideas of agency to embody the role of Africa in the global economy in the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial eras. Recent studies have focused on the internal factors which stimulated and threatened African economies and have challenged the extent to which external factors have dominated these narratives until now.⁸⁹ Research is demonstrating how African actors have shaped trade and global exchange for centuries.⁹⁰

In this thesis, the term agency is used to express the authority of the consumer and the way in which the choices made by consumers have consequences beyond the immediate sphere of consumption. The potential for consumption to function as an act of political resistance has resonances in the history of empires. This thesis does not deny that the imperial powers structures which developed from the mid-nineteenth century, had profound political, economic and social consequences for colonised

⁸⁷ Ibid. p. 10.

⁸⁸ John Lonsdale, 'Agency in Tight Corners: Narrative and Initiative in African History', *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 13/1 (2000), 5-16, (p. 12).

⁸⁹ Austin, 'Africa: Economic Change South of the Sahara since c.1500', p. 251.

⁹⁰ Joseph E. Inikori, 'English Versus Indian Cotton Textiles: The Impact of Imports on Cotton Textile Consumption in West Africa', in *How India Clothed the World: The World of South Asian Textiles, 1500-1850*, ed. by Giorgio Riello and Tirthankar Roy (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 85-114; Fee, "Cloths With Names"; M. Amah Edoh, 'Redrawing Power? Dutch Wax Cloth and the Politics of 'Good Design'', *Journal of Design History* 29/3 (2016), 258-72.

communities. It does not dismiss or depreciate the overwhelming impact that Western imperialism had on African communities.

However, it is important to recognise that within the unequal framework of Empire colonised communities could and did continue to exercise agency. To maintain a narrative that West African communities were merely passive consumers, with no control over the cloth they bought and the clothes they wore risks simply reinforcing the imperialist ideologies while trying to deconstruct them. To assume that colonised consumers had no agency, no power to make choices in what they consumed, is reductionist. West African consumers, like British consumers, had preferences as individuals and as communities. This thesis recognises the influence of colonial power structures on the lives, decisions and actions of colonised communities but it argues that, despite these structures, the history of textile consumption in West Africa illustrates that human agency is still present. To paraphrase Terence Ranger and John Lonsdale, it shows that human agency can be exercised against the odds.⁹¹

The use of the term hybrid to describe the results of cross-cultural exchange is equally, contentious. Hybridity has many connotations beyond the study of material culture and is a term loaded with notions of racial hierarchies.⁹² It is impossible to ignore this relationship to the history of creole communities and racial ideologies. However, in the study of material culture hybridity offers a means of expressing the diversity that results from cross-cultural exchange and the interweaving of ideas and influences across cultural boundaries.

⁹¹ Lonsdale, 'Agency in Tight Corners', p. 12.

⁹² Pnina Werbner and Tariq Modood (eds), *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multi-cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-racism* (London: Zed Books, 1997); Nikos Papastergiadis, 'Tracing Hybridity in Theory', in *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multi-cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-racism*, ed. by Pnina Werbner and Tariq Modood (London: Zed Books, 1997), 257-81; Robert Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995).

Unpacking the global cultures and communities which are embodied in these objects has been the focus of many studies of material culture over the last thirty years.⁹³ These studies have made significant contributions to our understandings of global trade and cultural exchange and have become seminal texts in their fields.⁹⁴ The histories of hybrid objects highlight the positive outcomes of cross-cultural exchange and the expansion of global trade.

Yet, overuse of the term can render it ineffectual.⁹⁵ Clear divisions need to be made between objects or phenomena which portray the influences of global exchanges and distant cultures and truly hybrid objects. Certainly, by the mid-nineteenth century it would be difficult to find examples of textiles which do not reflect in some way interactions with other cultures. A simple piece of printed cotton cloth, manufactured in Manchester, was the product of a vast web of networks, ideas and relationships.

This thesis will demonstrate that hybridity remains a valuable concept when considering the British textiles which were produced for export to West Africa as a means of expressing the agency of West African consumers. In the case of the West African textile trade, these hybrid objects represent the agency of West African consumers and their role as actors within the global trade network. To view these textiles as hybrid objects necessitates a less Eurocentric perspective and re-establishes the West African consumer as vital actor in the history of the artefacts.

⁹³ Gerritsen and Riello (eds), *The Global Lives of Things*; Glenn Adamson, Giorgio Riello, and Sarah Teasley (eds), *Global Design History* (London: Routledge, 2011).

⁹⁴ Beverly Lemire, *Consumer Cultures: The Material World Remade, c.1500-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Prestholdt, 'Africa and the Global Lives of Things'; Gerritsen and Riello (eds), *The Global Lives of Things*; Prestholdt, *Domesticating the World*.

⁹⁵ Carolyn Dean and Dana Leibsohn, 'Hybridity and Its Discontents: Considering Visual Culture in Colonial Spanish America', *Colonial Latin American Review* 12/1 (2003), 5-35, (p. 6).

0.3 Methodologies

Methodologies for object-based studies from the discipline of design history have developed new ways to examine and analyse material evidence. Increasingly, the potential for design history to contribute to longstanding debates in other disciplines, such as economic history or global history is being recognised. In understanding, not just the manufacture of objects, but how we interact with them design history has implications far beyond the discipline.

Thinking about the way we interact with artefacts and the meanings which humans give to objects, has significant implications for the study of global exchange. The meanings associated with objects are now acknowledged to be fluid and unfixed. The meaning given to an object by its maker is transformed and reformed by the consumer. This is true in any system of exchange, yet it is particularly important to the study of the global commodity trade between geographically distant communities. Importantly, material culture interrogates objects but also the meanings bestowed upon those objects through interaction with people.⁹⁶

Using this framework, design can offer a lens through which to consider the possible modes of communication between British manufacturers and merchants and colonised communities which could function outside of the formal networks of Empire. Global design history can be seen as a methodology which attempts to move away from Eurocentric understandings of design history, to acknowledge that design can be traced across all human society.⁹⁷ It moves away from this binary approach to a 'centre-less' understanding of the connections and global exchanges within the

⁹⁶ Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello (eds), *Writing Material Culture History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 2.

⁹⁷ Adamson, Riello, and Teasley (eds), *Global Design History*, p. 3.

framework of empire, providing a framework through which to consider the interaction of design and imperial contexts.⁹⁸

Object-based approaches from design history allow opportunities for the detailed study of specific actors, commodities and networks. The value of research on specific geographical case studies has often been questioned by scholars of imperial and, more recently, global history.⁹⁹ To a certain extent there is a fundamental contradiction in micro-studies of global phenomena. Global micro-histories tell us about one particular place, or a particular relationship between several places, and are bound within the specificities of this context. As Clive Dewey and Hopkins stated, they can become self-validating exercises, where the conclusions are untestable in a wider context.¹⁰⁰

However, as Glen Adamson, Sarah Teasley and Riello state, '*Global Design History* is emphatically not an attempt to write a new master narrative.'¹⁰¹ The post-modern tendency to reflect plurality, over the grand narrative, has opened new opportunities for the ways in which methodologies from diverse disciplines can be brought together, reshaped and challenged. The resulting histories do not present satisfying and complete truths, but reflect the multiplicity of voices, often competing, sometimes contradictory that are the products of human existence.

This thesis is a reflection of the multiple narratives which form the history of trade with West Africa. The approaches within reflect the interdisciplinary nature of the topic, being at the intersection between economic, imperial and design history. In response this thesis draws together a wide range of primary sources, from material

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Clive Dewey and A. G. Hopkins (eds), *The Imperial Impact: Studies in the Economic History of Africa and India* (London: Athlone Press 1978), p. 3.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Adamson, Riello, and Teasley (eds), *Global Design History*, p. 3.

evidence to government documents and colonial photography. The material evidence, in the form of pattern books and textile samples, provides the framework through which these other sources are understood. This thesis demonstrates the value of material evidence and the ways in which more traditional sources can be reframed through the analysis of objects.

Analysis of the material evidence offers new perspectives of the trade with West Africa and the ways in which the industry developed to cater for the specific tastes and demands of particular markets. Through an examination of the designs produced, the manufacturing techniques used and the way these goods were marketed a more complex and sophisticated picture of the British global textile trade emerges. It is also possible to track changes and trends through the material evidence allowing for which reflect the demands of the market and changing tastes. Thus, through close examination of the material evidence the historian can gain a depth of understanding which is difficult to achieve through a reliance on trade statistics or official documents. This research integrates the material evidence with these previously studied sources to identify previously unrecognised actors in the trade and acknowledge the importance of West African consumers to the British textile industry. The material evidence demonstrates that the British textile printing industry responded to the demands of the West African market, producing specialised designs which catered to the specific tastes of West African consumers.

0.3.1 Pattern Books as Evidence

The development of the history of design and material culture history in the last 20 years has led historians to explore new methodologies but also new types of primary sources. Within these disciplines the use of objects as evidence is now firmly established. This research draws on two distinct pattern sample collections, the Logan Muckelt collection held by Manchester Archives and the Board of Trade registers at the National Archives, Kew. The differences between these two collections illustrate the need to carefully consider the context and origin of pattern books in order to accurately interpret their contents.

The use of pattern books and textile samples as evidence of the textile industries and trade is by no means new. A number of important studies in textile history have utilised pattern books and samples as evidence including Wendy Hefford's survey of the textile collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum, Pat Hudson's study of the woollen industries in the West Riding, Sarah Grant's survey of Toile de Jouy in the V&A collection and Starr Siegele's *Toiles for All Seasons*.¹⁰² (Figure 0.1-3)

¹⁰² Wendy Hefford, *The Victoria and Albert Museum's Textile Collection: Design for Printed Textiles in England from 1750 to 1850* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1992); Pat Hudson, *The West Riding Wool Textile Industry: A Catalogue of Business Records from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century* (Edington: Pasold Research Fund Ltd., 1975); Sarah Grant, *Toiles de Jouy: French Printed Cottons 1760-1830* (London: V&A Publishing, 2010); Starr Siegele, *Toiles for All Seasons: French and English Printed Textiles* (Boston: Bunker Hill Publishing, 2004); Mary Schoeser, *Silk* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); Jacqueline Jacque, *Andrinople Le Rouge Magnifique: De La Teinture a L'Impression, une Cotonnade a la Conquete du Monde* (Paris: Editions de la Martiniere, Musee de L'Impression sur Etoffes, 1995); Melanie Riffel and Sophie Rouart, *Toile de Jouy: Printed Textile in the French Classic Style* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003); Josette Bredif, *Toiles de Jouy: Classic Printed Textiles from France 1760-1843* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1989).



Figure 0.1: Registered Designs, Book No. 3, Logan Muckelt Collection, The Manchester Archives, 1915-1922, GB127.M831/64.



Figure 0.2: Volume of Printed Textiles from the Board of Trade Copyright Registers, The National Archives, 1880, BT 43/335.



Figure 0.3: Volume of Printed Textiles from the Board of Trade Copyright Registers, The National Archives, 1880, BT 43/335.

More recent studies have marked a shift in the way these sources are exploited, with greater focus on contextualisation of the objects and understanding of the origin of the pattern books. There is a growing acknowledgement amongst historians of the textile industries that pattern books and textile samples are not merely illustrative but vital pieces of evidence which require skilled and sensitive interpretation.¹⁰³ As such, understanding the origin, purpose and use of individual pattern books and samples is crucial to their analysis, as is the context of the industry in which they were created.

Two major contributions to understandings of pattern books and the development of methodologies for their analysis have come from Philip Sykas' *The Secret Life of Textiles* (2005) and Nenadic and Tuckett's *Colouring the Nation* (2013).¹⁰⁴ Both publications were produced in association with and with the help of museums and archives. Sykas' study presents the findings of the North West Pattern Book Project, a heritage lottery funded initiative to locate and catalogue the pattern books of the region with support from a number of partners, including The National Trust, Manchester City Council and Bolton Museums and Gallery. *Colouring the Nation* developed from a two-year collaboration between the National Museums of Scotland and the University of Edinburgh on the collection of pattern books from Turkey red manufacturers across Scotland and culminated in the publication and an online exhibition. Both these surveys have firmly placed pattern books at the centre of textile research and established a set of common methodologies for their analysis. The work of Sykas, Nenadic and Tuckett represent part of a broader shift towards object

¹⁰³ Philip A. Sykas, 'Material Evidence: Nineteenth Century Calico Printers' Pattern Books' (PhD Thesis, Manchester Metropolitan University, 2000).

¹⁰⁴ Philip A. Sykas, *The Secret Life of Textiles: Six Pattern Book Archives in North West England* (Bolton: Bolton Museums, Art Gallery and Aquarium 2005); Nenadic and Tuckett, *Colouring the Nation*.

evidence, beginning in the fields of design history and material culture these methodologies have found wider acclaim.

Accordingly, before analysis of the pattern books and samples studied in this thesis can begin it is necessary to outline the basic principles relating to pattern book research, the different pattern books that can be found and their purposes. Sykas identifies five main categories and uses of pattern books used in the textile printing industry.¹⁰⁵ Firstly, swatches of fabrics were collected to illustrate current fashions and provide inspiration for designers developing new ideas. For instance, manufacturer of printed textiles Edmund Potter claimed to have received, through industrial contacts and merchants, a copy of every design produced across the world. His print works also housed a 'design library' containing reference material for design inspiration.¹⁰⁶ Equally, the series of pattern books compiled by John Forbes Watson at the request of the India Office in 1866 falls into this category.¹⁰⁷ Secondly, pattern books were created during the design process to enable communication between the different workshops in the print works. These books would travel between the designers, engravers and colourists allowing for alterations for technical viability and cost efficiency. Thirdly, pattern samples were often collected and archived as an easily accessible record of the engraved rollers and blocks which were available for re-use. The reproduction of designs (or elements of designs) from previous seasons was common practice in the industry and pattern books of this kind provided a catalogue of inspiration for designers and pattern drawers. Fourthly, ledgers charting the quantity of goods dispatched by the manufacture to merchants and warehousemen also contain samples of designs. Finally, these merchants and warehousemen would use pattern

¹⁰⁵ Sykas, 'Material Evidence', p. 8.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. p. 240.

¹⁰⁷ Felix Driver and Sonia Ashmore, 'The Mobile Museum: Collecting and Circulating Indian Textiles in Victorian Britain', *Victorian Studies* 52/3 (2010), 353-85.

books to document orders and shipments. To this list it is also important to add that pattern books were also used as a sales tool by merchants and agents as a means of conveniently displaying goods on offer.¹⁰⁸

The above types and uses of pattern books illustrate the potential diversity in the pattern books that have survived and now reside in museums, archives and private collections. These pattern books can vary greatly in content, style and characteristics which can in turn effect how they are interpreted as historical objects. As seen above, pattern books can represent different stages of the design or production process and can chart the post-production life of the design to its purchase by the merchant to its final consumer. Pattern books intended for use within the printworks are often roughly compiled with handwritten notes and unmounted samples. Many of the surviving pattern books are manufacturers' copies which would have been used at the print works. For instance, The NMS' Turkey red collection is predominantly made up of manufacturers' copies, as is the Logan Mucklet collection. Manufacturers' copies can often be identified by the presence of technical annotations, which are often difficult to decipher, a lack of attention to presentation and the rough nature of the samples (although this is not always the case).¹⁰⁹ Pattern books intended for sales purposes often contain neatly labelled and mounted samples in an effort to present the designs in a desirable manner. It is worth noting also that many pattern books developed a secondary purpose once their primary purpose had been fulfilled.¹¹⁰ A pattern book used on the workshop floor may have been retained and used at a later date as design inspiration.

¹⁰⁸ Alyson Valda Cooper, 'The Manchester Commercial Textile Warehouse, 1780-1914: A Study of its Typology and Practical Development' (PhD Thesis, Manchester Polytechnic, 1991).

¹⁰⁹ Sally Tuckett and Stana Nenadic, 'Colouring the Nation: A New In-Depth Study of the Turkey Red Pattern Books in the National Museums Scotland', *Textile History* 43/2 (2013), 161-82.

¹¹⁰ Sykas, 'Material Evidence', p. 9.

It is also important to consider how and why surviving pattern books have endured often harsh conditions and the vagaries of business to currently reside in archival collections. A major landmark in the conservation of pattern books from the textile printing industry was the dissolution of the Calico Printers' Association in 1968. The CPA, established in 1899, was the amalgamation of a number of textile printers and merchants, most based in the Greater Manchester area. The composition of the Association had altered substantially over the seventy years of its existence with various further mergers, buy-outs and closures.¹¹¹ During this time the Association acquired many pattern books as firms closed or were absorbed into larger companies so that by the 1960s it had amassed a sizable and historically significant collection. When in 1988 part of the CPA collection was sent to auction it was divided between twenty buyers across four countries with only a small portion of the lot entering public collections.¹¹² The case of the CPA demonstrates the often arduous journey of pattern books that do reach publicly accessible collections and encapsulates the fragmentary nature of evidence on the printed textile industry in Britain. Similarly, the collection of Turkey red pattern books at the National Museums of Scotland was acquired in the 1960s with the end of the United Turkey Red Company.¹¹³ The decline of the British textile industries and the final demise of many firms in the 1960s left many pattern books without a clear commercial purpose.¹¹⁴ The apparent abundance of pattern material made available during this period and a lack of understanding of the importance of business records, resulted in the destruction of many volumes. Some

¹¹¹ Simon Pitt, 'The Political Economy of Strategic and Structural Change in the Calico Printers' Association 1899-1973' (PhD Thesis, London Graduate School of Business Economics, 1989), p. 42.

¹¹² Sykas, 'Material Evidence', pp. 19-20.

¹¹³ Tuckett and Nenadic, 'Colouring the Nation', p. 162.

¹¹⁴ Philip A. Sykas, 'The North West Pattern Book Survey', *Textile History* 32/2 (2001), 156-74, (p. 157).

entered public collections but many institutions lacked the capacity and conservational skills to deal with the quantity that was available.¹¹⁵

The very materiality of the pattern books which can make them so appealing as objects and collectables has also threatened their preservation and accessibility. Pattern books can vary markedly in size, shape and weight but the majority of pattern books from the second half of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth are bulky and heavy items. They are difficult to store, transport and conserve. They can also be unruly, cumbersome and dirty objects for the researcher to handle. Many are in poor condition with loose pages, shattered bindings and crumbling leather. Yet hidden within these damaged pages lie thousands of often virtually untouched examples of vibrant and vivid textiles.

Pattern book archives across Britain are thus often fragmentary and tend to privilege the higher-end of the market.¹¹⁶ Many of the pattern books in existence today survived because of their considered aesthetic quality rather than their historical significance. A lack of appreciation of the value of pattern books and an absence of collecting policies has led to a series of collections which do not accurately represent the textile printing industry of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This does not mean, however, that what does remain is not valuable or significant, each pattern book has a story to tell and a contribution to make to the field of textile history. It remains for the historian to employ the necessary skills to interpret the evidence within.

¹¹⁵ Sykas, 'Material Evidence', p. 15.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. p. 12.

0.3.2 The Logan Muckelt Pattern Books

The firm of Logan Muckelt & Co. was established in 1885 when John Muckelt, who had begun to produce indigo prints for the African markets the previous year, was joined by partners William and Logan.¹¹⁷ The firm acted as merchant converters, purchasing fabric, creating designs to their specifications and printing and dyeing the cloth.¹¹⁸ Logan Muckelt maintained a highly specialised trade in printed and dyed textiles for African markets until its closure in 1961.

The Logan Muckelt collection consists of 123 bound volumes of textile samples dating from the late 1880s to the 1960s.¹¹⁹ When the firm closed in 1961 the pattern collection was divided between the firms of F. W. Ashton and Salis Schwabe.¹²⁰ The collection was recently relocated from Quarry Bank Mill in Cheshire, a National Trust property, to the Manchester Archives. Details of the volumes are fragmentary and the archives are currently working to produce more complete catalogue entries for the collection and verify the dates of the volumes. This thesis examines 20 of the volumes, just under 15 percent of the total collection, which can be confidently dated to the period between 1889 and the late 1910s. (Figure 0.4)

These volumes have been collated with assistance from the existing catalogue and the dates assigned therein and from further inspection of the collection to date previously undated volumes. The process of dating the Logan Muckelt volumes is complex and a total of 47 volumes in the collection remain undated. However, a number of the undated volumes can be dated through the numbers of the designs

¹¹⁷ Sykas, *The Secret Life of Textiles: Six Pattern Book Archives in North West England*, p. 26.

¹¹⁸ Ibid. p. 27.

¹¹⁹ The Manchester Archives, Logan Muckelt Collection, 1899-1961, GB127.M831.

¹²⁰ Sykas, *The Secret Life of Textiles: Six Pattern Book Archives in North West England*, p. 28.

within, which when cross-referenced with other dated volumes can be confidently identified as being produced before 1914.



Figure 0.4: Pattern Book, Logan Muckelt Collection, The Manchester Archives, c.1899, GB127.M831/55.

The majority of the volumes in the Logan Muckelt collection, were compiled to aid in the production process containing annotations relating to, for instance, the size of the roller or the colours to be used. Others were used primarily as records of the designs held in storage as engraved rollers, which are sometimes in the form of pencil rubbings on paper. There are also a number of ‘client books’ containing designs commissioned by clients and fulfilled by Logan Muckelt, these include designs for William Truesdale and the United Africa Company.¹²¹ In many cases, each individual sample was given a unique design number which is stamped on or written next to the sample. These numbers run in four discernible series; the early series which runs from

¹²¹ Ibid.

1889 to 1905, the D series from 1902-1959, the L series from c.1917 to 1958 and the F series from 1959 to the early sixties.¹²²

The volumes of the Logan Muckelt collection are diverse in character and are not standardised in their layout or content. Some of the volumes contain less than 50 samples while many other comprise of between 500 and 1000. Some hold uniformly sized and shaped samples, with similar design characteristics, a common colour palette and present multiple versions or variations of the same design. Others are more haphazard and feature smaller, randomly placed swatches with annotations and labels. Others appear to present a distinct but consistent style throughout the pattern book, with one limited colour scheme. Some designs appear only once in one colour scheme; others are given in over 60 different variations. Thus, although the collection comprises of the designs of one firm over almost a century, the volumes do not represent a homogeneous and cohesive archive. Understanding the purpose and creation of each volume is vital to understanding the context in which these designs were produced and their relevance to the broader history of printing for export.

0.3.3 The Board of Trade Registers

In contrast, the Board of Trade copyright registers present a very different type of source, created for a very different purpose, yet which tells an equally important narrative of the printed textile trade in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹²³ Held at the National Archives as part of the much larger Board of Trade collection the copyright registers (herein referred to as the BT registers) date from 1842 to 1991 and

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ The National Archives, Board of Trade, Copyright Registers, 1839-1991, BT 42-53.

comprise of over 11,000 volumes.¹²⁴ These volumes contain information and samples of decorative designs which were submitted for and granted copyright. These volumes are divided into three categories, the registers, the representations and the indexes. The registers are written ledgers, detailing the date of registration, the number of designs registered by the same person on that date, the unique number given to each design and the owner of the copyright and their address. The representation volumes contain samples of the designs being registered, these can vary from drawings on paper, photographs and small swatches of fabric to full-sized top hats and panes of glass. (Figure 0.5) The indexes allow the unique number of each design to be cross-referenced with the proprietor. It is important to note that the owner of the copyright, known as the proprietor in the registers, was not always the manufacturer. In many cases the proprietor would be the merchant who commissioned the design or an agency firm registering the design on behalf of someone else. Rarely was the designer the owner of the copyright.

¹²⁴ Dinah Eastop, 'Exploring the Potential of the Board of Trade Design Register ', *TEXT: For the Study of Textile Art, Design and History* 39 (2011-12), 52-56, (p. 52).



Figure 0.5: Volume of Damask Textiles from the Board of Trade Copyright Registers, The National Archives, 1874-1879, BT 43/414.

The BT copyright registers series is divided into a number of collections from BT 42 to BT 53, the number of the series corresponding to the Act under which the design was registered. The registers and representations are catalogued under different series numbers. A recent digitisation project has made the index registers of the BT 43 and 44 series searchable, through the TNA's online catalogue.¹²⁵ A process that before required the painstaking search of the written registers to find a specific manufacturer or designer can now be more easily achieved. The unique design numbers can then be cross-referenced with the volumes of physical representations, making the process of

¹²⁵ Dinah Eastop, 'History by Design: The UK Board of Trade Register', in *Writing Material Culture History* ed. by Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 273-80 (p.275).

locating a particular design much simpler and opening up the BT registers for researchers.

The Board of Trade copyright registers were introduced in 1842 with the passing of the Ornamental Design Act.¹²⁶ Prior to 1842 the 1839 Copyright of Designs Act had provided some protection for decorative designs.¹²⁷ These designs were submitted to the Office of the Registrar of Designs and are catalogued under BT 42, being divided between the two categories of paper hangings and other.¹²⁸ The BT 42 series consists only of volumes of representations, onto each of which a certificate of registration was attached.¹²⁹ The 1842 Act resulted from the formation of Select Committee in 1839 to assess the extent and impact of copying within the printed textile industry and consult on a possible solution.¹³⁰ What followed were lengthy and impassioned debates in the committee room, within the industry and in the press. The content and manner of this debate and its particular relevance to printed textiles has been discussed in greater detail by Lara Kriegel and David Greysmith.¹³¹

Designs registered under the 1842 Act were divided into fourteen categories including metal, glass, paper hangings, shawls and printed and furniture fabrics. Printed dress textiles submitted for copyright were protected for nine months, while printed furnishing fabrics were protected for twelve.¹³² Greysmith's research into the creation and character of the BT registers reveals some important points about how

¹²⁶ David Greysmith, 'Patterns, Piracy and Protection in the Textile Printing Industry 1787-1850', *Textile History* 14/2 (1983), 165-94, (p. 175).

¹²⁷ Ibid. p. 167.

¹²⁸ 'Registered Designs 1839-1991', The National Archives, <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/registered-designs-1839-1991/> [accessed 12/08/2017].

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Greysmith, 'Patterns, Piracy and Protection', p. 174.

¹³¹ Kriegel, 'Culture and the Copy'; Kriegel, *Grand Designs*; Greysmith, 'Patterns, Piracy and Protection'.

¹³² Greysmith, 'Patterns, Piracy and Protection', p. 175.

the registers were used and their composition in the early years of registration.¹³³ Greysmith's survey of the first eight years of registration after the 1842 Act reveals a number of characteristics of the registers which persist for the remainder of the century. For instance, Greysmith notes that the majority of designs are variations on basic striped, checked, floral or geometric motifs and that the repeats are generally small.¹³⁴ Similarly he remarks that the quality of the fabric and print was high.¹³⁵ Analysis of the early registration also suggests that only a few firms were registering designs but that these firms were submitting large quantities of samples, possibly their complete design repertoire for each season.¹³⁶ The majority of printers did not register any designs in the 1840s.¹³⁷ However, between 1843 and 1883 design registration increased steadily particularly in printed textiles with small motifs, which rose from 7,618 in 1843 to 12,440 in 1883.¹³⁸ Julie Halls argues that this could be seen as the success of the 1842 Act as manufacturers saw investment in copyright protection worthwhile.¹³⁹

0.3.4 Analysing the Pattern Books

The two pattern book collections were created in very different contexts and represent very different types of textile samples archives. The two collections, therefore, require different methodological approaches. The BT registers are a very valuable source for the study of design in the decorative industries from 1842. However, they are also very

¹³³ David Greysmith, 'The Printed Textile Industry in England 1830-1870' (PhD Thesis, Middlesex University, 1985).

¹³⁴ Greysmith, 'Patterns, Piracy and Protection', p. 183.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Sykas, 'Material Evidence', p. 166.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Julie Halls, 'Questions of Attribution: Registered Designs at the National Archives', *Journal of Design History* 26/4 (2013), 416-32, (p. 4).

¹³⁹ Ibid.

different from many other pattern books and collections of product samples which were also being produced during this period. As such, their interpretation requires different considerations. While the registers offer a wealth of information a certain degree of caution must be taken to prevent inaccurate reading of the evidence within. For instance, the BT registers present one of the largest collections of printed textile samples, with details of the manufacturer and accurate dates, almost uninterrupted for decades. However, while the registers themselves may be relatively consistent and unbroken, they do not represent a comprehensive and absolute image of the textile printing industry. Inclusion in the BT registers was voluntary and required the payment of the registration fee. Not all manufacturers saw the benefits of registration as outweighing the cost and chose not to register their designs. Equally, the registers often offer no indication of the designer, noting the proprietor only. However, this is a common trait of pattern books which rarely name the designers.

The BT registers are not without their challenges and there are many questions which they cannot answer. For example, the registers offer no concrete information on the success or lifetime of a design. A design's appearance in the register offers no indication of its popularity or commercial success or even any guarantee that it was put into production. Furthermore, direct evidence of the consumers of these designs is also lacking from the registers. However, with the right knowledge of the context of the industry, the textile trade and consumption of printed textiles during this period, it is possible to tease more information from the designs in the registers. For instance, many manufacturers and merchants catered for specific markets, often specialising in production for one country or region rather than many diverse areas. Paterson Zochonis for example, are listed in the 1911 *Slaters'* directory as exporting to the West coast of Africa only, thus it is reasonable to assume that any samples registered by the

firm in the BT registers were destined for West Africa.¹⁴⁰ In this sense the BT registers, like most pattern books and samples, cannot stand alone but must be understood alongside other primary evidence and must be contextualised. With these tools and methods of interpretation they can offer clues to much deeper and broader questions.

This is also true of the representation of the export industry in the BT registers. The copyright acts did not extend beyond the British Isles meaning protection for designs intended for export was limited but not totally absent. Copyright holders could bring to court any person within breach of copyright practicing within the United Kingdom, this would have included designs which may have been sold abroad. Yet, finding guilty parties and bringing evidence against them was a more complex affair when it involved export goods, many of which were being shipped to distant markets. It has often been assumed, therefore, that the overwhelming majority of designs in the BT registers were primarily intended for the domestic markets.¹⁴¹ It is indeed likely that the majority of designs in the registers were sold domestically but the BT registers should not be overlooked when considering the export trade. For instance, in the case of textile exports to Africa, a number of manufacturers, commission merchants and shipping agents were traced to the BT registers. Through cross-referencing firms dealing solely in the African trade with the BT indexes, it is possible to locate designs which can be firmly said to be intended for African markets. They represent a small proportion of the total number of designs registered but nevertheless offer vital evidence of the textile trade with West Africa. Details of the methodologies used to gather and analyse the data from the BT registers can be found in Appendix I.

¹⁴⁰ *Slater's Manchester, Salford and Suburban Directory* (Manchester: Slater's Directory Ltd, 1911), p. 2007.

¹⁴¹ Greysmith, 'The Printed Textile Industry', p. 104.

The Logan Muckelt collection presents a different set of methodological challenges. While locating relevant designs in the BT registers requires a great deal of prior research and planning, the Logan Muckelt collection presents the researcher with a vast expanse of designs from almost one hundred years. The extent of the Logan Muckelt volumes is part of the collection's value but equally one of its challenges. With very little written information alongside the pattern samples, the collection can be difficult to interpret. However, with the correct tools the value of the Logan Muckelt books become evident.

The first steps in the analysis of the Logan Muckelt samples was to identify the volumes in the collection which corresponded to the dates of this research. The firm was established in 1884 and the earliest books in the collection date from the late 1880s. The catalogue entries for many of the volumes did not include date information and for those that did only nine were dated before 1914. A process of dating the unknown volumes was thus undertaken. Appendix II details the methods used to date the volumes. Once dated the samples were collated into a database of designs which could be analysed quantitatively and qualitatively.

Drawing on methodologies from the history of design and studies of material culture, object-analyses of a number of samples was conducted. This qualitative approach is vital to understanding the role of design in the export trade in printed textiles and is important so that these designs be viewed and understood not simply in terms of production figures and trade statistics but as objects. It is particularly pertinent when considering the design of these goods to account for their value as design objects and consumer goods as well as their intrinsic material value and value within the export trade.

0.4 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis provides an alternative perspective of the relationship between British manufacturers and merchants and their colonial consumers. It examines the role of the consumer within networks of exchange which were dominated by the imperial power structures that facilitated them. It reframes our understanding of the importance of West African communities as active participants in the textile trade, as merchants, suppliers of knowledge, market traders, intermediaries and as consumers. The dynamics of the textile trade with West Africa can only truly be understood when the role of West African consumers is acknowledged. The thesis is structured around the processes of the trade, from the tastes and demands of the consumer, to the design and manufacture of the goods, to their distribution and finally, their sale to the consumer, as mediated through marketing devices such as trade marks.

Chapter 1 examines the historiography of economic imperialism in West Africa and explores the place of West African consumers within these narratives. It presents the concepts of agency and hybridity as a framework to better understand textile consumption in West Africa within the context of the British Empire. As such, it establishes the theoretical foundation of the thesis. The chapter argues that by focusing on the consumer we can begin to develop a non-binary history of the global textile trade of the nineteenth century and give a voice to those who have not been recognised in the traditional economic history.

Chapter 2 considers the material evidence of the textile trade between Britain and West Africa as evidence of cultural hybridity. It argues that a re-examination of the trade through the lens of the extant textile samples offers a new perspective of the relationship between British manufacturers and merchants, and West African

consumers. Viewing these objects within the broader context of the textile industry and the colonial economy allows for a greater understanding of how the inequalities in economic, political and social power embodied in the British Empire are visible in the material culture of colonial trade.¹⁴² The chapter argues that British manufacturers and merchants created specialised designs for West Africa, using colour and symbols to appeal to the specific tastes of consumers.

Chapter 3 continues to examine the pattern books, focusing on the development of textile printing and dyeing techniques which enabled manufacturers to cater for the specific demands of the West African markets. These processes further enabled the specialisation of textiles for specific markets. In the case of the trade with West Africa, manufacturers used new techniques to imitate the aesthetics of wax-resist dyeing. However, they also used established European textile printing methods, creating designs which reflected the influences of British and West African visual cultures.

Chapter 4 argues that the increased specialisation of the British textile industry mirrored the specialisation of design and printing techniques discussed in the previous chapters. It contends that this restructuring of the industry was in response to the increasing threat from foreign competition and protectionist measures in other countries. It places the textile trade with West Africa within the broader economic and political context and analyses the role of merchants and manufacturers in Britain's economic performance in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Chapter 5 draws on the archives of the of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce's African Sectional Committee, which was established to discuss and

¹⁴² Annie E. Coombes, *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture and Popular Imagination in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 221.

resolve issues relating to British trade with Africa. The chapter examines the extent to which British commercial interests were represented in the decisions of the British government and colonial administration relating to West Africa. It focuses on two case studies: the Folded Woven Goods Ordinance and the registration of trade marks in British West Africa. It argues that Manchester merchants were actively trying to protect their commercial interests in Africa but that this was limited to issues directly related to trade.

Chapter 6 considers the marketing practices of British merchants in West Africa, specifically through the lens of trade marks. It argues that the study of the trade marks registered in British West Africa offers a new perspective of the position of British textiles within the West African market. It also contends that British merchants were actively marketing their goods through trade marks, shipping labels and tickets but that this did not conform to standard models of marketing through trade marks. In analysing the way these goods were marketed the final chapter returns to the role of the West African consumer as an active agent in the development of the trade.

Chapter 1

Locating the Consumer in the Economic History of West Africa

By the mid-nineteenth century British textile exports dominated global markets and contributed to the economic hegemony of Britain. By the turn of the twentieth century, Britain's economic dominance was waning but had been replaced by the ascendancy of the British Empire. Imperial history has worked to unpack the complex connections and constructs forged by Empire and the power dynamics within them. The imbalance of economic influence has been a common theme across the histories of Western imperialism and continue to provoke debate.¹

The omnipresence of imperialism in the global economy, politics and culture of the nineteenth century continues to be debated. However, the close connection between global trade and empire is unavoidable. Yet, the nature of this relationship, is not straightforward. New sources and new methodological frameworks continue to raise questions about the extent to which trade determined the expansion of empires and the influence imperial power exerted over the economic development of the colonisers and the colonised alike.

This chapter outlines the key debates in African economic history and the relationship between the African economy and colonisation. It argues for greater recognition of the role of West African consumers through conceptual frameworks of cross-cultural consumption. The chapter establishes the necessity for a revaluation of

¹ Karl de Schweinitz, 'What is Economic Imperialism?', *Journal of Economic Issues* 15/3 (1981), 675-701; Tirthankar Roy and Giorgio Riello, 'Trade and the Emergence of a World Economy, 1500-2000', in *Global Economic History*, ed. by Tirthankar Roy and Giorgio Riello (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 137-56; P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, 'The Political Economy of British Expansion Overseas, 1750-1914', *The Economic History Review* 33/3 (1980), 463-90; David S. Landes, 'Some Thoughts on the Nature of Economic Imperialism', *The Journal of Economic History* 21/4 (1961), 496-512; P. J. Cain, 'J. A. Hobson, Cobdenism, and the Radical Theory of Economic Imperialism, 1898-1914', *The Economic History Review* 31/4 (1978), 565-84; Clive Dewey and A. G. Hopkins (eds), *The Imperial Impact: Studies in the Economic History of Africa and India* (London: Athlone Press 1978).

the narrative of British imperial trade, arguing for greater focus on the material evidence of the trade, to further unpack the consumer agency within the Empire.

1.1 The Economic History of West Africa

The economic history of West Africa in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has centred on several important themes: the shift from the slave trade to 'legitimate commerce', European trade and commerce in the pre-colonial era and the exploitation of the continent's natural resources and cash crops under colonial rule.² In the period immediately following African decolonisation historians such as Anthony Hopkins, Martin Lynn and Robin Law, illustrated the complexity and significance of African economic history to the broader topics of imperial expansion, the development of the global economy and the economic legacy of Western imperialism.³ Although interest in African economic history dwindled in the last decades of the twentieth century, renewed interest in the field has resulted in new understandings of the extent of Africa's trade in the pre-colonial period, Africa's place in the global economy beyond the confines of imperial structures and the importance of Africa as an export market for British consumer goods.⁴

Histories of African economies in the pre-colonial era have been dominated by narratives of the impact of the slave trade on economic development.⁵ However, they

² Martin Lynn, 'The 'Imperialism of Free Trade' and the Case of West Africa, c.1830-1870', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 15/1 (1986), 22-40, (p. 24).

³ A. G. Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa* (London: Longman, 1973); Robin Law, *From Slave Trade to Legitimate Commerce: The Commercial Transition in Nineteenth-Century West Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Martin Lynn, *Commerce and Economic Change in West Africa: The Palm Oil Trade in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁴ A. G. Hopkins, 'Economic Imperialism in West Africa: Lagos, 1880-92', *The Economic History Review* 21/3 (1968), 580-606, (p. 581).

⁵ Joseph E. Inikori, *Africans and the Industrial Revolution in England: A Study in International Trade and Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 156.

have also highlighted the extent and complexity of the African trade during this period. Ghislaine Lydon, for instance, has highlighted the importance of the trans-Saharan trading networks which connected West African communities with East Africa and brought goods from the Middle East and Asia.⁶

Related to the history of the slave trade but also developed as a distinct narrative, the history of the trade in commodities, such as textiles, beads and cowries, from the sixteenth century has provided a rich area of research for historians. Marion Johnson and Angus Dalrymple-Smith's work on West African imports and commodity prices has been significant in building understandings of African economic history within the framework of the slave trade but with greater emphasis on African consumption.⁷ Likewise, Joseph Inikori's study of imports of Indian and English cotton cloth in West Africa considered the impact of foreign textile imports on the development of local production.⁸

The textile trade of West Africa in the pre-colonial era demonstrates the region's engagement with the global economy and the diversity of textile goods that were traded with European merchants along the coast but also that travelled through the interior of Africa from as far as India and Indonesia. The pre-colonial textile trade illustrates that West African markets were complex and that West African consumers played an active role in shaping the type and quality of textiles which were imported.⁹

⁶ Ghislaine Lydon, *On Trans-Saharan Trails: Islamic Law, Trade Networks, and Cross-cultural Exchange in Nineteenth-Century Western Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 84.

⁷ Marion Johnson, *Anglo-African Trade in Eighteenth Century: English Statistics on African Trade 1699-1808* (Leiden: Centre for the History of European Expansion, 1990); Angus Dalrymple-Smith, 'A Comparative History of Commercial Transition in Three West African Slave Trading Economies, 1630-1860' (PhD Thesis, Wageningen University, 2017).

⁸ Joseph E. Inikori, 'English Versus Indian Cotton Textiles: The Impact of Imports on Cotton Textile Consumption in West Africa', in *How India Clothed the World: The World of South Asian Textiles, 1500-1850*, ed. by Giorgio Riello and Tirthankar Roy (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 85-114.

⁹ Kazuo Kobayashi, 'Indian Cotton Textiles and the Senegal River Valley in a Globalising World: Production, Trade and Consumption, 1750-1850' (PhD Thesis, LSE, 2016).

Guinea cloth was a vital means of exchange in the slave trade but also established networks of exchange between European and African merchants, and an opportunity for European merchants to study the tastes of the West African consumers. Used to describe European re-exports of Indian cloth and British and French imitations, Guinea cloth was a major import into West Africa from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century.¹⁰ Colleen Kriger's research also indicates that the demands of the West African markets are visible in the guinea cloth trade and that imports were chosen on the basis of West African tastes.¹¹ The guinea cloth trade is evidence of the role of West African consumers as influencers of the design and manufacture of foreign goods.¹²

However, histories of the trade in Guinea cloth, and other commodities, have emphasised the role of European imports as a form of currency for the purchase of slaves.¹³ The history of West African commerce with Europe after the abolition of the slave trade, has also focused on the role of manufactured goods from industrialised societies as a means of exchange for valuable natural resources and cash crops, such palm oil, gold and rubber.¹⁴ Lynn argued that the transition from the slave trade to one 'legitimate' commerce, encouraged European traders to develop the export of natural resources like palm oil and rubber.¹⁵ These raw materials became increasingly important to industrial development in Europe and this demand influenced the crops which African farmers grew and shaped the scale of the agricultural industry on the

¹⁰ Colleen E. Kriger, 'Guinea Cloth' Production and Consumption of Cotton Textiles in West Africa Before and During the Atlantic Slave Trade', in *The Spinning World: A Global History of Cotton Textiles, 1200-1850*, ed. by Giorgio Riello and Prasannan Parthasarathi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 105-26 (p.105).

¹¹ Ibid. p. 120.

¹² Ibid. p. 123.

¹³ Stanley B. Alpern, 'What African Got for Their Slaves: A Master List of European Trade Goods', *History in Africa* 22 (1995), 5-43.

¹⁴ David Richardson, 'Cultures of Exchange: Atlantic Africa in the Era of the Slave Trade', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 6/19 (2009), 151-79.

¹⁵ Lynn, *Commerce and Economic Change in West Africa*, p. 12.

continent.¹⁶ Palm oil was frequently used as a lubricant in industrial machinery, including the spinning machines and looms used to produce textiles which would be exported to West Africa.¹⁷ The portrayal of Europe's trade with West Africa as led by the need for natural resources has also resulted in the characterisation of the economic relationship between Europe and Africa as extractive.¹⁸

Although the exchange of textiles between Britain and West Africa can be traced back to the seventeenth century, the intensity of the trade grew significantly in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹⁹ Inikori estimates that while the importation of Indian cotton textiles into West Africa during the first half of the nineteenth century was relatively stable, at around half a million yards per year, exports of British textiles continued to grow reaching almost 17 million yards by 1850.²⁰ According to the Board of Trade, the West African market for British goods had increased considerably; 136 million pieces were exported in 1820, rising by more than 10 times that by the end of the nineteenth century.²¹ The value of British exports to West Africa also grew from £340,366 to £855,486 between 1860 and 1883.²² Johnson's vital work on commodity data for West Africa emphasised the growth in exports of cotton piece goods from Britain to West Africa; from 20 million square yards in 1850, to 100 million square yards by 1890.²³

¹⁶ Gareth Austin, 'Africa: Economic Change South of the Sahara since c.1500', in *Global Economic History*, ed. by Tirthankar Roy and Giorgio Riello (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 251-70, (pp.259-60).

¹⁷ Law, *From Slave Trade to Legitimate Commerce*, p. 37.

¹⁸ Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson, and James A. Robinson, 'Reversal of Fortune: Geography and Institutions in Making of the Modern World Income Distribution', *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 117/4 (2002), 1231-94.

¹⁹ Kriger, 'Guinea Cloth', p. 114; David Etlis and Lawrence C. Jennings, 'Trade Between Western Africa and the Atlantic World in the Pre-Colonial Era', *The American Historical Review* 93/4 (1988), 936-59, (p. 948).

²⁰ Inikori, *Africans and the Industrial Revolution*, p. 444.

²¹ Mary Schoeser, 'Shewey and Full of Work': Design', in *The Lancashire Cotton Industry: A History Since 1700*, ed. by Mary B. Rose (Preston: Lancashire County Books, 1996), 187-209 (p.196).

²² M. E. Chamberlain, *The Scramble for Africa* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 58.

²³ Marion Johnson, 'Cotton Imperialism in West Africa', *African Affairs* 73/291 (1974), 178-87, (p. 180).

Export figures also indicate that the textile trade with West Africa grew as a percentage of overall trade from 5 percent in 1856 to 9 percent in 1913, almost equal to that of the Americas.²⁴ By 1913 nearly 240 million square yards of piece-goods were exported from Britain to West Africa.²⁵ One contemporary stated that, 'with all parts of the world, Manchester carries on an enormous trade, and Africa comes in for no small part of attention on the part of numerous mercantile firms.'²⁶ Although not one of the largest markets for British textile goods, Africa constituted a significant portion of exports. Equally, by the middle of the nineteenth century cotton piece goods accounted for 33 per cent of total British exports to West Africa, indicating the importance of the textiles to trade between Britain and West Africa.²⁷

The textile trade between Britain and West Africa in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, has long been overshadowed by the trade with colonies like India, which had a larger overall share of British exports and arguably feature more prominently in Britain's collective memory of the imperial past.²⁸ Nonetheless, British textile exports to West Africa, have been seen as further evidence of an exploitive economic relationship.²⁹ Chamberlain and Hobson have argued that the textile trade with West Africa developed from the need to dispose of surplus production as production capacity in Britain rose.³⁰ As a result, British merchants looked to Africa, and other colonial markets, to absorb surplus production paying little attention to the suitability of these goods for the demands of the market.

²⁴ Arthur Redford, *Manchester Merchants and Foreign Trade Vol.II 1850-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1956), pp. 60, 75, 90.

²⁵ Johnson, 'Cotton Imperialism', p. 178.

²⁶ *Manchester of Today* (London: Historical Publishing Company, 1888), p. 97.

²⁷ Inikori, *Africans and the Industrial Revolution*, p. 519.

²⁸ Redford, *Manchester Merchants II*, p. 43.

²⁹ Cain, 'Radical Theory of Economic Imperialism', p. 572.

³⁰ John Cunningham Wood, 'J. A. Hobson and British Imperialism', *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 42/4 (1983), 483-500, (p. 494); Johnson, 'Cotton Imperialism', p. 179.

The economic exploitation of Africa by the West dominated the history of African trade from the 1950s until the 2000s. However, in the last twenty years greater attention has been paid to the agency of African consumers and evidence of more equal exchange in the pre-colonial and colonial eras.³¹ Christopher Steiner's study of the marketing of European textiles in West Africa from the 1870s illustrated the need for further research into the mechanisms employed by European manufacturers and traders to market goods to West African consumers.³² It also highlighted how a better understanding of these mechanisms would lead to a more nuanced view of the complex economic and cultural power structures which dominate the history of colonial Africa.

1.2 New Imperialism and the Scramble for Africa

The argument that African economies were based on the extraction of raw materials by European industrial powers in exchange for manufactured goods, is closely linked to the development of the narratives of economic and New Imperialism, especially within the context of the Scramble for Africa in the 1870s. Colonial Africa has been seen as the ultimate example of economic imperialism and the exploitation of the natural resources of colonised territories. Thus, the West African market provides a

³¹ Gareth Austin and Stephen Broadberry, 'Introduction: The Renaissance of African Economic History', *The Economic History Review* 67/4 (2014), 893-906; Austin, 'Africa: Economic Change South of the Sahara since c.1500'; E. Frankema, J. G. Williamson, and P. Woltjer, 'An Economic Rationale for the West African Scramble? The Commercial Transition and the Commodity Price Boom of 1835-1885', *The Journal of Economic History* 78/1 (2018), 231-67; P. Manning, 'Historical Datasets on Africa and the African Atlantic', *Journal of Comparative Economics* 40/4 (2012), 604-07; Judith A. Byfield, 'African Women in Colonial Economies', in *The Palgrave Handbook of African Colonial and Postcolonial History*, ed. by M. S. Shanguhya and T. Falola (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 145-70; Moses E. Ochonu, 'Africans and the Colonial Economy', in *The Palgrave Handbook of African Colonial and Postcolonial History*, ed. by Martin S. Shanguhya and Toyin Falola (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 123-43; E. Frankema and others, 'An Introduction to the African Commodity Trade Database, 1730-2010', *Research Data Journal for the Humanities and Social Sciences* (2018).

³² Christopher B. Steiner, 'Another Image of Africa: Toward an Ethnohistory of European Cloth in West Africa, 1873-1960', *Ethnohistory* 32/2 (1985), 91-110, (p. 93).

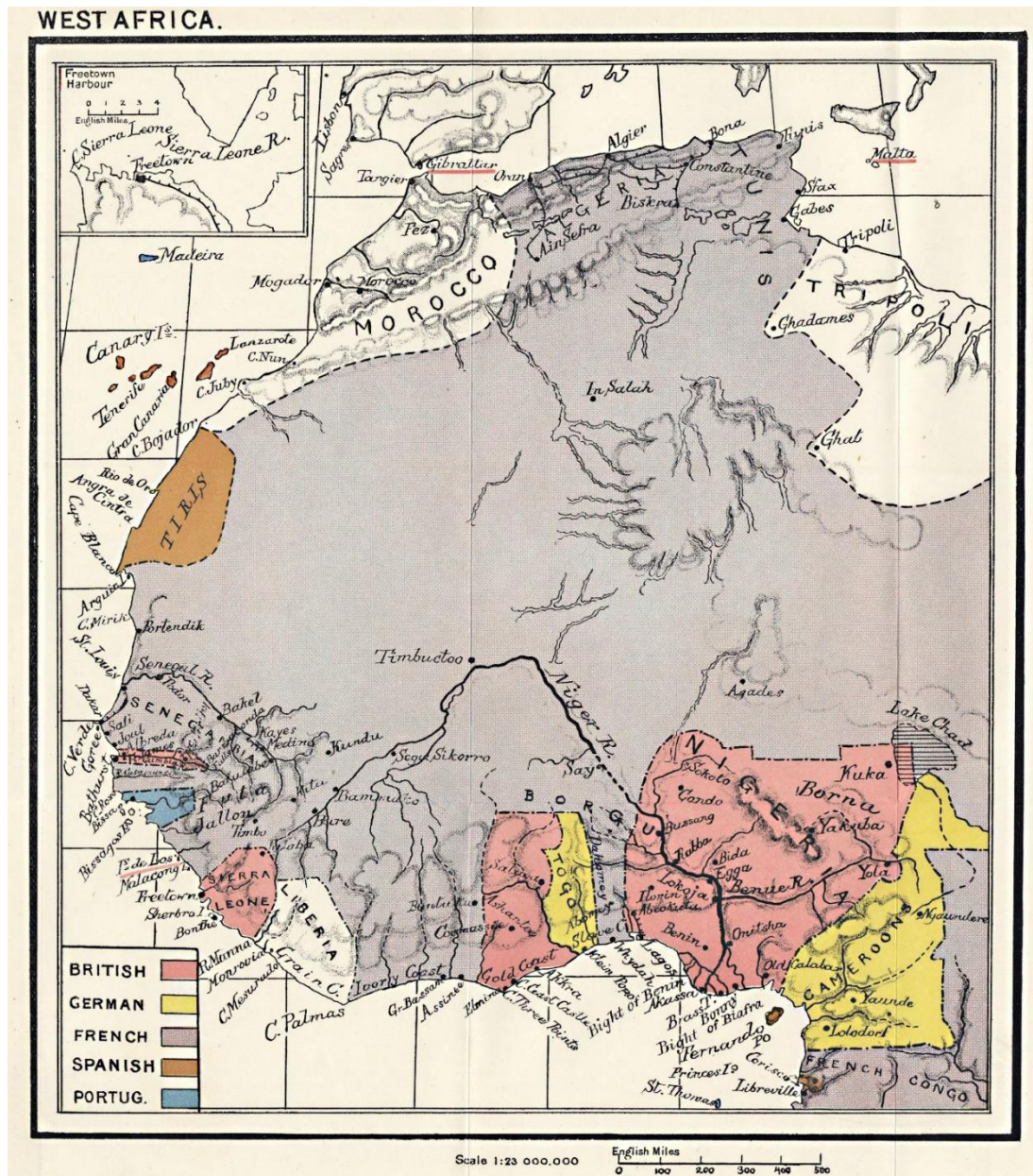
valuable case study for considering the relationship between British trade and colonial markets.³³

By the beginning of the twentieth century the west coast of Africa was dominated by European powers. However, the process of colonisation was gradual and fragmentary. Although Britain formally annexed Lagos in 1861 it was not until 1900 that the Northern and Southern Nigeria Protectorates were formed, transferring the administration of the territories from the Royal Niger Company to the British crown.³⁴ The expansion of formal empire in West Africa was complex and the boundaries between formal and informal rule fluid. European influence in matters of trade long pre-dated the establishment of colonies in West Africa. In many cases the transition from informal to formal empire was not a watershed moment in the trading relationship between European merchants and West African communities.³⁵

Yet, by the turn of the century the map of West Africa looked very different to 30 years previously. France occupied the largest area, including the Ivory Coast, Dahomey (Benin), Senegal and Niger. Germany held Togo and Cameroon (which today forms Cameroon but also an area of Nigeria). Britain's most significant territories were the Gold Coast (Ghana), Nigeria and Sierra Leone. (Map 1.1)

³⁴ Ronald Robinson, John Gallagher, and Alice Denny, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism* 10th edn (London: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd 2015), pp. 405-6.

³⁵ Chamberlain, *The Scramble for Africa*, p. 87.



Map 1.1: Map of European Territories in West Africa, Maps of Africa to 1900, University of Illinois, West Coast of Africa Showing Dependencies, 1894, afm0002338, <https://digital.library.illinois.edu/items/3c5a0b50-e946-0133-1d3d-0050569601ca-a>.

The rapid expansion of European imperialism across Africa from the second half of the nineteenth century, has been linked to the increasing demand for natural resources, like palm oil and rubber, the political context in Europe and a the need for market expansion to absorb Britain's growing production capacity.³⁶ The extent to which European powers wanted to expand their Empires by acquiring territories in Africa is complex.

The tension between the underconsumption in the domestic and European markets and the dumping of surplus production in new or less developed markets, has led to problematic assumptions about the nature of Britain's textile trade with markets like those in West Africa. Economic motives have long been closely associated by historians with imperial expansion in Africa.³⁷ Critical to J. A. Hobson's argument, was the partition of Africa. Hobson argued that from the second half of the nineteenth century, the desire for imperial expansion in Africa stemmed from capitalists and politicians in Europe's financial centres, who increasingly looked to invest overseas.³⁸ As such, the Scramble for Africa has been seen as a decisive turning point in defining the character and extent of European imperialism from the mid-nineteenth century onwards.

This narrative highlights the difficulty of constructing overarching theories on the nature of imperialism while remaining sensitive to the differences of each case.³⁹ It is important to highlight the relationship between perceptions of Africa and African societies, the response of trade and the state to these observations and the perpetuation of some of these ideas in historical narratives. Exchange between Africa and Europe long pre-dated the beginning of formal colonisation in the nineteenth century.

³⁶ Law, *From Slave Trade to Legitimate Commerce*, p. 17.

³⁷ Hopkins, 'Economic Imperialism in West Africa', p. 583.

³⁸ J. A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (New York: Gordon Press, 1975), pp. 53-4.

³⁹ P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: 1688-2015* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

European imperialism was slow to officially take hold in much of Africa, despite the extensive mercantile relationships between the two continents. The eventual shift to direct colonial rule of the majority of Africa, during the Berlin Conference of 1884-5, had a number of contributing factors.

It has been argued that the economic importance of Africa to European Imperial powers from the middle of the nineteenth century can be seen in the eventual division of the continent by these powers during the Scramble for Africa.⁴⁰ The concept of 'effective occupation' as a basis for the negotiations at the Berlin Conference, forced Britain to move towards a policy of direct control rather than informal influence.⁴¹ Furthermore, despite the Scramble for Africa the division between informal and formal Empire remains blurred. The division of Africa occurred over a period of over twenty years. Although the Berlin Conference of 1885 was a defining moment in this process, it would be a number of years, before European imperial rule in Africa was solidified.⁴²

Certainly, the act of annexation is often seen as the defining moment marking the move from informal to formal empire. But several scholars have argued that the relationship between informal and formal control cannot be reduced to a simple binary.⁴³ Understanding the extent to which former trading relationships continued under colonisation, would benefit from further research. However, the advantages of formal empire did not eradicate the need for interaction and collaboration with local merchants and traders.⁴⁴ Equally, although under the formal rule of the British, the

⁴⁰ Hobson, *Imperialism*, p. 56.

⁴¹ Chamberlain, *The Scramble for Africa*, p. 54.

⁴² Ibid. p. 87.

⁴³ John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade', *The Economic History Review* 6/1 (1953), 1-15, (p. 7).

⁴⁴ F. V. Parsons, 'The North-West African Company and the British Government, 1875-95', *The Historical Journal* 1/2 (1958), 136-53, (p. 140).

port cities of the West African coast became important entrepôts for traders of diverse nationalities, providing centres of global exchange and communication.⁴⁵

While the boundaries between informal and formal empire are not fixed, the mechanisms employed by traders, merchants and agents under the umbrella of informal imperialism could be distinctly different from those employed by the state under the formal empire. Research has shown the extent to which European traders exporting to West Africa in the pre-colonial period developed personal relationships with merchants on the West Coast.⁴⁶ The importance of West Africa in the Atlantic slave trade meant that for centuries the relationship between Europe and the coast had been one of trade.⁴⁷ Strong connections with local merchants were vital for the success of trade in West Africa, particularly due to the inaccessibility of the interior to Europeans. Direct contact with West African consumers was limited to the coastal regions and European traders relied on local merchants to transport goods to the interior markets and relay information on demand.⁴⁸

British traders were also integral in establishing greater access from the busy ports to the interior.⁴⁹ The desire to broaden the British sphere of influence inland can be seen under both informal and formal empire.⁵⁰ Prior to the formal annexation of British West African colonies, a succession of negotiations and treaties had formalised these trading relationships.⁵¹ The role of private companies, like the United African Company which was founded in 1879, in the administration of Britain's West African

⁴⁵ Kristin Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760-1900* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), p. 76.

⁴⁶ Inikori, *Africans and the Industrial Revolution*; Etlis and Jennings, 'Trade Between Western Africa and the Atlantic World', p. 938; Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City*, p. 80.

⁴⁷ Chamberlain, *The Scramble for Africa*, p. 44.

⁴⁸ F. J. Pedler, 'Foreign Investment in West Africa', *International Affairs* 31/4 (1955), 459-68, (p. 463).

⁴⁹ Cherry Gertzel, 'Relations Between African and European Traders in the Niger Delta 1880-1896', *Journal of African History* 111/2 (1962), 361-66, (p. 362).

⁵⁰ Gallagher and Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade', p. 9.

⁵¹ Chamberlain, *The Scramble for Africa*, p. 51.

territories further complicated the relationship between the state and trade.⁵² Once the Scramble for Africa began the position of commercial treaties, established by companies and not by the state, became less certain.⁵³

The difficulty in separating informal and formal empire is evident in the British involvement in West Africa. The Niger Protectorate, which forms most of present-day Nigeria, was established in 1884. Although formally the title of protectorate, rather than colony, implied limited intervention of Britain into domestic administration, once again these boundaries were blurred in the late nineteenth century.⁵⁴ The extent of informal imperialism in building the foundations of a formal administration led the historian Onwuka Dike to argue that institutions which were primarily established to promote trade, like consuls, grew to have a more political role. Discussing the British Consul for the Bights of Benin and Biafra, appointed in 1849, Dike claimed that 'in time Africans came to look on the British Consul as the de facto Governor...'⁵⁵

For a number of years, the Niger Protectorate was controlled and managed by what would become the Royal Niger Company. In a similar pattern to that of the East India Company, the Royal Niger Company provided the transition between trading relationship to formal colonial possession. However, it is important to note that the decision to grant the Niger Company these powers, was based primarily on the unwillingness of the state to begin the costly process of establishing a formal colonial administration in the region.⁵⁶

⁵² The United African Company later became the Royal Niger Company in 1886. Gallagher and Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade', p. 13; Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa*, p. 160.

⁵³ Chamberlain, *The Scramble for Africa*, p. 54.

⁵⁴ Barbara Harlow and Mia Carter (eds), *The Scramble for Africa* (London: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 14.

⁵⁵ K. Onwuka Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885: An Introduction to the Economic and Political History of Nigeria* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1956), p. 128.

⁵⁶ Chamberlain, *The Scramble for Africa*, p. 55.

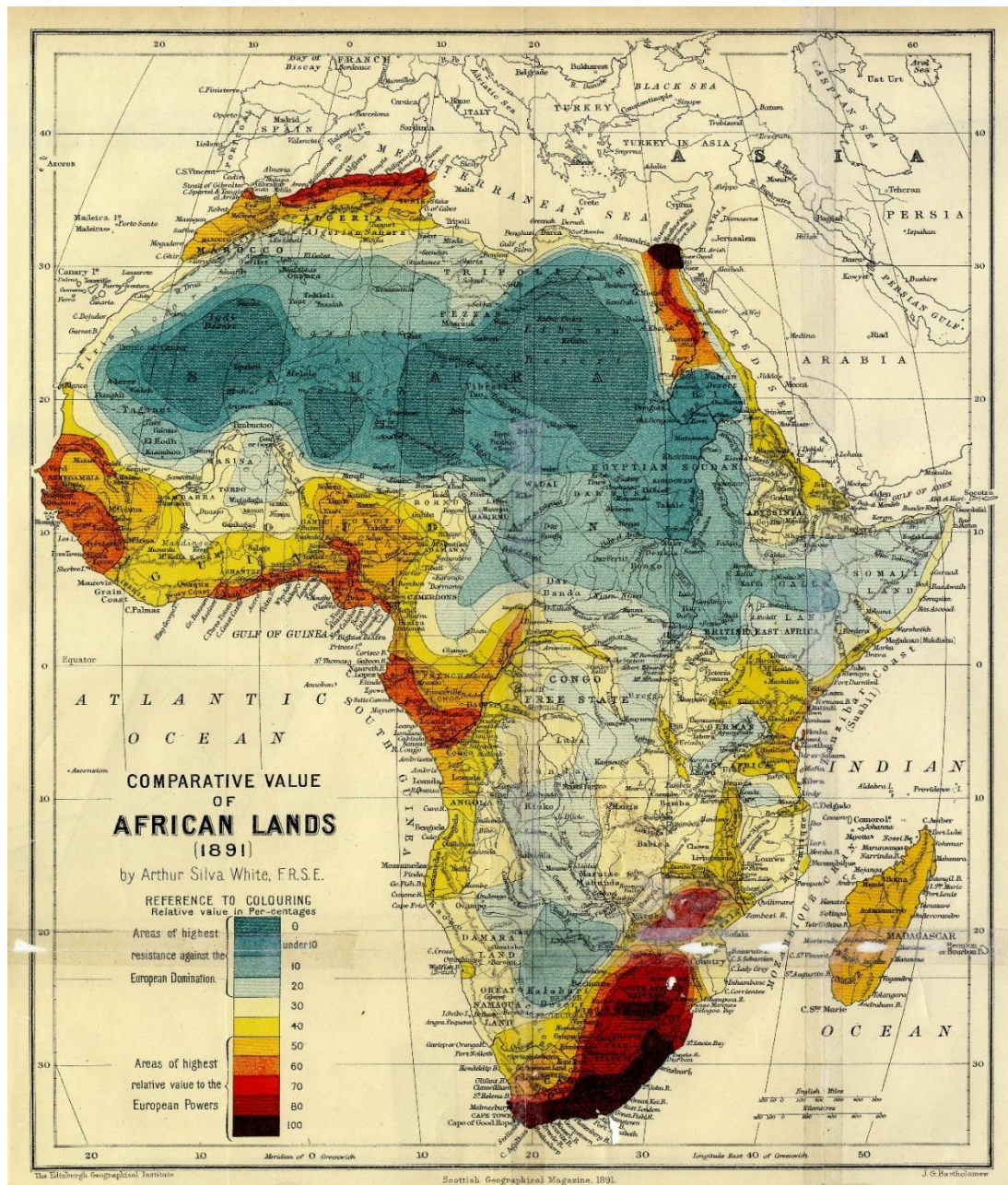
Few in government felt that imperial expansion in Africa was worth the potential economic and political risk. However, they accepted that state intervention was possible and would be preferable to the loss of influence in the region. In 1865 the British government was poised to abandon almost all territories in West Africa and certainly did not intend to expand their possessions in the region.⁵⁷

The trading relationship between Britain and Africa has been frequently framed around this issue, with the focus being in the importation of African resources into Europe. Interest in the export of British goods to Africa before 1870, has largely been focused on the exchange of manufactures for natural resources.⁵⁸ (Map 1.2) Exports to Africa were thus seen as a necessity, as items to exchange for palm oil and rubber.⁵⁹ As such, Africa, as a potential market for British goods, has often been overlooked or reduced to the at times rather one dimensional view of a means for acquiring natural resources. (Map 1.2)

⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 44.

⁵⁸ Law, *From Slave Trade to Legitimate Commerce*, p. 37.

⁵⁹ Kriger, "Guinea Cloth", p. 111.



Map 1.2: Comparative Value of African Lands, 1891, Maps of Africa to 1900, University of Illinois, <https://digital.library.illinois.edu/items/229cfe90-e946-0133-1d3d-0050569601ca-f>.

The requirement for natural resources evidently played an important role in the development of trading networks and commercial relationships on the West Coast of Africa. The formation of early European trading posts followed the exchange routes for these commodities and presented opportunities to gather information on market preferences. Yet, this narrative has often been based on the idea that Africa had little potential as a market for British goods due to the limited purchasing power of its inhabitants.⁶⁰ The narrative of an export-centred trade relationship with West Africa has significant implications for understanding the development of the British printed textiles intended for export and the role of African consumers in shaping this trade.

The potential of West Africa as a significant market for British cotton goods was noted by Frederick Lugard, in his role as High Commissioner of Northern Nigeria, in order to validate his efforts to further expand and consolidate British administrative control in the region. Lugard hoped to undermine local production of cotton cloth and enable British products to claim a greater share of the market. Lugard's policy, or 'cotton imperialism', is one of the boldest examples of direct intervention by the colonial administration to further the interests of British industry. However, Lugard's successor revoked the policy on the grounds that it ran counter to the principles of free trade.⁶¹

1.3 The West African Market: Consumption in Colonised Communities

The British Empire had far-reaching and extensive influences on her colonies. The dynamics of Empire are based on the imbalance of power between the coloniser and

⁶⁰ W. G. Hynes, 'British Mercantile Attitudes Towards Imperial Expansion', *The Historical Journal* 19/4 (1976), 969-79, (p. 972).

⁶¹ Johnson, 'Cotton Imperialism', p. 184.

the colonised. This can manifest in many ways as explicit or implicit prejudice in favour of the imperial authority. Histories of imperialism have highlighted the loss of agency experienced by colonised communities and the impact this had and continues to have, politically, socially and culturally. The effects of the British Empire were far more than just political and as Gary B. Magee and Andrew S. Thompson have argued, 'being "British" had material implications, not only shaping consumer tastes and preferences, but impacting more broadly on the very nature and orientation of economic activity and behaviour.'⁶²

However, recent studies have endeavoured to explore the ways in which colonised communities exercised agency and challenged the recognised imperial hierarchies.⁶³ New global networks which developed and grew as a result of Western imperialism, helped to foster trade and cultural exchange. Although these processes often reinforced the coloniser-colonised binary, there is growing evidence to suggest that this relationship was more complicated than previously thought. For instance, the work of Martin Lynn and Robin Law on the transition from the slave trade to 'legitimate commerce' has highlighted that 'Africans were never passive spectators...'⁶⁴ Scholars are increasingly moving away from the core-periphery model of imperialism to consider the complex networks of material and cultural exchange.⁶⁵

Histories of Britain's global textile trade have, for a number of reasons, focused on the threads of power emanating from Britain to her markets across the globe. Equally, studies of the importation of British goods into West Africa have

⁶² Gary B. Magee and Andrew S. Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation: Networks of People, Goods and Capital in the British World, c.1850-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 6.

⁶³ Jeremy Prestholdt, *Domesticating the World: African Consumerism and the Genealogies of Globalization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), p. 19.

⁶⁴ Lynn, 'The 'Imperialism of Free Trade'', p. 31.

⁶⁵ Magee and Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation*, p. 23.

centred on the need for goods to exchange for natural resources.⁶⁶ The source and direction of power was clear, authority emanated from the imperial core which exploited the periphery as a supply of resources and as a market for British goods. Recognition of the imbalance of power within colonial structures is vital to understanding both the imperial past and current global inequalities. However, these histories give little or no space for the agency of the colonised and cannot explain the complex networks of exchange and the consumption which crossed the globe. For instance, Jeremy Prestholdt has argued that these binary readings of global exchanges have obscured the complexity of these relationships.⁶⁷

Significant contributions to understandings of the role of African agency in the trade with Western imperial states have been made by in recent years.⁶⁸ These studies have shown how patterns of consumption can be traced and individual agency accounted for where little documentary evidence remains.⁶⁹ Equally, although Magee and Thompson's work focuses on the settler colonies of Canada and Australia, their research has significant findings for the British Empire as a whole. Within imperial history, studies of the impact of the Empire at home have also acted to complicate the one-way relationship between core and periphery.⁷⁰ The increased focus on the cultural impact of Empire has further unpacked the mutual relationship between the

⁶⁶ Law, *From Slave Trade to Legitimate Commerce*; Lynn, *Commerce and Economic Change in West Africa*.

⁶⁷ Prestholdt, *Domesticating the World*, p. 3.

⁶⁸ Kriger, 'Guinea Cloth', pp. 108-9.

⁶⁹ Studies of other regions, such as South America, and of working-class consumption in Europe also provide a theoretical framework for the consumption the marginalised in society. See, for example, Manuel Llorca-Jana, 'Knowing the Shape of Demand: Britain's Export of Ponchos to the Southern Cone, c.1810s-70s', *Business History* 51/4 (2009), 602-21.

⁷⁰ John M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984); Bernard Porter, 'Empire, What Empire?' Or Why 80% of Early and Mid-Victorians were Deliberately Kept in Ignorance Of It', *Victorian Studies* 46/2 (2004), 256-63; Simon J. Potter, 'Empire, Cultures and Identities in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Britain', *History Compass* 5/1 (2007), 51-71.

colonising and colonised society.⁷¹ This can be through the development of new theoretical frameworks for the understanding consumption or through the analysis of non-traditional sources.

Locating and analysing forms and patterns of consumption where there is little surviving evidence presents a number of challenges. However, theoretical frameworks of consumption aid in the critical analysis of consumption in the context of global exchange. Theories of consumption have increasingly focused on consumption as a process which can be traced before and after the moment of purchase or acquisition of a good.⁷² This 'circuit of consumption' encompasses the life of the good, from production to use and reuse.⁷³

Studies of consumption have also moved away from top-down approaches which leave little room for consumer agency. Current research emphasises how consumer decisions have influenced the development of goods and services and how consumption can be an expression of agency.⁷⁴ Agency can have many meanings depending on the context in which it is used. One possible interpretation of agency is as the ability of an individual or group 'to act or perform an action'.⁷⁵ It is this idea of agency which helps to unpack the power dynamics and inequalities which are present in commercial institutions and economic systems, while accounting for the role of the individual.

Consumption has also been defined by core-periphery models which emphasise the differences between geographies of consumption, such as imperial core

⁷¹ Magee and Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation*, pp. 13-4.

⁷² Peter Jackson and Nigel Thrift, 'Geographies of Consumption', in *Acknowledging Consumption: A Review of New Studies*, ed. by Daniel Miller (London: Routledge, 1995), 203-36 (p.205); Daniel Miller, 'Consumption and Commodities', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1995), 141-61, (p. 145).

⁷³ Richard Johnson, 'The Story So Far: and Further Transformations', in *Introduction to Contemporary Cultural Studies*, ed. by David Punter (London: Longman, 1986), 277-313 (p.281).

⁷⁴ Miller, 'Consumption and Commodities', p. 149.

⁷⁵ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *Post Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 9-10.

and colonised periphery or urban and rural.⁷⁶ In instances of consumption within the context of imperialism, agency offers a framework with which to consider the potential for consumption to destabilise the binaries of colonial power structures.

The development of consumption theory is closely connected to increased interest in the study of material culture. The emphasis on material culture and object studies also has implications for understandings of object agency and the power of objects to influence the behaviour of consumers.⁷⁷ Bourdieu's theory which sees objects as a system through which habitus are formed and the concept of objects as symbols, further highlight the role that objects play in our lives and the importance of understanding consumption.⁷⁸

The concept of hybridity in relation to objects, cultures and identities has become an important – if controversial – tool with which to consider cross-cultural exchange in the globalising world. Hybridity connotes the interaction of multiple cultural influences which were facilitated through global trade and exchange. However, Carolyn Dean and Dana Leibsohn have cautioned that the term hybridity is too often used to distinguish interaction between Europe and the world which was not previously present.⁷⁹ They argue that this use of the term:

...performs a double move: it homogenizes things European and sets them in opposition to similarly homogenized non-European conventions. In short, hybridity is not so much the natural by-

⁷⁶ Jackson and Thrift, 'Geographies of Consumption', p. 215.

⁷⁷ Miller, 'Consumption and Commodities', p. 148.

⁷⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Miller, 'Consumption and Commodities', p. 148.

⁷⁹ Carolyn Dean and Dana Leibsohn, 'Hybridity and Its Discontents: Considering Visual Culture in Colonial Spanish America', *Colonial Latin American Review* 12/1 (2003), 5-35, (p. 5).

product of an “us” meeting a “them”, but rather the recognition – or creation – of an “us” and a “them”.⁸⁰

Readings of cultural hybridity in the modern world, risk overestimating the novelty of interaction between the Europe and the rest of the world. In these instances, in trying to reinforce the similarities and shared experiences of European and non-European communities, a binary of us and them is inadvertently created.

The language of cultural hybridity has also entered discussions surrounding politics and identity within the public sphere. The increasingly politicisation of cultural hybridity, which has been both celebrated and criticised, illustrates the extent to which self and cultural identity are shaped by many forces, moving in many directions. Histories of global trade have emphasised the influence of Western culture on the rest of the world, but histories of migration have also demonstrated the impact of migrant communities in shaping notions of Western identity. To recognise hybridisation, is not to deny the profound global imbalance that Western imperialism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries engendered. Rather, it is to acknowledge the complex networks of exchange which have characterised human interaction throughout history.

The consumption of British textiles in West Africa was a process which created hybrid objects. Through acquiring and using these goods, West African consumers gave them new meanings and attached new values to their materiality, design and function. The acts of choosing, wearing, gifting or conserving these textiles represent the agency of West African consumers in the trade with Britain. Although exchange

⁸⁰ Ibid. p. 6.

between British merchants and West African consumers was performed within the framework of colonial rule, the reconstruction of the meanings and value attached to imported textiles by consumers destabilised the simple binary of coloniser-colonised.

Cloth had long played an important role in communities across West Africa and complex trading networks had facilitated the exchange of cloth and other commodities across the region for centuries.⁸¹ Caravans continued as crucial modes of transporting an immense variety of local and imported goods over long distances into the twentieth century.⁸²

During the nineteenth century the maritime trade of West Africa experienced a number of significant changes. The introduction of steam shipping led to a decline in the practice of river and coastal trading and most of the overseas trade became centred on the larger ports of the West coast.⁸³ European firms developed factories and warehouses in these ports, massing export goods to be shipped to Europe on the next steamer and received goods from incoming ships to be sold throughout West Africa.⁸⁴ For instance, by 1890 there were 8 factories operating in Old Calabar in the Southern Nigeria Protectorate.⁸⁵ Although the larger trading ports, such as Lagos and Freetown, were the focus for many European merchants, goods traded in these commercial centres continued to be part of much wider networks across West Africa and foreign goods circulated deep into the interior.

West Africa was part of a dynamic global economy, of which trade with British merchants was only one part. As a centre of global trade, West African consumers had

⁸¹ Etlis and Jennings, 'Trade Between Western Africa and the Atlantic World'; Alpern, 'What African Got for Their Slaves'; Inikori, 'English Versus Indian Cotton Textiles'.

⁸² Johnson, 'Cotton Imperialism', p. 180.

⁸³ Lynn, 'The 'Imperialism of Free Trade'', p. 132.

⁸⁴ Martin Lynn, 'From Sail to Steam: The Impact of the Steamship Services on the British Palm Oil Trade with West Africa, 1850-1890', *The Journal of African History* 30/2 (1989), 227-45.

⁸⁵ Lynn, 'The 'Imperialism of Free Trade'', p. 136.

access to a wide variety of textiles. European textiles had to compete with Indian chintzes and Javanese batiks in the West African market.⁸⁶ A diverse range of plain and patterned cloth was also produced locally. Although there is some evidence that the growth in European imports had a negative influence on local textile production, Betty Wass has argued that this has been overestimated and that West African consumption of local cloth continued to perform an important role in African fashion and dress.⁸⁷ Locally produced cloth also reflected regional differences and carried specific cultural and religious meanings which could not be substituted by foreign imports.⁸⁸

Evidence suggests that locally produced and imported textiles performed very different functions in the West African market.⁸⁹ European printed cloth, as one of the cheapest available, was commonly used for everyday-wear and household functions.⁹⁰ Indian and Indonesian cloth fetched a higher price and was reserved for occasional-wear and the elite in society. Plain or simply patterned local cloth provided an alternative to European imports however textiles that were imbued with cultural significance or were produced using complex processes were most frequently used for ceremonial or important social occasions. These textiles which were visually distinctive occupied different roles within West African communities and were used to signal the status of the wearer and the occasion.

Quality was also an important factor which separated West African, Indian and European cloth. The properties of each type of cloth were known by consumers and

⁸⁶ Johnson, *Anglo-African Trade*, pp. 6-8.

⁸⁷ Betty M. Wass, 'Yoruba Dress in Five Generations of a Lagos Family', in *The Fabrics of Culture: The Anthropology of Clothing and Adornment*, ed. by Justine M. Cordwell and Ronald A. Schwarz (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1979), 331-48 (p.335).

⁸⁸ Kriger, 'Guinea Cloth', p. 114; Etlis and Jennings, 'Trade Between Western Africa and the Atlantic World', p. 948.

⁸⁹ Steiner, 'Another Image of Africa', p. 93.

⁹⁰ Colleen E. Kriger, *Cloth in West African History* (Oxford: AltaMira Press, 2006), p. 34.

as such choices were made based on characteristics such as durability or fineness. Locally produced cloth was the most durable of those available and fetched a much higher price than finer imported cloth, although prices fluctuated considerably from region to region.⁹¹

The majority of European imported cloth was worn as untailored wrappers by women. The most common form of dress in West Africa until the early twentieth century, the wrapper was constructed each time it was worn by wrapping a length of cloth around the body.⁹² In some instances, two lengths were used with the second being draped over the shoulder or wrapped around the waist.⁹³ The practice of wrapping exploited the material properties of the cloth as it was manipulated to fit the contours of the body, rolled and twisted to secure the garment, as traditionally no fastenings were used.⁹⁴ The transformation of cloth into a garment was part of the process of giving new value and meaning to the object. To portray West African consumers as passive victims of economic imperialism denies their agency in constructing and reconstructing these objects to suit the demands and preferences of fashion and dress in West African societies.

The adoption of Western dress by colonised societies in the nineteenth and early twentieth century has received much attention from historians. It has been seen as evidence of the manipulation of fashion and dress to conform to the accepted

⁹¹ Johnson, 'Cotton Imperialism', p. 185.

⁹² C. S. Okeke, 'Uses of Traditional Textiles Among the Aniocha Igbo of Mid-Western Nigeria', *Textile History* 11/1 (1980), 108-18; Alpern, 'What African Got for Their Slaves'; Colleen E. Kriger, 'Mapping the History of Cotton Textile Production in Precolonial West Africa', *African Economic History* 33 (2005), 87-116.

⁹³ Victoria L. Rovine, 'African Fashion: Design, Identity and History', in *Contemporary African Fashion*, ed. by Suzanne Gott and Kristyne Loughran (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 89-103.

⁹⁴ Kriger, *Cloth in West African History*, p. 137.

standards of the British in the colonies.⁹⁵ In West Africa, Western dress was promoted and provided by missionary groups and became common amongst the African elite and those who performed roles within the colonial administrations.⁹⁶ However, western styles of dress did not dominate West African fashion. Local fashion continued to change, influenced by external and internal factors. The years of colonisation in West Africa had a direct impact on West African dress but individuals and communities equally contributed to the dynamic fashion of the region.

The status of imported cloth was mediated largely through a complex network of West African merchants and traders who played an important role in determining how their consumers responded to particular products. In many West African communities, women were vital intermediaries between European cloth and local consumers as marketplace traders.⁹⁷ Many of the female traders purchased quantities of cloth on credit from European firms, settling the account at the end of the month.⁹⁸ The importance of these women in popularising Dutch wax-prints was acknowledged by many European merchants and manufacturers.⁹⁹

However, West African traders were equally responsive to the demands and tastes of their clients. Evidence suggests that many European firms gathered information on popular designs and consumer preferences from female traders.¹⁰⁰ Market traders were a valuable source of information and link between European merchants and consumers. To an extent, West African traders were able to determine

⁹⁵ Nina Sylvannus, 'Fashionability in Colonial and Postcolonial Togo', in *African Dress: Fashion, Agency and Performance*, ed. by Karen Tranberg Hansen and D. Soyini Madison (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 30-44.

⁹⁶ Victoria L. Rovine, 'Colonialism's Clothing: Africa, France, and the Deployment of Fashion', *Design Issues* 25/3 (2009), 44-61.

⁹⁷ Byfield, 'African Women in Colonial Economies', p. 159.

⁹⁸ Frederick Pedler, *The Lion and the Unicorn in Africa: A History of the Origins of the United Africa Company, 1787-1931* (London: Heinemann, 1974), p. 240.

⁹⁹ Byfield, 'African Women in Colonial Economies', p. 158.

¹⁰⁰ Pedler, *The Lion and the Unicorn in Africa*, p. 240.

the type of goods which were sold and how they were presented by providing European merchants with the specialist knowledge required to succeed in these markets.¹⁰¹

The British textiles exported to West Africa became part of the complex hybrid identity of West Africa which develop over centuries, as West African societies engaged in global trading networks and were colonised by European powers. The agency of West African consumers is evident in the ways in which they negotiated the changing definitions of West African identity under colonisation. A collection of photographs of young women wearing traditional wrappers, fashioned from imported cloth exemplifies the ways in which meanings were reconstructed and hybrid identities formed. Seated in a style typical of Western portrait photography in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and in one example holding a book, the women express their identity through combining elements of foreign and local signals. The cloth they wear embodies this hybridity: these textiles cannot be defined as European or African, rather they are located at the intersection between cultures in a globalised world. (Figures 1.1 to 1.4)

¹⁰¹ Ibid. p. 101.

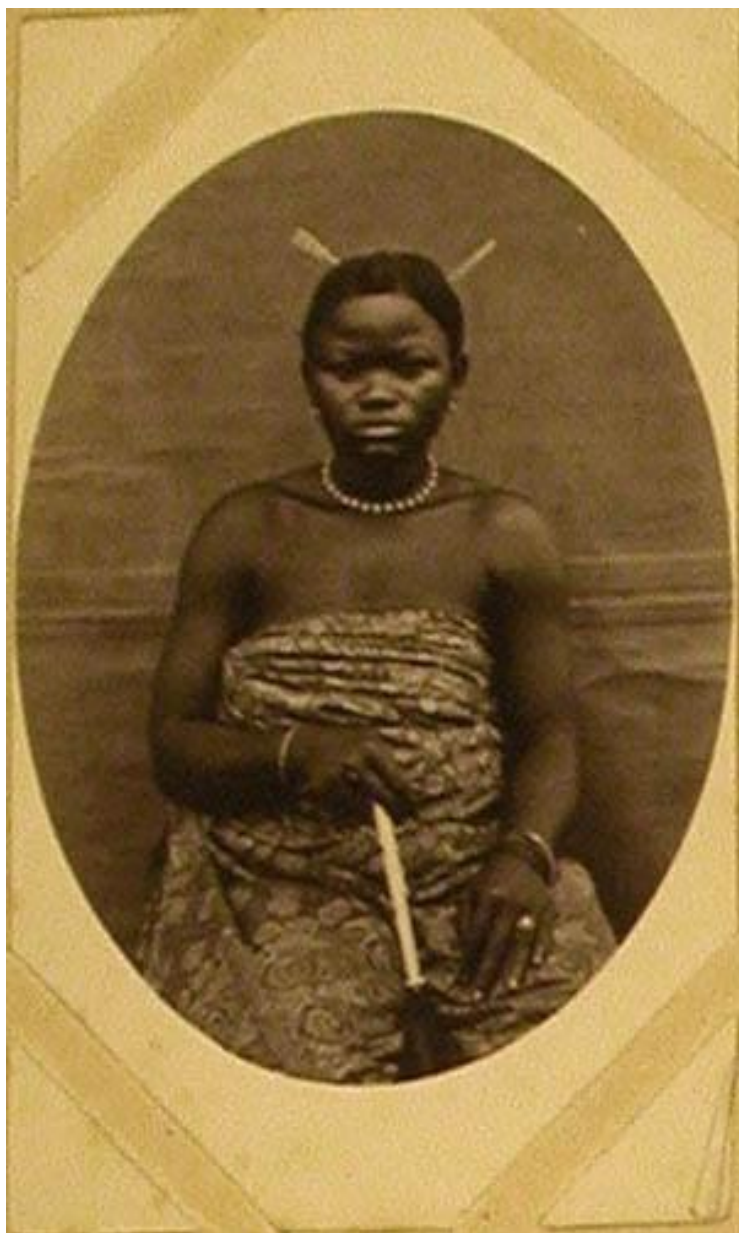


Figure 1.1: 'M'pongwe Typen', Portrait Photograph of a M'pongwe Woman taken in Gabon c.1875-1883, attributed to Carl Passavant, Grey Album 23699. <http://africaphotography.org/collections/carl-passavant-grey-album>.



Figure 1.2: Portrait Photograph of a Woman taken in Gabon c.1875-1883, attributed to Carl Passavant, Grey Album 23705. <http://africaphotography.org/collections/carl-passavant-grey-album>.

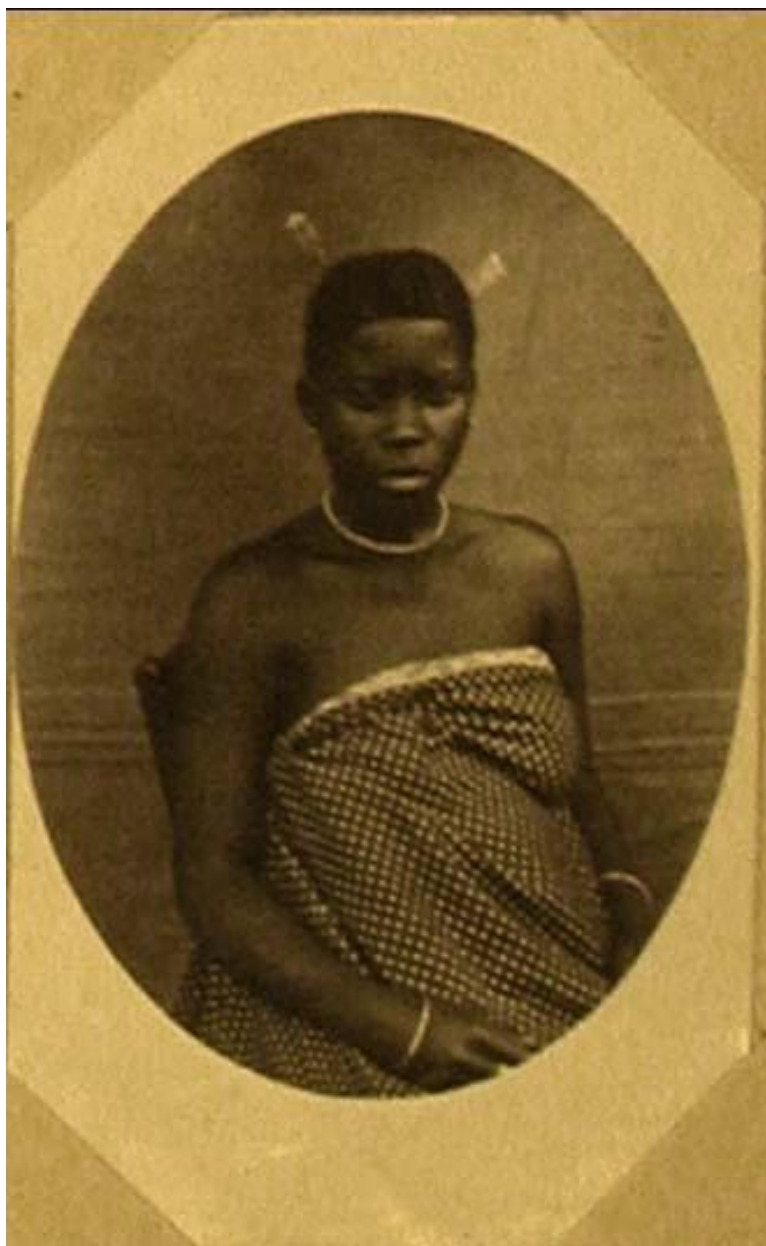


Figure 1.3: Portrait Photograph of a Woman taken in Libreville, Gabon c.1875-1883, attributed to Carl Passavant, Grey Album 23698. <http://africaphotography.org/collections/carl-passavant-grey-album>.

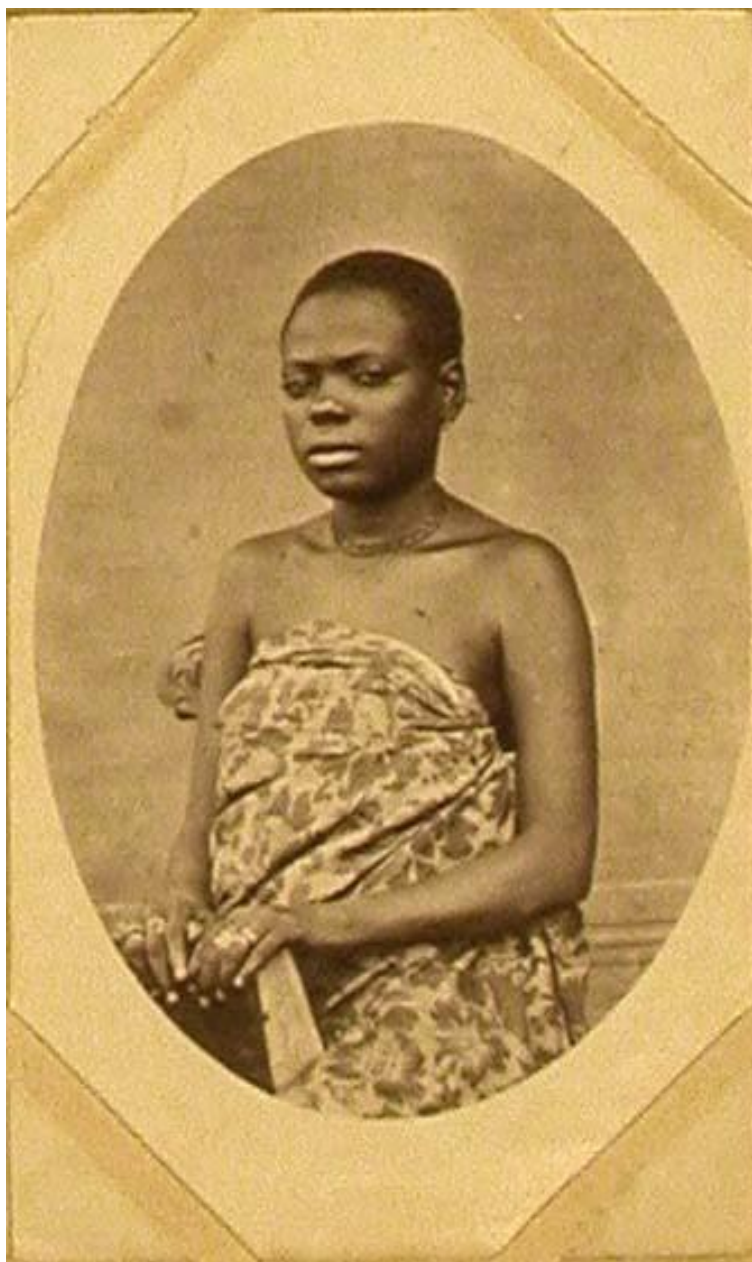


Figure 1.4: 'M'pongwe Typen', Portrait Photograph of a M'pongwe Woman taken in Gabon c.1875-1883, attributed to Carl Passavant, Grey Album. <http://africaphotography.org/collections/carl-passavant-grey-album>.

Through an examination of British textiles for export to West Africa from the design process to their manufacture and distribution, and their consumption in West Africa, this thesis reasserts the agency of West African consumers within the framework of colonial rule. It acknowledges that the imperial context of the trade created a fundamental imbalance of power between Britain as coloniser and West Africans as the colonised. However, I argue that this did not mean that West African consumers were passive. Through consumption West African communities exercised agency in the objects they chose, the meanings they gave them and the ways in which they used them.

1.4 Conclusion

An examination of the textile trade between Britain and West Africa from the second half of the nineteenth century to the outbreak of war in 1914, offers a new perspective of the relationship between trade and the Empire. By the middle of the nineteenth century two thirds of the printed textiles manufactured in Britain were destined for export.¹⁰² Understanding the role these textiles played in the development of economic and cultural exchange between Britain and West Africa illustrates the complex relationship between trade, consumption and imperialism. The historiography of economic imperialism and imperial expansion in the late nineteenth century demonstrates the tensions and limitations of traditional economic histories in understanding consumer goods trades within the colonial context.

¹⁰² David Greysmith, 'Patterns, Piracy and Protection in the Textile Printing Industry 1787-1850', *Textile History* 14/2 (1983), 165-94, (p. 168).

By considering the relationship between the African consumer, the British manufacturer and the numerous middlemen and agents who facilitated this relationship, we can begin to develop a non-binary history of the global textile trade of the nineteenth century and give a voice to those who have not been recognised in the traditional economic history. As Prestholdt argues, by ‘considering the world in the terms and through the ideas of actors marginalised in the historical record allows us to imagine how the world was – and can be – different than it appears from our contemporary vantage points.’¹⁰³ In order to do this, it is necessary to turn to the material evidence of the trade which offers a point of connection between British manufacturers and West African consumers.

¹⁰³ Prestholdt, *Domesticating the World*, p. 4.

Chapter 2

Designing for West African Tastes:

The Role of Design in the Export Trade

Material culture, or the study of objects, has been the focus of many research projects in the last twenty years. This ‘material turn’ has renewed interest in the potential of pattern books and collections of textile samples as records of the textile trades.¹ The revisiting, and in many cases discovery, of these sources by scholars of textile history, but also design history, business history, industrial history and more, has highlighted the possibilities, but also necessitated a consideration of the limitations, of these sources. The material culture of the textile trade is critical in developing our understanding of the role of trade in the Empire and the relationship between manufacturers and consumers.

As with any other type of primary source, an understanding of the context of its creation and survival is imperative to determining what the source illustrates. Pattern books can illuminate previously unknown aspects of the textile industries. Yet, pattern books rarely include explicit details such as if the design was actually put into manufacture, how many yards of a particular design were manufactured and whether a design was popular with consumers. Nonetheless, pattern books contain a wealth of implicit information which when gathered contributes significantly to our understanding of the role design played in determining British success in West African

¹ Philip A. Sykas, *The Secret Life of Textiles: Six Pattern Book Archives in North West England* (Bolton: Bolton Museums, Art Gallery and Aquarium 2005); Stana Nenadic and Sally Tuckett, *Colouring the Nation: The Turkey Red Printed Cotton Industry in Scotland, c.1840-1940* (Edinburgh: National Museums of Scotland, 2013).

textile markets and in reinforcing imperial power structures. The pattern books offer an alternative perspective of imperial trade and the role that consumer demand played.

This chapter argues that British manufacturers and merchants were conscious of the demands of the West African market and catered their products to suit the tastes of these consumers. It explores how textiles for export to West Africa were designed to appeal to West African tastes through colour and motif. It argues that this represents the hybridity of these objects as products of European and West African visual cultures. Through an examination of the pattern books the chapter considers colour and motif as attributes of cloth from which meaning is created, illustrating the role of West African consumers in shaping the development of the trade.

2.1 Hybridity and Authenticity

Greater focus on material culture and the objects of exchange has led to a revision of economic imperialism and questioned the direct impact of the Empire on the global trade of British commodities.² Closer study of objects has highlighted the extent of cultural exchange dating from the very earliest trade routes. This research has also encouraged a shift away from a binary East-West model of trade by demonstrating the significance of intra-regional trade. The concept of hybrid objects, as objects which reflect the processes of cultural exchange that global trade facilitated provides a theoretical framework to further consider questions of authenticity and the homogenisation of global design.

² Christopher B. Steiner, 'Another Image of Africa: Toward an Ethnohistory of European Cloth in West Africa, 1873-1960', *Ethnohistory* 32/2 (1985), 91-110, (p. 90); Katherine Frederick, 'Global Competition in the Local Marketplace: The Impact of Foreign Cloth Imports on British West African Cotton Textile Industries during the Pre-Colonial and Colonial Eras' (RMA Thesis, Utrecht University, 2013), p. 43.

The case of British textiles for export to West Africa illustrates that object-based analysis is vital to unpacking the relationship between trade, the political, economic and social context of the Empire and the consumption of global commodities. However, they also show the difficulty of untangling the complex cultural interactions. Textiles for export to West Africa highlight the importance of terminology and how objects are described as British or West African. To better reflect the patterns of exchange and the hybridity of these objects Prasannan Parthasarathi's suggests that we should speak of textile design in England or India, not English or Indian design.³ As in Parthasarathi's example of designs for South Indians (rather than South Indian designs), the textile samples in the Logan Muckelt collection and the BT registers illustrate that British manufacturers and merchants created a new design vernacular, drawing on local and global design tropes.⁴

However, as Annie Coombes has argued an increasing interest in hybrid objects as evidence of 'exchange on equal terms' between core and periphery can be highly problematic.⁵ It is tempting to view objects such as those by Logan Muckelt, which demonstrate an intent to respond to West African tastes and fashion as evidence of 'exchange on equal terms'. Yet, it is important not to mistake or confuse evidence of the exchange of ideas with exchange on equal terms. The material culture of the Empire trade may reflect a greater degree of consumer agency than previously acknowledged but this does not negate the imbalance in power relations which the Empire reinforced.

³ Prasannan Parthasarathi, 'Response: Indian Cottons and European Fashion, 1400-1800', in *Global Design History*, ed. by Glenn Adamson, Giorgio Riello, and Sarah Teasley (London: Routledge, 2011), 47-49 (p.48).

⁴ Ibid. p. 49.

⁵ Annie E. Coombes, *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture and Popular Imagination in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 217.

The volumes of pattern books and textile samples under analysis illustrate the design and production methods used by British manufacturers for the West African markets. They present the perspective of the British industry and the merchants operating within the British Empire. In this sense, they continue to reinforce the core-centred perspective of the textile trade with West Africa. However, as the objects of trade they also provide a connection to the consumer.

Using textile samples to reconstruct the consumer experience must again acknowledge the limitations of the notion of an equal exchange. In the context of the textile trade with West Africa power relations must be considered on two levels those between the imperial power and the colonised and those between the capitalist and the consumer. While the role of the consumer has been privileged in many studies of material culture others have questioned the possibility of consumer agency in commodity cultures.⁶ Rather than viewing the consumer as an actor whose decision-making and tastes influence the design and production of goods they question the autonomy of the consumer and the extent to which consumers have a genuine ability to make choices about the goods they consume.⁷ This is particularly pertinent in the colonial context where many external factors, political, cultural and economic were in play to determine which goods reached consumers.

The transfer of meaning and value in cross-cultural exchange is integral to how scholars interpret the interplay of power relations in hybrid objects. While scholars of material culture and exchange recognise the transformations in value and meaning which occur when objects move from one community to another, how we should

⁶ Peter Jackson, 'Local Consumption Cultures in a Globalizing World', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 29/2 (2004), 165-78, (p. 172).

⁷ Ibid.

evaluate the malleability of commodities remains a subject of debate.⁸ Plasticity of meaning and value is especially significant in relation to cloth and dress, as objects which are often used and adapted to express identity.⁹

The construction and reconstruction of meaning in imported objects is central to the interpretation of the textile designs produced for West African markets. In combining West African symbols and imagery with European aesthetics in textile printing, firms like Logan Muckelt, produced designs which alluded to but were distinctly different from both West African and European textiles. Whether British manufacturers believed they imbued meaning in the designs they produced did not determine the meaning that would be constructed by the consumer.

Meaning can be constructed in a number of ways: personal experience relating to an object, the materiality of an object and the biography of an object can all influence how an individual or community constructs the meaning of a particular object. For instance, a gold bracelet may hold meaning related to its materiality and the economic and cultural value of gold, to its acquisition, perhaps as a gift or to its history, perhaps as an object inherited from a close relative.¹⁰

The (re)construction of meaning by West African consumers, can be seen in the naming of imported cloth. The naming of designs on imported cloth by West African consumers is evidence of the extent to which new meaning is ascribed to goods in cross-cultural exchange. Evidence indicates that West African consumers were giving names to the imported designs in the late nineteenth century although the

⁸ Arjun Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 12-18.

⁹ Victoria L. Rovine, 'African Fashion: Design, Identity and History', in *Contemporary African Fashion*, ed. by Suzanne Gott and Kristyne Loughran (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 89-103 (p.89).

¹⁰ Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things*, p. 15.

majority of known names appear to date from the early twentieth century.¹¹ The names given to these designs were often descriptive, such the 'Flying Duck' (see Figure 11). However, these names also reflected local proverbs or the individual experience of a specific consumer.¹²

The practice of naming designs also indicates that there was a degree of communication between manufacturers and consumers through the mediation of merchants and agents. As West African consumers gave names to particular designs European merchants and manufacturers adopted these names.¹³ Through these indirect exchanges of information merchants were able to improve the marketing of goods by adopting and disseminating these names in the West African market place. In this sense, manufacturers and merchants exploited the new meanings constructed by West African consumers in order to attract further consumers.

However, despite being widely utilised by merchants and consumers, it is believed that names were often created from a personal experience or interpretation by a consumer.¹⁴ It is probable that names which resonated with the largest number of consumers were disseminated eventually reaching merchants and agents. Evidence suggests that the naming process often took several years and that the most popular and reproduced designs were the most frequently named.¹⁵ For contemporary consumers named designs are the most desirable because of the value associated with their history, as a mark of authenticity.¹⁶

¹¹ Ruth Neilson, 'The History and Development of Wax-Printed Textiles Intended for West Africa and Zaire', in *The Fabrics of Culture: The Anthropology of Clothing and Adornment*, ed. by Justine M. Cordwell and Ronald A. Schwarz (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1979), 467-98 (p.480).

¹² Karin Barber and Stephanie Newell, 'Speaking Out: Dissent and Creativity in the Colonial Era and Beyond', in *West Africa: Word, Symbol, Song*, ed. by Gus Casely-Heyford, Janet Topp Fargion, and Marion Wallace (London: British Library, 2015), 100-31 (p.123).

¹³ Neilson, 'Wax-Printed Textiles Intended for West Africa and Zaire', p. 481.

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 482.

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 481.

¹⁶ M. Amah Edoh, 'Redrawing Power? Dutch Wax Cloth and the Politics of 'Good Design'', *Journal of Design History* 29/3 (2016), 258-72.

Research into contemporary African fashion and the use of African cloth by designers for the international and African markets demonstrates the potential flexibility of meaning in cloth. A number of African designers have utilised modern *kente*, *adinkra* and *bogolan* cloth to produce contemporary fashion pieces. For many, the cloth is used as an intentional reference to African culture and the designers' heritage.¹⁷ However, there is an acknowledgment by the designers themselves, consumers and scholars that these objects do not carry the same symbolic meaning once the cloth has been transformed into a fashion garment.¹⁸ Thus, the symbolic quality of the cloth, rather than being inherent, is closely associated with its production and use. The meaning and value of the cloth may be constructed by the manufacturer but it can also be reconstructed by the consumer. As Victoria Rovine argued for the use of contemporary *bogolan* cloth, 'the precise meanings of the motifs are, in this instance, relatively unimportant, for they serve as generalized references to indigenous knowledge and practices.'¹⁹

The metonymic nature of these aesthetic tropes enabled these textiles to appear both familiar and distinct in West African consumers. This may have been the result of a conscious effort to avoid direct competition with locally produced cloth and with other imported goods, namely from India and Indonesia, by developing a distinct style. Equally, the unique aesthetic qualities of this style may have grown organically due to technical possibilities and limitations and economic and political pressures. Notably, an examination of British textiles designed for West African markets in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century also demonstrates their distinctiveness from the

¹⁷ Rovine, 'African Fashion'; Victoria L. Rovine, 'Fashionable Traditions: The Globalization of an African Textile', in *Fashioning Africa: Power and the Politics of Dress*, ed. by Jean Allman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 189-211 (p.197).

¹⁸ Rovine, 'Fashionable Traditions', p. 193; Leslie W. Rabine, *The Global Circulation of African Fashion* (Oxford: Berg, 2002), p. 76.

¹⁹ Rovine, 'Fashionable Traditions', p. 196.

Dutch wax-prints, which came to dominate the market in the twentieth century. The Logan Muckelt volumes indicate that the firm did not truly begin to imitate the Dutch style of wax-prints until the 1930s, over half a decade after Dutch merchants began exporting to West Africa.

In highlighting the cross-cultural exchange which led to the development of specialised designs, the issue of authenticity is also raised. The idea of authenticity is one that permeates contemporary production of patterned textiles in and for West Africa, particularly in relation to wax-resist and printed cloth. A number of studies in art and design history and in the social sciences have highlighted the importance of establishing a sense of cultural ‘authenticity’ in the design of African wax prints from the late twentieth century onwards.²⁰ Interest in the history of the import of printed and dyed textiles prior to 1914 has largely been the result of a desire to further understand the ‘authenticity’ and cultural origins of popular and long-lasting designs.

This quest to confirm the ‘authenticity’ of contemporary West African textile tastes can be problematic. For instance, the focus on ‘authentic’ African culture has been criticised for reinforcing binaries such as traditional and modern by suggesting that a pure and unchanged form exists.²¹ For scholars of consumption and material culture the notion that an object or type of object has an ‘authentic’ meaning pertaining to one country, society or culture, has been frequently challenged since the 1980s.²²

Related to the issue of authenticity is that of tradition, and more importantly the dichotomy between tradition and modernity. Understanding the role of cloth and fashion in West African communities is problematic for a number of reasons, partly due to the availability of sources, but largely due to the discourse of ‘tradition’ which

²⁰ Rabine, *The Global Circulation of African Fashion*, p. 22.

²¹ Ibid. p. 10.

²² Daniel Miller, 'Consumption and Commodities', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1995), 141-61, (p. 144).

pervades the topic. The overarching narrative of tradition in African fashion, historical and contemporary is accompanied by one of loss. For a number of anthropologists and historians the loss of 'traditional' ways of adorning the body is something to be lamented in the face of increasing globalisation.²³ While the fast pace of fashion in the Western world is celebrated, changes in Africa are seen to be destroying the rich history of communities and corrupting the purity and authenticity of West African material culture. The notion that fashion exists and existed beyond the West for centuries has gained traction in the last twenty years.²⁴ Yet, many studies of West African fashion and the textile trade continue to focus on 'traditional' cloth such as *adinkra* or *kente* and the lasting influences of these traditions on contemporary African fashion.²⁵

The dichotomy between tradition and modernity is also projected onto the growth in the importation of British cloth, which has been seen as representative of the destructive force of modernity, at the hands of the Empire. As our understanding of the development of global trade increases it is recognised that determining the cultural origins of particular designs, aesthetic tropes or fashions becomes progressively complex. Rovine, for instance, suggests that rather than 'African' or 'Western' most fashion objects are better thought of as being on a scale between imported and indigenous.²⁶ The two extremes of this scale influence each other to create new 'cosmopolitan' styles.²⁷ In this way, the underlying power relations enacted through labels such as traditional, modern, authentic and imitation is increasingly

²³ Angela Fisher, *Africa Adorned* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1984), pp. 9-10.

²⁴ Victoria L. Rovine, 'Viewing Africa Through Fashion', *Fashion Theory* 13/2 (2009), 133-40, (p. 135).

²⁵ Rabine, *The Global Circulation of African Fashion*; Rovine, 'Viewing Africa Through Fashion'; Rovine, 'African Fashion'.

²⁶ Rovine, 'African Fashion', p. 92; Rovine, 'Viewing Africa Through Fashion', p. 136.

²⁷ Rovine, 'African Fashion', p. 92.

recognised. Paradoxically, the assertion of the authenticity of designs created in West Africa as a result of their adherence to tradition, reinforces the discourse of cultural superiority disseminated by the Empire and captured in the binary of tradition and modernity/inferiority and superiority.

2.2 Colour

2.2.1 'Gaily-tinted Cloth'

Colour played an important role in the way in which textiles have been perceived and understood both by both contemporaries of the trade with West Africa and by historians. Within the discourse of good design colour was identified by the cultural elite of the nineteenth century as a signifier of poor taste and a lack of design quality. Colour became an attribute which determined how the meaning of an object was constructed, used to establish and reinforce binaries of good and bad taste, elite and popular culture and the West and the 'Orient'.²⁸

This relationship between colour and perceptions of taste in Western culture has been characterised as a prejudice against colour in favour of whiteness.²⁹ In his work *Chromophobia* (2000), David Batchelor argues that colour has been the subject of prejudice in Western culture for centuries, being 'systematically marginalised and diminished.'³⁰ Beverly Lemire's recent research on dress in the American colonies in the eighteenth century highlights the use of white textiles as an identifier of class and

²⁸ The Orient in the collective imagination of the West as understood by Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 5th edn (London: Penguin, 2003).

²⁹ This shift is often attributed to Johann Joachim Winckelmann's *The History of Art in Antiquity* (1764), which exalted the virtues of whiteness in classical sculpture, and the rise of neo-classicism. The image of classical sculpture as white permeated Western art and culture until recent research uncovered the colourfulness of the ancient art world. See Vinzenz Brinkmann, Renee Dreyfus, and Ulrike Koch-Brinkmann, *Gods in Colour: Polychromy in the Ancient World* (London: Prestel, 2017).

³⁰ David Batchelor, *Chromophobia* (London: Reaktion, 2000).

race.³¹ Similarly, John Gage has argued that in many cultures a disregard for colour is seen as mark of taste and refinement.³² As such, colour has been devalued and its significance denied.³³ Furthermore Batchelor argued that colour has been made to be a foreign body, one which is primitive, infantile, vulgar and ‘oriental’.³⁴ As Batchelor stated ‘...the other is colour.’³⁵ This otherness of colour has particularly strong implications when we consider the language used to describe the textile exports to West Africa. By using words such as garish and gaudy the otherness of colour is reinforced and in turn the otherness of consumer is reinforced.

One of the most striking features of nineteenth-century printed and dyed textiles is the vibrancy and variety of colour. The use of colour in cloth and fashion is often overlooked. Accounts of the use and meaning of colour through the ages have largely been the reserve of art history, with a focus on the fine arts.³⁶ In recent years, however, a number of publications have addressed the issue of colour in the design and manufacture of the decorative arts and everyday objects.³⁷

Numerous contemporary descriptions of the printed textile industry and the export trade make reference to the colour of the cloth, describing the ‘stacks of coloured stuffs’, the ‘gaily-tinted cloth’, the ‘glaring patterns’ and the ‘red, oranges, and yellows [that can never be] too bright’.³⁸ Further contemporary accounts highlight

³¹ Beverly Lemire, *Consumer Cultures: The Material World Remade, c.1500-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 108-14.

³² John Gage, *Colour and Culture: Practice and Meaning from Antiquity to Abstraction* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993), p. 31.

³³ Batchelor, *Chromophobia*, p. 22.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid. p. 34.

³⁶ Charlotte Nicklas, 'Splendid Hues: Colour, Dyes, Everyday Science and Women's Fashion, 1840-1875' (PhD Thesis, University of Brighton, 2009), p. 22.

³⁷ Regina Lee Blaszczyk, 'Chromophilia: The Design World's Passion for Colour', *Journal of Design History* 27/3 (2014), 203-17; Charlotte Nicklas, 'One Essential Thing to Learn is Colour: Harmony, Science and Colour Theory in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Fashion Advice', *Journal of Design History* 27/3 (2014), 218-36.

³⁸ Angus Bethune Reach, *A Cotton Fibre Halo: Manchester and the Textile Districts in 1849* (Hebden Bridge: Royd Press, 2007), p. 42.

the importance of colour to the export market and the variation of market demands for particular colours across the globe. For instance, one article in a 1910 issue of *Manchester City News* noted that with as little as ten printing machines and two thousand rollers a firm could compete in the African and Asian markets but not in South America due to the large variety of designs and colour variations which were required.³⁹ A further commentator stated that the South American markets required a 'splendid assemblage of colours'.⁴⁰ Moreover, as Steiner highlights, subjective descriptions such as these were of little use to merchants and manufacturers trying to understand the tastes and needs of West African markets.⁴¹

The importance of colour was also noted with specific reference to the African trade. The 1888 publication *Manchester of Today*, which provides an overview of the businessmen and 'commercial interests' operating within the city at the time, includes a description of the firm G. B. Ollivant & Co., shipping merchants and manufacturers specialising in the West African trade. This summary of Ollivant's commercial activity emphasises the firm's trade in prints, stating 'the firm has a first-class reputation and great care is shown in the selection of material, the finish and the various colourings.'⁴² This comment is particularly interesting as it places colour alongside material and production quality in terms of their importance to the consumer. The article goes on to state that at G. B. Ollivant, '...the requirements of the market are attentively studied, and no firm in the shipping trade has a better assortment of goods suitable for the African market.'⁴³ Evidently, colour was seen as

³⁹ David J. Jeremy, 'Working the Business as One': Cultural and Organisational Aspects of the Calico Printers' Association Merger of 1899', in *King Cotton: A Tribute to Douglas A. Farnie*, ed. by John F. Wilson (Lancaster: Crucible Books, 2009), 93-116 (p.100).

⁴⁰ Thomas Bullock, *Blackwood's Descriptive Guide to Manchester and Surrounding Districts* (London: W. J. Adams, 1857), p. 19.

⁴¹ Steiner, 'Another Image of Africa', p. 98.

⁴² *Manchester of Today* (London: Historical Publishing Company, 1888), p. 150.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

an important element in meeting the requirements of the market and provided manufacturers with one mechanism for specialising goods.

However, African markets were also noted for the variety and vividness of colour required. Speaking of the Senegambia region in 1879, Frenchman Bérenger-Féraud claimed to know that the local people liked ‘gaudy colours: thus, whatever is extraordinary in this respect is most highly sought after.’ He went on to comment on the popularity of ‘scarlet red, canary yellow, sky blue [and] parrot green...’ in the local dress.⁴⁴ In 1900, fellow Frenchman Henri le Comte described the ‘loud colours and tacky designs’ of European textiles in West Africa, arguing that they satisfied the local ‘love of gaudiness, while flattering their vanity.’⁴⁵ One account of Sierra Leone, published in 1910, went so far as to state that ‘the Kissy Road...for tawdriness, crudeness in the blending of colours, and, especially in the cotton goods, grotesqueness of pattern, is probably unrivalled in any part of the world.’⁴⁶ Yet, despite his criticism of local tastes, the author frequently described the ‘gaily coloured prints and bright handkerchiefs’ which surrounded him.⁴⁷

The descriptive terms seen in these examples typify the vocabulary used to describe colour in relation to printed textiles for the export market, particularly in the case of West Africa. Bright, gaily and a number of words expressing their variety (for instance, assemblage and various) are common but so too are far less innocuous terms such as garish, gaudy, brash, tawdry, crude and grotesque. The latter paints a picture

⁴⁴ L. J. B. Berenger-Feraud, *Les Peuplades de la Senegambie* (Paris: Leroux, 1879), p. 383. The original text reads ‘les couleurs voyantes ; donc ce qui est extraordinaire dans cette direction est le plus recherché. Le rouge écarlate, le jaune serin, le bleu de ciel, le veri perroquet font des boubous capables de faire mourir de jalousie celui qui ne peut se les procurer.’ English translation from Steiner, ‘Another Image of Africa’, p. 97.

⁴⁵ Henri Le Comte, *Le Coton: Monographie, Culture, Histoire Economique* (Paris Georges Carre 1900), p. 185. The original text reads ‘les couleurs criardes et les dessins de mauvais gout satisfont leur amour du clinquant et flattent leur vanité.’ English translation from *ibid.* pp. 97-8.

⁴⁶ T. J. Alldridge, *A Transformed Colony: Sierra Leone as it Was and as it is, its Progress, People, Native Customs and Undeveloped Wealth* (London: Steeley & Co. Ltd, 1910), p. 56.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p. 208.

of textiles which are cheap and poor quality, are excessive, tasteless and ostentatious. One dictionary defines garish as being 'crudely or tastelessly colourful'. However, the choice of these words reflects not just on the goods themselves but on their consumers, the implication being that people who buy these goods must be lacking in taste and culture, poorly educated and uncivilised. The idea that African consumers lacked taste and the skills to determine good-quality cloth was persistent and despite the then decades old textile trade an article in *The Times* from 1958 commented that, 'Many people believe that the African is a person of very simple tastes who is ready to accept all sorts of second quality goods and clearing lines, and crude designs of garish colours.'⁴⁸ This type of language or view on African societies is of course far from unusual in the colonial period and is by no means unique to the discussion of printed textiles.

A report on foreign competition published in the *Government Gazette* for Southern Nigeria in 1913, highlighted the importance of colour for British textiles in the market. The report questioned the efficacy of design registration as a tool for limiting the advances made in the market by foreign competitors, arguing that design was not the principal consideration for West African consumers. Colour, or to be more precise the fastness of the dye, was believed to be the primary concern as the author stated that it was the 'stability of the colours rather than the design that counts.' In this report, the inability of British manufacturers to adequately compete with Dutch and German imports, is attributed to a lack of technical knowledge and the inability to mimic the 'secret printing process' which made their competitors goods so successful.⁴⁹ Conversely, Ruth Neilson has argued that, due to the cultural significance

⁴⁸ Neilson, 'Wax-Printed Textiles Intended for West Africa and Zaire', p. 467.

⁴⁹ The National Archives, Colonial Office, *Government Gazette*, Southern Nigeria Protectorate, 13th May 1913, CO 591/12, p.474.

and symbolism of the designs in West Africa, the motif was more important to the consumer than the colour used in a design.⁵⁰

Although difficult to quantify, it is important to consider the materiality of the cloth in relation to colour and the environment in West Africa. The life of a piece of cloth or garment after it is sold to the consumer is integral to its history. The bleaching of fabrics in the sun was a genuine concern for manufacturers and consumers alike. The intensity of the colours in the BT registers and Logan Muckelt volumes may not be indicative of their appearance a month or a year after they were sold in West Africa. Despite being able to successfully produce fast dyes, all textile goods are liable to fading through use, cleaning and sun exposure. Equally, the tone, hue and intensity of a colour can change dramatically depending on the light under which it is viewed. Sometimes bright sunlight can make dyes appear faded and washed-out, other times it can increase the intensity of a colour, while twilight emphasises white tones. It is difficult to know how these textiles might have looked in the climate of Southern Nigeria or Sierra Leone. Yet, the 1913 report on competition reminded officials that 'a colour that is stable in Europe will not necessarily remain stable under the influence of African sun and damp.'⁵¹ This indicates that merchants were aware of the need to adapt processes and colour palettes to suit the climate, as well as the tastes, of West Africa.

Laundering practices can also affect the durability of colour in cloth. A dye is considered fast if it does not leech or bleed through wear or washing, however all dyes are capable of fading under extreme conditions. Manipulation of the fabric is required to lift and remove dirt from the fibres, but it can also jeopardise the fastness of the dye.

⁵⁰ Neilson, 'Wax-Printed Textiles Intended for West Africa and Zaire', p. 486.

⁵¹ The National Archives, Colonial Office, Government Gazette, Southern Nigeria Protectorate, 13th May 1913, CO 591/12, p.474.

Sustained beating or rubbing to remove stains and prolonged exposure to sweat can reduce the intensity of dye. It is notable that saving and storing cloth is an important practice in many West African communities. Designs and pieces which are particularly prized by their owner were often stored in trunks and boxes to protect them from the climate and the impact of everyday life. Evidence of these practices has largely been found in anthropological studies conducted in the second half of the twentieth century, however oral histories indicate that it was common for women to collect lengths of cloth for future use.⁵² The efforts taken to protect these fabrics are indicative of both the importance of cloth and the difficulties of conserving textiles in a West African climate.

Colour, is therefore, both subjective and variable. Colours which appeared ‘gaudy’ and ‘garish’ to British sensibilities may have been well-suited for other markets, in terms of tastes and fashions but also in practical terms. It has been well noted that West African consumers looked for assurances of the quality and fastness of colours before purchasing textiles.⁵³ This can be read as evidence that West African consumers were discerning and knowledgeable but also that they were aware of the impact the West African climate had on the longevity of dye.

⁵² Catherine McKinley, *Indigo: In Search of the Colour that Seduced the World* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011), p. 68.

⁵³ Frederick Pedler, *The Lion and the Unicorn in Africa: A History of the Origins of the United Africa Company, 1787-1931* (London: Heinemann, 1974), p. 123.

2.2.2 Indigo

Analysis of the Logan Muckelt pattern books illustrates the dominance of indigo dye in textiles produced for the West African market. Of the around 5,000 samples analysed almost 80 percent of the designs use indigo. Indigo was frequently used for the ground, while lighter, brighter colours are used for the motif. Despite the high number of designs which appear in multiple colour combinations it is common for the indigo ground to be used for all variations while the colours of the motif are changed. This can be seen in the example of the octopus motif in figures 2.1 and 2.2.⁵⁴ Although many different colourways are presented for this design, each sample has an indigo ground. The prevalence of indigo is also mirrored in those designs submitted for copyright and held in the Board of Trade registers. Two designs by Mark Blakeley & Co. illustrate the distinctive use of indigo as the ground, while light blue and white are used to print the motif.⁵⁵ Two years later the firm registered a further two indigo designs, using the same colour palette.⁵⁶ Notably, seven different firms specialising in the trade with West Africa registered indigo designs between 1870 and the late 1890s.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ The Manchester Archives, Logan Muckelt Collection, Pattern Book, Design No. 5600-6400, c.1905, GB127.M831/52.

⁵⁵ The National Archives, Board of Trade, Samples submitted for copyright by Mark Blakeley & Co., 1870, BT 43 310 243937 & 243938.

⁵⁶ Board of Trade, Samples submitted for copyright by Mark Blakeley & Co., 1872, BT 43 313 257606 & 257607.

⁵⁷ Board of Trade, Samples submitted for copyright, BT 43 & BT 50.



Figure 2.1: Variations of an octopus motif on an indigo ground by Logan Muckelt. The Manchester Archives, Logan Muckelt Collection, Pattern Book, Design No. 5600-6400, c.1905, GB127.M831/52 5625-5634.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries indigo was prized by many societies and was the centre of a lucrative global trade. Notably, unlike other natural dyes indigo does not require the use of a mordant. Instead, indigo requires fermentation and deoxidisation. The leaves of the *Indigofera* plant are fermented in vats to create indigo white into which the cloth is submerged, on removal from the dye vat the dyed cloth initially appears a pale yellow.⁵⁸ Exposure to the air reveals the recognisable deep blue, through the process of deoxidisation.⁵⁹ Dyeing with natural indigo requires extensive tacit knowledge and sight, smell and taste are vital tools for determining the conditions of the dye vat and the quality of the colour that will be produced.⁶⁰ Skilled

⁵⁸ Colleen E. Kriger, *Cloth in West African History* (Oxford: AltaMira Press, 2006), p. 124.

⁵⁹ John Gillow, *Printed and Dyed Textiles from Africa* (London: British Museum Press, 2001), p. 12.

⁶⁰ Kriger, *Cloth in West African History*, p. 125.

dyers could effectively control the hue and tone of the blue that was produced by the vat, meaning that multiple shades of blue could be produced from indigo.⁶¹



Figure 2.2: Detail of variations of an octopus motif on an indigo ground by Logan Muckelt. The Manchester Archives, Logan Muckelt Collection, Pattern Book, Design No. 5600-6400, c.1905, GB127.M831/52 5642-5644.

There is a long tradition in many West African communities of using indigo to adorn cloth and the body. In Sierra Leone, for instance, the first dyed textiles which were adorned with patterns were produced using indigo.⁶² The region surrounding Kano, Nigeria, specialised in the production of indigo-dyed cloth and it is estimated that tens of thousands of dyers were employed to serve the export markets from the

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Maude Wahlman and Enyinna Chuta, 'Sierra Leone Resist-Dyed Textiles', in *The Fabrics of Culture: The Anthropology of Clothing and Adornment*, ed. by Justine M. Cordwell and Ronald A. Schwarz (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1979), 447-66 (p.448).

nineteenth century.⁶³ Resist dyeing techniques such as tie-dye, stitch resist and starch resist developed as popular methods of decorating indigo cloth.

The history of indigo in West Africa was complex and its place in West African societies often centred on the skill and work required to produce indigo cloth. The process of developing indigo dye through deoxidisation made achieving regular and consistent colour more difficult than for dyes which used a mordant. A skilled dyer was able to adapt the length of time the cloth was immersed in the vat to regulate the depth and intensity of colour produced. These gradations of blue allowed for the effective expression of social status and position through dress, which Kriger has argued is distinctively West African.⁶⁴

The place of indigo in West African textiles, is also evidence of the influence of Islamic traditions and the long history of trade networks spanning the continent, connecting Africa with the Middle East. It is believed that indigo plants and dyeing techniques were first introduced to West Africa by Arab traders, at least 500 years ago.⁶⁵ The iconic indigo dress of the Tinkas, who were key to the facilitation of commerce between East and West Africa across the Sahara, led to the moniker “the blue men”.⁶⁶ The use of indigo in locally produced West African textiles, is evidence of the development of hybrid objects before the importation of European goods.

Indigo was also one of the staple dyes of the British textile industries.⁶⁷ In 1881, one writer in *The Manchester Guardian* claimed that indigo to the value £2

⁶³ Philip Shea, 'The Development of an Export-Orientated Dyed Cloth Industry in Kano Emirate in the Nineteenth Century' (PhD Thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1975), p. 60.

⁶⁴ Kriger, *Cloth in West African History*, p. 138.

⁶⁵ Gillow, *Printed and Dyed Textiles*, p. 11.

⁶⁶ Ghislaine Lydon, *On Trans-Saharan Trails: Islamic Law, Trade Networks, and Cross-cultural Exchange in Nineteenth-Century Western Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 171.

⁶⁷ C. M. Mellor and D. S. L. Cardwell, 'Dyes and Dyeing 1775-1860', *The British Journal for the History of Science* 1/3 (1963), 265-79, (p. 266).

million had been imported into Britain in the previous year.⁶⁸ A stable and steady supply of indigo was paramount to sustaining the manufacture of dyed and printed cloth. The pressure on natural indigo stocks led to increasing demand amongst dyers for a synthetic substitute which could rival the tone and depth of natural indigo dye.⁶⁹ However, as the development of synthetic dyes expanded from the middle of the nineteenth century, a man-made substitute for indigo was not developed until 1897 when German chemists succeed in creating an artificial indigo dye.⁷⁰

Despite the developments in synthetic indigo dye, the Logan Muckelt samples do not indicate an immediate or distinct shift from the use of natural to man-made indigo dye. Without testing the samples it is not possible to know the exact make-up of the dyes used. However, there is no noticeable visual change in the tone, depth or intensity of the indigo in the samples. There is also significant evidence to suggest that natural indigo kept its hold on the market. Despite the introduction of an artificial substitute, many believed that natural indigo was more hardwearing and less likely to fade in harsh conditions. In 1901, for instance, it was reported that the German navy had rejected all woollen cloth dyed with synthetic indigo and insisted that natural indigo was used.⁷¹

The apparent gradual shift to synthetic dyes has been noted across the textile industries and in relation to many colours. Novel natural dyes continued to be developed into the 1870s and used in tandem with artificial colours.⁷² In the Turkey Red industry, for instance, the distinctive red dye was not immediately overtaken by

⁶⁸ 'The Artificial Production of Indigo: Improvements in Calico Printing', *The Manchester Guardian*, 28th May 1881.

⁶⁹ Ghulam A. Nadri, *The Political Economy of Indigo in India, 1580-1930* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), p. 146. See also Peter Reed, 'The British Chemical Industry and the Indigo Trade', *The British Journal for the History of Science* 25/1 (1992), 113-25, (p. 116).

⁷⁰ Mellor and Cardwell, 'Dyes and Dyeing', p. 277.

⁷¹ 'Artificial Indigo', *The Manchester Guardian*, 2nd April 1901, p.12.

⁷² Nicklas, 'Splendid Hues', p. 49.

its man-made imitation.⁷³ The appeal of natural dyes appears to have persisted throughout the nineteenth century and goods continued to be label as using natural dyes.⁷⁴ However, C. M. Mellor and D. S. L. Cardwell have suggested that it was not until the synthesis of 'hard core' dyes, staples of the textile industries such as indigo and madder, that man-made dyes began to overtake natural products.⁷⁵ They point to the significant fall in imports of natural indigo from 90,000 cwt. in 1896 to just 12,000 cwt. by 1907 as evidence.⁷⁶

The frequent use of indigo in textiles for the West African markets raises a number of questions regarding the role of colour in design and understandings of the cultural significance of colour. From the textile samples, it is evident that British manufacturers attempted to tap into the familiarity of indigo dye to West African consumers, while employing common European dyeing techniques. However, indigo also held a high cultural value in many West African societies and the process of indigo-dyed cloth was respected skill. The place of indigo in West African communities could not be encapsulated in factory-made, imported cloth. However, colour is only one attribute of cloth. The construction of meaning in textile objects is created through colour, texture, design, touch and even smell. The use of indigo therefore was only one characteristic employed by manufacturers of textiles for West Africa to appeal to consumers. Another important aspect of the design of these textiles was the motif.

⁷³ Nenadic and Tuckett, *Colouring the Nation*, p. 39.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Mellor and Cardwell, 'Dyes and Dyeing', p. 278.

⁷⁶ Cwt. is a measure of a hundred weight, equating to 112. Ibid.

2.3 Motif

2.3.1 'Reading' Design

Understanding and unpacking the cultural significance of a motif is a complex task, especially in the case of goods designed for export. Analysis of motifs requires an approach which is sensitive to the design process but equally to the response of the consumer. A number of different approaches can be seen in the historiography of printed and dyed cloth in West Africa, emanating from the diverse disciplines of anthropology, textile history and economic history. A number of scholars have argued for the classification of motifs, such as Meda Johnston and Glen Kaufman who suggested three principal categories including designs which tell a story, designs which have symbolic significance and designs which are simply ornamental.⁷⁷ However, Ruth Neilson argues that these were insufficient to fully encompass the variety and specificity of designs available in the African markets.⁷⁸ Neilson suggests a number of possible alternative categories, including traditional/non-traditional, colour, shape and the original inspiration for the design, while acknowledging that none of these classifications would adequately describe many designs.⁷⁹ Several themes are visible in the samples in the Logan Muckelt Collection and the Board of Trade Registers. A brief overview of the designs is important in order to contextualise the motifs which are most common in the archives and which illustrate the role of design in the textile trade with West Africa.

Trade itself is a common theme in the designs for export to West Africa. Cowry shells and manilas appear in numerous forms in the Logan Muckelt designs and those

⁷⁷ Meda Parker Johnston and Glen Kaufman, *Designs on Fabrics* (New York: Reinhold Publishing, 1981), p. 54.

⁷⁸ Neilson, 'Wax-Printed Textiles Intended for West Africa and Zaire', p. 485.

⁷⁹ Ibid. p. 486.

in the BT registers. Both cowry shells and manilas were common forms of currency in West Africa, amongst local communities but also with foreign merchants and traders operating on the coast.⁸⁰ Barrels of palm oil also features in the Logan Muckelt designs. The reference to palm oil in this design illustrates the role of textiles as a commodity of exchange for the raw materials desired by European traders. These references to trade indicate that merchants were drawing on a common 'language' of commerce to create designs which would appeal to West African consumers by portraying an aspect of shared culture.

Animals account for a large proportion of the designs analysed and represent another distinct difference between those for the West African markets and domestic and other global markets. The trend for novelty prints in the domestic market from the middle of the nineteenth century led to an increase in the number of animal forms used in designs. However, the representation of animals in designs for the domestic market was limited to novelty prints which, designed to amuse and entertain, also featured images of figures, such as Napoleon, household objects, and references to 'exotic' people and countries.⁸¹ These images are often presented as a simple vignette on a pale ground.

In contrast, the designs for the West African markets depict images of animals as part of larger abstract motifs. A number of the animals depicted were local to parts of West Africa, such as guinea fowl and antelope. However, there are also a number of non-native species, such as the Asian peacock (distinguishable from the recently discovered African peacock by the iconic fanned tail). The animals portrayed in these designs may simply be representative of 'exotic' fauna but it is also possible that the

⁸⁰ Pedler, *The Lion and the Unicorn in Africa*, p. 213.

⁸¹ Sykas, *The Secret Life of Textiles: Six Pattern Book Archives in North West England*, pp. 82-3.

animals depicted by British designers were in response to the circulation of images of non-native animals in West Africa. The long history of Indian and Indonesian textiles in West Africa meant that consumers were already familiar with images of foreign plants and animals, especially the peacock and Asian elephant.

Similarly, floral designs are notably absent from the Logan Muckelt collection and the samples for export to West Africa identified in the Board of Trade Registers. While floral designs accounted for a large proportion of designs for the domestic market and many foreign markets, very few designs for West Africa featured floral motifs, or even abstract floral forms. Representations of leaves and plants are also rare in the designs. The most common plants forms portrayed in the motifs are seed heads, fruits and nuts.

Many of the designs analysed allude to aspects of West African cultures however to understand the role of design in the West African trade and the relationship between West African consumers and British merchants it is necessary to further interrogate the extent to which these designs represent imitations, hybrid objects or evidence of the global homogenisation of design. A close analysis of the use of language and symbols in the designs reveals the complexity of the designs and their economic, political and social context.

2.3.2 Language and Symbol

A significant number of designs depict important symbols from West African cultures. Most notably, these include imagery from local languages of symbols such as Nsibidi and Adinkra. For instance, a sample dating from the late nineteenth century includes the *adinkra* symbol of the ‘duafe’ which for the Ashanti people can represent femininity, love and care and looking after one’s appearance.⁸² (Figure 2.3) The *adinkra* symbol ‘Dwen ini Aben’ or ram’s horns, signifying humility and strength, also appears in a number of the Logan Muckelt samples.⁸³ (Figures 2.4-6)



Figure 2.3: Design by Logan Muckelt featuring the Adinkra symbol ‘Duafe’ or the comb, which signifies femininity, love and care of one’s appearance. The Manchester Archives, Logan Muckelt Collection, Impression Book, Design No. D8201-D9030, c.1911-1913, GB127.M831/114 8395.

⁸² W. B. Wilis, *The Adinkra Dictionary: A Visual Primer on the Language of Adinkra* (Washington D.C.: Pyramid Complex, 1998), p. 189; Sykas, *The Secret Life of Textiles: Six Pattern Book Archives in North West England*, p. 30.

⁸³ Wilis, *The Adinkra Dictionary*, p. 210.



Figure 2.4: Design by Logan Muckelt featuring the Adinkra symbol 'Dwen ini Aben' or the ram's horns which represents humility and strength. The Manchester Archives, Logan Muckelt Collection, Pattern Book, c.1899, GB127.M831/55 130-131.



Figure 2.5: Photograph of a man wearing cloth decorated with 'Dwen ini Aben' and other Adinkra symbols. The National Archives, 'A Scribe of Bimtukuu', Collection of photographs taken in Ghana, 1901, CO 1069/34/65/2.



Figure 2.6: Printing block used to produce the Adinkra ram's horns symbol. The British Museum, date unknown, Kumase, Ghana, 8cm x 4.5cm, Af1946,18.240.a.

These languages of symbols, used by communities in Nigeria and the Gold Coast respectively, were a means of communication and form of decoration.⁸⁴ Each symbol carried a number of distinct but interrelated meanings, which were used to convey messages through dress, adornment and decorative art. The use of languages of symbols in West Africa is most evident in the development of Adinkra cloth, in the Gold Coast. Created using block printing methods, the cloth was adorned with

⁸⁴ Barber and Newell, 'Speaking Out', p. 119.

symbols in a grid-like pattern to convey a multitude of meanings.⁸⁵ Adinkra was often associated with mourning dress when it would be dyed black or red and decorated with symbols such the moon and fern.⁸⁶

The use of symbols which carried cultural or religious meaning was a common feature of textile production in many communities in West Africa. Yet, while these symbols were often regionally specific, evidence suggests that they too were products of cultural exchange, both within West Africa and globally. For instance, *olokun*, a type of *adire* cloth named after the God or Goddess of the sea, shares imagery with *adinkra* cloth and Muslim charm gowns. Originating in Lagos *olokun* is not seen as a simple imitation of *adinkra* designs and Kriger highlights the influences of Muslim symbols and designs, as well as the shapes created by tie-dye techniques. Indeed, Kriger argues that the name itself, *olokun*, is a recognition of the global influences which inspired the design, as the deity of the sea was closely related to the success of trade and prosperity. For Kriger the *olokun* cloth illustrates the hybridity of tastes and fashion in Lagos at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁸⁷

These symbols would have been recognisable and familiar to consumers however, they were also regionally specific. Reverend J. K. Macgregor, while traveling in Southern Nigeria, estimated that approximately four million people in the region belonged to the Ibo tribe from which the Nsibidi language was believed to have originated.⁸⁸ However, other contemporaries highlighted not only the regional differences but distinct differences between communities.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Kriger, *Cloth in West African History*, p. 127.

⁸⁶ Gillow, *Printed and Dyed Textiles*, p. 18.

⁸⁷ Kriger, *Cloth in West African History*, pp. 159-61.

⁸⁸ J. K. Macgregor, 'Some Notes on Nsibidi', *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 39 (1909), pp.209-219, p.209.

⁸⁹ Elphinstone Dayrell, 'Further Notes on 'Nsibidi Signs with Their Meanings from the Ikom District, Southern Nigeria', *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 41 (1911), pp.521-540.

It is likely that an understanding of the use of West African languages of symbols in textile adornment was made possible by the local knowledge of merchants and agents who transmitted information to manufacturers in Britain. Missionaries, colonial officials and explorers also contributed to the broader European knowledge of the importance of languages of symbols as a means of communication in various communities in West Africa.⁹⁰ It is difficult to ascertain the extent to which British manufacturers and merchants understood the meaning and nuances of the symbols they applied to textiles for export to West Africa. However, the symbols used indicate a degree of understanding of the suitability of certain symbols. For instance, the most common symbol found in the samples analysed is the 'duafe', a symbol which reflects the role of the cloth itself as a means of adornment and care of one's appearance. Equally, analysis indicates that no symbols related to death or mourning were used by British manufacturers. Research suggests that even after imports of British cloth began to dominate the West African markets, consumers continued to show a preference for locally produced cloth for ceremonial or ritual purposes.⁹¹ The absence of symbols relating to mourning suggests a degree of sensitivity on the part of merchants, to the use of particular symbols and their suitability for imported cloth.

The samples analysed in this study are evidence of manufacturers and merchants producing designs for individual markets. In incorporating culturally specific symbols into the designs for export to West Africa, merchants produced specialised motifs in an attempt to suit the tastes of West African consumers. Nonetheless, despite the significant number of illustrative motifs in the Logan Muckelt and BT collections, the majority of designs are abstract and geometric forms.

⁹⁰ Barber and Newell, 'Speaking Out', p. 123.

⁹¹ Frederick, 'Global Competition in the Local Marketplace', p. 89.

However, the absence of imagery drawn directly from West African visual cultures did not mean that these designs were typically European in form.

The predominance of designs which feature abstract or geometric forms can also be understood as reference to West African printing and dyeing traditions. While British manufacturers directly incorporated symbols from West African cultures, the use of abstract and geometric forms also mirrors the use of symbols in West African cloth. Although these forms and shapes do not hold any meaning to West African consumers, these designs share an aesthetic with textile traditions such as *adinkra* and *adire*. These motifs are distinct from both locally produced dyed and printed cloth, which held important symbolic meaning, and from imported Indian chintzes and Indonesian batiks.

The relationship between the British-made designs and West African printed cloth can be seen in the example of the two samples in figures 2.7 and 2.8. A number of the samples analysed recreate the grid structure used in *adinkra* cloth but replace *adinkra* symbols with abstract forms, geometric shapes and depictions of objects such as musical instruments. These designs mirror the amalgamation of textile traditions from diverse cultures found in the *olokun* cloth. Like *olokun* these designs are not simply imitations of West African cloth but refer to designs characteristics found within them. Just as Kriger saw *olokun* as a representation of Lagos as a centre of global trade and exchange, so to the Logan Muckelt designs represent the dialogue between Britain and West Africa. (Figure 2.9)



Figure 2.7: Geometric designs by Logan Muckelt & Co. The Manchester Archives, Logan Muckelt Collection, Impression Book, c.1903-1905, GB127.M831/110.



Figure 2.8: Design imitating resist dye methods and motifs found in *adire* cloth. The Manchester Archives, Logan Muckelt Collection, Impression Book, c.1903-1905, GB127.M831/110.

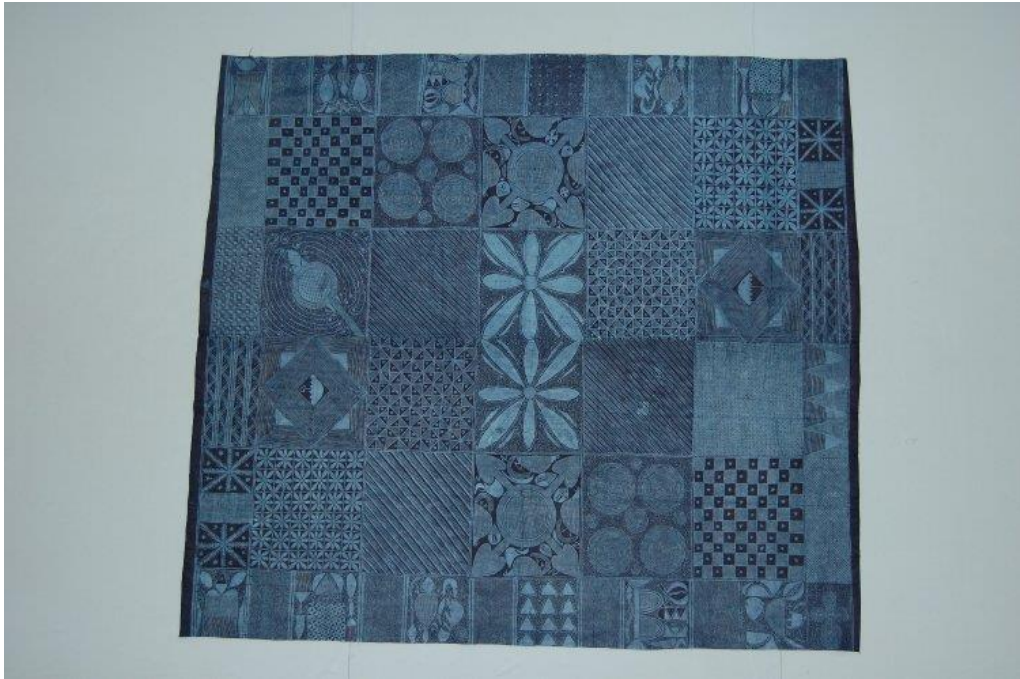


Figure 2.9: Example of Adire cloth created in Ibadan, Nigeria. The British Museum, Charles Beving Collection, Adire Cloth, Nigeria, Af1971,35.17.

Similarly, a number of striped designs are also present in the collections. Strip cloth, created from sewing individually woven strips of cloth together, played a significant role in trade in West Africa, as narrow strip cloth was used as currency after the dissemination of treadle looms by Muslim traders. Kriger argued that the relationship between strip cloth and trade resulted in a standardisation of strip cloth production and a set of well-established consumer preferences for cloth. Particularly in Muslim communities tailored strip cloth garments represented an individual's status and taste, while conforming to religious and cultural ideals.⁹²

The frequent creation of striped designs for the West African markets indicates a desire to tap into tastes for strip cloth. Indeed, a number of examples mimic the appearance of woven strip cloth in the printed design. However, these striped designs do not appear to be imitations of designs produced in West Africa and despite sharing many characteristics with West African made strip cloth, they are distinctive as

⁹² Kriger, *Cloth in West African History*, pp. 81-92.

European imports. For instance, as a currency which required standardisation, the exact width of each section of strip cloth was very important in West African societies.⁹³ Some regional differences existed but constancy of width became a key element of strip cloth design.⁹⁴ The striped designs produced by British manufacturers vary considerably in width and two sections of the same design are often different in width. Thus, these textiles draw on the popularity of striped cloth in West Africa and exploit the familiarity of such designs, while not directly imitating or reproducing strip cloth. Knowledge of the significance of strip cloth and the standardisation of dimensions may have travelled through the various merchants and agents operating in the trade with West Africa. Examples of strip cloth can be found in the collection of Charles Beving, dating from the later nineteenth century. Yet, it is unclear whether British manufacturers understood the value and cultural meaning of strip cloth in order to be able to accurately imitate its characteristics.

The collection of textile printer, Charles Beving, held at the British Museum illustrates how British manufacturers used samples of West African and Indonesian cloth to produce designs which were suitable for the West African market. Throughout his career as a Manchester-based textile printer and merchant, Charles Beving specialised in goods for the African markets. Beving began as a partner in the firm Blakeley & Beving in the second half of the nineteenth century, later establishing Beving & Co which continued production into the early twentieth century.⁹⁵ Beving's collection consists of over three hundred samples of Javanese and West African

⁹³ Ibid. p. 93.

⁹⁴ Ibid. p. 92.

⁹⁵ Julie Halls and Allison Martino, 'Cloth, Copyright, and Cultural Exchange: Textile Designs for Export to Africa at the National Archives of the UK', *Journal of Design History* 31/3 (2018), 236-54, (p. 241).

textiles.⁹⁶ These samples were collected for Beving in the late nineteenth century, as illustrations of the textile trade in West Africa.⁹⁷ The collection also includes a number of samples of Beving's own designs which drew inspiration from the samples collected in West Africa.⁹⁸ Beving's archive, therefore, is one of the few extant examples of the collection of samples by British manufacturers as a means of producing designs which were suitable for the West African market.

Beving's designs are notable for the inspiration they drew from Javanese motifs, dyeing techniques and colour palettes. Unlike the Logan Muckelt designs, Beving's samples mimic the effect of Indonesian wax-prints and include a number of floral motifs. Similarly, the designs are detailed and the pattern repeats are much smaller. A number of the designs also feature borders on each selvedge, evocative of the wide borders found on Indonesian sarongs, which also appear in the collection. In one instance, Beving directly copies a Javanese motif, adapting the colour combination to include an indigo ground and orange details. (Figures 2.10-11)

⁹⁶ H. J. Braunholtz, 'The Charles Beving Collection of Textiles', *The British Museum Quarterly* 8/4 (1934), 151-52, (p. 151).

⁹⁷ Alisa La Gamma and Christine Giuntini, *The Essential Art of African Textiles: Design Without End* (London: Yale University Press, 2008), p. 20; Halls and Martino, 'Cloth, Copyright, and Cultural Exchange', p. 241.

⁹⁸ La Gamma and Giuntini, *The Essential Art of African Textiles*, p. 22.



Figure 2.10: Sample of Javanese cloth for sale in West Africa, collected by Charles Beving. The British Museum, Charles Beving Collection, late nineteenth century, As1934,0307.51.



Figure 2.11: Design by Beving & Co. for the West African market imitating a Javanese design. The British Museum, Charles Beving Collection, late nineteenth century, Af1934,0307.391.

The samples in Beving's collection highlight the importance of Indonesian fabrics in the West African markets and the influence of this trade on European manufacturers and merchants. Beving's designs indicate an attempt to directly compete with Dutch imports by focusing on the reproduction of wax-resist effects and floral motifs. Beving also reproduced a popular motif, 'The Flying Duck' and registered the design in 1914.⁹⁹ (Figure 2.12) The exact provenance of the design is unclear however evidence suggests that the motif was first used in the 1880s by Ebenezer Brown Fleming, one of the first merchants to import Dutch imitation batik cloth into West Africa.¹⁰⁰ Beving's registration of the design in 1914 illustrates the extent to which copying and imitation persisted in the textile industry, Beving's interest in wax-effect designs and the potential life-span of motifs. Notably, the sample held by the British Museum and the sample found in the BT registers, present two different colourways for the design with red and purple grounds respectively.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Halls and Martino, 'Cloth, Copyright, and Cultural Exchange', p. 6.

¹⁰⁰ Neilson, 'Wax-Printed Textiles Intended for West Africa and Zaire', p. 472.

¹⁰¹ La Gamma and Giuntini, *The Essential Art of African Textiles*, p. 22.



Figure 2.12: 'Flying Duck' design by Beving & Co. for the West African market. The British Museum, Charles Beving Collection, c.1914, Af1934,0307.414.

Another distinctive feature of the designs for West Africa, is the scale of the motif and the size of the repeat. In Europe, large motifs and repeats were predominately associated with furnishing fabrics in the domestic market and were rarely used in the creation of garments.¹⁰² Conversely, the majority of designs for

¹⁰² Sykas, *The Secret Life of Textiles: Six Pattern Book Archives in North West England*, p. 54.

export to West Africa feature large motifs and very limited amounts of small detail. The designs manufactured for West African markets mirror in the size and scale of their motifs, the dyed and printed fabrics produced in West Africa.

The scale of the motifs and the size of the repeat also reflects the way that these textiles were used by West African consumers as wrappers. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the majority of imported British printed textiles were not worn as tailored garments. Instead, lengths of cloth were draped around the body as a wrapper, by both men and women.¹⁰³ With the absence of multiple seams and joins in the fabric, large motifs were not interrupted by tailoring and so could be viewed in their entirety. As can be seen in figure 2.13, only one woman wears a wrapper made from fabric with a small motif on a pale ground, the other women wear large check designs or pale motifs on an indigo ground with large-scale repeats. As with many photographs from the colonial era, little is known of the provenance of this image and it is not possible to know if the textiles worn are imported goods or locally produced.¹⁰⁴ However, visual analysis highlights the similarities between the fabrics seen in this image and the extant textile samples in the archives.

¹⁰³ Steiner, 'Another Image of Africa', p. 98.

¹⁰⁴ Jack T. Thompson, *Light on Darkness? Missionary Photography of Africa in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2012), p. 34; James R. Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualisation of the British Empire* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997), p. 16.



Figure 2.13: 'Women carrying bales of cocoa to the coast', photograph taken in Ghana by Rudolf Fisch. International Mission Photography Archive, Photographs from the Basel Mission, Ghana, c.1900-1911, D-30.22.052. <http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15799coll123/id/7630/rec/137>.

Object analysis demonstrates the extent to which British merchants and manufacturers produced specialised designs for the West African markets. Through close examination of the designs it becomes clear that the British textile industry drew on the imagery and characteristics of West African textiles in order to create designs which were suitable for West African consumers. However, these designs were rarely imitations of West African cloth, or other imported goods such as Indian and Indonesian textiles. Instead they combined elements of West African visual cultures with aspects of European printed-textile design. Consequently, these designs can be seen as hybrid objects, reflecting the networks of exchange between Britain and West African communities.

2.4 Conclusion

For many years scholars largely overlooked the potential of object sources relating to the printed textile industry from the 1830s onwards. There are a number of reasons for this, some relating to accessibility, others to trends in academic research and the lasting influence of nineteenth-century discourses in taste and ‘good design’ on perceptions of British printed textiles. In recent years, the importance of object-based research has been demonstrated by historians working in a variety of disciplines and across numerous subjects and time periods.

The importance of design, as a subject for historical study, is highlighted in the case of the printed textile industry, and particularly in relation to the export markets. Through analysing the designs produced by British manufacturers for export to West Africa, or equally India, Japan or South America, a new narrative is revealed, one which problematises the narrative of colonial export markets as ‘dumping grounds’

for surplus production, of the colonised as passive consumers and of the way the economy of Empire was enacted by British merchants.

The next chapters will place these textile samples within the context of the British textile industry, colonial trade and the colonial administration through the lens of trade mark legislation in British West Africa. Viewing these objects within the broader context of the textile industry and the colonial economy allows for a greater understanding of how the inequalities in economic, political and social power embodied in the British Empire are visible in the material culture of colonial trade.¹⁰⁵ As illustrated, using methods from the field of design history offers new perspectives on the relationship between British manufacturers and colonial consumers. The pattern book and textile samples remain the focus of the following chapter, which considers the relationship between the specialisation of design for West Africa and the development of printing and dyeing techniques within the industry.

¹⁰⁵ Coombes, *Reinventing Africa*, p. 221.

Chapter 3

Flexible Production:

The Development and Adaptation of Manufacturing Processes for the West African Market

Design was one mechanism used by British manufacturers and merchants to specialise goods for the West African market. Knowledge of the demands of specific markets and an understanding of other cultures was vital in enabling designers to cater for a wide range of global consumers. However, the creation of these designs was also influenced, and sometimes limited, by the technology available to translate them from a concept to a finished product. The designs had to meet the tastes of West African consumers but also be reproduced in a way which was efficient and profitable. The processes of the design and manufacture of consumer goods is directly related. The introduction of new processes led to the conception of novel styles while the requirements of the market encouraged the development of new manufacturing techniques.

During the late nineteenth century technological innovation facilitated manufacturers in the adaptation of textile goods to suit the tastes of export markets. The use of indigo in British textiles for West Africa, required the development of new and improved processes for dyeing and printing with indigo. Manufacturers and merchants trading in the West African markets also looked to imitate features of Indonesian textiles produced using wax-resist methods. This led to technological and chemical innovations in the development of new printing and dyeing techniques.

The relationship between technological and product innovation has been the focus of many studies of the Industrial Revolution.¹ The majority of this literature considers the role of import substitution and quality innovation (where the quality of a product is enhanced).² Technological innovation in the second half of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century, was also encouraged by the need for greater efficiency in the production process and the desire to reduce production costs.³ The development of mechanised textile printing was in response to the high labour requirements of block and copper plate printing and the commercial potential of cheaper goods for the lower end of the market.⁴ This chapter argues that the need to produce specialised goods for export led to the development and adoption of printing and dyeing techniques which enabled manufacturers to imitate aspects of textiles that were popular in the West African markets while exploiting existing European technologies.

This chapter considers how printed textiles for the West African market were manufactured and what the choice of production methods can reveal about product specialisation for the export trade. It will demonstrate the ways in which developments in the printing and dyeing industries enabled greater specialisation in the form of imitation batik and tie-dye. However, it also argues that alongside these specialised methods, firms adapted existing techniques, such as roller printing and pattern variation, to meet the requirements of the West African market. It concludes that this

¹Maxine Berg, 'Quality, Cotton and the Global Luxury Trade', in *How India Clothed the World: The World of South Asian Textiles, 1500-1850*, ed. by Giorgio Riello and Tirthankar Roy (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 391-414; Stanley D. Chapman, 'Quantity Versus Quality in the British Industrial Revolution: The Case of Printed Textiles', *Northern History* 21/1 (1985), 175-92; John Styles, 'What Were Cottons for in the Early Industrial Revolution?', in *The Spinning World: A Global History of Cotton Textiles, 1200-1850*, ed. by Giorgio Riello and Prasannan Parthasarathi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 307-26.

² Berg, 'Quality, Cotton and the Global Luxury Trade', p. 398.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Adrian Forty, *Objects of Desire: Design and Society 1750-1980* (London: Cameron Books, 1986), p. 42.

represents an example of the use flexible production to negotiate the demands and risks of the export market.

3.1 The Textile Printing Industry 1830-1870

The introduction of printed cottons from India in the seventeenth century and the beginnings of domestic calico printing industries in the eighteenth century marked a significant shift in the production and consumption of patterned cloth in Europe.⁵ Within a few decades of its naissance the European textile printing industry, copper plate and roller printing methods were developed, enabling the process to be mechanised.⁶ By the 1830s, the use of mechanised printing methods was widespread.⁷

The role of mechanisation in the textile printing industry, was the subject of much debate during the nineteenth century and continues to be raised by historians.⁸ For many contemporaries, roller printing was perceived as detrimental to the aesthetic quality of printed textiles, reducing it from a craft performed by skilled artisans to an industry producing cheap, low-quality goods to please the consuming masses. The printed textile industry was held as an example of the danger mechanisation posed.⁹

⁵ Beverly Lemire, *Fashion's Favourite: The Cotton Trade and the Consumer in Britain, 1660-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Stanley D. Chapman and Serge Chassagne, *European Textile Printers in the Eighteenth Century: A Study of Peel and Oberkampf* (London: Heinemann, 1981); Styles, 'What Were Cottons for in the Early Industrial Revolution?'; John Styles, 'Indian Cottons and European Fashion, 1400-1800', in *Global Design History*, ed. by Glenn Adamson, Giorgio Riello, and Sarah Teasley (London: Routledge, 2011), 37-46.

⁶ Hazel Clark, 'Design and Designing of Lancashire Printed Calicoes During the First Half of the Nineteenth Century', *Textile History* 15/1 (1984), 101-18, (p. 103).

⁷ David Greysmith, 'The Impact of Technology on Printed Textiles in the Nineteenth Century', in *Design and Industry: The Effects of Industrialisation and Technical Change on Design* (London: The Design Council, 1980), 62-67.

⁸ Ibid.; David Greysmith, 'Patterns, Piracy and Protection in the Textile Printing Industry 1787-1850', *Textile History* 14/2 (1983), 165-94; Clark, 'Design and Designing of Lancashire Printed Calicoes'; Peter Floud, 'The British Calico-Printing Industry, 1676-1840', *CIBA Review* 1 (1961), 2-7; Lara Kriegel, 'Culture and the Copy: Calico, Capitalism and Design Copyright in Early Victorian Britain', *Journal of British Studies* 43/2 (2004), 233-65.

⁹ Josephine Tierney, 'Design Quality, Mechanization and Taste in the British Textile Printing Industry, 1839-1899', *Journal of Design History* 30/3 (2017), 249-64.

The advantages of roller printing lay in its ability to produce large quantities of the same design per unit of time. These machines were ubiquitous by the late nineteenth century but were by no means the only method of production. Hand painting, block printing and copper plate printing remained common methods of producing patterned cloth.

The anxiety produced by the introduction of the roller printer was encapsulated in the debates surrounding the copying and imitation of designs in the late 1830s, which led to the Design Registration Act of 1839 and the subsequent creation of the Board of Trade copyright registers.¹⁰ However, the introduction of legal protection for manufacturers and merchants against those intentionally copying their designs, did not have the desired effect.¹¹ In the textile printing towns and cities of the North-West of England, emulating, imitating and reproducing competitors designs remained a characteristic of the trade.

Further technological developments in the industry included the process of mechanical engraving in the 1850s, which enabled designs to be transferred onto copper rollers by the use of the pentagraph machine.¹² Improvements were also made to rotary and duplex printing machines and although they remained less common than roller printers, continued to be used throughout the nineteenth century.¹³

¹⁰ Lara Kriegel, *Grand Designs: Labor, Empire, and the Museum in Victorian Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), p. 239; Julie Halls and Allison Martino, 'Cloth, Copyright, and Cultural Exchange: Textile Designs for Export to Africa at the National Archives of the UK', *Journal of Design History* 31/3 (2018), 236-54.

¹¹ Kriegel, *Grand Designs*, p. 82.

¹² The Pentagraph machine was used to transfer the design onto the copper roller. The pentagraph could alter the scale of designs ready for printing and by using the etching process, rather than hand engraving, reduced the skill and time required for the completion of each roller.

¹³ Stuart Robinson, *A History of Printed Textiles* (London: Studio Vista, 1969), p. 27.

The improvement of synthetic dyes, since the first coal-tar dye of 1856, also influenced the industry, enabling new and exciting colours.¹⁴ However, like roller printing, synthetic dyes did not replace natural dyestuffs which continued to be widely used into the twentieth century.¹⁵ Examination of handbooks and manuals for calico printing illustrates the extent to which the industry centred on the chemical knowledge of its dyers. A greater understanding of the chemicals used within the printed industry led to significant improvements in the processes of resist and discharge dyeing, allowing more elaborate designs to be created.¹⁶

Thus, the textile printing industry did not remain static during the second half of the nineteenth century; while the principles of block or roller printing remained the mainstay of the workshop, significant improvements and enhancements continued to be made. Many of these developments were in response to the requirements of the growing export trade and attempts to cater to the demands of consumers across the globe. The adaptation of existing printing methods and technologies to produce specialised goods for particular markets is an important aspect of the history of the industry. The development and growth of the Turkey Red industry in Scotland and England is a prime example of the changes to the structure of the industry and the continued evolution of the trade in printed textiles throughout the nineteenth century.

In the case of the West African trade the development of imitation batik and tie-dye and the adaptation of existing printing and dyeing techniques to create suitable designs, was vital to the success of firms like Logan Muckelt. Examination of the techniques that manufacturers used to produce textiles which were adapted to the West

¹⁴ Charlotte Nicklas, 'Splendid Hues: Colour, Dyes, Everyday Science and Women's Fashion, 1840-1875' (PhD Thesis, University of Brighton, 2009), p. 24; C. M. Mellor and D. S. L. Cardwell, 'Dyes and Dyeing 1775-1860', *The British Journal for the History of Science* 1/3 (1963), 265-79, (p. 265).

¹⁵ Robert Fox and Agusti Nieto-Galan (eds), *Natural Dyestuffs and Industrial Culture in Europe, 1750-1880* (Canton, MA: Science History Publications, 1999), p. xi.

¹⁶ Robinson, *A History of Printed Textiles*, pp. 43-6.

African market, illustrates the importance of market specialisation in the textile printing industry of the late nineteenth century.

3.2 Resist Methods

The wax-print has become the dominant theme in the historiography of textiles in West Africa but is just one example of resist-dye methods used to produce cloth for the West African market. West African dyers used a number of resist methods to add patterns to cloth and Indonesian batiks were popular amongst West African consumers. The popularity of resist-dyed cloth in West Africa encouraged European manufacturers to reproduce the process of batik and develop new ways of imitating the characteristics of resist designs, including the ‘cracked’ effect produced by wax-resist techniques. New and modified process enabled manufacturers to economically and efficiently produce the designs being created for West African markets.

The history of European cloth imports into West Africa is largely associated with the trade in Dutch wax-printed textiles, which became staples of West African fashion during the twentieth century. The first exports of Dutch wax-resist textiles to West Africa can be traced to the mid-nineteenth century.¹⁷ However, it was in the latter part of the century that the export of Dutch textiles to West Africa developed into a significant trade. It is during this period, in the 1880s, that the most prominent Dutch firm, Vlisco, began to export their wax-cloth to West Africa.¹⁸

The history of wax-cloth in West Africa is complex and contested. The significant role that Dutch-wax plays in contemporary West African dress and the

¹⁷ Nina Sylvannus, *Patterns in Circulation: Cloth, Gender and Materiality in West Africa* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2016), p. 56.

¹⁸ <https://www.vlisco.com/heritage/the-founding-of-vlisco/> [accessed 03/07/2018]

meaning which has been imbued into many of the designs has heavily influenced how the history of these imported goods has been narrated.¹⁹ In writing the history of wax-cloth in West Africa, time is often contracted to evoke a sense of tradition and continuity between the early imports of the late-nineteenth century and the symbolic status which these textiles now have in many West African communities. With very limited primary sources relating to the consumption of imported cloth in West Africa prior to the 1920s, scholars, manufacturers and fashion writers frequently draw on the present to inform our understanding of wax-cloth in the past.²⁰ The wax phenomenon in West Africa and the related questions surrounding cultural appropriation, imitation and authenticity, has attracted the interest of a variety of different disciplines from anthropology to economics, fashion studies, globalisation studies, sociology, political studies, textile history and business history.²¹

The wax-print has also been a popular topic of study due its hybrid nature. Although resist-dyeing methods for patterned cloth are found all over the world, Indonesian artisans had developed the use of wax-resist to produce fine and detailed designs which were exported to a number of countries, including India and West Africa.²² Indonesian batiks were admired by West African consumers and became an

¹⁹ Leslie W. Rabine, *The Global Circulation of African Fashion* (Oxford: Berg, 2002), p. 76; Sylvannus, *Patterns in Circulation*, p. 52.

²⁰ Ruth Neilson, 'The History and Development of Wax-Printed Textiles Intended for West Africa and Zaire', in *The Fabrics of Culture: The Anthropology of Clothing and Adornment*, ed. by Justine M. Cordwell and Ronald A. Schwarz (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1979), 467-98 (p.467).

²¹ Christopher B. Steiner, 'Another Image of Africa: Toward an Ethnohistory of European Cloth in West Africa, 1873-1960', *Ethnohistory* 32/2 (1985), 91-110; Catherine McKinley, *Indigo: In Search of the Colour that Seduced the World* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011); Colleen E. Kriger, *Cloth in West African History* (Oxford: AltaMira Press, 2006); Victoria L. Rovine, 'African Fashion: Design, Identity and History', in *Contemporary African Fashion*, ed. by Suzanne Gott and Kristyne Loughran (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 89-103; Victoria L. Rovine, 'Fashionable Traditions: The Globalization of an African Textile', in *Fashioning Africa: Power and the Politics of Dress*, ed. by Jean Allman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 189-211; Sylvannus, *Patterns in Circulation*.

²² Harmen C. Veldhuisen, *Batik Belanda 1840-1940: Dutch Influence in Batik from Java History and Science* (Jakarta: Gaya Favorit Press, 1993), p. 13.

important import for the area.²³ There are several theories about how Europeans came to export wax-prints to West Africa.²⁴ However, the most likely can be traced to attempts by the Dutch to export imitation batiks to their colonies in Indonesia. This short-lived enterprise ended when the demand in Java slumped in the late 1860s but the styles were revived in the 1890s when the potential of the West African market was realised.²⁵

Resist methods were an important part of West African textile traditions and, as textile printing was uncommon in most West African communities, was the primary way of patterning lengths of fabric.²⁶ Starch, stitch, wax and clamp resist methods were all used to produce effects which were similar to Javanese batik styles.²⁷ Imitating these styles, and the popular Indonesian imports, offered European merchants one mechanism for adapting designs for West African tastes.

However, European printers attempting to replicate the batik methods of Indonesian producers faced a number of challenges. Translating the hand application of a wax resist to a mechanised, less labour-intensive alternative proved problematic. Initial attempts at imitating Javanese batik by Dutch manufacturers were disregarded by Indonesian consumers who recognised distinct flaws in their quality.²⁸ Another such challenge was ensuring that the resist would harden on or before being immersed into the dye vat, as soft resist would lead to bleeding of the colour.²⁹

²³ Geert Verbong, 'The Dutch Calico Printing Industry between 1800 and 1875', in *Natural Dyestuffs and Industrial Culture in Europe, 1750-1880*, ed. by Robert Fox and Agusti Nieto-Galan (Canton, MA: Science History Publications, 1999), 193-218 (p.195).

²⁴ Neilson, 'Wax-Printed Textiles Intended for West Africa and Zaire', pp. 469-70.

²⁵ Verbong, 'The Dutch Calico Printing Industry', p. 213.

²⁶ Kriger, *Cloth in West African History*, pp. 117-18.

²⁷ Robinson, *A History of Printed Textiles*, p. 46.

²⁸ Verbong, 'The Dutch Calico Printing Industry', p. 209.

²⁹ William Crookes, *A Practical Handbook of Dyeing and Calico-Printing* (London: Longmans, Green & Co. , 1874), p. 581.

The difficulties for the British textile industry of adapting resist dye methods to meet the demand and costs of the domestic and overseas markets are highlighted by Charles O'Neill in his 1878 treatise on calico printing.³⁰ While pipeclay is cited by a number of contemporaries as a common resist O'Neill noted that although it was the most efficient mechanical resist it could not be applied using a roller, due to the impurities found within which scratched the surface of the copper roller and the inability to apply it in sufficient quantities through this method.³¹ Equally, while wax and resin were used for cold vat dyeing, there were no known substances which were insoluble in hot vats.³² In cases where the dye vat needed to be heated, the cloth had to be tied or clamped to prevent the dye from reaching unwanted areas.³³

The Javanaise machine, the first known attempt to mechanise the batik process, was developed by the firm of Previnaire & Co. in the 1850s and applied the principles of the Perrotine by applying resist to the cloth using a large block.³⁴ However, importantly La Javanaise included mechanisms for heating the printing block and the resist, allowing for the use of the warm resin-wax resist which Previnaire favoured.³⁵

The Perrotine, invented by Monsieur Perrot in 1834, was an early attempt to mechanise the printing process, based on the use of wooden blocks.³⁶ While the Perrotine was a significant advancement in the mechanisation of the textile printing, it did not experience great success in the British industry at the time of its introduction

³⁰ O'Neill had worked for several years in the textile printing and dyeing industries, using this knowledge to publish *The Practice and Principles of Calico Printing* (Manchester: Palmer and Howe, 1878) and *Dictionary of Calico Printing and Dyeing* (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1862).

³¹ Charles O'Neill, *The Practice and Principles of Calico Printing*, (Manchester: Palmer and Howe, 1878), p. 322.

³² Ibid. p. 327.

³³ Ibid. p. 323.

³⁴ Verbong, 'The Dutch Calico Printing Industry', p. 209.

³⁵ Ibid. p. 210.

³⁶ Robinson, *A History of Printed Textiles*, p. 106.

in the 1840s.³⁷ In 1849, Edward Parnell, the author of *Dyeing and Calico Printing*, a manual on the processes used in the industry, stated that only two or three Perrotines were in use in Britain.³⁸ The Perrotine was largely made redundant with the development of copper plate printing and subsequently copper roller printing.³⁹ Nevertheless, the Perrotine continued to be used across continental Europe, notably in Switzerland and France.⁴⁰ While the Perrotine was not as efficient as the roller printers which followed, it considerably reduced the amount of work required to produce accurate and good quality printed textiles. (Figures 3.1-2)

Although the Perrotine was slower than rotary machines as the surface area covered was much smaller and printing was not continuous, the block mechanism enabled multiple colours in the design to be printed at the same time with the potential for six blocks in one machine, this allowed for six colour designs. However, La Javanaise did not prove to be more efficient than hand-block printing, as several workers were needed for each machine and misprints were common. This led Previnaire to transfer to double-sided cylinder printing machines in the 1890s, as his British competitors.⁴¹

³⁷ Philip A. Sykas, 'Material Evidence: Nineteenth Century Calico Printers' Pattern Books' (PhD Thesis, Manchester Metropolitan University, 2000), pp. 314-5.

³⁸ Edward Andrew Parnell, *Dyeing and Calico Printing* (London: Taylor, Walton & Maberly, 1889), p. 120.

³⁹ Robinson, *A History of Printed Textiles*, p. 106.

⁴⁰ For instance, in the Bas-Dauphiné, France, printing blocks and the Perrotine machine remained the primary means of production well into the second half of the nineteenth century; Jerome Rojon, 'L'industries Textile en Bas-Dauphine du XVIIIe Siecle a 1939', in *Indiennes et Brocards: L'industries Textile en Bas-Dauphine* (Grenoble: Centre Alpin et Rhodanien D'Ethnologie, 2000), 19-38 (p.34).

⁴¹ Verbong, 'The Dutch Calico Printing Industry', pp. 209-13.

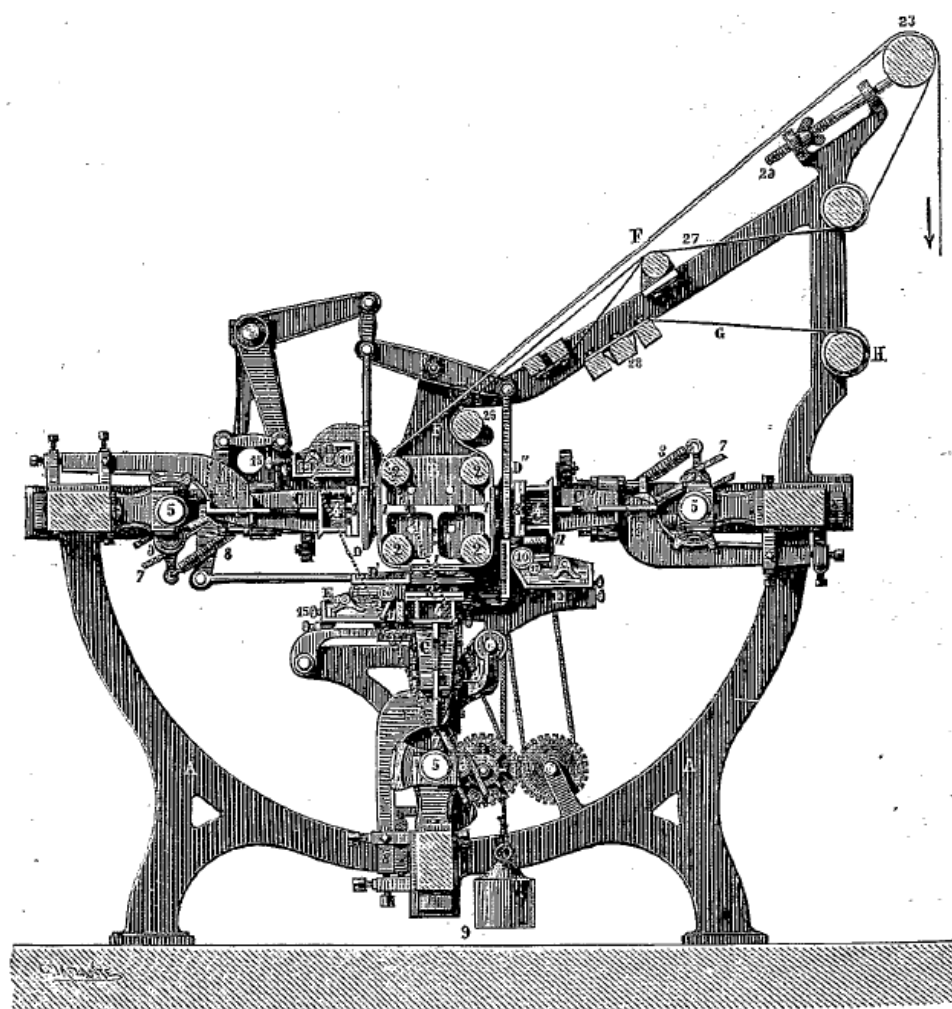


Fig. 746. — Perrotine.

Figure 3.1: Diagram of a Perrotine. From Charles-Adolphe Wurtz, *Dictionnaire de Chimie Pure et Applique Vol.III* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1878), p.269.

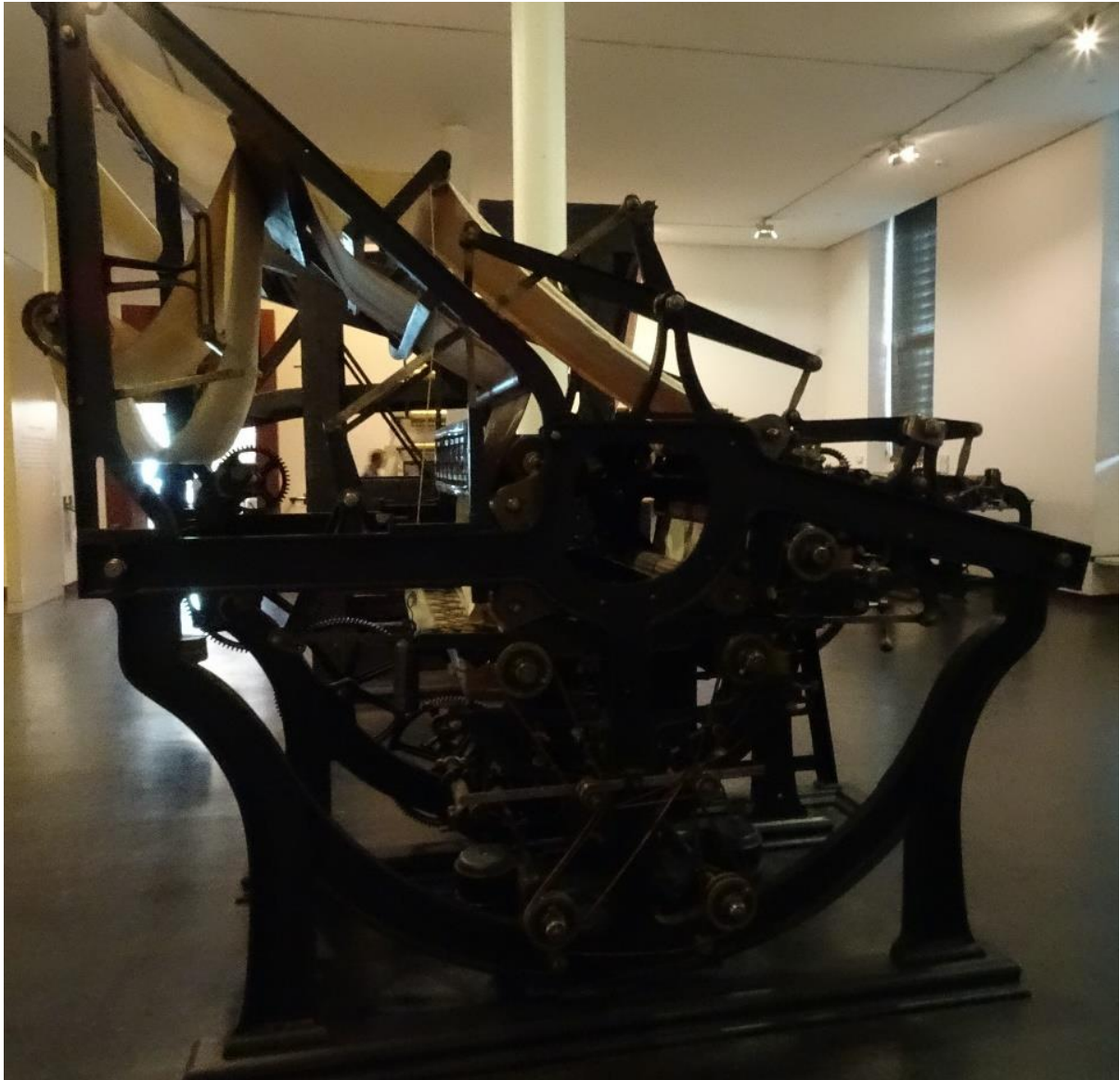


Figure 3.2: A surviving French Perrotine with four printing blocks, dating from the 1840s. Musée d'Impression sur Etoffes, Mulhouse, France.

The Perrotine was far less popular than roller printing machines but John Graham's survey of the calico printing industry indicates that 33 machines were in use in the middle of the nineteenth century.⁴² Philip Sykas has also highlighted the extent of press printing, which was based on similar principles to the Perrotine in that it

⁴² The Manchester Archives, John Graham, *History of Printworks in the Manchester District, 1760-1846*, GB127.BR ff 667.3 G1.

presented a mechanised form of block printing, demonstrating the probability that a large proportion of Graham's estimates for the Perrotine were actually press printing machines.⁴³ This figure differs dramatically from the 210 Perrotine machines which are estimated to have been in use during the same period in France. Conversely, the number of roller printing machines in use in Britain was ten times that of France at approximately 800.⁴⁴ Despite the limited success of the Perrotine relative to the copper roller printing machine, the Perrotine played an important role in the development of the production of imitation batik styles.

Other forms of imitating batiks styles were to prove more popular, as the development of chemical knowledge within the printing and dyeing industry brought new possibilities in resist and discharge methods. Despite being referred to as wax-cloth or wax-prints, European manufacturers rarely used wax to produce resist patterns. Contemporary descriptions of resist dye processes describe the use of pipe clay, gum and a variety of chemical solutions and salts.⁴⁵

An examination of textile printing and dyeing manuals from the second half of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century also highlights the use of discharge methods alongside resist techniques. For instance, Crookes *A Practical Handbook of Dyeing and Calico Printing*, published in 1874, suggests that resist and discharge methods were considered to have similar effects. Crookes states that there are two types of resist used in the dyeing of indigo; those which act 'mechanically' by preventing the penetration of the dye, such as wax, and those which act chemically, such as 'salts of copper and of bichloride of mercury', which cause the indigo to oxidise before it reaches the fibre, thus preventing the uptake of the dye.⁴⁶ While

⁴³ Sykas, 'Material Evidence', p. 315.

⁴⁴ Verbong, 'The Dutch Calico Printing Industry', p. 204.

⁴⁵ Crookes, *Handbook of Dyeing and Calico-Printing*, p. 580.

⁴⁶ Crookes, *Handbook of Dyeing and Calico-Printing*, p. 572.

Crookes claims that the latter are known as discharge methods, there were a number of substances which worked both mechanically and chemically, such as copper and lead soaps. Renowned manufacturer of imitation batiks, Previnaire, differed in that until the 1890s he used a mixture of warm resin and wax.⁴⁷

Batik methods were also being used in this period in the Turkey Red industry. The pattern book archive of the United Turkey Red Company, held by the National Museums of Scotland, contains a volume entitled 'Alexandria Batiks' believed to have been produced for the Indonesian or West African markets. Minutes of the UTR indicate that batik styles remained profitable and popular amongst Turkey red manufacturers into the twentieth century.⁴⁸ Discharge methods were also used by Manchester printers to produce cloth for the West African markets. These 'Manchester batiks' were first dyed with indigo, the indigo was then removed from the areas where the motif would be applied and further colours added over these bleached areas to form the complete design.⁴⁹

A further development in the use of discharge and resist methods to imitate batik was the 'padding machine'. While most printing machines were designed to impart a design onto particular parts of the cloth, padding machines were employed when one colour needed to be applied uniformly across the entire width and length of the cloth.⁵⁰ Several contemporary handbooks and manuals also indicate that padding machines were used in the application of various solutions prior to the dyeing or printing. For instance, in his 1887 publication *The Printing of Cotton Fabrics*, Antonio Sansone described the use of a padding machine to apply glucose solution prior to

⁴⁷ Verbong, 'The Dutch Calico Printing Industry', p. 210.

⁴⁸ Stana Nenadic and Sally Tuckett, *Colouring the Nation: The Turkey Red Printed Cotton Industry in Scotland, c.1840-1940* (Edinburgh: National Museums of Scotland, 2013), p. 37.

⁴⁹ Robinson, *A History of Printed Textiles*, p. 46.

⁵⁰ Sykas, 'Material Evidence', p. 280.

printing.⁵¹ Cloth could be padded on a padding machine or with the use of a padded roller.⁵²

Padding machines were commonly used in the production of resist and discharge styles. Correspondence between the Africa Section of the Calico Printers' Association and the director Hewit, refers to the padded styles produced by Horidge, Cornall & Co., stating that the firm 'do indigoes in all styles, but use their indigo patterns also for mock indigo work, and print on work, white ground and padded.'⁵³ Sansone described the process for producing discharge styles with the padding method, stating:

The goods are padded all over, or on one side only with the mordant, and dried, and afterwards the discharge is printed on, which by dissolving the iron or alumina mordant where it is applied, prevents any colour from being formed there, and therefore causes the production of white spots on coloured ground, when the goods are dyed in alzerin...⁵⁴

The cloth was padded with a mordant, the design was printed onto the cloth with acid removing the mordant where the motif would finally be, then the cloth was dunged and dyed. At the end of this process, the design 'appears in white on a coloured ground' and further methods such as block printing could be used to add layers of colour to the motif.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Antonio Sansone, *The Printing of Cotton Fabrics* (Manchester: Heywood, 1887), p. 311.

⁵² Ibid. p. 312.

⁵³ The Manchester Archives, Calico Printers' Association Collection, Correspondence, 1901-1949, 12th July 1910, GB127.M75/1/2-1144.

⁵⁴ Sansone, *The Printing of Cotton Fabrics*, p. 315.

⁵⁵ Crookes, *Handbook of Dyeing and Calico-Printing*, p. 582.

Padding was also used for resist styles, as described by George Duerr in 1869, 'In the resist style the cloth is printed with a colour which will prevent the pad colour from being fixed on the part where the resist or reserve has been applied.' Duerr also summarises the difference between resist dyeing and printing stating:

Thus, suppose a roller is engraved so as to print spots in, say, a red mordant, this, by dyeing up with alizarine, would give red spots on a white ground; if now, we print with the same roller a resist colour, afterwards pad this over with a red mordant, and then dye up with alizarine, we should have a pattern in white spots on a red ground.⁵⁶

Using the padding technique to produce resist styles was beneficial, therefore, when large areas of one colour formed the ground of the cloth, while relatively simple motif in one colour formed the pattern. As such, padding was ideal for indigo styles which often consisted of an indigo ground with a large, undetailed motif, as seen in the Logan Muckelt pattern books.

Contemporary accounts indicate that individual padding machines were common but that they could also be integrated into the complex mechanical systems which could complete the entire padding process. One such example is the 'padding flue' described by William Crookes in 1874, in which the cloth is conveyed through each stage of the padding process from the application of the mordant to the printing of the cloth.⁵⁷ It is difficult to know how many, if any, of these systems were in use during the second half of the nineteenth century. Yet, Crookes' description is a

⁵⁶ George Duerr, *Bleaching and Calico Printing: A Practical Manual* (London: C. Griffin & Co. , 1896), p. 41.

⁵⁷ Crookes, *Handbook of Dyeing and Calico-Printing*, p. 582.

reminder of the auxiliary equipment and machinery that was required by printers and dyers in order to produce finished goods. (Figure 3.3)



Figure 3.3: Illustration of the 'padding flue'. William Crookes, *A Practical Handbook of Dyeing and Calico-Printing* (London, Longmans, Green & Co., 1874), p.582.

Padding provided an efficient alternative to roller printing in the production of designs with large areas of ground colour. If the entire design were roller printed it would require the engraving of multiple rollers (one for each colour) and their installation on the roller printing machine, both which were costly and time consuming. Large quantities of the design would need to be produced in order to recuperate these costs. For intricate and detailed designs which did not consist of large areas of any one colour, the benefits afforded by roller printing, namely the ability to produce clean, crisp lines even in small motifs, was often considered to outweigh these costs. In designs with large areas of block colour padding was much more efficient.

The development of mechanical means of applying resist to a fabric prior to dyeing, illustrates the ability of the industry to adapt existing technologies to the demands of foreign markets. By exploiting the advances made in the fields of printing and dyeing, Manchester merchants were able to create designs which catered to West African tastes while offering a cheaper alternative to hand finished cloth which was produced locally or imported from India and Indonesia. The relationship between the utilisation of machines such as the Perrotine and the roller printer, and the aesthetic

qualities of Manchester “wax-prints” points again to the development of a new typology of textiles in the West African markets.

3.3 Imitation Wax

By the end of the nineteenth century, a number of different methods were available to manufacturers wishing to imitate the wax-resist styles of Indonesian batik. Some of these methods used other forms of resists, such as lime, while others drew on the developments in the discharge method. These techniques drew on the basic principles of traditional batik in that they prevented the dye from reaching or fixing into the cloth. However, the Logan Muckelt pattern books samples illustrate a number of different styles, imitating the effects of batik and the challenges of emulating the wax-resist process, were producing using established roller printing methods. To do so the firm harnessed a number of common tropes, which by the 1880s were closely associated with the European wax-print. Three distinct features of European imitations of wax-resist cloth have been highlighted as insufficient to compete with locally-produced Indonesian textiles: the ‘cracked’ effect created by the dye bleeding, the ability to produce double-sided designs and precision of the print-registration.

The cracked effect was an unintended consequence of the quest for a mechanised alternative to wax-resist methods. European manufacturers understood that an important feature of wax-resist cloth was the appearance of the design on both sides of the fabric. In order to compete with Indonesian examples, Dutch producers developed a duplex-roller printing machine which allowed them to print a wax-resist

onto both sides of the cloth simultaneously.⁵⁸ However, although this technique brought the benefits of roller-printing to batik styles, resists applied in this manner were prone to crack as they dried.⁵⁹ As a result, once exposed to the dye vat, colour leached into the fractures in the resist, creating what is known as the cracked effect. (Figure 3.4)



Figure 3.4: Design by Logan Muckelt, imitating the 'cracked' effect. The Manchester Archives, Logan Muckelt Collection, Impression Book, Design No. D8201-D9030, c.1911-1913, GB127.M831/114 8305.

⁵⁸ Silvia Ruschak, 'The Gendered Luxury of Wax Prints in South Ghana: A Local Luxury Good with Global Roots', in *Luxury in Global Perspective: Objects and Practices, 1600-2000*, ed. by Karin Hofmeester and Bernd-Stefan Grewe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 169-91 (p.178).

⁵⁹ Ibid.

Despite its accidental beginnings, the cracked effect, or craquelé, became an iconic and desirable feature of West African wax-print. Indeed, contemporary Edward Knecht describes the cracked effect as giving designs ‘an extremely rich and beautiful quality’.⁶⁰ In his *Principles and Practices of Textile Printing*, he also notes that in Europe these veins were created by purposefully fragmenting the resist by ‘passing [the cloth] over small rollers’.⁶¹

The Logan Muckelt pattern books also indicate that engraved rollers were used to give the appearance of the cracked wax effect. For instance, design numbers 8305 and 8258 produced in the early twentieth century, illustrate how roller printing could imitated the cracked effect through a series of thin lines which make up the background motif. Other designs allude to the aesthetics of the wax-resist process in the uneven distribution of colour and the bleeding of one colour into another. All of these designs, while distinctly different, attempt to imitate the cracked effect of wax-resist dyeing. (Figures 3.5-6)

⁶⁰ Edmund Knecht, *The Principles and Practice of Textile Printing* (London: C. Griffin & Co., 1912), p. 491.

⁶¹ Ibid. p. 492.



Figure 3.5: Design featuring 'cracked' effect and misalignment of the motif to imitate wax-resist dyeing methods. The Manchester Archives, Logan Muckelt Collection, Impression Book, Design No. D8201-D9030, c.1911-1913, GB127.M831/114 3258.



Figure 3.6: Detail of 'cracked' effect. The Manchester Archives, Logan Muckelt Collection, Impression Book, Design No. D8201-D9030, c.1911-1913, GB127.M831/114 3258.

However, another design shows the difficulty of reproducing the effect of batik with traditional printing methods. (Figure 3.7-8) The background to this design presents a honeycomb style pattern which attempts to resemble the cracked effect. Yet, it is clear from the regularity and repetition of the motif, that this cracked effect was printed using either a copper roller or with blocks rather than produced with wax-resist methods. The design is also presented in another colourway, with an identical background, again evidence that the motif was printed and thus able to be reproduced.



Figure 3.7: Design featuring an alternative technique for imitating the 'cracked' effect of wax-resist dyeing. The Manchester Archives, Logan Muckelt Collection, Impression Book, Design No. D8201-D9030, c.1911-1913, GB127.M831/114 8235.



Figure 3.8: Detail of imitation 'cracked' effect. The Manchester Archives, Logan Muckelt Collection, Impression Book, Design No. D8201-D9030, c.1911-1913, GB127.M831/114 8235.

The cracked effect which Logan Muckelt imitated in their designs is evidence of the complexity of cross-cultural exchange and the changeable meaning of objects. The development of the cracked effect as a design trope in European cloth intended for West African consumers illustrates the need of manufacturers to respond to the tastes and specificities of the West African markets, drawing on visual cultures from around the world to produce hybrid objects. While designs produced using wax-resist dyeing techniques were considered objects of high value, ‘fancy prints’ were seen to be of inferior quality and aesthetic merit.⁶² By alluding to the cracked effect of the authentic wax designs, Logan Muckelt were tapping into these cultural connotations. They also demonstrate that Manchester merchants were not attempting to directly compete with Indonesian imported cloth available on the West African market by simply imitating their designs. In the Indonesian practice of batik, the cracking of the wax was not intentionally practiced and the resulting bleeding of dye through any fractures was seen as a sign of inferior quality.

The archive of Charles Beving, held at the British Museum, is evidence that the cracked effect associated with Euro-African wax-prints was not found in Indonesian batik cloth. The Javanese samples in Beving’s collection illustrate the detailed and complex patterns which Indonesian manufacturers created using the wax-resist method. They also demonstrate that the cracked effect associated with batik was not a feature of all Javanese batik cloth. (Figures 3.9-10) Only one of the samples of Javanese cloth in Beving’s collection shows evidence of cracking in the wax-resist. (Figure 3.11)

⁶² Sylvannus, *Patterns in Circulation*, p. 25.



Figure 3.9: Sample of Javanese cloth decorated using hand and block wax-resist methods. The British Museum, Charles Beving Collection, Cotton Sarong, 1880-1913, As1934,0307.28.



Figure 3.10: Sample of Javanese batik cloth. The British Museum, Charles Beving Collection, Cotton Sarong, 1880-1913, As1934,0307.60.



Figure 3.11: Example of cracking in Javanese hand-drawn batik sogi cloth. The British Museum, Charles Beving Collection, 1880-1913, As1934,0307.43.

The sample represents a square fragment of a larger piece, with stitching on each side and a star motif within a grid design.⁶³ Bleeding of the *soga* dye (a reddish-brown dye made with the bark of the *soga* tree) can be seen clearly on the cream ground, particularly running horizontally across the middle of the fragment. It is not known if the dye was encouraged to bleed by the intentional cracking of the wax-resist. However, there are some indications that in this example the cracked effect was used as a design feature. For instance, the cracking is comparatively uniform and consistent across the sample, with lines originating from each red spot. Equally, the level of detail in the large stars which form the focal point of the motif, indicates that the wax was applied by a skilled artisan, reducing the probability that the cracking was the result of poor quality production. The *soga* dyed sample in the Beving collection suggests that Indonesian batik manufacturers experimented with the aesthetic effects of cracked wax-resist. However, this sample is an exception in the Beving collection of Javanese textiles, which do not portray the cracked effect as an important aspect of Indonesian wax-resist cloth.

Beving's collection of African produced cloth includes a number of resist dyed designs. Many of these designs were produced using stitch resist or tie-dye methods to create pale motifs on an indigo ground. Both starch and wax resist were common methods for patterning cloth in a number of West African communities and were used to produce textiles such as *adire eleko*.⁶⁴ Although the growing use of wax resists in West Africa, due to the popularity of the cracked effect can be traced to the nineteenth century, the Beving collection does not reflect this.⁶⁵ Evidence of cracking is not found

⁶³ http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=559445&partId=1&searchText=beving&page=4 [accessed 11/06/2018]

⁶⁴ Kriger, *Cloth in West African History*, p. 155.

⁶⁵ John Gillow, *Printed and Dyed Textiles from Africa* (London: British Museum Press, 2001), pp. 17-8.

in any of the African samples in the Beving archive, despite including a number of examples of resist-dyed cloth. (Figure 3.12) Evidently, Beving's collection only provides a fragment of West African textile production in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Yet, the archive is significant in that it allows for a direct comparison between the designs produced for the West African market and the samples collected by British manufacturers which informed their understanding of the tastes of West African consumers.

While there is little evidence of cracking in the Javanese and West African samples, the archive also includes a number of Beving's own designs which reflect the development of the cracked effect amongst European manufacturers. In the majority of these designs, produced by Beving & Co. in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, the cracked effect is an important feature of the motif. Indeed, one design, which is a direct copy of a Javanese sample in his collection, adds a cracked effect that is not present in the Indonesian original. (Figure 3.13-4)



Figure 3.12: Sample of stitch-resist dyed cloth from Senegal. The British Museum, Charles Beving Collection, late nineteenth century, Af1934,0307.242.



Figure 3.13: Sample of Javanese cloth for sale in West Africa, collected by Charles Beving. The British Museum, Charles Beving Collection, late nineteenth century, As1934,0307.51.



Figure 3.14: Design created by Charles Beving & Co. for export to West Africa, based on a sample of Javanese cloth. The British Museum, Charles Beving Collection, late nineteenth century, Af1934,0307.391.

Another important indicator of batik cloth was the design being present on both sides of the cloth. Whether cloth was patterned on both or just one side depended on the printing or dyeing process used. The majority of printed cloth was patterned on just one side as the rollers or blocks were applied to only one side of the cloth.⁶⁶ However, dyed cloth, including those patterned with resist dye methods, bore the identical pattern on both sides of the fabric. A double-sided pattern was an indication, therefore, that the cloth had been dyed rather than printed. For West African consumers looking to purchase authentic wax-cloth, this was a very important distinction. The importance of double-sided motifs can also be seen in Previnaire's development of La Javanaise, the frame of which was designed to allow for the easy application of resist on both sides of the fabric.⁶⁷

Cloth that was patterned on both sides was also particularly important in West Africa because of how it was used. Across many West African communities, the most common form of dress for women, and often men, was the 'wrapper'.⁶⁸ These were lengths of untailored cloth which were draped or wrapped around the body.⁶⁹ In some cultures one or more lengths were used, sometimes of contrasting patterns, to achieve the desired effect.⁷⁰ Garments created in this way, without fastenings or closures to be undone and remade each day, were the product of tacit knowledge transferred within communities. Using a length of cloth to bind itself to the body and hold its shape during the necessary tasks of the day requires considerable manipulation of the fabric. Equally, aesthetic choices could be made with each fold or tuck. As such, cloth which

⁶⁶ Halls and Martino, 'Cloth, Copyright, and Cultural Exchange', p. 10.

⁶⁷ Verbong, 'The Dutch Calico Printing Industry', p. 210.

⁶⁸ Kriger, *Cloth in West African History*, p. 19.

⁶⁹ Nina Sylvannus, 'Fashionability in Colonial and Postcolonial Togo', in *African Dress: Fashion, Agency and Performance*, ed. by Karen Tranberg Hansen and D. Soyini Madison (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 30-44 (p.36).

⁷⁰ Kriger, *Cloth in West African History*, p. 117.

was patterned on both sides to the same quality had obvious advantages, in allowing both sides of the fabric to be shown. Cloth which was patterned on only one side would require extra consideration in order to avoid the ‘wrong’ side to show. The difficulties of this is portrayed in an image of two women wearing wrappers in Ghana around the turn of the nineteenth century.⁷¹ In the photograph, it can be seen that the wrapper of the woman on the right is showing the ‘wrong’, unpatterned side of the cloth where the end of the length hangs free at the side of her body. At the top of the wrapper, the back of the cloth is also visible where it has been rolled over in order to secure the garment above the breasts. (Figures 3.15-6)

⁷¹ ‘Two Women Preparing Fufu’, Ghana, 1885-1907, D-30.22.022, Mission 21, <http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15799coll123/id/7605/rec/37> [accessed 06/05/2018]



Figure 3.15: 'Two women preparing fufu', photograph taken in Ghana by Rudolf Fisch. International Mission Photography Archive, Photographs from the Basel Mission, Ghana, c.1885-1907, D-30.22.022. <http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15799coll123/id/7605/rec/37>.



Figure 3.16: Detail of 'Two women preparing fufu', photograph taken in Ghana by Rudolf Fisch. International Mission Photography Archive, Photographs from the Basel Mission, Ghana, c.1885-1907, D-30.22.022. <http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15799coll123/id/7605/rec/37>.

The materiality of pattern books often means that researchers only have access to the front side of the cloth, as the back is adhered to the leaves of the book. However, occasionally samples have become loose over time or were large enough to extend beyond the edge of the paper, allowing access to the underside of the fabric. In this case it is possible to see the underside of the fabric, illustrating that it is unpatterned or coloured, suggesting the cloth was roller printed and not dyed.

In some cases, notations on the pages of pattern books also give an indication of the type of production method used. For instance, one volume found in the Logan Muckelt collection contains a number of samples with the word ‘duplex’ written on labels affixed to the sample which also include the design number. The duplex machine was another development in the textile printing industry which broadened the choices available to printers and dyers. The duplex machine enabled the printing of both sides of the fabric so that the pattern would be exactly the same on the right and wrong side of the cloth.⁷² While in principle the duplex machine was two roller printing machines combined so that the fabric passed through one on the right side, before being passed through the second on the wrong side, the difficulty lay in ensuring that the pattern on both sides of the cloth matched perfectly.⁷³

The duplex machine was one way in which manufacturers for the West African markets could produce goods which showed the pattern on both sides of the cloth. The Logan Muckelt collection indicates that the firm used the duplex machine, amongst other methods, to produce textiles for the West African markets. One sample with an abstract chicken design bears a label with the words ‘this patt[ern] is duplex’ while several others in the volume simply state ‘duplex’.⁷⁴

⁷² Knecht, *The Principles and Practice of Textile Printing*, p. 74.

⁷³ Ibid. p. 75.

⁷⁴ The Manchester Archives, Logan Muckelt Collection, Impression Book No.2, Design No. 1CL5453-1CL5766, 2CL4030-2CL4159, c.1905, GB127.M831/53.

This volume in the Logan Muckelt collection is unusual in that rather than including one sample of each finished design, it also includes a swatch from each roller. As such, the samples represent each layer of colour in the printing process and the finished design. The volume offers an exceptional opportunity to understand how manufacturers layered colours within designs and how they used a roller for each colour. It also reveals how the firm made use of ‘duplex’ printing to achieve the double-sided designs and how they experimented with this technique.

Design number 4134 is a combination of the blue motif of number 5721 and the yellow motif of number 5722. (Figures 3.18-19) In another intriguing group of samples, the finished design (number 4156) includes the note ‘blue roller is duplex’.⁷⁵ (Figure 3.17) This design is accompanied by a blue (5762) and a red motif (5763), the former of which is labelled as ‘duplex’. Initially it appears counterintuitive to have only one colour of the motif duplex-printed but another sample in the volume offers an explanation.

⁷⁵ Logan Muckelt Collection, Impression Book No.2, Design No. 1CL5453-1CL5766, 2CL4030-2CL4159, c.1905, GB127.M831/53.



Figure 3.17: Design No.4134, Logan Muckelt & Co. The Manchester Archives, Logan Muckelt Collection, Impression Book No.2, c.1905, GB127.M831/53 4134.



Figure 3.18: Design No.5722, Logan Muckelt & Co. The Manchester Archives, Logan Muckelt Collection, Impression Book No.2, c.1905, GB127.M831/53 5722.



Figure 3.19: Design No.5721, Logan Muckelt & Co. The Manchester Archives, Logan Muckelt Collection, Impression Book No.2, c.1905, GB127.M831/53 5721.

Design number 4148, uses the same colour combination as 4156, depicting a red flamingo on a purple ground decorated with a pale blue vermicular motif. The accompanied samples (5740 and 5741) illustrate that this design was produced by a red and blue motif, which combined created the purple ground and red and blue details. These samples demonstrate the skill and knowledge required to manipulate the chemical properties of dyes and mordants and formulate the layers of a design to accurately make use of the negative space as well as the space to be printed or dyed. However, most notably and somewhat serendipitously, a lifted corner reveals the red motif printed on the reverse of the cloth with a duplex machine, as indicated on the label. These samples illustrate that doubled-sided prints were not always identical. There is no evidence in the pattern books or in the contemporary manuals of why motifs may be printed in this way, with a simpler, one colour motif on the reverse. However, producing a design in this way, would have enabled manufacturers to imitate the double-sided motif of wax prints with less work and preparation. This style only required one colour to be duplex-printed and this also appears to be the first colour to be printed allowing for the easier application of the blue dye to the front side of the fabric. As well as helping to simplify the printing process, the design also offers the consumer the choice of two colourways in one length of cloth. Returning to the photograph of the Ghanaian women, it is easy to see how consumers could manipulate the cloth to display two colourways in contrast and further customise the way they wore their wrapper. (Figures 3.20-2)



Figure 3.20: Design No.4148, Logan Muckelt & Co. The Manchester Archives, Logan Muckelt Collection, Impression Book No.2, c.1905, GB127.M831/53 4148.

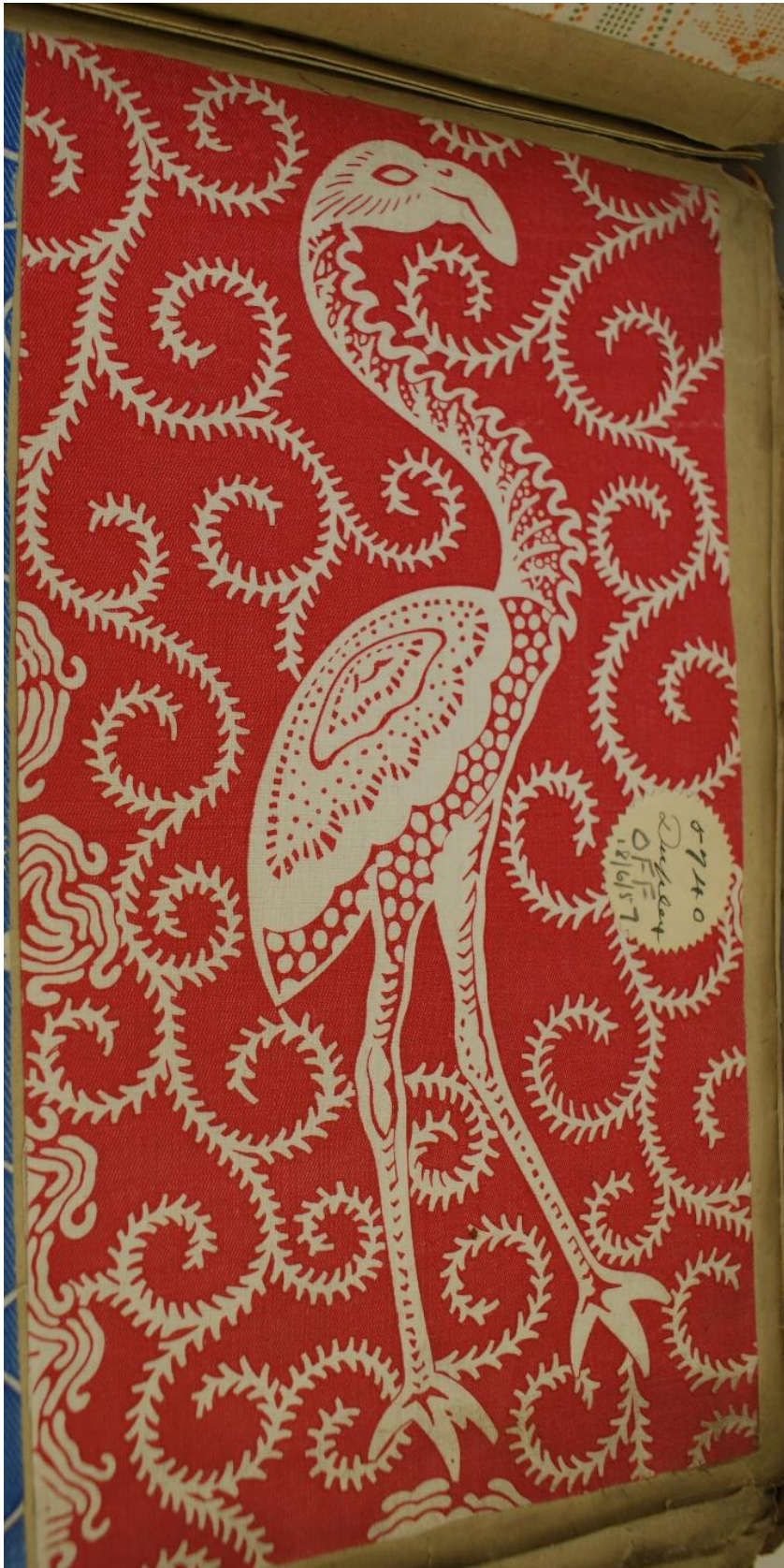


Figure 3.21: Design No.5740, Logan Muckelt & Co. The Manchester Archives, Logan Muckelt Collection, Impression Book No.2, c.1905, GB127.M831/53 5740.



Figure 3.22: Design No.5741, Logan Muckelt & Co. The Manchester Archives, Logan Muckelt Collection, Impression Book No.2, c.1905, GB127.M831/53 5741.

Developments in cylinder printing also presented the possibility of larger-scale designs. Throughout the nineteenth century the majority of printed textiles produced for European, but also export markets such as the Americas and Japan, consisted of small motifs with small repeats. As such, they were well suited for roller printing. Furnishing fabrics, which have traditionally, been designed to have much larger motifs and thus larger repeats, could not be produced using cylinder machines in the early years of roller printing, due to the maximum circumference of the copper roller. However, from 1860 the possible maximum repeat increased to 43 inches by 44 inches, making roller printing suitable for larger designs and furnishing fabrics.⁷⁶ In 1912, Knecht described rollers of 80 inches in circumference and width in use on the 'largest printing machine in the world' at F. Steiner & Co. Ltd, Lancashire. Knecht goes on to state that even larger rollers were used by Steiner & Co. to produce cloth for "sarries" and imitation "batticks".⁷⁷ As a result, roller printing became a viable method for producing designs for the West African markets, where larger motifs and repeats were desired.

Research into the imitation of wax-resist patterns also suggests that European manufacturers attempting to mimic the appearance of Indonesian batik cloth, experimented with design registration to replicate the imperfections of hand-printed cloth.⁷⁸ Printed and resist-dyed cloth was produced by building up layers of the motif, as each colour (or resist) was applied using a different set of rollers or printing blocks. As each layer was added, it was vital that it lined up accurately with the previous layers to ensure that the details of the designs did not bleed into each other and that the lines were clean. This is known as print or design registration.

⁷⁶ Sykas, 'Material Evidence', p. 310.

⁷⁷ Knecht, *The Principles and Practice of Textile Printing*, p. 62.

⁷⁸ Neilson, 'Wax-Printed Textiles Intended for West Africa and Zaire', p. 480.

Print registration is an important marker of quality in printed and dyed cloth and in hand-printed textiles indicates the skill of the craftsman. Although poor print registration was a problem in the early years of roller printing machines, by the middle of the nineteenth century, these issues had been resolved. Flaws in print registration after this date are normally associated with the misalignment of rollers as they were installed or the misfeeding of the fabric through the machine.⁷⁹ Evidence of flaws such as these are rarely visible in samples from the 1850s onwards.

The issue of print registration in imitation wax-resist designs has been assigned by a number of scholars to the printing of additional layers of colours using hand blocks, a process in which accuracy requires great skill on the part of the printer. However, recent revisions of the development of mechanised printing and the extent to which hand printing continued to be fundamental in the production of printed and dyed cloth into the twentieth century, suggests that technological restrictions were not the primary reason for the inaccuracy in print registration. Examples of misalignment can be seen in the Logan Muckelt volumes, employed alongside the ‘cracked’ effect discussed previously. (Figure 3.23) A number of designs in volume 114 of the collection, show the bleeding and misalignment of colour described above. Notably, these designs are found in the same volume as the attempts at imitating the ‘cracked’ effect, reinforcing the idea that these were intended flaws in registration.

⁷⁹ Robinson, *A History of Printed Textiles*, p. 26.



Figure 3.23: Design No.8219, Logan Muckelt & Co. The Manchester Archives, Logan Muckelt Collection, Impression Book, Design No. D8201-D9030, c.1911-1913, GB127.M831/114 8219.

It has been argued that manufacturers wishing to imitate the wax-resist cloth of Indonesia, purposefully misaligned rollers and blocks during the printing process to achieve poor design registration.⁸⁰ Geert Verbong has argued that the development of double-sided cylinder printing, with the application of additional colours by hand-block, meant that irregularities in the registration were inevitable. Verbong suggests that these imperfections became an important aesthetic attribute of wax-prints and that African consumers ‘preferred the irregularities inherent in hand-made work’.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Neilson, 'Wax-Printed Textiles Intended for West Africa and Zaire', p. 480.

⁸¹ Verbong, 'The Dutch Calico Printing Industry', p. 215.

3.4 Flexible Production

The Logan Muckelt collection demonstrates the simultaneous use of different printing and dyeing techniques, some of which had been established methods of the industry for decades and others which were recent adaptations that catered for export markets. Sykas' invaluable work tracing and cataloguing the pattern books of the North-West, shows that the collection is divided into several series. Each volume can be placed into one of several categories, which fall into three larger groups; design and engraving records, pattern records, and client books. The pattern record group can be subdivided into four further categories based on the design numbers. The majority of design numbers found in the collection are prefixed by the letter D, L or F and Sykas' research indicates that these letters relate to the manufacturing techniques used. Notably, the D series includes designs printed on a duplex machine or producing using wax resist while the L series includes roller printed motifs and 'bleed styles'. The volumes in these two groups do not correspond entirely in terms of dates, as the D series begins from 1902, while the L series does not begin until 1917.⁸² Evidence of the use of multiple production methods is also visible in the Turkey Red industry. A surviving sample book of batik prints believed to be destined for Indonesia or West Africa indicates that the areas covered by the resist were often over-printed.⁸³ Using block or roller printing, additional colours could be added to the areas left blank in the batik process.

The variety of production methods used by Logan Muckelt and other manufacturers catering for the West African market, reflects the breadth of the textile

⁸² Philip A. Sykas, *The Secret Life of Textiles: Six Pattern Book Archives in North West England* (Bolton: Bolton Museums, Art Gallery and Aquarium 2005), p. 31.

⁸³ Nenadic and Tuckett, *Colouring the Nation*, p. 37.

printing industry and the limitations of standardisation within the trade. In an industry where market specialisation was fundamental to the success of the export trade, an ability to deftly manipulate new and existing technologies to meet the demands of a particular market was highly advantageous. In the historical alternatives approach to industrial development and the distribution of mass production, the avoidance of specialising in one form of production was a way of reducing risk.⁸⁴

Correspondence from the Calico Printers' Association archive illustrates the high degree of variation in quality and manufacturing techniques used in the production of indigo cloth for the African markets. A letter written in 1911 to the director of the Association, Hewitt, from the section responsible for supplying the East and West African markets, outlines the diverse types of cloth produced by firms specialising in the African markets. The letter claimed that the majority of firms "are indigo printers of various grades, who use the resist and hand dipping method."⁸⁵ The section also noted that "Cunliffe does a very low business in imitation indigoes...both discharge and print on."⁸⁶ The correspondence of the CPA also reveals that machine wax was being used by at least one printer by 1910.⁸⁷

The flexible production visible in the textile printing industry throughout the nineteenth century is a manifestation of the numerous markets that it supplied and the specialised nature of each. As Charles Sabel and Jonathan Zeitlin have illustrated this flexible production was a common response to the fact that there is no single market, 'only particular markets.'⁸⁸ As such, mass production offered limited advantages to

⁸⁴ Charles Sabel and Jonathan Zeitlin (eds), *World of Possibilities: Flexibility and Mass Production in Western Industrialization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 3.

⁸⁵ The Manchester Archives, Calico Printers' Association Collection, Correspondence, 1901-1949, 27th February 1911, GB127.M75/1/2-1153.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ The Manchester Archives, Calico Printers' Association Collection, Correspondence, 1901-1949, 12th July 1910, GB127.M75/1/2-1144.

⁸⁸ Jonathan Zeitlin, 'The Historical Alternatives Approach', in *The Oxford Handbook of Business History*, ed. by Geoffrey G. Jones and Jonathan Zeitlin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 121-

the textile printing industry which was not characterised by stable demand and standardised products.⁸⁹

The development of roller printing has been seen as the advent of mass production into the textile printing industry.⁹⁰ However, as the Logan Muckelt samples and the accounts of contemporaries illustrate, the introduction of roller printing did not make earlier forms of printing techniques obsolete and neither did the process of roller printing remain standardised for very long. Despite the important developments in and wide-spread use of mechanical roller printing by the late 1830s, earlier methods of hand block-printing and hand painting remained vital throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century.⁹¹ As a mechanised form of textile printing, roller and rotary printing was frequently and consistently adapted to allow for more flexibility within the industry. Far from leading to the production of standardised products, the principles of the roller printing machine were modified and customised by a number of manufacturers to suit the needs of particular markets and changing fashions. This is another example of industrial development as an ‘ongoing interaction between strategic actors and their environmental conditions.’⁹²

40 (p.127); Charles Sabel and Jonathan Zeitlin, 'Historical Alternatives to Mass Production: Politics, Markets and Technology in Nineteenth-Century Industrialization', *Past & Present* 108 (1985), 133-76.

⁸⁹ Zeitlin, 'The Historical Alternatives Approach', p. 125.

⁹⁰ Greysmith, 'The Impact of Technology on Printed Textiles', p. 64.

⁹¹ Tierney, 'Design Quality, Mechanization and Taste', pp. 256-7.

⁹² William Lazonick, 'Review', *Business History Review* 73/2 (1999), 309-13, (p. 312).

3.5 Variation, Replication and Reuse

The relationship between the textile printing industry and the standardisation of goods is complex and to an extent paradoxical. In a traditional sense the introduction of mechanisation was not the result of nor resulted in the standardisation of goods. The British calico trade was characterised, throughout the nineteenth century, by its emphasis on novelty and variation. Many critics of the industry, and the tastes of the working classes, bemoaned the favouring of novelty over artistic or aesthetic merit.⁹³ However, to achieve the constant flow of 'new' designs manufacturers and merchants developed methods for exploiting the standardising properties of mechanisation. By combining motifs and rollers from different designs to create new patterns, manufacturers were able to turn the disadvantages of standardisation to their advantage.

The Logan Muckelt collection, alongside the BT registers, indicate that merchants and manufacturers based in Manchester balanced the adaptation of designs, colourways and styles to better suit the tastes of West African consumers, but continued to exploit the technology and printing practices that had spurred the popularity of printed textiles in the domestic market, and in many other markets overseas.

Despite the 'standardisation' of roller printing novelty is an important theme in the history of printed textiles and apparent impact of mechanisation on design quality. By the mid-nineteenth century the printed textile industry was characterised by its critics amongst the cultural elites such as Richard Redgrave, Owen Jones and Henry Cole, as lacking aesthetic value as manufacturers and merchants produced

⁹³ Tierney, 'Design Quality, Mechanization and Taste', p. 252.

increasingly distasteful designs in order to satisfy the unrelenting demand for novelty from the working-class consumers.⁹⁴

For many textile printers in the North-West who were catering for the lower end of the market, producing novel designs on a regular basis was costly. Two of the greatest financial expenses in producing a print were the employment of the designer to create the motif and the engraving of a new design on to the copper rollers or blocks.⁹⁵ Both of these stages in the manufacturing process required skilled artisans and were often time consuming. The introduction of mechanical engraving from the 1850s, in the form of the pentagraph, offered a more time-efficient method for transferring the design but, as with all pieces of machinery, required the initial purchase capital. The pentagraph was an adaptation of the pantograph, named so as the pattern could be scaled up or down by a factor of five.⁹⁶ However, it has been argued that patterns produced by a pentagraph lack the individuality of earlier methods due to the necessity to adapt certain standardisations of line.⁹⁷ The practice of directly copying or imitating the designs of other manufacturers has been linked to the heavy cost of designing and engraving new designs.⁹⁸ However, there were other options available to manufacturers who wanted to ensure that their investment in design was returned.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the Logan Muckelt pattern books, is the number of designs the firm produced. The volumes indicate that hundreds of different

⁹⁴ Christopher Frayling, *Henry Cole and the Chamber of Horrors: The Curious Origins of the Victoria and Albert Museum* (London: V&A Publishing 2010), pp. 27-31; Richard Redgrave and G. R. Redgrave, *Manual of Design* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1882); Henry Morley, 'A House Full of Horrors', *Household Words* (4th December 1852), 265-70.

⁹⁵ Greysmith, 'Patterns, Piracy and Protection', p. 169.

⁹⁶ Sykas, 'Material Evidence'.

⁹⁷ Dress and Textile Specialists, 'Identifying Printed Textiles in Dress 1740-1890', <http://www.dressandtextilespecialists.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Printed-Textiles-Booklet.pdf>, [accessed 20/10/2016], p.45.

⁹⁸ Kriegel, *Grand Designs*, p. 76.

designs were created each year, though it is not possible to know how many of these were produced and sold. The Logan Muckelt collection is not unique in this, an examination of the number of designs for printed textiles registered for copyright each year during this period shows a similar level of productivity in the creation of new designs.⁹⁹ Furthermore, it is believed that the BT registers represent only a small portion of the total number of designs in circulation, as not all designs were registered.

Yet, of these hundreds of designs in the Logan Muckelt pattern books, few are truly unique. The vast majority of designs represent variations of each other or are a combination of one or more motifs, layered to make a 'new' design. One set of designs, in volume 51, dating from the early twentieth century illustrate the extent to which minute changes to a particular aspect of a design could create a 'new' design. For instance, design numbers 3547 and 3548 appear identical, both depicting a pale blue flower-like form with an orange centre on an indigo ground. (Figures 2.24-5) However, closer examination shows that in the first sample the petals of the flower are formed by white vermicular pattern on a pale blue ground, whereas in the second sample the petals are small white dots on the same pale blue ground. Although these designs are evidently very similar, even from a distance the difference is clearly perceptible.

⁹⁹ Dinah Eastop, 'Exploring the Potential of the Board of Trade Design Register ', *TEXT: For the Study of Textile Art, Design and History* 39 (2011-12), 52-56, (p. 52).



Figure 3.24: Design no.3547, Logan Muckelt & Co. The Manchester Archives, Logan Muckelt Collection, Pattern Book, Design No. 2800-3580, c.1900-1906, GB127.M831/51 3547.



Figure 3.25: Design no.3548, Logan Muckelt & Co. The Manchester Archives, Logan Muckelt Collection, Pattern Book, Design No. 2800-3580, c.1900-1906, GB127.M831/51 3548.

Some variations are more distinct than others, for example both 3546 and 3549 have the same striped pattern as the petal ground and differ only in the alignment of the stripes, being diagonal in the former and horizontal in the latter. (Figures 3.26-7) This series of abstract flowers is given further variety by changing the colour of the centre of the flower from orange, to yellow or pale blue. By using variations of this kind, 18 versions of this design were created. Alongside these flower designs are two other motifs which are in a similar style, consisting of a central circular form

surrounded by a pale blue star shape or stylised pomegranate form. Both these designs are also presented in a number of different versions. (Figure 3.28) As such, these designs form a series or a collection of motifs, each being connected by one or more common design elements yet each being also unique.



Figure 3.26: Design no.3546, Logan Muckelt & Co. The Manchester Archives, Logan Muckelt Collection, Pattern Book, Design No. 2800-3580, c.1900-1906, GB127.M831/51 3546.



Figure 3.27: Design no.3549, Logan Muckelt & Co. The Manchester Archives, Logan Muckelt Collection, Pattern Book, Design No. 2800-3580, c.1900-1906, GB127.M831/51 3549.

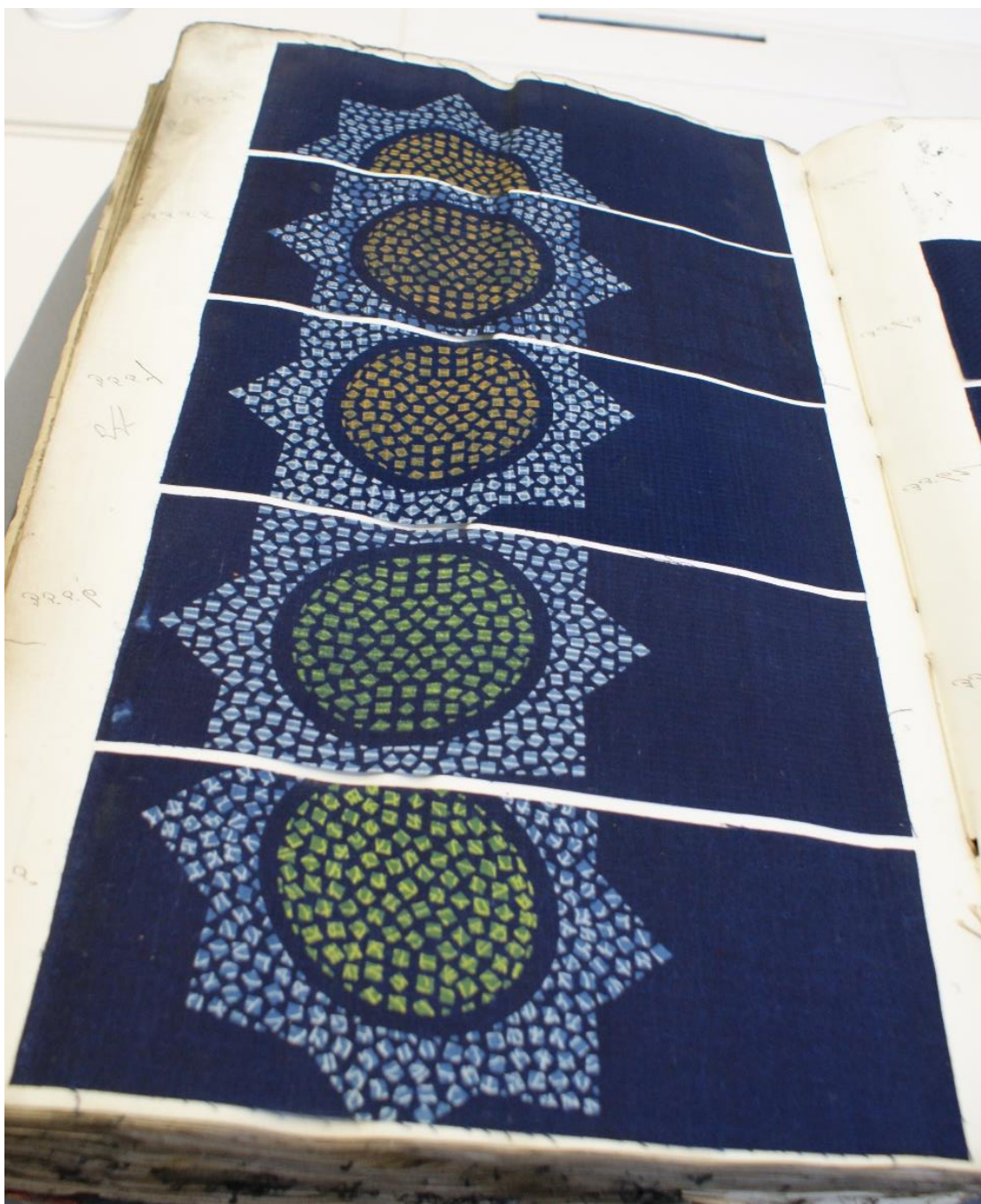


Figure 3.28: Variations of a design, Logan Muckelt & Co. The Manchester Archives, Logan Muckelt Collection, Pattern Book, Design No. 2800-3580, c.1900-1906, GB127.M831/51 3555-3559.

Pattern series such as these, which represent several variations on a theme, are visible in almost all the Logan Muckelt pattern books from this period. The vast majority of designs can be found in a number of variations, exploiting changes in the

colourway or in the combination of the motifs of the ground and foreground. The most striking example, an octopus motif, appears in 53 different designs in a volume dating from the early 1900s.¹⁰⁰ These samples also illustrate the way that stock rollers could be put to a variety of uses and that simple motifs, such as stripes or polka dots, could be reused in a number of designs. (Figures 3.29-30)



Figure 3.29: Variations of an octopus motif, Logan Muckelt & Co. The Manchester Archives, Logan Muckelt Collection, Pattern Book, Design No.5600-6400, c.1905, GB127.M831/52 5601-5603.

¹⁰⁰ The Manchester Archives, Logan Muckelt Collection, Pattern Book, Design No. 5600-6400, c.1905, GB127.M831/52.



Figure 3.30: Variations of an octopus motif, Logan Muckelt & Co. The Manchester Archives, Logan Muckelt Collection, Pattern Book, Design No.5600-6400, c.1905, GB127.M831/52 5625-5634.

The practice of producing numerous variations based on one motif, was not unique to the West African market, it was a common feature of the textile printing industry and was used to meet the demands of domestic and export markets. Other collections of printed textiles produced for the lower end of the domestic market depict these same characteristics and these methods of producing a sense of variety can be traced back to the early nineteenth century.¹⁰¹ The pattern books of Edmund Potter & Co., a large firm which printed for the domestic market and export trade, demonstrate multiple colour variations for designs.¹⁰² (Figure 3.31) The BT registers also contain

¹⁰¹ See the pattern books of Edmund Potter & Co., Derbyshire Records Office, Matlock and the Rossendale Collection at the Museum of Science and Industry, Manchester.

¹⁰² Derbyshire Record Office, Edmund Potter & Co., Papers Relating to Edmund Potter & Co., Pattern Book, 1890, DRO D1589 Box 15/1.

numerous examples of manufacturers producing ‘collections’ or sets of patterns which follow a similar theme or have a common motif or colour palette. In a trade dominated by the pursuit of novelty, strategies such as this allowed manufacturers to maximise the number of designs produced by a roller and thus, had a greater chance of recouping the capital invested in its creation.

In a similar bid to extend the profitability of a roller manufacturers issued reprints of popular designs. As discussed, the capital invested in engraved rollers, both in terms of the time spent engraving the design and the intrinsic value of the copper, was considerable and encouraged manufacturers to retain each roller once they were no longer installed on the printing machine.¹⁰³ Exact figures for the cost of engraving and installing a new roller are hard to find but Stanley Chapman estimated that each design cost about £23 to be printed by copper roller.¹⁰⁴ Further estimates suggest that a cylinder cost between £5-7 in the 1850s while it could cost approximately £50 for a design to be hand-engraved.¹⁰⁵ The decision to retain a roller depended on the popularity of a design, the chances that it could be reprinted at a later date, the potential for an element of the design to be combined with another motif producing a ‘new’ design and fluctuations in the value of copper. The rollers for designs which proved popular were often archived, those which were less successful were sometimes retained or if the price of copper was high at the time, they could be milled to remove the engraved design and reused for a new motif.¹⁰⁶ However, many engraved rollers were held by manufacturers for a number of years and, indeed, many

¹⁰³ Sykas, 'Material Evidence', p. 249.

¹⁰⁴ Chapman, 'Quantity Versus Quality', p. 179.

¹⁰⁵ Greysmith, 'Patterns, Piracy and Protection', p. 53.

¹⁰⁶ Sykas, 'Material Evidence', p. 165.



Figure 3.31: Example of colour variations in printed textiles for the domestic market, Edmund Potter & Co. Derbyshire Record Office, Papers Relating to Edmund Potter & Co., Pattern Book, 1890, DRO D1589 Box 15/1.

printing firms on their dissolution in the 1960s with the decline of the industry, were found to still have in stock rollers dating back to the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁷

The roller stock of a firm was therefore, a tangible store of their capital investment and a potential resource for print runs. Each roller was marked with the design number and the correct placement of the roller on the machine. The pattern books and the design numbers allowed workers to cross reference the designs to the corresponding rollers.¹⁰⁸ As such, the pattern books acted as a visual repository of past designs which could be reprinted from the existing roller stock. As designs were removed from the rollers, known as ‘turning off’, either to release the capital, for the reuse of the roller or because the design was no longer considered commercially viable, this was noted in the pattern book next to the corresponding design with a record of the date.

There are limitations to the information that pattern books can offer the historian, they are often fragmentary, variable and inconsistent in the way that data is recorded, reflecting their role as working documents on the factory floor. Neither does the presence of a design in a pattern book indicate that the design was produced and sold at a particular time or at all. As working documents in use on the factory floor, the warehouse or show rooms, pattern books, such as the Logan Muckelt volumes, often contain numerous layers of notation. Some of these inscriptions can be easily identified as design numbers or the names of clients.

Part of the role of the pattern books was to function as a repository for designs which were in use and a record of past designs, which could be reprinted. As such,

¹⁰⁷ One such example is the firm of ABC Wax who manufactured in Hyde, Greater Manchester until 2007.

¹⁰⁸ Sykas, *The Secret Life of Textiles: Six Pattern Book Archives in North West England*, p. 13.

when a design was no longer available the pattern book was thus marked. The record of 'turning off' dates left in pattern books can equally appear to be unreliable and can be difficult to interpret. However, these dates provide a vital indication of the extent to which rollers were retained, which designs were considered to be more valuable than the intrinsic value of the roller and on average how many years designs were retained for. This is particularly relevant in the case of designs for the West African markets as many of the popular heritage designs in use today are believed to date from the late nineteenth century.¹⁰⁹

Turning off dates can be found in several of the volumes in the Logan Muckelt collection. Analysis of these dates illustrates that the majority of the Logan Muckelt samples were retained for many years, sometimes as long as fifty years, before being discarded. The pattern books show that designs were retained as an engraved roller until designated for removal at long intervals. These major processes of pattern clearance appear to have occurred, in 1899, in 1920 and from the late 1930s into the 1940s. For instance, a design found in volume 47 was 'turned off' in July 1899, only a few years after it was created. (Figure 3.32) However, design number 5450 in volume 53, was produced around 1905 and is noted as being 'turned off' on 3rd October 1946 along with 5 other designs in the volume.

Certain designs were retained through these clearances, suggesting they were popular and were frequently reprinted. Of the almost 600 designs in volume 47, 15 appear to have been reproduced in 1937. These designs have been removed from the volume and replaced with the inscription 'H&C Nov. 2/37' and 'J K Nov. 2/37'. It is difficult to know for sure what these notes mean but it possible that 'H&C' refers to the indigo dyers Horridge and Cornall who became directors of Logan Muckelt in

¹⁰⁹ Neilson, 'Wax-Printed Textiles Intended for West Africa and Zaire', p. 472.

1917 when the firm became a limited company.¹¹⁰ Determining the success of a particular design can be difficult as little evidence remains of the quantities of each design printed and their commercial success. How long a design was stored before being ‘turned off’ can give some indication of the lifetime of the designs and thus how commercially successful it was. (Figures 3.33)



Figure 3.32: ‘Turned Off’ Design, Logan Muckelt & Co., The Manchester Archives, Logan Muckelt Collection, Pattern Book, Design No. 2000-2748, c.1890, GB127.M83/47 2160.

¹¹⁰ Sykas, *The Secret Life of Textiles: Six Pattern Book Archives in North West England*, p. 26.



Figure 3.33: 'Turned off' designs, Logan Muckelt & Co. The Manchester Archives, Logan Muckelt Collection, Pattern Book, Design No. 6500-7300, c.1906, GB127.M831.101 6510-6511.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how European manufacturers catering for West African consumers adopted new production techniques and adapted and exploited existing practices to suit the needs of a particular overseas market. A close examination of the Logan Muckelt pattern books illustrates that the firm were attempting to imitate batik styles, including the 'cracked' effect, using techniques such as roller printing. Using methods which were well established in the British printing industry allowed the firm to specialise designs for the West African market, while exploiting the advantages of mechanised production. Equally, although the firm specialised designs and manufacturing methods to meet the requirements of West African consumers, they drew on common practices in the textile printing industry, such as creating multiple variations of the same design and reprinting designs, to reduce risks and maximise potential profits. In this sense their goods represent the hybrid nature of British textile exports in both design and production.

Chapter 4

Merchants and Merchandise:

The Structure of the Export Trade in Printed Textiles

Manufacturers were using a variety of mechanism, including creating specialised designs and adapting printing technologies, to suit the tastes and needs of the West African market. However, the ability of British goods to compete in export markets also required a complex and knowledgeable network of merchants, agents and ancillary trades. This chapter considers the structure of the industry and the extent to which this facilitated or hindered the trade in British printed textiles with West Africa. Thus, the chapter explores the connections between manufacturers, merchants and consumers, illustrating the symbiotic relationship between these three groups of actors in the trade with West Africa.

The strength of these relationships was key to determining the success of British goods in overseas markets. I argue that an increasing market specialisation is visible in the distribution and sale of goods which mirrors that found in the design of goods. This chapter also addresses two central themes of the economic and industrial history of late-nineteenth-century Britain, foreign competition and the declining dominance of British goods in overseas market, through the lens of market specialisation. It argues that in the printed textile industry, British merchants continued to supply suitable goods for export and that their struggle to maintain their position as the world's leading exporter of consumer goods was due to a combination of political, social and economic factors.

This chapter will outline the structure of the industry from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries. It will go on to discuss foreign competition in the

international cotton trade and its role in the economic performance of the cotton industry. Finally, it will consider specialisation and the restructuring of the industry, in the form of the Calico Printers' Association, as responses to declining market shares, increasing competition and an atmosphere of economic decline.

4.1 The Structure of the Industry

By the mid-nineteenth century the cotton industry in the United Kingdom had grown considerably, producing vast quantities of yarn and cloth and supplying countries across the globe. This scale of production required not only hundreds of manufacturers but also a wide range of ancillary services including merchants, shipping agents and warehousemen. There were numerous interconnecting networks between export merchants, home trade agents, commercial travellers, manufacturers, warehouses, money lenders and institutions such as the Manchester Chamber of Commerce. There were multiple stages in the production of printed textiles from raw cotton to commodity, yet the post-production life of these goods was equally complex. A piece of printed cotton had passed through many hands by the time it reached its ultimate consumer. From the importer of the raw cotton to the spinners, weavers, cloth merchants, printers, warehousemen and home or export merchants, many actors were involved in the production and shipment of a commodity which could then be purchased by a consumer as near as Manchester or as distant as Africa or China.¹¹¹

From its growth and technological development in the early years of the century, by the 1850s the calico printing industry was a highly complex trade. The second half of the nineteenth century was characterised by increasing specialisation

¹¹¹ Arthur Redford, *Manchester Merchants and Foreign Trade Vol.II 1850-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1956), p. 29; Mary B. Rose, *Firms, Networks and Business Values: The British and American Cotton Industries Since 1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 169.

across many branches of the textile finishing industries, from bleaching and dyeing to warehousing and shipping. Some of the larger firms maintained a role in the entire process from production to sale, such as Rylands & Sons Ltd. who by the end of the nineteenth century were Manchester's largest textile wholesaler.¹¹² The firm oversaw all aspects of production from the spinning of the yarn to the piecing of ready-to-wear garments, even producing their own sewing cotton and printing their own pattern cards and boxes, leading one contemporary to claim that, 'such another system of industrial establishments, it is safe to say does not exist in Great Britain under the control of any one house.'¹¹³ However, by and large companies were specialising in one stage of manufacture or distribution of textile goods.¹¹⁴ The separation of production for the domestic and exports markets also became more distinct during this period.¹¹⁵

Although the manufacture of cotton goods has been the focus of the majority of research, the warehousing and distribution of these goods was an equally important branch of the industry. Commission merchants, shipping agents, warehousemen and packing houses were common features in Manchester and became integral to the city's cotton trade. These middlemen connected the manufacturers, located in the towns and villages surrounding the city, with the final consumer. Manchester itself, therefore, became a centre for the exchange of goods and as one contemporary explained, 'Our distinctive trade consists in purchasing goods from the manufacturer and selling them to the retail dealer.'¹¹⁶

¹¹² Sarah Levitt, 'Clothing', in *The Lancashire Cotton Industry: A History Since 1700*, ed. by Mary B. Rose (Preston: Lancashire County Books, 1996) (p.175).

¹¹³ *Manchester of Today* (London: Historical Publishing Company, 1888), p. 162.

¹¹⁴ D. A. Farnie, *The English Cotton Industry and the World Market, 1815-1896* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 50.

¹¹⁵ Alyson Valda Cooper, 'The Manchester Commercial Textile Warehouse, 1780-1914: A Study of its Typology and Practical Development' (PhD Thesis, Manchester Polytechnic, 1991), p. 71.

¹¹⁶ R. Lamb, 'Manchester by a Manchester Man', *Fraser's Magazine* (1853), 611-26, (p. 614).

Warehouses became increasingly important due to the dominance of the commission system which was an integral part of the home and export trade in printed and dyed textiles. One of the most common and important merchants within the industry was the commission merchant.¹¹⁷ Acting as an intermediary between the manufacturers and consumers, as the name suggests, commission merchants would commission work from manufacturers for sale in foreign markets.¹¹⁸ Commission merchants were in a powerful position, having a wide range of manufacturers to choose from, they were able to negotiate and keep prices competitive.¹¹⁹ Business historian Stanley Chapman claims that in the second half of the nineteenth century merchants came to dominate the British textiles industries, becoming the ‘undisputed Kings of the textile business.’¹²⁰

Commission merchants would buy cloth from cloth brokers and purchase or commission particular designs from independent designers and artists for printing firms to produce. Occasionally, the printer would provide the cloth and the designs: however, the commission merchant would choose which patterns would best suit the intended market. Furnished with the printed cloth, the commission merchant would employ a shipping company to export the goods and their own contacts abroad to secure a buyer.¹²¹ Equally, the commission merchant could sell their goods directly to a shipping agent, who would then take responsibility for the shipping and sale.¹²² Figure 4.1 illustrates the possible routes that a piece of woven cloth could take through the hands of a commission merchant.

¹¹⁷ Stanley Chapman, 'The Decline and Rise of Textile Merchanting, 1880-1990', *Business History* 31/4 (1990), 171-90, (p. 171).

¹¹⁸ Rose, *Firms, Networks and Business Values*, p. 170.

¹¹⁹ Simon Pitt, 'The Political Economy of Strategic and Structural Change in the Calico Printers' Association 1899-1973' (PhD Thesis, London Graduate School of Business Economics, 1989), p. 35.

¹²⁰ Chapman, 'Textile Merchanting', p. 171.

¹²¹ Redford, *Manchester Merchants II*, p. 74.

¹²² Chapman, 'Textile Merchanting', p. 171.

Although a number of the larger firms continued to print goods speculatively, the commission system dominated the trade.¹²³ The logistics of commission printing were complex and many manufacturers and merchants agreed on terms individually on the basis of each order, though there were two common processes. A commission merchant could approach a manufacturer with specific designs to be printed to their specification or the merchant could approach a manufacturer speculatively with a specific market in mind but no specific designs, these could then be provided by the manufacturer from their selection of sample books or drawn up by their in-house designer.¹²⁴ Equally, the cloth could be provided by the commission merchant or manufacturer.¹²⁵

Manchester's Royal Exchange, in St Anne's Square, provided a place for merchants, manufacturers and agents to meet and settle business.¹²⁶ The role of the Exchange was vital due to the geographical separation of the manufactures, which were predominantly in the surrounding towns, and the merchants whose offices were in city centre. The Exchange provided a space in which these two groups could communicate quickly and easily on a regular basis.¹²⁷ This was particularly important with the growing dominance of the commission merchant and the increased separation between the manufacturer and consumer that resulted from the mediation by a third party.

The importance of the Exchange is also a reminder of the informal nature of much of the trade throughout the nineteenth and into the early twentieth centuries.

¹²³ Henry Brougham Heylin, *Buyers and Sellers in the Cotton Trade* (London: C. Griffin & Co. , 1913), p. 117.

¹²⁴ Pitt, 'The Calico Printers' Association 1899-1973', p. 35.

¹²⁵ Heylin, *Buyers and Sellers*, p. 117.

¹²⁶ D. A. Farnie, 'An Index of Commercial Activity: The Membership of the Manchester Royal Exchange', *Business History* 21/1 (1979), 97-106, (p. 98).

¹²⁷ Rose, *Firms, Networks and Business Values*, pp. 73-4.

Despite the fundamental role of the Exchange and the deals agreed there, no formal record of these was ever kept.¹²⁸ Contracts and agreements were based largely on trust, familial ties and unofficial trade networks.¹²⁹ Goods were forbidden on the floor of the Exchange, and samples were normally viewed in the salesrooms of warehouses.¹³⁰ For the domestic trade these were specially designed to display the goods at their best and were often placed on the top floor with glazed rooves to allow the maximum possible light in.¹³¹ By the middle of the century, the majority of warehouses in the city specialised in either the domestic or export trade.

Another crucial element of the export trade was the packaging of goods for transit. The growth of the export trade meant that goods were travelling longer distances to reach the final consumer and special care had to be taken to ensure that products arrived in a suitable condition. This was particularly imperative in instances where goods were travelling long distances by sea or in damp climates, as overexposure to moisture could cause significant damage and financial losses.

The minutes of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce's African Sectional Committee highlight the importance of properly packing goods, in the discussion of an insurance case for goods damaged by sea-water on the way to Dakar, Senegal in 1902.¹³² The Committee received advice from Lloyd's, in response to the case, suggesting that tarred canvas should be used as the interior packing of bales, to prevent future water-damage.¹³³

¹²⁸ Farnie, 'An Index of Commercial Activity', p. 98.

¹²⁹ Rose, *Firms, Networks and Business Values*, p. 58.

¹³⁰ Farnie, 'An Index of Commercial Activity', p. 99.

¹³¹ Cooper, 'The Manchester Commercial Textile Warehouse', p. 96.

¹³² The Manchester Archives, Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Committee Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1897-1903, 1st September 1902, GB127.M8/4/2.

¹³³ Ibid.

The packing of goods for export became a highly specialised and skilled trade, with the development of new machinery and techniques to improve the efficiency and efficacy of the process. Hydraulic packing presses and lifting machinery increased productivity but also required extensive networks of boilers and engines to operate.¹³⁴ The need for ‘hovels’ (loading bays) and interior cartways further increased the infrastructure and space required for the packaging of goods.¹³⁵ However, firms unable or unwilling to invest in such equipment were able to outsource the process to packaging warehouses, such as the Beaver Packing House and the Manchester Shipping Office and Packing Company.¹³⁶ *Manchester of Today* described the ‘unsurpassed facilities’ of the Beaver Packing House, which ‘offered special advantages to shippers of Manchester goods’ as they were able to ‘execute the largest orders in the promptest and most satisfactory manner.’¹³⁷ The development of the packing warehouses also led to a greater concentration of the export trade around Albert Square and Sackville Street by early twentieth century.¹³⁸ [Map 4.1]

The calico printing industry was a specialised branch of the textile trade but required a wide variety of ancillary industries in order to operate. This included the shipping agents, warehousemen, packing houses and commission merchants. However, it also included bleachers, chemists and of course the spinning and weaving industries supplying the cloth. The importance of these trades to the printing industry is illustrated in the membership of the Royal Exchange, the Manchester cotton market, which included representatives from the dyestuffs industry, manufacturers of machinery and suppliers of coal and chemicals.¹³⁹

¹³⁴ Cooper, 'The Manchester Commercial Textile Warehouse', p. 83.

¹³⁵ R. Lamb, 'Manchester by a Manchester Man', *Fraser's Magazine*, (June 1853), pp.611-626, p.615.

¹³⁶ Cooper, 'The Manchester Commercial Textile Warehouse', p. 79.

¹³⁷ *Manchester of Today*, p.173.

¹³⁸ Cooper, 'The Manchester Commercial Textile Warehouse', p. 82.

¹³⁹ Farnie, 'An Index of Commercial Activity', p. 99.

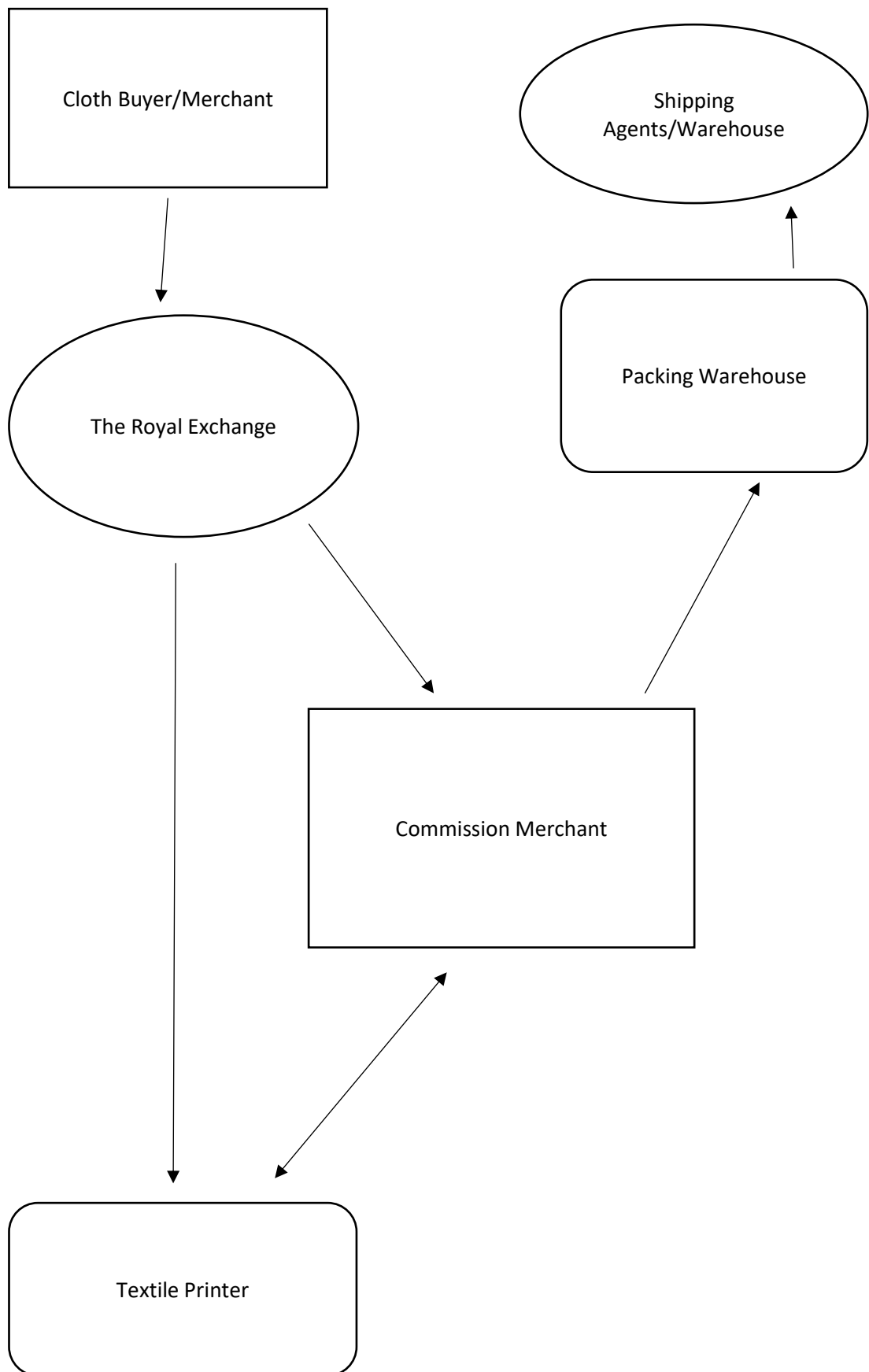


Figure 4.1: The Movement of Cloth within the Manchester Textile Printing Industry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.



Map 4.1: Map of textile merchants and shipping agents involved in the trade with West Africa in 1879 (blue) and 1911 (red). Manchester Archives and Local Studies, Street Map Collection, Manchester, J. E. Cornish, 1879, GB127.Local Studies Street Map Collection/1876Cornish. Accessible at https://luna.manchester.ac.uk/luna/servlet/detail/maps002~1~1~336489~201018?sort=reference_number%2Ctitle#.

The cotton industry of the nineteenth century was in a state of constant change, new firms regularly entered the trade, and many were short-lived. Firms which did survive for a number of years were rarely geographically fixed within the city as warehousing and office facilities were frequently relocated due to the changing needs of business.¹⁴⁰ Equally, partnerships were fluid and ownership of a business could pass through many hands as partners moved to other ventures or died.

In the final year of the nineteenth century, the structure of the textile printing industry was significantly transformed by the formation of the Calico Printers' Association, or CPA. The establishment of the CPA in 1899 was the largest merger in Britain.¹⁴¹ In its creation the CPA brought the printing capacity of 46 firms, totalling around 830 printing machines, under the direction and supervision a single committee. 13 merchanting firms were also represented by the CPA, reflecting the role of merchants in the printed calico trade. The firms were divided into 13 groups, being categorised by the quality and type of work undertaken. During the first few years of the Association a number of its smaller firms were closed in an effort to streamline production and reduce costs. The remaining firms and the CPA as an organisation would go on to shape the textile printing industry in Britain until its dissolution in the 1960s.¹⁴²

4.2 Changing Fortunes: The Loss of Britain's Dominance in Global Markets

The economic history of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century is often one of uncertainty and relative decline. Fluctuations in demand were to be expected in an industry which supplied the globe. There were many potential forces acting on the

¹⁴⁰ Cooper, 'The Manchester Commercial Textile Warehouse', p. 90.

¹⁴¹ Pitt, 'The Calico Printers' Association 1899-1973', p. 40.

¹⁴² Ibid. pp. 35-47.

trade in printed textiles, from political changes at home, to shipping conditions, improvements in a competitor's trade and changes in consumer preferences. The extent of the rise and fall in demand can be seen in the trade statistics of the time, but also in the minutes of the CPA. For instance, in 1900 the CPA complained that demand was low and machines were idle as a result. Indeed, annual trade returns indicate that 50 million yards fewer than the previous year were exported. However, while this is a considerable loss, 1899 had been an unusually successful year with over 1000 million yards exported.¹⁴³

During the meetings of the special committee of 1902, a Mr McKenzie encapsulated the challenges of the trade stating:

Our trade is continuously changing...the styles in use now at the low end did not exist five years ago. For instance, the Aniline Black discharges were not done five years ago to the extent that they have been done since the Association was formed. That is because the trade fluctuates. Now we are better employed.¹⁴⁴

McKenzie's comments highlight several issues which were fundamental to the performance of the industry. Firstly, that the industry was governed by changes in taste and fashion; secondly, that specialisation brought advantages but also left manufacturers at greater risk when the demand for particular styles decreased, and; thirdly, that manufacturers understood the impact of such cycles on their business. McKenzie's remarks suggest that those involved in the day-to-day running of the

¹⁴³ Pitt, 'The Calico Printers' Association 1899-1973', p. 52.

¹⁴⁴ The Manchester Archives, Calico Printers' Association Collection, Draft Report of the Special Committee, 1902, GB127.M75/2/10/1 [Green 916].

industry, accepted these fluctuations as an inevitability in a trade in which demand was governed by so many external factors, from changing consumer preferences to global political events.

Historians of Britain's economic decline have focused on the failures of British merchants and entrepreneurs. The lack of commercial skill has been linked to the public education system and the effects of the British class structure.¹⁴⁵ D. H. Aldcroft argued that although the entrepreneurial spirit was not entirely lacking, British businessmen were directly responsible for the economic decline of the late nineteenth century.¹⁴⁶ Likewise, D. C. M. Platt suggested that British merchants abroad were reluctant to use consular services or the information provided by the Board of Trade's Commercial Intelligence Branch.¹⁴⁷

In 1898, the perceived failures of British merchants and manufacturers were summarised by a report on competition in foreign trade. The report presented a collection of observations on the practices of British traders abroad by consular officials and offered a number of recommendations for improvement. The report highlights the 'disinclination of British traders, to supply a cheaper class of goods' and 'to study the consumer's wishes.' The testimonies of the consuls, the report argued, indicated that British merchants were not sensitive to the economic power of their consumers and overestimated the demand for higher class goods. One consular account stated that it is 'not the best that the foreigner wants, but merely a similar article that will answer the purpose for which it is required at a cheaper price.' The

¹⁴⁵ Bernard Elbaum and William Lazonick, 'The Decline of the British Economy: An Institutional Perspective', *The Journal of Economic History* 44/2 (1984), 567-83; Hartmut Berghoff, 'Public Schools and the Decline of the British Economy 1870-1914', *Past & Present* 129 (1990), 148-67.

¹⁴⁶ D. H. Aldcroft, 'The Entrepreneur and the British Economy, 1870-1914', *The Economic History Review* 17/1 (1964), 113-34, (p. 133).

¹⁴⁷ D. C. M. Platt, 'The Role of the British Consular Service in Overseas Trade, 1825-1914', *The Economic History Review* 15/3 (1963), 494-512, (p. 497).

belief that British manufacturers were unadaptable is echoed in a further report which claimed that they seemed 'indisposed to go below a certain standard of worth and durability.'¹⁴⁸

Although there are no reports from West Africa in the 1898 memorandum, there are a number of issues raised which were very relevant these markets. For instance, the report stated that 'in many districts, owing to the poverty of the country, there is no demand for first class or expensive goods.' In reference to the Zanzibar trade the report states that 'The market is essentially a cheap one, and it is in the cheapness rather than, with the one exception of piece goods, the superiority of these manufactures, that foreign countries are in advance of Great Britain.'¹⁴⁹ The reference to poverty mirror the arguments made for the dismissal of Africa as a potential market for British goods due to the privation of African consumers.¹⁵⁰ A number of historians have questioned the commercial value of Africa to Imperial states and the potential of African markets to offer a financially viable outlet for British products due to the lack of wealth on the continent.¹⁵¹

An unwillingness to cater to the needs of the customer is also raised by a number of the consular officials and the report sensitively highlighted this issue stating, 'As regards this question the reports show that in many cases the tastes and wishes of customers are *sometimes insufficiently considered*.'¹⁵² In fact, the accounts of the consuls were far more critical of British traders. The Consul of Aleppo, for instance, asserted that:

¹⁴⁸ *Foreign Trade Competition*, pp. ii-2.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 2-3.

¹⁵⁰ C. C. Wrigley, 'Neo-Mercantile Policies and the New Imperialism', in *The Imperial Impact: Studies in the Economic History of Africa and India*, ed. by Clive Dewey and A. G. Hopkins (London: Athlone Press, 1978), 20-34 (p.29).

¹⁵¹ Marion Johnson, 'Cotton Imperialism in West Africa', *African Affairs* 73/291 (1974), 178-87, (p. 178).

¹⁵² *Foreign Trade Competition*, p. 3. [author's emphasis].

Our merchants should realise that they have to satisfy many different markets, and that the same article will not do for all...The manufacturer should produce for the purchaser, and not expect the client to take whatever he offers, no matter how unsuitable to his purse or tastes.

Similarly, the Consul-General of Frankfurt highlighted an example of a British leather company who refused to fulfil a client's request for a particular colour even when the client offered to provide the dye themselves. The Consul-General warned that, as a result, a French firm was now likely to gain the contract and that 'This German merchant holds that such an example is typical of English business men'.¹⁵³

The decline of Britain's competitiveness in the global market towards the end of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, has been linked to the failures and inadequacies of British entrepreneurs and businessmen.¹⁵⁴ Amongst the faults directed against them, an inability to adapt to the requirements of export markets and an overreliance on colonial markets which were taken for granted are the most significant in relation to the trade with West Africa.¹⁵⁵ The notion that British textile manufacturers were trading unsuitable and unwanted goods to 'soft' colonial markets has been increasingly questioned.¹⁵⁶ There are many examples of firms which successfully navigated the economic instability of the decades surrounding the turn of

¹⁵³ Ibid. p. 4.

¹⁵⁴ M. W. Kirby, *The Decline of the British Economic Power Since 1870* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1981), p. 8; David Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus: Technological Change and Industrial Development in Western Europe from 1750 to the Present*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 337.

¹⁵⁵ Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus*, pp. 337-9.

¹⁵⁶ Andrew S. Thompson and Gary B. Magee, 'A Soft Touch? British Industry, Empire Markets, and the Self-Governing Dominions, c.1870-1914', *The Economic History Review* 56/4 (2003), 689-717.

the century. An examination of the Logan Muckelt pattern book archives illustrates the ability of British manufacturers to adapt design and production methods in order to compete in export markets.

4.3 Foreign Competition

Increasingly, British merchants were competing with goods from continental Europe, notably France, the Netherlands and Germany, the United States and countries with quickly developing industries like Japan and India.¹⁵⁷ The effect of foreign competition on British exports was a persistent and pervasive fear that can be found in many nineteenth century commentaries on the state of British industry.¹⁵⁸

In 1909, the *Textile Mercury* published an article entitled 'Japan's Improving Textile Industry', which outlined the developments in the Japanese textile industries.¹⁵⁹ Notably, the article stated that, 'There are signs, too, that within the next few years there will be a development of textile printing on economic lines that have not been seen before.'¹⁶⁰ Two years later, in 1911, a similar warning was given in *Public Opinion*, asserting that 'the loss of the Chinese market to the Japanese cotton industry is merely a question of time.'¹⁶¹ By 1925 China imported more piece goods from Japan than Britain, and was followed by India a decade later in 1935.¹⁶²

Contemporary accounts also illustrate the threat which German competition posed, citing that the German emphasis on technical education, the learning of foreign

¹⁵⁷ The US became a major competitor in the late 1870s, followed by India in the 1880s and France and Germany in the 1890s. Farnie, *The English Cotton Industry*, p. 192.

¹⁵⁸ John C. Brown, 'Imperfect Competition and Anglo-German Trade Rivalry: Markets for Cotton Textiles Before 1914', *The Journal of Economic History* 55/3 (1995), 494-527.

¹⁵⁹ 'Japan's Improving Textile Industry', *Textile Mercury*, 17th July 1909.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ 'Foreign Competition', *Public Opinion*, 1st December 1911.

¹⁶² Farnie, *The English Cotton Industry*.

languages and the inclination to send young men to export markets to learn the trade meant that they could compete with a much 'greater chance of success.'¹⁶³ Likewise, German merchants were seen to be more respectful of client's requests and that 'He never tries to impose his own judgment on buyers; he is satisfied if he can meet the wishes of his customers and can retain their patronage.'¹⁶⁴ However, economic historian Ross J. S. Hoffman suggested that German merchants also exploited praiseworthy tactics, such as selling small quantities, offering extensive credit and discounting shipping and rail rates.¹⁶⁵

The extent to which foreign competition was the cause of the relative decline of Britain's global economic position is fundamental to understanding the potential failures of British merchants. David Landes and Aldcroft argued that British entrepreneurs were responsible for the decline Britain's economic performance, while Bernard Elbaum and William Lazonick identified the cause as the inflexibility of Victorian institutions.¹⁶⁶ However, Sandberg convincingly argued that British entrepreneurs and merchants made rational decisions in the face of the increasing pressure of foreign competition.¹⁶⁷

4.4 Responses to Increasing Competition

4.4.1 Merchants and Market Specialisation

The export trade presented increased risks for the textile industries as there was greater potential for damage to shipments and understanding the tastes and needs of the market

¹⁶³ *Foreign Trade Competition*, p. 1.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.* p. 3.

¹⁶⁵ Ross J. S. Hoffman, *Great Britain and the German Trade Rivalry, 1875-1914* (New York: Russell & Russell 1964), p. 177.

¹⁶⁶ Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus*, pp. 337-39; Aldcroft, 'The Entrepreneur and the British Economy', p. 133.

¹⁶⁷ Elbaum and Lazonick, 'The Decline of the British Economy'.

required significant infrastructure and networks. By selling through merchants, manufacturers eliminated the risk to their profits by trading with the merchant at a fixed price. It was the merchant who then absorbed the risk and took on the responsibility of selling the goods.¹⁶⁸ In order to survive merchants had to ensure the goods they commissioned or bought were suitable for the intended market, in terms of quality and design, and could be sold on for a sufficient profit.

While British merchants in the second half of the nineteenth century have been labelled as arrogant and unwilling to meet the requirements of the consumer, the merchants and manufacturers of the Manchester cotton trade appear to have been highly sensitive to needs of the client. The internal correspondence of the CPA, for instance, shows that they were aware of the reasons for their failures in particular markets and styles. A report made to the director, Hewitt, by the East and West Africa Section in 1911, accounting for the loss of trade in the previous year, points their difficulties in producing acceptable goods.¹⁶⁹ The section admits that they have ‘failed to deliver to the satisfaction of our consumers’ in a handful of styles. The report also indicates that, far from being blind to the demands of the market, they were unable to attain the necessary quality or aesthetic to be competitive. The section stated that:

Great efforts have been made and are being made, I know, to set this matter right at the works; but, although I think improvement is shown, we are still at fault both in regard to standard quality and regularity in turning it out.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ Heylin, *Buyers and Sellers*, p. 117.

¹⁶⁹ The Manchester Archives, Calico Printers’ Association Collection, Correspondence, 1901-1949, 28th August 1911, GB127.M75/1/2-1143.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

By the mid-nineteenth century mercantile professions had become accepted by society as vital. The publications directly targeted at potential future mercantile men, with titles such as *Readings for Young Men, Merchants and Men of Business* and numerous articles and books were produced celebrating the great merchants of the age, such as Henry Richard Fox Bourne's *Famous London Merchants* demonstrate the significant place merchants held within society and their acceptance.¹⁷¹ The importance of the merchant community in the nineteenth century can be seen in the number of contemporaries who wrote on the necessary qualities that must be possessed for a man to pursue a successful careers as a textile agent. Samuel Smith, senior partner in the cotton brokerage firm Smith, Edwards & Co., stated that, 'the head of a great firm dealing with foreign countries needs to be a statesman, an economist, and a financier, as well as a merchant.'¹⁷² Likewise, within the textile industry itself there was an acknowledgement of the vital role merchants played and the shift of power from manufacturers to mercantile professionals. For instance, as early as 1835, an agent for the Calcutta agency house of Gisbourne & Co. recognised merchants as the kings of the cotton industry stating that:

The small percentage to which competition has reduced profits in Manchester and Yorkshire has given such an advantage to the Merchant over the manufacturer in shipping abroad that the foreign export trade of this country is returning more and more every year to the 'purchase system.' A buyer can ensure a good and

¹⁷¹ *Readings for Young Men, Merchants, and Men of Business* (London: James Blackwood & Co., 1866); Henry Richard Fox Bourne, *Famous London Merchants. A Book for Boys* (London: J. Hogg & Sons, 1869).

¹⁷² Stanley Chapman, *Merchant Enterprise in Britain: from the Industrial Revolution to World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 10.

comprehensive assortment. He ships at the best seasons watching
the terms of prices at home...¹⁷³

Neither was the importance of market knowledge underestimated, or the role of the merchant as the vector of this information. As H. B. Heylin stated, 'It is a salesman's *duty* to know the styles of patterns and quality of goods required for certain markets.'¹⁷⁴ The importance of the merchant as a source of market intelligence arises in many of the primary sources. For instance, in *Manchester of Today*, John Walkden & Co., specialist in the West African trade, are praised by the author as they 'evinced a sound and deep knowledge of the industries and commerce of the country.'¹⁷⁵ This practice was also used by the CPA as a means of gathering market information and in 1910 the East and West Africa section of the Association advised that in order to compete in the indigo styles, 'it might be wise to send Mr Maughan on a tour of inspection of the markets.'¹⁷⁶

This evidence suggests that a number of British merchants involved in the West African trade did travel to these markets, and those which did not often sent representatives or had merchants compile reports on the state of the market. The advantages of having spent time in West Africa were also recognised by the mercantile community at large. In a description, dating from 1888, the firm of Bennett, Brotherton & Co. are applauded for being, 'thoroughly acquainted with the requirements of the markets, having had considerable experience on the coast...'¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³ Guildhall Library, Baring Bros. & Co. Ltd, Correspondence, 1833-1903, Letter from Mss. Gisbourne & Co. to Barings, 14th February 1835, HC 3.35 as cited in Stanley Chapman, 'The Agency Houses: British Mercantile Enterprise in the Far East c.1780-1920', *Textile History* 19/2 (1988), 239-54, (p. 241).

¹⁷⁴ Heylin, *Buyers and Sellers*, p. 119.

¹⁷⁵ *Manchester of Today*, p.97.

¹⁷⁶ Calico Printers' Association Collection, Correspondence, 1901-1949, 19th December 1910, GB127.M75/1/2-1143.

¹⁷⁷ *Manchester of Today*, p.123.

Stephen Nicholas also warns against a reliance on consular sources as an indicator of the performance of British trade overseas. He notes that these claims were not based on any empirical studies or analysis of particular markets or products.¹⁷⁸ Nicholas suggests these reports were lacking in objectivity and often overly critical. He points to similar reports made by American consulates to the US government, which were equally unfavourable.

Similarly, though the consular reports and other contemporary sources were often in agreement on the weaknesses of British merchants, they also highlight larger problems which were largely beyond the control of those in the trade or influenced by broader political and economic developments. The continued use of the Imperial system of weights and measures by British merchants in international markets was criticised, with the Consul of Naples arguing that 'It seems absurd that the first commercial nation in the world should measure their horses by hands and their dogs by inches, their cloth by ells and their calico by yards...'¹⁷⁹ A lack of access to credit, a lack of technical training, the paucity of languages, the impact of frequent trade disputes and the lack of coordination in rail and shipping infrastructure leading to higher prices for British shippers were all blamed for reducing Britain's ability to compete in exports.¹⁸⁰

It is, of course, possible to argue that it was within the means of British merchants on an individual basis to address some of these issues. Indeed, the report highlights that the progress made by German traders is largely due to 'quiet individual persistence backed up by special education.'¹⁸¹ However, the role, and potential

¹⁷⁸ Stephen J. Nicholas, 'The Overseas Marketing Performance of British Industry, 1870-1914', *The Economic History Review* 37/4 (1984), 489-506, (p. 491).

¹⁷⁹ *Foreign Trade Competition*, p. 4.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 1-8.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.* p. 8.

failings, of the state in supporting British businesses during the second half of the nineteenth century has been a contentious and long debated topic in within economic, Imperial and business history.¹⁸² It is beyond the scope of this chapter to examine in depth the significant research into the extent and effect of laissez-faire policies on the economy of the late nineteenth century which has been published over the last fifty years. However, Eric Hobsbawm's assertion that 'the foundations of *laissez-faire* crumbled in the 1860s and 1870s', coinciding with increased pressure from foreign competition, highlights the importance of the relative position of British economic policy in relation to the non-interventionist stance of the state in the first half of the century and to the policies of European and American nations as competitors in global trade.¹⁸³

With the growing importance of the export markets to the printed textile industry from the second quarter of the nineteenth century, the trade became increasingly divided into those catering for the domestic market and those for the export trade. The development of shipping houses, which dealt exclusively in goods for export further strengthened this segregation of the trade. The 1853 article 'Manchester by a Manchester Man' indicates that this division was certainly visible by the early 1850s. The author sketching the mercantile centre of the city exalted, 'See

¹⁸² F. V. Parsons, 'The North-West African Company and the British Government, 1875-95', *The Historical Journal* 1/2 (1958), 136-53; Kirby, *The Decline of the British Economic Power*; Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus*; Peter Mathias, *The First Industrial Nation: An Economic History of Britain 1700-1914*, 2nd edn (London: Methuen, 1983); J. H. Clapham, *An Economic History of Modern Britain. Free trade and Steel 1850-1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932).

¹⁸³ Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire: From 1750 to the Present Day* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), pp. 233-7; Sven Beckert, 'American Danger: United States Empire, Eurafica, and the Territorialization of Industrial Capitalism, 1870-1950', *The American Historical Review* 122/4 (2017), 1137-70, (p. 1141); Peter Mathias and Sidney Pollard (eds), *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe. Vol.8 The Industrial Economics: The Development of Economic and Social Policies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 14-16; Guillaume Daudin, Matthias Morys, and Kevin H. O'Rourke, 'Globalization, 1870-1914', in *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Europe. Vol.2, 1870 to the Present* ed. by Stephen Broadberry and Kevin H. O'Rourke (Cambridge Cambridge University Press 2010), 6-29 (p.9 & 26).

that enormous edifice: it is a large shipping house; it is exclusively in the foreign trade.'¹⁸⁴

The degree of separation between the domestic and export trade can be seen in the structure of the warehousing systems and the space they occupied within Manchester. While home trade warehouses catered for the wholesale of drapery goods, including printed textiles, shipping warehouses, also referred to as shipping or foreign houses, dealt with all aspects of the export trade. Alongside the home and shipping warehouse were the packing warehouses, which baled and labelled goods ready for distribution or export. The development of large shipping warehouses in the city, as distinct from those involved in the domestic trade, can be seen from the middle of the nineteenth century. The shipping trade was also geographically distinct within the space of the city, being centred around Whitworth Street in the south east of city.¹⁸⁵

This increased specialisation was not unique to the export markets and was mirrored by similar trends in production for the domestic market, where firms were divided by the type of cloth rather than by the geography of their clients.¹⁸⁶ Likewise, merchants and middlemen were also largely divided into those dealing in grey and coloured goods.¹⁸⁷

The division in the trade between the domestic and export market was partly in response to the different logistical requirements but was also an acknowledgement of the need to specialise goods and marketing to the intended market. For instance, goods suitable for the Chinese market would not be successful in South America or West Africa. The importance of catering to the precise needs of the different export

¹⁸⁴ Lamb, 'Manchester Man', p. 615.

¹⁸⁵ Cooper, 'The Manchester Commercial Textile Warehouse', p. 78.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. p. 73.

¹⁸⁷ Heylin, *Buyers and Sellers*, p. 117.

markets was emphasized by a number of contemporaries. For instance, H. B. Heylin wrote in 1913 that:

All of the above markets have styles and qualities suitable to their own tastes, customs, and climates [...] Specialising on certain makes of goods enables a manufacturer to produce with greater proficiency and economy.¹⁸⁸

This distribution of the trade was reflected in the merchants and agents who specialised in a particular good and geography. Of those dealing in printed piece goods, many exported to only one or two countries or continents, for instance the leading house of John N. d'Andira shipped to Australia, the United States and the Mediterranean.¹⁸⁹ Likewise, Atho Joannides & Co. specialised in shipping goods to Egypt, the Sudan and Red Sea ports.¹⁹⁰ Many larger firms were divided into numerous departments each of which served a different market. As one contemporary commented, 'one active fellow presides over the China trade, another over that to Calcutta, another over that of Western Africa [...] each with his staff of assistants and his separate ledger.'¹⁹¹

A number of merchants during this period concentrated on the growing West African market: Bennett, Brotherton & Co. are one such example, being identified as 'West and South-West African merchants' by *Manchester of Today*. The firm had two houses, one in Manchester and one in Liverpool, the former stocking printed piece goods and the latter hardware and earthenware.¹⁹² Similarly, John Walkden & Co. are

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. p. 119.

¹⁸⁹ *Manchester of Today*, p. 189.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid. p. 126.

¹⁹¹ Lamb, 'Manchester Man', p. 615.

¹⁹² *Manchester of Today*, p. 187.

described in *Manchester of Today*, as ‘trading with the West Coast of Africa only.’¹⁹³ As the value of British trade with Lagos alone had almost doubled between 1866 and 1870 and the value of the West Coast trade was £3 million by 1882.¹⁹⁴ Specialising in the West African market had the potential to be highly profitable.

Tracing the history of textile manufacturers and merchants in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries poses a number of difficulties due to the fragmentary nature of the primary evidence and the transient nature of the companies. Trade directories can provide valuable evidence in these circumstances, supplying basic information, such as the name and address under which firms were trading and the markets or products they specialised in. A survey of trade directories from Manchester and Salford indicates the growing importance of the West African markets, especially for the textile printing trade. The ‘shipping trade lists’ provide information on the firms operating as shipping merchants in Manchester and Salford including the markets they supplied, the goods they specialised in and their pay days. These lists, as valuable as they might be, are by no means comprehensive as inclusion in the trade directory was voluntary on the part of the merchant, who was responsible for supplying the necessary information.

The 1879 *Slater’s Directory of Manchester and Salford’s* shipping trade lists include the details of over 600 shipping merchants and agents exporting a wide range of goods across the globe.¹⁹⁵ Of these firms 45 are noted as shipping goods to Africa, 11 specifically to the West Coast. This seems a very small proportion, less than 10 percent of the overall number of firms; however, this is greater than the market share of goods exported. The 1911 issue of *Slater’s* shows an increase in the number of firms

¹⁹³ Ibid. p. 97.

¹⁹⁴ Redford, *Manchester Merchants II*, p. 60.

¹⁹⁵ *Slater’s Directory of Manchester and Salford 1879* (Manchester: Isaac Slater, 1879), pp.182-196.

engaged in the West African trade, rising from 11 to 34.¹⁹⁶ This is mirrored in an increase to a total of 91 firms trading across the continent of Africa, just over ten percent of the total shipping firms. While the proportion of agents exporting to Africa generally did not increase significantly, those exporting specifically to West Africa more than doubled. A closer look at the firms exporting to West Africa in both the 1879 and 1911 directories indicates that almost all shipping agents exporting to West Africa dealt in cotton goods.

The move towards specialisation for the West African market is described in the example of the firm of G. B. Ollivant & Co. which began as manufacturers of velvets and other textile goods, ‘but later a large general business began to develop itself in every description of goods suitable for the West Coast of Africa, which is now a large and increasing market with them.’¹⁹⁷ Although the firm began as manufacturers supplying the general market, by the late 1880s the trade with West Africa had proven profitable and become the focus of the firm’s business.

The shipping lists also indicate a growing division in the types of shipping firms located in Manchester and how they approached the export trade. While the number of firms specialising in exports to West Africa was increasing, there appears to be a broader division between firms who exported to numerous countries across several continents and those who focused on one of two locations. The 1911 directory suggests that by the early years of the twentieth century those companies trading yarn, plain cloth and other household goods such as earthenware and general merchandise, tended to cover a broad range of markets whilst those selling printed textiles specialised in one or two. Companies dealing in ‘Manchester goods’ were thus much

¹⁹⁶ *Slater’s Manchester, Salford and Suburban Directory 1911* (Manchester: Salter’s Directory Ltd., 1911), pp.1989-2015.

¹⁹⁷ *Manchester of Today*, p. 150.

more specialised in terms of markets, many catering for just one such as Antunes & Co. who exported to Brazil, Anderson & Worsley Ltd. who catered for Scandinavian markets and the Kahn Brothers who specialised in New Zealand.¹⁹⁸ This increased market specialisation amongst firms who dealt in printed textiles may be in response to the need to specialise designs to suit the diverse tastes of consumers in these markets.

Thus, the case of printed textiles for West Africa does not appear to be unique and the textile industry generally saw increasing levels of specialisation throughout the nineteenth century, particularly in manufacturing and marketing. The most common forms of specialisation were by process (vertical disintegration) and by product (lateral disintegration) which aimed to reduce costs, increase turnover and maximise profit by reducing the number of processes in the manufacture of goods.¹⁹⁹ The earliest attempts at specialisation in the cotton industry were in the division of spinning and weaving, which both required specialist skills and machinery.²⁰⁰ Increasingly by the middle of the nineteenth century, manufacturers would specialise in one of these processes. The specialisation of firms in the West African market, may be the result of broader specialisation in the industry and the increasing division of production processes.

Further examination of the trade directories indicates that while the case of specialisation for the West African market was not unique, neither was it the norm. As a number of agents specialised in specific markets, many continued to cater for

¹⁹⁸ Slater's *Manchester, Salford and Suburban Directory 1911*, pp.1989-2015.

¹⁹⁹ R. Robson, *The Cotton Industry in Great Britain* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1957), p. 63; Timothy Leunig, 'A British Industrial Success: Productivity in the Lancashire and New England Cotton Spinning Industries a Century Ago', *The Economic History Review* 56/1 (2003), 90-117, (p. 90).

²⁰⁰ Peter Temin, 'Product Quality and Vertical Integration in the Early Cotton Textile Industry', *The Journal of Economic History* 48 (1988), 891-907; Michael Huberman, 'Vertical Disintegration in Lancashire: A Comment on Temin', *The Journal of Economic History* 50/3 (1990), 683-90.

multiple and diverse markets. Notably, despite accounting for the largest share of British textile exports, very few shipping agents are recorded as catering specifically for the Indian markets. In the 1879 directory just 13 firms are detailed as shipping solely to India, 6 of which specify a particular region or city such as Bombay or Calcutta. However, a further 48 are noted as trading with India along with other countries such as China, America and Australia.²⁰¹ Often these firms traded with several countries, frequently many miles apart. The 1911 directory shows a continuation of this division of trade and although there is an increase in the number of firms shipping solely to India it is small.²⁰² Thus, while some shipping agents had become highly specialised by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, many continued to supply several markets, suggesting that despite increasing specialisation in the textile industry, this was far from universal. The directories indicate that specialisation occurred for a number of specific markets including the Levant, Java and West Africa. An examination of the textile samples illustrates why specialisation was important to merchants and manufacturers catering for the West African market.

Market specialisation enabled merchants to gain the necessary knowledge and experience of the market and consumer tastes. This knowledge allowed merchants to export goods which were better suited to the market and therefore more likely to be profitable. Although this model limited the number of potential consumers, to one market rather than several markets across the globe, specialised merchants could develop complex networks of trade and potentially benefit from economies of scale²⁰³

²⁰¹ Slater's *Directory of Manchester and Salford 1879*, pp.182-196.

²⁰² Slater's *Manchester, Salford and Suburban Directory 1911*, pp.1989-2015.

²⁰³ Kindleberger suggests that this type of specialisation could lead to increased standardisation of products, resulting in scale economies. Charles P. Kindleberger, *Economic Response: Comparative Studies in Trade, Finance and Growth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 229.

Surviving pattern books offer a unique glimpse into the way manufacturers and merchants specialised in particular markets and catered their designs accordingly. They are vital evidence which supports the contemporary accounts discussed above, indicating not only that the industry understood the need to provide suitable goods but also illustrating the mechanisms through which they attempted to do so. However, there are relatively few extant pattern books or examples of printed textiles for export and these are rarely accompanied by documentary evidence detailing the intended market or consumer.

The Logan Muckelt pattern books are records created for use on the factory floor and in the offices of the firm. Yet, pattern books and pattern samples were produced for a wide variety of uses. The role of the merchant, for instance, was largely reliant on the pattern book which enabled them to market their goods and gather orders. Great care was taken in the presentation of samples, as one example from the Bleachers' Association archives illustrates. Dating from 1896, the sample book of James Hardcastle & Co. exemplifies the distinct presentation style of sales books, in comparison to factory copies.²⁰⁴ Each sample is neatly labelled with the style, quality, width and length and the corresponding design number which allowed the manufacturer to cross-reference the order with the factory stock. (Figure 4.2) These books were designed to allow potential clients to judge the quality of the goods and select their preferred designs.²⁰⁵ They were used in the salesrooms of the warehouses but, most importantly were carried by merchants to middlemen in markets across the globe.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ The Manchester Archives, Bleachers' Association Collection, Sample Book of James Hardcastle & Co., 1896, GB124.BAA/75.

²⁰⁵ Philip A. Sykas, *The Secret Life of Textiles: Six Pattern Book Archives in North West England* (Bolton: Bolton Museums, Art Gallery and Aquarium 2005), p. 142.

²⁰⁶ Cooper, 'The Manchester Commercial Textile Warehouse', p. 92.

Pattern books and samples were fundamental to the export trade. They allowed for the conveyance of information that was vital to the purchaser across great distances and, in some ways, contracted the space between the manufacturer and the buyer. By being able to see and, importantly, feel the cloth pattern books reduced the potential risk for the buyer, who could have confidence that the product they would receive would meet their requirements. Equally, large companies catering for a variety of markets would produce a different set of pattern books for each market, thus selecting the designs and styles suitable for each.²⁰⁷

The importance of being able to feel the quality of the goods is highlighted by the Hardcastle pattern book. In between each leaf of the volume, a piece of the cloth is inserted which allows the buyer to examine both sides of the fabric and judge the weight and drape.²⁰⁸ (Figure 4.3) Similar methods were employed in the export trade and are described by Heylin as full-width samples known as ‘quality lengths’ or ‘feeler[s]’. He adds that ‘In some cases pattern books will be prepared with quality lengths inserted’, as seen in the Hardcastle example.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ Heylin, *Buyers and Sellers*, p. 119.

²⁰⁸ Kate Smith, ‘Sensing Design and Workmanship: The Haptic Skills of Shoppers in Eighteenth-Century London’, *Journal of Design History* 25/1 (2012), 1-10.

²⁰⁹ Heylin, *Buyers and Sellers*, p. 119.

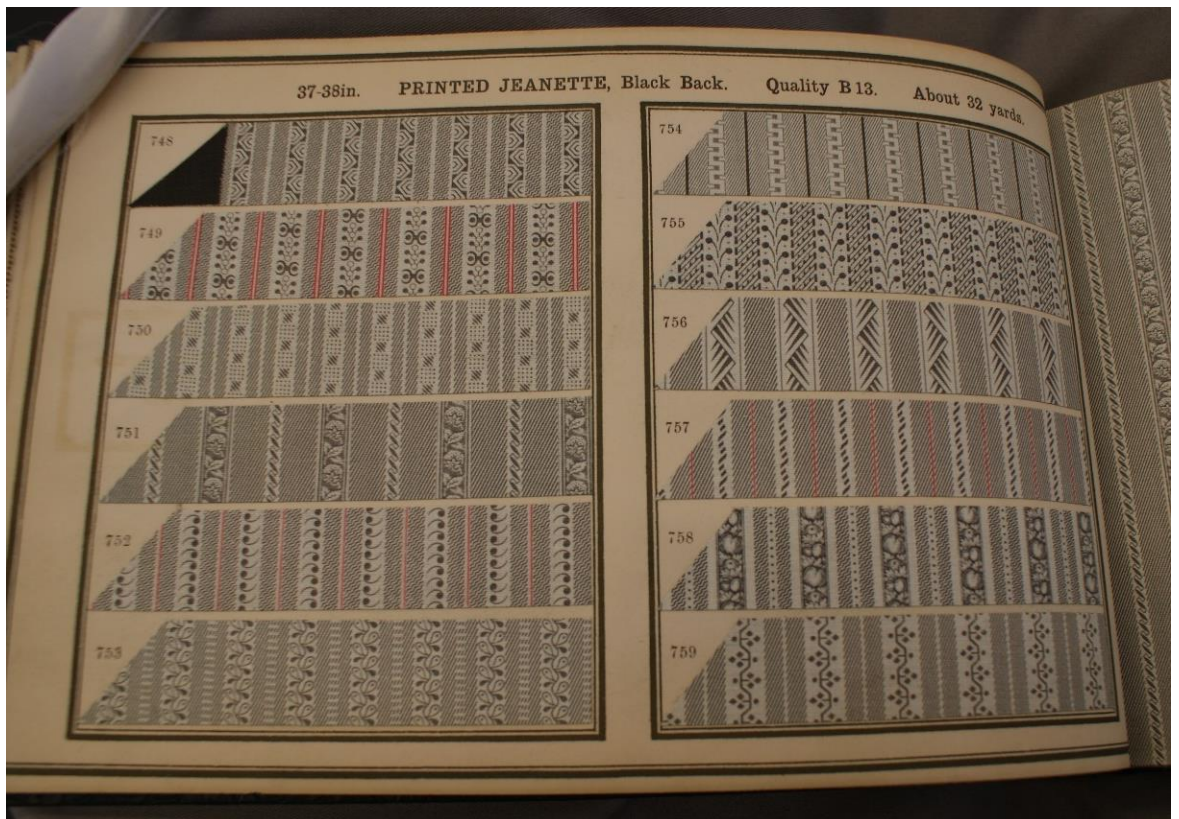


Figure 4.2: Sample Book of James Hardcastle & Co. The Manchester Archives and Local Studies, Bleachers' Association Collection, Sample Book, 1896, GB124.BAA/75.

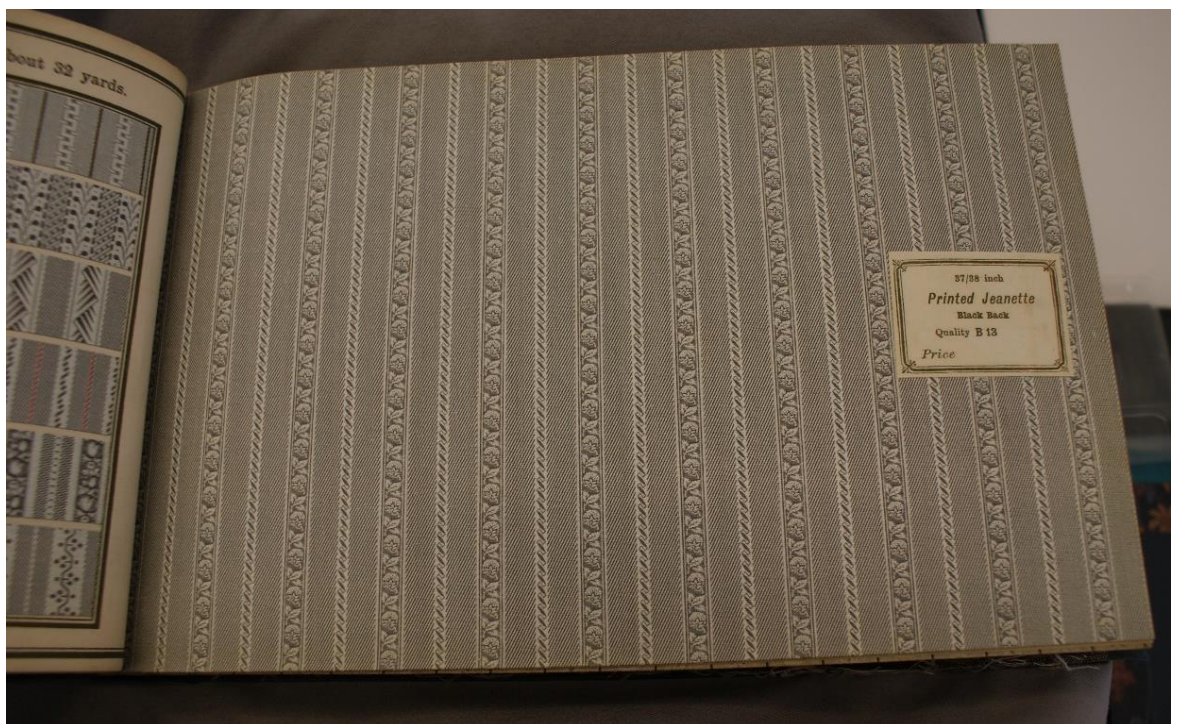


Figure 4.3: 'Feeler' Insert in James Hardcastle & Co. Sample Book. The Manchester Archives and Local Studies, Bleachers' Association Collection, Sample Book, 1896, GB124.BAA/75.

In many respects, the use of pattern books, as a way of marketing goods and securing orders, demonstrates the importance placed on meeting the needs of the consumer. They are proof that merchants and manufacturers involved in the export market were actively marketing specific goods to specific markets and not sending consignments of unsuitable or surplus textiles.

In unpacking the weaknesses or failures of those involved in British industry, and particularly those involved in the textile trade, the role of foreign merchants is often overlooked. As Britain's most significant competitor in many markets, the threat posed by German manufacturing is frequently highlighted by contemporary sources. Likewise, the African Sectional Committee of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce raised the registration of German trade marks in British West African possessions on a number of occasions. However, these accounts obscure the fact that a significant German trading community thrived in Manchester and it is estimated that around 150 German business were once present in the city.²¹⁰

The significance of foreign shipping houses and foreign agents has been emphasised by a number of historians of the textile industries, including Stanley Chapman.²¹¹ However, discussions of the problems facing the British businesses have largely neglected to identify the ambiguity of the term 'British merchants.' This is also true of contemporary accounts, which fail to differentiate between the foreign agents trading from Britain, or in British goods, and British nationals.

Foreign merchants played a vital role in the expansion of Manchester's cotton trade and founded some of the city's largest agency houses. Between 1820 and 1830 the number of foreign merchants in Manchester doubled and by the 1870s they owned

²¹⁰ Fred Halliday, 'The Millet of Manchester: Arab Merchants and Cotton Trade', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 19/2 (1992), 159-76, (p. 161).

²¹¹ Chapman, 'The Agency Houses', p. 173.

over four hundred of the trading houses in the city.²¹² The diversity of Manchester's cotton trade is also highlighted by contemporaries, such as R. Lamb who declared, 'Look at that group of foreigners, consisting of a German, a Greek, a Russian, and a Jew.'²¹³ Likewise, another contemporary stated that 'Manchester has many firms of different nationalities, and among them an important place is occupied by the French.'²¹⁴

Relatively little is known about the activities of foreign merchants and shipping houses within the Manchester textile trade. However, research by Fred Halliday into the role played by Arab merchants illustrates their importance in the opening of new markets and establishment of new global trading networks. His research demonstrates that Arab merchants formed vital trading networks and were particularly influential in the West African trade.²¹⁵ During the nineteenth century Arab traders in Britain began to export increasingly to West Africa to supply Lebanese-Syrian emigrants.²¹⁶ Lebanese immigrants living in West Africa were able to undercut European competitors due to their low costs and acceptance of lower profit margins.²¹⁷

The Ralli Brothers were one of the most prominent foreign trading houses and in 1828 had branches in Manchester and London as well as Odessa and Marseille, later adding offices in Calcutta and Bombay in the 1850s.²¹⁸ They dealt in a number of consumer goods, not limiting themselves to textile products, however, the four

²¹² Cooper, 'The Manchester Commercial Textile Warehouse', p. 55.

²¹³ Lamb, 'Manchester Man', p. 617.

²¹⁴ *Manchester of Today*, p. 109.

²¹⁵ Halliday, 'The Millet of Manchester', pp. 171-2.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 171.

²¹⁷ Michael Crowder, *West Africa Under Colonial Rule* (London: Hutchinson, 1968), p. 295; R. Bayly Winder, 'The Lebanese in West Africa', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 4/3 (1962), 292-333; Toyin Falola, 'Lebanese Traders in Southwestern Nigeria, 1900-1960', *African Affairs* 89/357 (1990), 523-53.

²¹⁸ Pitt, 'The Calico Printers' Association 1899-1973', p. 35.

hundred and sixty textile designs registered with the Board of Trade indicate that commission printing was a significant proportion of their business. Sven Beckert highlights how the Ralli's global network of offices allowed them to 'purchase cotton in the United States, ship it to Liverpool, sell it to manufacturers in Manchester, and then sell the finished goods in Calcutta.'²¹⁹ The Ralli Brothers were members of a large Greek community that traded in Manchester and held an important share of the export market.²²⁰ Indeed by the 1870s there were one hundred and sixty-seven Greek merchant houses in Britain, surpassing the number of German firms.²²¹ Descriptions of the firm of P. J. Villy & Co. also emphasise the advantages of foreign firms in having warehouses outside of Britain, facilitating the distribution of goods to the continent.²²² Villy & Co. had houses in Manchester and Paris, enabling them to stock a wide range of goods and acquire a detailed knowledge of trade on both sides of the channel.²²³

Foreign merchants may have been seen as competition for British merchants and shipping houses but for the textile industry they provided opportunities and contributed significantly to the development of British textile markets overseas. Through foreign merchants, British goods had access to a greater number of markets and, most importantly, to first-hand knowledge of the tastes and requirements of those markets. Foreign merchants were also a common feature of trade in West Africa, and while the Lebanese were the most prominent merchants, Greek, Indian, Libyan and Syrian immigrants were important traders across West Africa.²²⁴

²¹⁹ Sven Beckert, 'Cotton and the Global Origins of Capitalism', *Journal of World History* 28/1 (2017), 107-20, (p. 232).

²²⁰ Chapman, *Merchant Enterprise in Britain*, p. 156.

²²¹ *Ibid.* p. 157.

²²² *Manchester of Today*, p. 109.

²²³ *Ibid.*

²²⁴ Crowder, *West Africa*, p. 295.

Equally, the role of African merchants should not be forgotten. This is an area of study which would benefit from substantial research as relatively little is known about the life of these textiles once they were sold by British or British-based traders in West Africa. However, it is evident that African merchants and traders were essential in facilitating trade with the interior, which remained largely impenetrable to Europeans until the formal establishment of colonial rule. In Lagos, for instance, these merchants would buy goods on the coast and take them inland using the trade routes overland or river.²²⁵ West Africa had a long history of complex trade networks and African merchants continued to draw on these in their trade of European goods.²²⁶ Within communities, female traders were also integral to the exchange of British goods, particularly textiles.²²⁷ As such, these African actors were a crucial link between British merchants and West African consumers beyond Lagos.

4.4.2 The Calico Printers' Association

Increased market specialisation was one way in which merchants and manufacturers responded to increasing foreign competition in the global textile market. Business mergers were another way in which the industry responded to this increasing competition. The end of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth saw an increase in commercial associations and business mergers. Between 1890 and

²²⁵ Kristin Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760-1900* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), p. 138.

²²⁶ Ghislaine Lydon, *On Trans-Saharan Trails: Islamic Law, Trade Networks, and Cross-cultural Exchange in Nineteenth-Century Western Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 342-3.

²²⁷ A. G. Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa* (London: Longman, 1973), p. 56; Frederick Pedler, *The Lion and the Unicorn in Africa: A History of the Origins of the United Africa Company, 1787-1931* (London: Heinemann, 1974), p. 234.

1900 business mergers occurred in 18 sectors of Britain's textile industry.²²⁸ By consolidating resources the members of the organisations like the Calico Printers' Association (1899) and the Bleachers' Association (1900) sought to exploit economies of scale and limit internal competition allowing British textiles to regain their global competitive advantage.²²⁹ The firms of Allan Arthur Fletcher & Co., whose designs for West Africa are found in the BT registers, and Dalglish, Falconer & Co., who were a client of Logan Muckelt, were both members of the CPA.²³⁰

Internal competition was a major concern of the Calico Printers' Association and reflected the increasing pressures on manufacturers and merchants to be profitable. With its creation, the CPA claimed, 85 percent of the printing capacity of United Kingdom was controlled by one organisation.²³¹ This figure is now thought to be somewhat of an exaggeration, which in turn calls into question the viability of the CPA's objectives.²³² Principally, the aim of the CPA was to reduce internal competition by allowing for the most efficient use of resources, preventing severe price cutting and taking advantage of economies of scale.²³³ The central concern of the directorship in the early years was to fix minimum prices, thus halting the spiral of declining prices and profits.²³⁴ In the early years of the CPA, small firms were well represented and for many the merger offered an opportunity for survival in a trade where profit margins were shrinking.²³⁵

²²⁸ David J. Jeremy, 'Working the Business as One': Cultural and Organisational Aspects of the Calico Printers' Association Merger of 1899', in *King Cotton: A Tribute to Douglas A. Farnie*, ed. by John F. Wilson (Lancaster: Crucible Books, 2009), 93-116 (p.95).

²²⁹ David J. Jeremy, 'Survival Strategies in Lancashire Textiles: Bleacher's Association Ltd to Whitecroft plc, 1900-1980s', *Textile History* 24/2 (1993), 163-209, (pp. 163-4).

²³⁰ Jeremy, 'Working the Business as One', pp. 96-7.

²³¹ Pitt, 'The Calico Printers' Association 1899-1973', p. 42.

²³² Simon Pitt suggests that the figure may have been closer to 70 percent; *ibid.* p. 48.

²³³ The Manchester Archives, Calico Printers' Association Collection, Prospectus, 1899, GB127.M75/1/4/3 [Green 925].

²³⁴ Calico Printers' Association, Report of the Special Committee, 1902, GB127.M75/2/10.

²³⁵ Calico Printers' Association, Branch Statistics, June 1906-1909, GB127.M75/1/5/5 [Green 923].

The problems faced by the CPA in attempting to amalgamate so many branches of the textile printing industry are made clear reports of a Special Committee. The competition committee was proposed in 1900 and began 1902²³⁶ The committee was created in response to fears that internal competition within the Association was damaging profits and causing firms to break the minimum prices fixed by the board. Implicit in the formation and activities of the committee is the concern over foreign competition and the loss of the export markets, which were the mainstay of many British printers.

The minutes also illustrate the influence of merchants in determining which printers survived and which did not. In a discussion regarding the allocation of work between the various branches of the CPA, in an attempt to transfer work to those firms with idle machines, it was suggested that the merchants commissioning the work would not look favourably on these changes.²³⁷ A Mr Stanning warns that 'A Manchester merchant house does not like to be told where to send its goods.' The following exchange highlights how distant the directorship of the CPA was from the day-to-day trade and the extent to which merchants determined the structure of the industry:

Chairman: I do not understand that a Manchester merchant need to be told. He may simply be told 'we do not make that style.'

Mr Stanning: If he sends an order to the Head Office and is told 'send it to so and so' he would say 'I don't like so and so, I prefer the printer who has done it previously.' A merchant sends for a

²³⁶ Pitt, 'The Calico Printers' Association 1899-1973', p. 49.

²³⁷ Calico Printers' Association, Reports and Papers of the Special Committee, 1902, GB127.M75/2/10 [Green 916].

branch and says he would like it to the work, but it is informed that it is prevented from doing so, and that the merchant does not like.²³⁸

The structure of the Calico Printers' Association is also evidence of the importance of market specialisation. The CPA was divided into a number of groups, based on the quality and type of work that undertaken. There were 10 groups which represented the range of qualities which the branches could produce, those in group one dealing in the highest class of goods and those in group ten the lowest.²³⁹ A further three groups, labelled A-C, were for speciality goods, such as firms specialising in handkerchiefs.²⁴⁰ The CPA also went to great lengths to understand which markets were supplied by each branch. A document in the CPA archives in Manchester, describes the information from each branch that was collected by the board. Amongst descriptions of books recording for each branch the number of machines working, the aggregate number of hours worked, the number of orders received and the number of goods awaiting delivery, is 'detail book 4.' In this book 'is recorded for each Branch the number of pieces booked and the particular market the goods are intended for.'²⁴¹ In these books the markets were divided into the following categories; home, colonial, India, Continent, Africa, Eastern, Levant, America, Mexico and Other.

Nonetheless, despite this evidence, the 1902 CPA committee report concluded that the printing trade was not very specialised. Although the CPA did not include many specialised manufacturers, like Logan Muckelt, they remained attentive to the differences in trade between the various global market and the home market. Notably,

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Pitt, 'The Calico Printers' Association 1899-1973', p. 47.

²⁴⁰ Branch Statistics, June 1906-1909, GB127.M75/1/5/5 [Green 923].

²⁴¹ The Manchester Archives, Calico Printers' Association, Summary of Books Kept in the Statistical Department, c.1902, GB127.M75/2/10 (3 Boxes).

the CPA also separated the colonial markets from other overseas markets, although it is unclear how colonial markets were defined. For instance, the term 'colonial' could refer to all British possessions or, perhaps more probable, those which were settler colonies like Australia. The rationale behind collecting this data was explained as allowing a comparison with the Board of Trade returns and thus illustrating 'whether the Association is getting its proportionate share of the exports of the calico printing trade of this country.'²⁴²

The specialised nature of the textile printing industry, which catered for a wide variety of markets and produced a myriad of styles, meant that large-scale mass-production was often unsuitable and inefficient. This diversity of the calico printing industry has also been linked to the difficulties faced by the CPA, as it attempted to merge printers and dyers whose products and consumers were markedly distinct.²⁴³ For example, around 40 percent of the CPA's work was in lower quality prints and the management repeatedly failed to ensure that a minimum price was achieved for these goods.²⁴⁴ In establishing the objectives of the Association, the board failed to account for the increased competitiveness in the lower end of the market, the differences in profit margins and the importance of economies of scale in the sale of these cheaper goods as well as in their manufacture. The correspondence of the CPA includes numerous requests by firms to sell below the minimum price fixed by the board. Indeed, the practice was so common that in 1906 a special committee was formed to reconsider the issue of internal competition most notably in relation to, 'the method of fixing

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Pitt, 'The Calico Printers' Association 1899-1973', p. 48.

²⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 51.

prices and procedure in regard to giving branches permission to break them' and 'the best means of preventing the breaking of prices.'²⁴⁵

In failing to see the extent to which the printing industry was specialist the directorship of the CPA came into conflict with its shareholders. The board argued that as a non-specialist trade, the decisions would be best made by the centralised management and not by individual branches as there was little or no benefit in allowing branches self-determination in the majority of matters.²⁴⁶ Although they did accept that branches had 'the right to decline any recommendations of the advisory committee if they think it will be hurtful to the interests of the Association...', prices and orders were still to be assigned by the board.²⁴⁷ This became the central point of contention between the management and the branches and according to Simon Pitt, significantly hindered the success of the Association in its first decade.²⁴⁸

However, equally, the records of the CPA reveal a number of fundamental problems in its management, which allude to the weaknesses of British business in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. One of the weaknesses of the CPA was summarised by contemporary Henry Macrosty, author of the *The Trust Movement In British Industry*, in his statement that, 'The Calico Printers' Association at the time of its formation was, measured by capitalisation, the largest in the kingdom, but it was a lumbering leviathan.'²⁴⁹ There were 79 directors of the company, representing the former owners of the constituent firms.²⁵⁰ The managing board and executive board each had six members while several executive committees were formed in the early

²⁴⁵ Calico Printers' Association, Minutes of the Internal Competition Committee, 1906, GB127.M75/2/11/1 [Green 918].

²⁴⁶ Calico Printers' Association Collection, *To the Shareholders of the Calico Printers' Association*, 9th September 1902, GB127.M75/2/10, p.23.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Pitt, 'The Calico Printers' Association 1899-1973', p. 64.

²⁴⁹ Henry Macrosty, *The Trust Movement in British Industry: A Study of Business Organisation* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1907), p. 122.

²⁵⁰ Calico Printers' Association Collection, Trust Deeds, 1900-1969, GB127.M75/1/4/1 [Green 924].

years to oversee the transferral of assets and to consult on issues such as the maintenance and distribution of cotton stocks.²⁵¹

The fundamental problem of the CPA was the dislocation of the management and the manufacturers. While the management board was drawn from the pool of former owners, they remained far removed from the day-to-day operations of the factories. This was not missed by the managers of the constituent firms. The manager of Potter & Co. went as far to assert that:

We do not want interference from men who do not know the practical side of the business. The board has been composed of salesmen entirely; the opinion from anyone from the works has gone for very little...²⁵²

The disagreement in the CPA, as to the level of direction which should be given to branches by the board, indicates that as the structure of the industry shifted, from a range of small, medium and large concerns, often run by families or close trading networks, the issue of market knowledge became increasingly fraught. It is impossible to say if the CPA could have been more successful in its first decade if the management had been organised differently. However, it does appear that with greater respect for the branch managers and merchants who understood the trade and the special requirements of each market, the Association would have been more reflective of the industry as a whole.

²⁵¹ Pitt, 'The Calico Printers' Association 1899-1973', pp. 43-44.

²⁵² Calico Printers' Association Collection, Papers of the Special Committee, 2nd July 1902, GB127.M75/2/10 [Secretariat Box 3].

4.5 Conclusion

The textile printing industry was in many ways paradoxical. During the second half of the nineteenth century and early twentieth, increasing internal competition was blamed for the decreasing available profits while an increasing degree of specialisation was occurring. The industry was infamous for producing endless variety and choice yet was criticised for a lack of design innovation and the custom of copying.

Edmund Potter, founder of one of the largest and longest surviving printing firms, stated in 1852 that, ‘it is the printer’s object to provide for the especial taste of the consumer.’²⁵³ There is sufficient evidence in the pattern books of Logan Muckelt, the specialisation of the industry and the accounts of contemporaries like Heylin, that this remained true until the early twentieth century. British textile printers were employing extensive networks of merchants and agents to ensure that their goods met the needs and tastes of their distant consumers. Historians, have argued that the increasing importance of the merchant and resulting the separation of production and sale, further removed the manufacturer from the consumer, reducing the speed with which merchants and manufacturers could react to changes in the market.²⁵⁴ However, without the market knowledge obtained by merchants, market specialisation would not have been possible.

The high degree of market specialisation illustrates that merchants and manufacturers understood that each market required different designs, production techniques and marketing. The causes for the slow decline of British manufacturing following the successes of the early nineteenth century and the loss of superiority in

²⁵³ Edmund Potter, *Calico Printing as an Art Manufacture: A Lecture Read Before the Society of Arts, April 2nd 1852* (London: John Chapman, 1852), p. 36.

²⁵⁴ Mathias, *The First Industrial Nation*, p. 419; Clapham, *An Economic History of Modern Britain*, p. 35; Charles P. Kindleberger, *Economic Growth in France and Britain 1851-1950* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1964).

the export markets are complex. While this chapter has not been able to consider all these possible causes, it demonstrates that in the printed textile industry, an unwillingness to cater to the needs of foreign consumers was not to blame.

Chapter 5

Negotiating Trade in British West Africa:

The Manchester Chamber of Commerce

The complexity of the trade in printed textiles drew numerous actors into the supply chain – spinners, weavers, printers, warehousemen, and shipping agents were all engaged in the sale of British imported cloth in West Africa. Numerous institutions worked hard to promote the interests of the trade, including the Royal Exchange and several regional Chambers of Commerce. Manchester's Chamber of Commerce, for example, played an especially active role in promoting the interests of the city's merchants in both domestic and international textile markets, even becoming involved in petitioning for and helping shape legislation regulating the conduct of trade. The Manchester Chamber worked to protect the rights of its members, and in the process was drawn into debates about the wider organisation of the textile industry, the character of the export trade, and the relationship between traders and those governing the British Empire.¹

This chapter considers the relationship between commercial interests and the development of colonial legislation in British West Africa, examining the extent to which the interests of British merchants were reflected in the policies of the British Empire. It argues that Manchester merchants were actively trying to protect their commercial interests in Africa but that this was limited to issues directly related to trade. The chapter also demonstrates the need for continued study of mercantile institutions, such as the Chambers of Commerce, which reflected the concerns and

¹ Arthur Redford, *Manchester Merchants and Foreign Trade, Vol.I 1794-1858* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1973).

interests of a number of merchants and businesses within a variety of industries. These institutions brought together the diverse branches of Britain's global trade from manufacturers, commission merchants, shipping agents, warehousemen and financiers. Acknowledging the vital role these institutions played, is key to understanding the structure of the export trade and the relationship between British merchants, the state and the Empire.

The Manchester Chamber of Commerce was founded in the eighteenth century to support the development of local business and industry.² During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the Chamber formed a number of sub-committees and branches to oversee the specific issues which arose in particular export markets or trades. For instance, committees for sugar, leather goods and grey (unbleached) cloth were established in 1904, 1909 and 1916 respectively. Sections were also created for particular markets including East Africa, China and the Far East, Egypt Greece and the Levant, and India.³ The categorisation of the sections by product but also market, is further indication of the specificities of each market and the requirement of specialised knowledge in order to succeed commercially in the export trade. Each section was made up of an executive committee, which reported the Chamber's board, and members of the committee.⁴ The sections held regular meetings to discuss any issues arising for its members, reviewed yearly trade statistics, invited guest speakers, such as Mary Kingsley to share her experiences of West Africa, and were in regular

² Roland Smith, 'The Manchester Chamber of Commerce and The Increasing Foreign Competition to Lancashire Cotton Textiles, 1873-1896', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 38 (1955-6), 507-34.

³ Arthur Redford, *Manchester Merchants and Foreign Trade Vol.II 1850-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1956).

⁴ Manchester Chamber of Commerce, *Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1892-1897*, GB127.M8/4/1.

contact with the relevant committees of other Chambers of Commerce, both nationally and internationally.⁵

Established in 1892 the African Sectional Committee formed one of a number of specialised branches of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce.⁶ The members of the committee included a number of prominent merchants and manufacturers involved in the African trade. Many of the executive committee were merchants who specialised in the West African markets, such as John Walkden, Messrs. Paterson and Zochonis and Mr Wilson of Edwards, Cunliffe and Wilson.⁷ These merchants, shipping agents and manufacturers represented a broad range of industries in both the import and export trade. It is important to remember that the members of the committee did not embody a representative cross-section of all West African merchants and their views cannot be taken as evidence of all those involved in the West African trade.

The minutes of the African Sectional Committee reveal the concerns and priorities of the members of the Manchester Chamber with interests in the trade with Africa. They cover a wide variety of topics, ranging from customs tariffs, to the adulteration of produce, to the desirability of military intervention to protect British commercial interests in the colonies.⁸ While the Section was responsible for commercial concerns across the entire continent of Africa, the committee minutes are overwhelmingly concerned with the British colonies in West Africa. This reflects both the interests of the committee members, such as John Burnet and Mr Burman of

⁵ Miss Kingsley died shortly before she was due to speak in 1900. In response to her death the committee expressed their sadness that 'the merchants and natives of West Africa especially – have thereby suffered an irreparable loss.' Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1897-1903, GB127.M8/4/2.

⁶ Redford, *Manchester Merchants II*, p. 60.

⁷ Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1892-1897, GB127.M8/4/1.

⁸ Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1892-1916, GB127.M8/4/1-4.

Pickering and Berthoud, who specialised in the West African trade.⁹ Sanitation and the high rate of mortality was a major concern of the committee throughout the period, with frequent calls to improve conditions in the port cities and regular communication with experts in tropical diseases. Increasing access to interior markets through the development of the railway network from Lagos, and greater ease of access to ports were also important topics for the section.¹⁰ As such the minutes provide a rich source of information on the activities of British merchants in West Africa, their communication with the British and colonial governments, their thoughts on the state of trade and how they perceived their relationship to the Empire.

The first section of this chapter considers the debate on economic imperialism and the extent to which Manchester's African Sectional Committee influenced the decisions and actions of the British government and colonial administrations. It outlines the ways in which Manchester merchants and manufacturers interacted with the imperial administrative and legislative frameworks to protect or advance their interests in colonial markets. The second and third sections examine two case studies from the archives of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, with detailed analysis of the legislation for folded woven goods and trade mark registration in British West Africa. I argue that British merchants frequently and persistently expressed their views on the administration of British colonies, especially when their commercial interests were deemed to be under threat. However, in the case of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, there is little evidence to suggest that trade was leading the Empire. Negotiations between the Chamber, the British government and colonial administrators were often slow and fraught. When concessions were made to protect

⁹ Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1892-1897, GB127.M8/4/1.

¹⁰ Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1892-1916, GB127.M8/4/1-4.

the commercial interests of British traders, this rarely granted them particular privileges or advantages against foreign competition within colonial markets.

This chapter contributes to the wider debate on economic imperialism and the growing threat to Britain's export trade from foreign competition. The minutes of the African Sectional Committee offer a different perspective on the extent to which government support of British trade contributed to the character and development of the British Empire.

5.1 The Relationship Between Trade and Empire

The apparent appeal of colonial trade lay in the ability to exercise political control in order to create market conditions which were preferential to the economy of the imperial power. This could be in the form of protective tariffs or legislation which benefitted the trading practices of the imperial power. The development of dependence on close trading links with colonial markets has been seen as evidence of a lack of competitiveness and a preference for protectionist measures over free-trade principles. Historians, like John Brown and William Lazonick, have characterised the relationship between Britain and her colonies in a similar way, arguing that the increase in foreign competition, particularly in the textile industries, encouraged merchants to seek support from the state in protecting their share of the colonial trade.¹¹

The discussions of the African Sectional Committee reflect the concerns and interests of Manchester merchants and manufacturers involved in the trade with West Africa. Frequent topics of discussion include the state of sanitation facilities in Lagos,

¹¹ John C. Brown, 'Imperfect Competition and Anglo-German Trade Rivalry: Markets for Cotton Textiles Before 1914', *The Journal of Economic History* 55/3 (1995), 494-527; William Mass and William Lazonick, 'The British Cotton Industry and International Competitive Advantage: The State of the Debates', *Business History* 32/4 (1990), 9-65.

the impact of tropical disease on trade, fluctuations in prices and the development of legislation in the colonies. The archival sources show that the most pressing issue for the Manchester Chamber was how trade was carried out which included commercial practices, the day-to-day running of overseas trading companies and the regulation of trade. Broader questions of British rule in Africa, the threat of foreign powers and the administration of the colonies beyond that directly related to trade, appear infrequently and do not receive the same attention as other topics.

There is little evidence in the Manchester Chamber's archives of the direct involvement of merchants in determining imperial policy beyond trade. Furthermore, the evidence found by F. V. Parsons and Anthony Hopkins, of merchants pushing for imperial expansion and increased formal control, is not mirrored in the case of Manchester's African Sectional Committee.¹² Barrie Ratcliffe's study of the Chamber's records highlighted that during the period of European imperial expansion in Africa, from the late 1860s to the early 1880s, Manchester merchants showed very little interest in the relationship between Britain and West Africa.¹³ Matters of military intervention, in particular, were rarely discussed by the committee. On one occasion, one member, a Mr Roskill, put before the committee that the government was 'too yielding in the matter of foreign encroachments on territory to which Great Britain had reasonable claim.'¹⁴ He urged the committee to raise the issue of Britain's 'military weakness' with the Foreign and Colonial Offices. However, the response was muted, with little interest shown by other members in the matter.

¹² F. V. Parsons, 'The North-West African Company and the British Government, 1875-95', *The Historical Journal* 1/2 (1958), 136-53; A. G. Hopkins, 'Economic Imperialism in West Africa: Lagos, 1880-92', *The Economic History Review* 21/3 (1968), 580-606.

¹³ Barrie M. Ratcliffe, 'Commerce and Empire: Manchester Merchants and West Africa, 1873-1895', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 7/3 (1979), 293-320, (p. 295).

¹⁴ Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1897-1903, 12th January 1898, GB127.M8/4/2.

Neither was Manchester's trade with West Africa restricted to British possessions. The Manchester cotton industry traded with markets across West Africa throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including British territories, independent states and the possessions of other European states. Just over fifty percent of cotton piece goods were exported to British territories in West Africa and only 30 percent of the total trade with West Africa was with British territories in 1880.¹⁵ The minutes of the African Sectional Committee are dominated by discussions of Nigeria and the Gold Coast, both British territories. However, the continued importance of markets outside of British influence is also visible. Senegal, French Dahomey, the Ivory Coast, Liberia and French Guinea were frequent topics of discussion between the foundation of the committee and 1914.¹⁶

The division of West Africa into European territories did not create blocs of British, French or German rule. Britain's colonies of Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast and Nigeria were separated by large expanse of French territories, including French Dahomey, and the German possession of Togo. Although protectionist measures, such as tariffs in French Dahomey, may have deterred some British merchants from trading outside of British colonies, in reality the boundaries set by the Berlin Conference did not reflect the flow of trade to and within the region.¹⁷

The failure of the British government and colonial administration to listen to the views of the Chamber on matters of trade was a common topic of discussion amongst committee members. In 1902 the section agreed that a lack of communication

¹⁵ Marion Johnson, 'Cotton Imperialism in West Africa', *African Affairs* 73/291 (1974), 178-87, (p. 178); Ratcliffe, 'Commerce and Empire', p. 318.

¹⁶ Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1892-1916, GB127.M8/4/1-4.

¹⁷ E. Frankema, J. G. Williamson, and P. Woltjer, 'An Economic Rationale for the West African Scramble? The Commercial Transition and the Commodity Price Boom of 1835-1885', *The Journal of Economic History* 78/1 (2018), 231-67.

between those governing West Africa and British merchants jeopardised the commercial interests of merchants. The committee chair, Mr Hutton, stated that ‘the Committee is of the opinion that under the present system of Government of our West African possessions the general mercantile community have very little opportunity of placing their views before the authorities.’¹⁸ He continued that, ‘the mercantile community of Manchester should, at least, have an opportunity of expressing its views before new departures are made directly affecting its interest.’ Yet, the committee also explicitly stated that they sought ‘purely advisory powers’ and did not expect to dictate the terms of colonial legislation or interfere in matters beyond those directly related to their trade.¹⁹

In 1905 the African Sectional Committee again raised concerns over assurances made by the departing Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, that the Chamber would be consulted on ‘trade questions.’²⁰ The Committee agreed that ‘there appears to be some misunderstanding between the Colonial Office and the Chamber as to the extent of the concession made by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, and therefore it appears very desirable that...the matter should be discussed with the Secretary of State at a subsequent date.’²¹ On several occasions the Chamber expressed disappointment that they had not been consulted on amendments to trade mark legislation, being made aware of changes only on their publication in the colonial *Gazette*. Although the African Sectional Committee minutes are only one perspective of commercial influence in the development of the British Empire, and do not cover what is considered the imperative period of expansion in the 1870s, they add

¹⁸ Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1897-1903, 1st December 1902, GB127.M8/4/2.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1904-1910, 10th November 1905, GB127.M8/4/3.

²¹ Ibid.

to the body of evidence which questions the assertions made by proponents of economic imperialism.²²

The desire of the Chamber to be consulted on questions of trade in the colonies could be interpreted as proof of economic imperialism in British West Africa. However, the context of these discussions indicates that, far from wanting to dictate how the colonies were administered or to establish generous advantages for British traders, the section members were responding directly to the lack of communication from British and colonial officials of the necessary legal requirements for their trade. Many of their complaints arose from the unavailability of fast and effective modes of communication which could be shared between all the relevant parties. Responses to letters and telegrams were often slow and seemingly simple discussions protracted as the correspondence of the section's executive committee bounced between colonial Governors in West Africa, officials in the Foreign and Colonial Office and the Chamber's members. Although the arrival of steam shipping and the telegraph significantly increased the speed of communication between Britain and West Africa, the distance between Manchester and its markets continued to present an obstacle to trade.²³

The sectional committee minutes illustrate that on a number of occasions merchants were shocked to find new or amended legislation in force with no or little time to adjust. In 1902, the committee requested that they be provided with all official publications, including the Gazettes, Blue Books and Ordinances, as soon as they were released.²⁴ The requests of the committee for greater inclusion in the organisation and

²² Parsons, 'The North-West African Company'; Rhoda Howard, 'Economic Imperialism and Oligopolization of Trade in the Gold Coast: 1886-1939', *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies* 7/1 (1976), 71-92.

²³ Martin Lynn, 'The 'Imperialism of Free Trade' and the Case of West Africa, c.1830-1870', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 15/1 (1986), 22-40.

²⁴ Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1897-1903, 1st December 1902, GB127.M8/4/2.

supervision of trade in the colonies largely resulted from a desire to be well-informed and able to trade without unwittingly contravening trade regulations.

The minutes of the African Sectional Committee offer an additional perspective of how British merchants perceived and responded to the external threat from growing economies and the extent of their efforts to secure the colonial markets. The establishment of the Section has been linked to growing anxiety amongst merchants over French expansion in West Africa and the implementation of trade tariffs in French territories.²⁵ The issue of foreign competition is a recurring theme in discussions of the British export trade at the turn of the twentieth century. Direct references to concerns about foreign competition are relatively uncommon in the minutes of the African Sectional Committee, however, the anxiety felt around the increasing threats from Europe, India, Japan and the United States is implicit in many discussions.

The issue of foreign competition is mostly evident in discussions surrounding tariffs and duties. For instance, in 1897 the Chamber expressed concerns over the import duties in French Dahomey (Benin).²⁶ This is followed some months later by fears that a general tariff would be applied to all of French West Africa.²⁷ In response, Mr Zochonis (of Paterson Zochonis, one of the largest and most influential firms operating in West Africa during this period), suggested that the Colonial Office be asked to negotiate with the French government to ensure that duties for British goods did not exceed 8 percent more than the duties on French goods.²⁸

The Chambers of Commerce provided one avenue for merchants and manufacturers to voice concerns over trade policies at home or in the colonies to

²⁵ Ratcliffe, 'Commerce and Empire', p. 296.

²⁶ Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1897-1903, 1st June 1897, GB127.M8/4/2.

²⁷ Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1897-1903, 26th October 1897, GB127.M8/4/2.

²⁸ Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1897-1903, 4th August 1897, GB127.M8/4/2.

government.²⁹ They also created and supported networks of communication between commercial cities and districts, allowing for shared interests to be voiced and building their strength by numbers.³⁰ This was particularly true for the Chambers of Manchester and Liverpool both had significant interests in the West African trade.

From its conception the committee had close ties with the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce and the two chambers frequently collaborated in dealings with the Foreign and Colonial offices. In 1905 representatives from Manchester joined with members from the London and Liverpool Chambers to form the Joint West African Committee.³¹ From this date, the minutes of the African Sectional Committee frequently refer to those of the Joint West African Committee. However, the minutes also illustrate the extent to which the interests of Manchester and Liverpool merchants differed in relation to the African trade.

The commercial networks of the two cities were important: while Manchester was one of the manufacturing capitals of the country, Liverpool provided essential shipping links for the North of England.³² Many of the shipping agents serving Manchester's manufacturers and commission merchants sailed from Liverpool's docks and the city's import trade provided vital resources for Manchester's industries.³³ The commercial life of the two cities was in many respects dependant on each other. It was not until 1913 that the possibility of a direct service from Manchester to West Africa, using the Manchester Ship Canal and allowing merchants to bypass the port of Liverpool, was proposed.³⁴

²⁹ Ratcliffe, 'Commerce and Empire'.

³⁰ Redford, *Manchester Merchants I*.

³¹ Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1904-1910, 10th November 1905, GB127.M8/4/3.

³² Kenneth Dike Nworah, 'The Liverpool 'Sect' and British West African Policy 1895-1915', *African Affairs* 70/281 (1971), 349-64.

³³ Frederick Pedler, *The Lion and the Unicorn in Africa: A History of the Origins of the United Africa Company, 1787-1931* (London: Heinemann, 1974).

³⁴ The Manchester Archives, Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1910-1914, 30th May 1913, GB127.M8/4/4.

On many occasions the Liverpool and Manchester Chambers stood in unison, sharing many of the same concerns and requests regarding British trade with West Africa. However, there were also times of friction between the two Chambers which reflect Manchester's dominance in the manufacturing and Liverpool's role as one of Britain's most important ports and a centre of global trade. For instance, the Manchester and Liverpool Chambers clashed over the quantity of liquor sold in West Africa. The export of liquor was an important branch of the West African trade, particularly for Liverpool merchants. However, Manchester merchants argued that the export of liquor had a negative impact on cotton sales in West Africa and thus should be restricted.³⁵

These discussions reflect a common theme throughout the minutes of the African Sectional Committee; the differentiation between Manchester merchants and British merchants generally. The Chamber's role was to represent and protect the specific interests of Manchester merchants. The minutes are evidence of the particular interests of Manchester merchants as the centre of British cotton textile production and the importance of the export trade to the cotton industry.

The African Sectional Committee minutes also illustrate the complicated relationship between commerce and Empire and the conflict that could arise between imperial ideology and the experiences of traders and merchants. On several occasions the committee complained about the actions of the British and colonial governments towards African traders and communities. In January of 1898, the Chamber raised the negative impact on trade caused by the Compulsory Labour Ordinance which had come into force in the Gold Coast. While the comments of the Chamber reflect the prevailing attitudes regarding race, they also illustrate that for those involved in trade

³⁵ Ratcliffe, 'Commerce and Empire', p. 298.

with West Africa, the situation was far more complex than a simple coloniser-colonised binary. A report of events highlighted that the Police had ‘raided the streets and market place and captured men and women indiscriminately, many being bush people who had come into the town to trade.’ It continues to add that the event seemed to be exceptional and that since ‘Government officials have acted with more discretion.’³⁶ Evidently, the Chamber’s primary concern was the loss of trade. However, as their trade relied on close relationships with merchants, carriers and female hawkers in West Africa, it was also vital that the colonial administration did not interfere with these networks.

Further evidence of the relationship between African traders and British merchants can be found in the action taken by the committee regarding the ‘alleged harsh treatment of a native trader’ in November 1898. The case concerned a E. W. Thorpe, who worked as an agent for Paterson Zochonis in Sierra Leone. He had been arrested for selling powder, but despite no charges being made was remanded in custody for a month in harsh conditions. The committee minutes state that, ‘he had been handcuffed and been made to sleep on a bare ground floor until his relatives supplied him with mats, and had been obliged to provide for his own maintenance in jail.’ Thorpe later documented his treatment in the *Sierra Leone Weekly News*. The committee was very clear that Thorpe’s arrest and detention was unlawful and wrote to the Colonial Office:

calling attention to the apparent looseness in the administration of
the law which it disclosed and pointing out how prejudicial to the
regular pursuit of peaceful avocations and how destructive to the

³⁶ Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1897-1903, 4th January 1898, GB127.M8/4/2.

proper feelings which ought to exist between the Governors and the governed in a British colony was the allowance of legislative blunders of this kind.³⁷

The response of the committee reflects the extent to which British merchants relied on their agents and contacts in West Africa. It also illustrates the ways in which the imperial project, and the hierarchical structures which came with it, could come into conflict with the principles of free trade.

These examples from the minutes of the African Sectional Committee, indicate the complexity of the relationship between trade and Empire and the difficulty of establishing an overarching narrative for the influence of merchants and manufacturers over colonial policy. Closer examination of two case studies illustrates the influence of Manchester merchants on colonial legislation but also the extent to which the Chamber had to fight for their interests to be protected. The opposition raised by the African Sectional Committee to the Folded Woven Goods Ordinance and trade mark registration demonstrates the free-trade principles of Manchester merchants. However, the Chamber was ultimately unable to overturn the legislation. The compromise that resulted shows that the relationship between trade, the British government and colonial governments was one of negotiation.

The introduction of trade mark registration in the colonies and the debates on the Folded Woven Goods Ordinances, must be understood within the broader framework of colonial legislation. Many depictions of the British Empire, by both contemporaries and historians, have presented an idea of unity, uniformity and

³⁷ Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1897-1903, 2nd November 1898, GB127.M8/4/2.

unanimity.³⁸ This image of the machine-like functioning of the British Imperial project is powerful but a number of historians have also challenged this view, highlighting the frequently improvised way in which the Empire was formed and governed.³⁹ The dissemination of British laws to the colonies and the creation of new colonial legislation was fragmentary and inconsistent, reflecting the differing levels of direct British involvement and the typology of the British Empire.⁴⁰ This is particularly visible in the development of legal practices and legislation in the colonies, which Lionel Bently has described as ‘varied, complex and messy’.⁴¹

Yet, an absence of organisation and unity does not necessarily equate to a lack of strategy or agenda. The British empire has been described as an engine for the dissemination of legal frameworks yet the extent to which this dissemination was the result of a formal imperial strategy or other factors, such as local demand or demand from trade, remains contested.⁴² Commercial interests can often seem to overshadow ideological ones, particularly in relation to trade mark law.⁴³ However, there remains a sense of the commercial and imperial agenda underlying each decision. When British law was transplanted in Lagos in the 1870s, including the establishment of a Supreme Court it was headed by a British judge.⁴⁴ The implications for Africans seeking justice within a system run by, and largely for, the British Empire are clear. The potential power of British merchants to influence decisions in the colonial legislative systems

³⁸ Ronald Hyam, *Understanding the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

³⁹ Thomas Richards, *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (London: Verso, 1993).

⁴⁰ Michael D. Birnhack, *Colonial Copyright: Intellectual Property in Mandate Palestine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 28.

⁴¹ Lionel Bently, 'The 'Extraordinary Multiplicity' of Intellectual Property Laws in the British Colonies in the Nineteenth Century', *Theoretical Inquiries in Law* 12 (2011), 161-200, (p. 162).

⁴² Birnhack, *Colonial Copyright*, p. 22.

⁴³ Ibid. p. 63.

⁴⁴ Kristin Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760-1900* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), p. 115.

can be understood through an analysis of the Folded Woven Goods Ordinance and the registration of trade marks.

5.2 The Regulation of Folded Woven Goods

The intervention of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce's African Sectional Committee in the amendment of the Southern Nigeria Folded Woven Goods Ordinance of 1908, is one example of mobilisation of merchants and manufacturers to protect their commercial interests in the colonies. It illustrates the ways in which the trade communicated and negotiated with the British government, mostly this was through the Foreign Office, and the colonial administrators.

Piece goods, lengths of cloth woven to standard dimensions, became one of the major exports from Britain to West Africa from the middle of the nineteenth century. Many piece goods were folded for shipment and sale, the number of folds indicating the number of yards in the piece. English law stipulated that a yard must consist of thirty-six inches, however it was common within the industry to tolerate anything between thirty-five and a half to thirty-seven inches.⁴⁵ Merchants frequently folded the cloth in such a way 'as to convey the impression that they are ordinary standard length, whereas in point of fact they are one, two or more yards short of that length.'⁴⁶ From 1886 merchants employed new tactics to evade prosecution, by neglecting to print the word *yards* after the figure indicating the length they exploited a loophole in the law.⁴⁷ The legislation on folded woven goods was designed to

⁴⁵ Redford, *Manchester Merchants II*, p. 143.

⁴⁶ The Manchester Archives, Manchester Chamber of Commerce, *Annual Report*, 1886, GB127.M8/381/M2.

⁴⁷ Redford, *Manchester Merchants II*, p. 143.

‘safeguard the interests of the purchaser’ from unscrupulous merchants.⁴⁸ Although selling cloth that did not meet the required standard of thirty-six inches to the yard was illegal, the practice continued given the difficulties of tracing and prosecuting offenders.⁴⁹ (Figures 5.1-3)

Legislation for the better regulation of folded woven goods in British West Africa was first established in Lagos in 1893.⁵⁰ This was followed by the proclamation of similar ordinances in Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast in 1894.⁵¹ Each Ordinance stipulated that piece goods should be marked with the exact number of yards contained within and that each yard should contain no less than thirty-six inches.⁵² The Ordinances were amended and consolidated later the same year to account for changes to the margin of error allowed for each length of cloth and the maximum penalty to be charged.⁵³ The Manchester Chamber of Commerce supported the introduction of the legislation and pushed for the similar regulation in the other British colonies in West Africa.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1910-1914, 28th July 1911, GB127.M8/4/4.

⁴⁹ Redford, *Manchester Merchants II*, p. 143.

⁵⁰ The National Archives, Colonial Office, Acts, Lagos, Ordinance No.5: An Ordinance to Amend and Consolidate Ordinances Regulating the Importation of Folded Woven Goods, 30th June 1893, CO 148/2.

⁵¹ Redford, *Manchester Merchants II*, p. 145.

⁵² Colonial Office, Acts, Lagos, Ordinance No.5: An Ordinance to Amend and Consolidate Ordinances Regulating the Importation of Folded Woven Goods, 30th June 1893, CO 148/2.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Redford, *Manchester Merchants II*, p. 144.



Figure 5.1: Printing Block Used to Indicate the Number of Yards for Folded Woven Goods, Science and Industry Museum, Manchester, late nineteenth century, Y1995.2.23.



Figure 5.2: Printing Block Used to Indicate the Number of Yards for Folded Woven Goods, Science and Industry Museum, Manchester, late nineteenth century, Y1995.2.47.



Figure 5.3: Number of Yards Printed on Samples for Piece Goods. The Manchester Archives, Logan Muckelt Collection, c.1899-1920, GB127.M831/10.

The subject of folded woven goods is notably absent from the minutes of the African Sectional Committee until 1908, when the colonial government of Southern Nigeria published a notice, relating to the importation of Madras handkerchiefs under the Folded Woven Goods Ordinance.⁵⁵ The notice indicated that merchants trading Madras handkerchiefs should ensure they conform to the stipulated folds on the

⁵⁵ The Manchester Archives, Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1904-1910, 7th October 1908, GB127.M8/4/3.

Ordinance or face prosecution.⁵⁶ The Folded Woven Goods Ordinance had previously exempted handkerchiefs from the legislation as merchants argued that they often varied in size and length, being sold by each piece and not by the yard.⁵⁷ After communication with the Colonial Office the Chamber was reassured that the notice would not be enforced until further consultation had taken place. Several years of negotiations ensued regarding the qualification of Madras handkerchiefs and the necessary procedures to be taken by merchants to ensure the exemption of their goods.

The Colonial Office first proposed that lengths of handkerchiefs should have, clearly visible, a dividing mark between each handkerchief and that the fold should occur on said dividing line.⁵⁸ Further disagreement was generated over the form of ticket that should be affixed to the first fold of the length and how long merchants should be allowed to dispose of stocks of handkerchiefs held in West African warehouses. The percentage allowed for error in the number of inches in each yard also provoked significant discussions. Between 1902 and 1913 frequent exchanges between the Chamber and the Colonial Office, discussed the appropriate number of inches which should be granted as a margin of error.

The Manchester Chamber had also been an important actor in the development of regulation for folded woven goods in India. After the Calcutta and Bombay Chambers of Commerce requested the aid of the Manchester chamber in combatting the false sale of folded woven goods, the Manchester Chamber drafted a declaration to be signed by members, pledging to correctly mark the number of yards on folded goods. The Chamber hoped that the non-signatories would thus become suspect,

⁵⁶ The National Archives, Colonial Office, *Government Gazette*, Southern Nigeria Protectorate, 1908, CO 591/5.

⁵⁷ The Manchester Archives, Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1904-1910, 7th October 1908, GB127.M8/4/3.

⁵⁸ The Manchester Archives, Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1904-1910, 22nd December 1908, GB127.M8/4/3.

creating a self-surveying system of compliance amongst merchants. Their attempt saw little success however, and by 1887 they had succeeded in amending the legislation to prevent merchants from exploiting the loophole.⁵⁹ The example of the Indian legislation thus provided a template for the formation of regulation in the West African colonies.

The case of the Southern Nigeria Folded Woven Goods Ordinance illustrates a number of important features of trade within the Empire and the formation of legislation relating to commerce. The amendments to the Ordinance in Southern Nigeria resulted in a protracted chain of letters and telegrams between the various interested parties, often across significant geographical distances. The appearance of the notice, which contravened the 1893 Ordinance, in the Government Gazette in 1908 demonstrates the difficulty in maintaining cohesive and unified legislation across a vast Empire. It is unclear if the publication of the notice was due to a misunderstanding of the regulations stipulated in the Ordinance or as an attempt to amend the exemptions of the Ordinance. However, the minutes of the African Sectional Committee, detailing the correspondence between the Chamber, the Colonial Office, the Governor of Nigeria and various government agents indicates that the left hand did not know what the right was doing.

In 1912 the Anglo-African Supply Company deferred to the Chamber after they received confirmation from the collector of customs in Calabar that a sample of cloth of five and a half yards in length was correctly folded when showing six folds.⁶⁰ The Lagos Chamber of Commerce disagreed as did the Manchester Chamber who cited the following clause in the Ordinance, ‘no piece shall be made up so as to show

⁵⁹ Redford, *Manchester Merchants II*, pp. 143-4.

⁶⁰ Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1910-1914, 22nd April 1912, GB127.M8/4/4.

more folds than the full number of yards it actually contains...'⁶¹ This example highlights the potential discord between legislation and enforcement, particularly in cases involving convoluted guidelines, which required a high level of expertise and understanding of the textile trade to properly interpret and enforce. Customs officers in the colonies were faced with a diverse and complex array of goods to inspect and were expected to be able to accurately identify varieties of cloth from the thread count, weave and fibre.⁶²

The confusion caused by the addition of Madras handkerchiefs to the Folded Woven Goods Ordinance, begs the question of the efficacy of such legislation and of the colonial customs administration. The necessity of such a measure was also questioned by the Chamber in 1909, when although claiming to sympathise with the administration's desire to close loopholes within the existing law, they expressing anxieties 'lest, in their solicitude for the attainment of this end, the authorities should insist on the observation of hard and fast rules not really touching the point.'⁶³ Ever diplomatic in communications with the Colonial Office the Chamber laboured to protect the interests of its members and limit what they saw as unnecessary or restrictive legislation.

The involvement of the Manchester Chamber in the development and modification of the regulation of folded woven goods is evidence of their role in negotiating with the British and colonial governments on behalf of the interests of British merchants. Much of the discussion surrounding the amendment to the Southern Nigeria Folded Woven Goods Ordinance is concerned with what appear to be very

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Isabel Hofmeyr, 'Colonial Copyright, Customs, and Port Cities: Material Histories and Intellectual Property', *Comparative Literature* 70/3 (2018), 264-77, (pp. 268-70).

⁶³ Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1904-1910, 5th January 1909, GB127.M8/4/3.

minor details. Many histories of the British Empire, and the role of commerce within it, centre on landmark moments and decisive actions, which without question are vital to our understanding. However, in attempting to better understand the interests and ideologies of merchants and how this influenced imperial policy, the commonplace and everyday can also illuminate how commerce interacted with the Empire. The efforts of the Chamber to influence the legislation on folded woven goods in Southern Nigeria, reflects the priorities of the merchants and manufacturers.

5.3 Trade Mark Registration

From the 1850s onwards Manchester was amongst those Chambers that campaigned to develop modern laws relating to trade marking. As the records of the Chamber reveal, this was based on the establishment of domestic trade mark registers in Britain in 1875, but also saw the migration of trade mark regulations to the British colonies.⁶⁴

The period between 1860 and 1914 saw the development of what has been characterised as modern trade mark law.⁶⁵ The demand for legislation from manufacturers and merchants from multiple consumer goods industries, reflects the growing use of names and symbols to establish the reputation of a particular product and increase repeat purchases.⁶⁶ It has been argued that this period marks a significant

⁶⁴ Redford, *Manchester Merchants II*, p. 138.

⁶⁵ Lionel Bently, 'The Making of Modern Trade Mark Law: The Construction of the Legal Concept of Trade Marks (1860-1880)', in *Trade Marks and Brands: An Interdisciplinary Critique* ed. by Lionel Bently, Jennifer Davis, and Jane C. Ginsburg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 3-41 (p.3).

⁶⁶ David M. Higgins, 'The Making of Modern Trade Mark Law: the UK, 1860-1914. A Business History Perspective', in *Trade Marks and Brands: An Interdisciplinary Critique*, ed. by Lionel Bently, Jennifer Davis, and Jane C. Ginsburg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 42-61 (p.42).

development in the concept of the 'brand' and that this was facilitated by the formation of trade mark protection.⁶⁷

Increasingly, from the middle of the nineteenth century, trade marks were being accepted as 'valuable intangible assets'.⁶⁸ One contemporary valued the trade mark of a Birmingham firm at £20,000 in 1862.⁶⁹ J & P Coats also believed in the value of their trade mark, spending almost £2,000 in legal costs against its fraudulent use between 1859 and 1862.⁷⁰ One reason for the increasing recognition of the value of trade marks came from their importance to the export trade; this was particularly true in the case of cotton goods.⁷¹ Mira Wilkins explains that, 'when the separation between producer and buyer occurs, the name and reputation become intangible property rights that *require legal support*.'⁷² As goods for export to increasingly distant countries became the staple of the North-West's textile industries, manufacturers and merchants progressively relied on symbols and images in order to communicate their 'brand' to non-English speaking and illiterate audiences.⁷³ Merchants and manufacturers saw trade marks as a vital way of assuring the quality of their products to repeat purchasers and establishing customer loyalty in overseas markets, where there was little direct contact between the manufacturer and the consumer. The growing importance and commercial value of trade marks required that they were protected by law.

⁶⁷ John Mercer, 'A Mark of Distinction: Branding and Trade Mark Law in the UK from the 1860s', *Business History* 52/1 (2010), 17-42.

⁶⁸ Higgins, 'The Making of Modern Trade Mark Law', p. 42.

⁶⁹ David M. Higgins and Geoffery Tweedale, 'The Trade Mark Question and the Lancashire Cotton Textile Industry, 1870-1914', *Textile History* 27/2 (1996), 207-28, (p. 210).

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* p. 211.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* p. 207.

⁷² Mira Wilkins, 'The Neglected Intangible Asset: The Influence of the Trade Mark on the Rise of the Modern Corporation', *Business History* 34/1 (1992), 66-95, (p. 68).

⁷³ Mercer, 'A Mark of Distinction', p. 23.

Trade mark legislation in British colonies was largely modelled on the domestic Trade Mark Act of 1875.⁷⁴ The history of domestic and colonial trade mark legislation is closely intertwined and both were influenced by the cotton industries' domestic and export trade.⁷⁵ This is reflected in the concerns expressed by the Manchester Chamber and the extent of their opposition to the registration of trade marks in the colonies. The influence of commercial interests, and the direct influence of merchants through the Chambers of Commerce and other forms of lobbying, on the development of trade mark legislation in British West Africa mirrors that of colonial copyright and the development of domestic trade mark legislation.

Understanding the formation of copyright law in the British Empire, the interests concerned and the mechanisms used, helps to unpack the discussions surrounding the development of trade mark law in the colonies. The history of the development of colonial copyright provides a useful framework through which to examine the example of trade marks. Michael Birnhack identifies three key periods in the development of colonial copyright in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; firstly the period prior to the International Copyright Act and the Berne Convention in 1886, secondly the period between the 1886 and the Berlin revision of the Berne Convention in 1908 and finally the period from 1908 to the Imperial Copyright Act in 1911.⁷⁶ The Imperial Copyright Act stemmed from a desire to unify the copyright laws across the colonies, encompassing a wide variety of genres of copyrightable works from literature to fine art. Nevertheless, while the Act offered a greater degree of uniformity, in many cases local legislation continued to work

⁷⁴ Higgins and Tweedale, 'The Trade Mark Question', p. 47.

⁷⁵ Bently, 'Modern Trade Mark Law', p. 15.

⁷⁶ Birnhack, *Colonial Copyright*, pp. 61-2.

alongside to support, for instance customs legislation and prosecution relating to the copyright Act.⁷⁷

In his study of copyright legislation in British Mandate Palestine, Birnhack highlights the importance of determining the interests or ideology that drove the development of a particular piece of legislation. In this sense he defines *colonial copyright* as:

...a mode of legal transplantation, of imposing copyright law from above and outside, by a foreign imperial power onto a governed territory and its people(s), in a way that serves first, the colonizer's interests, second, an overall imperial agenda, and third, it supports an emerging international agenda regarding copyright law.

Thus, 'when the British spoke of colonial copyright in the nineteenth century, they meant their own copyright in the colonies, rather than the colonies' copyright laws.' Acknowledging the imperial agenda behind the transplantation of British legislation to the colonies or the formation of new legislation by colonial governments, is vital to understanding the colonial law.⁷⁸ However, Assaf Likhovski cautions against relying on a crude colonizer-native binary, arguing instead for an acceptance of the complexity of these relationships.⁷⁹ Examination of legislation relating to trade and commerce offers a lens through which to consider the interests of consumers, as well as merchants and the colonial government.

⁷⁷ Ibid. p. 76.

⁷⁸ Ibid. p. 35.

⁷⁹ Assaf Likhovski, *Law and Identity in Mandate Palestine* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), pp. 5-7.

During the period of the development of British trade mark legislation in the late 1850s and early 1860s, little attention was paid to the need for similar legislation in the Colonies.⁸⁰ On the other hand, many of the self-governing dominions including Canada, South Australia and New Zealand established systems of trade mark registration in the 1860s, several years before the British Trade Mark Act of 1875.⁸¹ However, in drafting the British legislation, efforts were taken to cause as little interference with colonial law as possible. This lack of interest in protecting the ownership of trade marks in the colonies raises some interesting questions as to the attitudes of British merchants to the colonial markets. Although domestic legislation provided little protection for owners of trade marks which were misappropriated for use outside of Britain, the Manchester Chamber argued that the Merchandise Marks Acts offered sufficient security.

Trade mark legislation was established in the British colonies in West Africa at the beginning of the twentieth century despite determined, and for a period successful, opposition from the Manchester Chamber. Between 1902 and 1913 a series of trade mark ordinances underwent several amendments, under the watchful eye of the Manchester Chamber, so that by the outbreak of the First World War, provisions for protection were in place across the British colonies of West Africa.⁸² The introduction of trade mark registration into the colonial legislation of all the British possessions in West Africa was gradual and inconsistent across the colonies. This lack of unity in the adoption of trade mark registration is a manifestation of multiple colonial governments and an absence of demand from British merchants.

⁸⁰ Bently, 'Intellectual Property Laws in the British Colonies', p. 169.

⁸¹ Ibid. p. 172.

⁸² Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1892-1916, GB127.M8/4/1-4.

The necessity of reforming trade mark law in West Africa is raised by one particular case of infringement that was brought before the Lagos Supreme Court on the eve of the planned introduction of the new local legislation in 1902. The case of Lagos Stores Limited vs. Blackstock & Co. is evidence of the perceived sufficiency of existing legislation to protect trade mark ownership. Detailed in the *Lagos Weekly Record* the judgement was based on the principals of English common law which provided protection from infringement where continued use of the mark for several years could be proven. In doing so the judge rejected the defence that as the mark was not registered in Lagos the plaintiff could not claim ownership. The verdict was also dependent on evidence that the defendant showed clear intent to deceive, the judge referring to a letter stating, 'if exact copy cannot be done, please make one as near as possible.'⁸³ Evidently, Blackstock meant for their trade mark to be passable as that of Lagos Stores, with the objective that consumers would mistake the goods of Blackstock for those of Lagos Stores.

However, despite the importance of trade marks to the textile trade and the difficulty of controlling their use in export markets, merchants were reluctant for greater regulation. The Merchandise Marks Act, of 1862 provided protection for merchants and manufacturers if their mark was used by another firm.⁸⁴ In Britain, India and British West Africa, the Manchester Chamber of Commerce resisted the introduction of trade mark registration on the basis of a lack of faith in the fairness of the registration process and the ability of the Comptroller-General. They also argued that the unique nature of the cotton industry and the role of Manchester in the trade would further complicate the process of registration.⁸⁵

⁸³ *Lagos Weekly Record*, July 6th 1901.

⁸⁴ Higgins, 'The Making of Modern Trade Mark Law'.

⁸⁵ Redford, *Manchester Merchants II*, p. 141; Higgins and Tweedale, 'The Trade Mark Question', p. 211.

The establishment of the 1875 Act in Britain was the result of persistent and determined lobbying on the part of a variety of consumer goods trades across the country.⁸⁶ There was a notable absence in the lack of involvement from the Manchester Chamber of Commerce prior to 1875. Yet, after the establishment of the trade mark register, Manchester merchants and manufactures expressed considerable concern regarding the feasibility of registration for cotton marks. Despite having little interest in the formation of the legislation prior to its enactment, the Manchester Chamber became heavily involved in the development of trade mark registration process and the fought to protect the interests of Lancashire's cotton trade.⁸⁷

On the legislation of trade mark registration in Britain, the Chamber also questioned the viability of registering cotton marks already in use. The manufacturers and merchants of cotton goods were prolific collectors of trade marks, each firm using or claiming ownership of several marks at any one time. Indeed, once registration was enacted, marks for cotton piece goods were the seventh most commonly registered marks out of fifty different classifications of goods, between 1882 and 1914.⁸⁸ The vast quantity of cotton marks in circulation became one of the biggest concerns for manufacturers, merchants and legislators once registration was enacted.⁸⁹

The Manchester Chamber predicted a significant logistical challenge in creating the initial database of trade marks, with particular reference to cotton marks. The Chamber reported that prior to the requirement for registration in 1875, there were 50,000 cotton marks in use in Britain.⁹⁰ The administrative task and cost of registering

⁸⁶ Higgins, 'The Making of Modern Trade Mark Law', p. 42.

⁸⁷ Higgins and Tweedale, 'The Trade Mark Question', p. 211.

⁸⁸ Higgins, 'The Making of Modern Trade Mark Law', p. 52.

⁸⁹ Trademarks used for cotton goods were commonly referred to as 'cotton marks' by contemporaries to differentiate them from those marks used for other classes of goods. The coinage of this term indicates a desire or need to distinguish these marks within the legal framework and this is frequently raised in the discussion of the Manchester Chamber.

⁹⁰ Redford, *Manchester Merchants II*, p. 142.

the entirety of cotton marks already in use, the Chamber argued, would not be possible. Manchester merchants claimed they would only be able to register a small portion of the cotton marks in use and in this case would not be afforded legal protection for marks which had been in use for many years before the commencement of registration.

These concerns were further exacerbated in the case of registration in West Africa. The African Sectional Committee successfully opposed the introduction of trade mark legislation in Lagos in 1902 on the grounds that 'independent registration of trade marks in the West African Colonies and Protectorates [was] generally undesirable' due to the potential for rival firms to register trade marks already in use in Britain.⁹¹

The concept of 'good will' was prevalent in discussions of trade marks and nascent ideas of 'brand' and heavily influenced merchants' response to trade mark legislation in the colonies.⁹² Trade marks allowed a merchant or manufacturer to build a loyal consumer base by enabling customers to identify their 'brand' with a particular level of quality. Not only did good will ensure repeat purchases but it could also increase the price that goods could be marketed at.⁹³ As illustrated by the case of *Lagos Stores vs. Blackstock*, merchants were willing to risk prosecution to benefit from the potential of another's valuable trade mark. Merchants worried that without reference to those trade marks registered in Britain, the colonial legislation left trade mark owners open to misappropriation in export markets and that if the mark had been registered, in for example Lagos, there would be no legal defence to protect the original owner. Petitioning by the Chamber resulted in subsequent trade mark

⁹¹ Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1902, GB127.M8/4/2.

⁹² Merchants often used the phrase *good will* a shorthand for consumer base and reputation, although the term today has a broader meaning, including other intangible assets.

⁹³ Higgins, 'The Making of Modern Trade Mark Law', p. 43.

ordinances accounting for the prerogative of those with marks registered in Britain to have priority of their registration in the Colonies.⁹⁴

The lack of consistency in the rulings of the Comptroller-General as to which marks could and could not be registered. of the Comptroller-General who oversaw the registration of trade marks and acted as arbitrator in cases where two trade marks were deemed too similar. Specified in the 1883 Act the Comptroller had the right to refuse the registration of any trade mark 'so nearly resembling a trade mark already on the register with respect to such goods or description of such goods as to be calculated to deceive.'⁹⁵ It was argued by the Manchester Chamber that the decisions of the Comptroller were inconsistent and that the addition of the phrase 'calculated to deceive' further complicated the matter.⁹⁶ The Chamber suggested that instead, no similar mark should be allowed registration without the permission of the owner of the original mark, thus eliminating the need for the Comptroller's discretion.⁹⁷

Concerns over the responsibility of the Comptroller-General continued into the twentieth century and reappear in the colonies. In 1910 Mr Pickering-Jones, member of the Manchester African Sectional Committee, suggested that the Chamber should inform the Colonial Office of their view that 'in any future appointment of the Comptroller of Trade Marks at Lagos, the gentleman appointed should be an expert.'⁹⁸ Despite support for the proposition, after consideration no further action was taken but the episode indicates that there remained significant mistrust in the ability and role of the Comptroller.

⁹⁴ Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1904-1910, 1st June 1904, GB127.M8/4/3.

⁹⁵ The National Archives, Act, Patterns, Designs, and Trade Marks Act, 1883.

⁹⁶ Higgins and Tweedale, 'The Trade Mark Question', p. 214.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1910-1914, 28th November 1910, GB127.M8/4/4.

Another key area of dissent from the Manchester Chamber concerned the perceived marginalisation of regional commerce in the trade mark registration process as the sole register resided in London. Due to the high number of marks that were to be registered by Manchester firms, local merchants requested that a second copy of the register be made accessible in Manchester.⁹⁹ Once again, the Chamber highlighted the particularity of Manchester, as the commercial centre for large parts of the cotton trade and the vast number of trade marks that this generated.¹⁰⁰ Manchester also claimed to be the centre of expertise for the differentiation between marks and the permissibility of marks for registration.¹⁰¹ Over a number of years the Chamber fought for a measure of autonomy in the registration of cotton marks with varied success. In 1876 Manchester was granted permission to establish a trade mark office, and while this did not have the right to register marks, it allowed merchants to complete the application without travelling to London. Changes to the administration with the 1883 Act again displeased Manchester merchants and it was not until 1905 that the Manchester office was finally accorded the right to register marks. It is worth noting however that London retained the power to refuse any mark it deemed unacceptable.¹⁰²

Foreign competition was also cited as one of the principal motivations for adopting greater domestic trade mark protection in Britain from the middle of the nineteenth century. At the 1862 Select Committee on the necessity for trade mark legislation British merchants complained of trade mark infringement from foreign firms, which appears to have added to an increasing sense of pressure from foreign competition in the export trade.¹⁰³ The question of British advantage over foreign

⁹⁹ Redford, *Manchester Merchants II*, p. 142.

¹⁰⁰ Higgins and Tweedale, 'The Trade Mark Question', p. 209.

¹⁰¹ Redford, *Manchester Merchants II*, p. 138.

¹⁰² Ibid. pp. 141-2.

¹⁰³ Higgins, 'The Making of Modern Trade Mark Law', p. 46.

competitors in the export markets was raised again in 1906, once again at a Select Committee for a trade marks bill.

The case of the registration of German owned trade marks in British colonies highlights, as Birnhack identifies in the case of colonial copyright, the interests which encouraged British merchants to involve themselves in colonial legislation. While the African Sectional Committee of the Manchester Chamber rarely attempted to influence strictly political or military decisions, its members did its best to protect the interests of British traders over foreign competition where possible. The concern over the registration of German trade marks in British West Africa underlines the belief held by many of the members of the Chamber, that British merchants should be granted priority when trading with colonial markets. Although this sentiment is never explicitly stated by the Chamber, it is evident that in requiring registration in Britain prior to registration in Nigeria gave preference to British merchants. The fact that the increase in international reciprocity in trade mark protection raises concerns amongst British merchants, indicates that, although they did not take colonial markets for granted, they did not appreciate the erosion of their favourable position.

The registration of German trade marks in Southern Nigeria, alludes to underlying reasons for many of the Manchester merchants' demands regarding trade mark legislation in the colonies. The topic was first raised for discussion in July 1910, after it was brought to their attention by the Liverpool Chamber, and becomes a leading point of contention for a number of months.¹⁰⁴ The problem centred around the issue of international reciprocity in the protection of trade marks and the successful registration of German trade marks in Southern Nigeria which were not registered in

¹⁰⁴ Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1904-1910, 6th July 1910, GB127.M8/4/3.

Britain. In a memorandum to the Chamber, a representative of the General West African Merchants and Shippers, highlighted that based on the trade mark ordinance of Southern Nigeria German firms having no residence in the country were granted protection equal to that of 'native owners of trade marks in that country.' He goes on to list several examples, including the successful removal of two trade marks belonging to British and Lagos-based shipping merchants John Holt & Co. from the Nigerian register by the German firm J. J. W. Peters on grounds of infringement.¹⁰⁵

The question of the registration of German marks in Southern Nigeria also revived beliefs that making registration in Britain a compulsory prerequisite for registration in the colonies, unfairly favoured Manchester merchants. In a meeting between members of the Liverpool West African Section and the Manchester African Section, following an appeal to the Liverpool Chamber by a patent and trade mark agent, tense discussion ensued. The chairman of the Liverpool Chamber stated that 'owing to the action of the Manchester Chamber, it was impossible for a new mark to be placed upon the register in Manchester for use in Lagos.' The Liverpool Chamber argued that merchants who 'did not trade with Southern Nigeria and never intended to do so', were preventing the use of these marks by West African traders due to the clause which required registration in Britain prior to registration in Lagos.¹⁰⁶

This was further exacerbated by the fact that German merchants could register trade marks in Lagos without registration in Britain, leading to what Mr Moores described as 'a most humiliating position.' The Liverpool Chamber demanded, 'could Manchester offer no solution of the question?' In response, Mr Speakman argued that there would be 'continual conflict and trouble in Lagos if, without the experience

¹⁰⁵ Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1904-1910, 17th July 1910, GB127.M8/4/3.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

necessary for dealing with cotton marks, registration was permitted by the Officials without reference to Manchester, from whence the great bulk of the cotton goods sent to Nigeria were exported.' Mr Keymer added that it was often possible to come to an agreement with the owner of a trade mark to allow its use in markets not served by themselves. The conversation continued in a heated manner, the Liverpool merchants refusing to 'go cap-in-hand' to Manchester merchants and rejecting the idea that only Liverpool merchants were injured by the clause. The resolution was reached that the Liverpool Chamber would produce a statement containing proposed alterations to the Ordinance.¹⁰⁷

The efforts of the Chamber were not successful in overturning trade mark registration in British West Africa. However, registration was successfully contested by the Manchester Chamber of Commerce in India. Despite being the largest market for British cotton goods throughout the nineteenth century, India did not establish a system of registration for trade marks until 1938. Registration was proposed by the Government of India in 1879 and again in 1903 but Manchester opposed the legislation, arguing that sufficient protection was already provided by existing laws.¹⁰⁸

Debate of these issues was to continue into the twentieth century, first with relation to domestic legislation and later in response to attempts to mirror trade mark protection in the colonies. Manchester continued to claim special dispensation as one of the major industrial centres of Britain and attempted to assert its influence on trade mark legislation consistently throughout the period. This involvement in laws affecting commercial interests in Britain may not be surprising and was in many respects the rationale of institutions such as the Chambers of Commerce. The case of

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Redford, *Manchester Merchants II*, p. 142.

trade mark registration also suggests that opposition to increased state control of commerce, was not exclusively a result of free-trade principles but was also due to the difficulty of regulating trades as complex as the international cotton trade.

5.4 Conclusion

The relationship between trade and empire is central to the concepts of economic and New Imperialism. The minutes of the African Sectional Committee highlight the difficulty of establishing an overarching narrative of the protection of business interests in the colonies. British merchants, industrialists and financiers were not a unified or homogenous group. Commercial institutions, such as regional Chambers of Commerce were established to express the interests of British businesses. However, the Chambers represented the diverse interests of a range of industries. The archives illustrate the Chamber's difficulty of negotiating between its members and the governments in Britain and the colonies.

Evidently, the African Sectional Committee did attempt to influence the development of legislation in British West Africa in order to protect their own commercial interests. However, Manchester merchants were not trying to restrict foreign trade or claim unreasonable advantages for themselves. Instead, on the whole, they were working to improve communication between the state, the colonial administration and British merchants. The section's minutes allude to the tension between Britain's imperial objectives and her commitment to free-trade principles. It is evident that the desire to protect trade and British commercial interests influenced the direction and policies of the British Empire. However, the colonies did not provide British merchants with easy markets or a fundamental competitive advantage. Despite

the political and economic framework provided by the British Empire, it was still necessary for merchants to fight for the protection of their commercial interests overseas.

Chapter 6

Trade Marks:

Marketing to West African Consumers

British cotton merchants showed a frequent and at times fervent opposition to trade mark legislation in the colonies. They argued that the legislation was not fit for purpose and would create problems for merchants trading in multiple markets. Their response to trade mark registration in British West Africa illustrates the complexity of the global cotton trade and the difficult relationship between trade and Empire. The opposition of Manchester's merchants to trade mark registration in Nigeria, the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone was based on the value placed on trade marks by the trade and the potential losses that merchants faced if their mark was appropriated by another. British manufacturers and merchants placed great importance on the role of trade marks in foreign markets, including the in the colonies. They were distinctly aware of the economic value of trade marks in the colonial markets and fought hard to protect these commercial interests in West Africa. Evidence of the confidence placed in trade marks by the consumer goods industries, is visible in the development of the trade mark registers and in the records of institutions like the Manchester Chamber of Commerce.

In the 1970s, historian Fredrick Peddler argued that, at the turn of the twentieth century, the West African markets had the largest number of registered and 'used' trade marks in the world, claiming that trade marks were considered highly important by both African merchants and consumers.¹⁰⁹ However, relatively little is known about the trade marks used in West African markets, the importance of trade mark

¹⁰⁹ Frederick Pedler, *The Lion and the Unicorn in Africa: A History of the Origins of the United Africa Company, 1787-1931* (London: Heinemann, 1974), p. 1.

registration and exactly how these trade marks functioned in a variety of economic, social and cultural conditions across the globe.

This chapter argues that the use of trade marks for cotton goods in the colonies does not follow established models for trade marks. British cotton merchants trading in West Africa were not predominantly using trade marks to establish an easily identifiable 'brand' or to develop consumer loyalty. It contends that an examination of the marks indicates that their function was much broader, being used to identify their goods as European imports rather than as from a specific merchant or manufacturer. Nonetheless, trade marks, shipping tickets and labels were vital to the marketing of British textile goods in West Africa and employed a number of techniques to increase the desirability of British cotton in West African markets. The chapter will first outline the nature of trade mark registration in Nigeria, the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone, to locate cotton trade marks within the broader history of trade mark registration in British West Africa. It examines the registered marks for cotton piece goods illustrating the ways in which British manufacturers employed trade marks as a marketing tool. The final section considers the specific relationship between trade marks and cotton piece goods and the reasons why cotton marks cannot be understood within the framework of broader trade mark history.

6.1 Reconstructing an Archive: Applications for Trade Mark Registration as Evidence

Physical representations of trade marks in the form of tickets, labels and stamps, are among the many ephemeral objects connected to the trade in consumer goods. Rarely conserved by businesses and often overlooked for their historical value, collections of

textile trade marks are uncommon and often fragmentary.¹¹⁰ Object-based collections also often lack accompanying documentary evidence to indicate the date the mark was used, the types of goods it was associated with and whether the mark was registered.

With the introduction of trade mark registration, catalogues of registered trade marks were established and made accessible to merchants. Further developments in the registration process, included the general publication of trade mark applications. This allowed merchants and manufacturers to oppose the registration of a particular mark based on claims of misappropriation or possible market-place confusion due to the similarity of marks.¹¹¹ In the Britain's West African colonies and protectorates, trade mark applications were published in the local government *Gazette*. Those who wished to dispute the registration of a mark initially had one month, changing to three months in 1906, to notify the registrar of their case, before the mark was officially registered.¹¹²

If no opposition was recorded or the opposition's case was deemed inadequate, the mark would be entered into the trade mark register. Each colony had their own register and it was necessary to register a mark in each country in which it was used, to ensure full legal protection. Extant trade mark registers, particularly those of colonial governments, are difficult to trace and access. However, due to the publication of the trade marks applications, it is possible to reconstruct the trade mark registers for Nigeria, the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone. Published details of the application included the applicants name, address, the date the application was received, details of the agent

¹¹⁰ Notable collections include that of Paterson Zochonis & Co. held at the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester and the private collection of Adrian Wilson.

¹¹¹ Lionel Bently, 'The Making of Modern Trade Mark Law: The Construction of the Legal Concept of Trade Marks (1860-1880)', in *Trade Marks and Brands: An Interdisciplinary Critique* ed. by Lionel Bently, Jennifer Davis, and Jane C. Ginsburg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 3-41.

¹¹² The Manchester Archives, Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1904-1910, November 1906, GB127.M8/4/3.

(where applicable), the classification of goods the mark related to and a copy of the mark itself. Often, the applications also stated whether the mark had been in use prior to registration. Thus, the information held in the government gazettes forms a database of trade mark registration across the British West African colonies beginning from the first legislation of trade mark registration in Nigeria, in 1902.

It is important to note that the information published in the gazettes relates to the applications received by the registrar rather than those which were granted registration. Thus, it is possible that as a result of their publication in the gazettes opposition to the registration of the mark was raised and the mark was not entered into the register. In some cases, it is possible to trace these objections in the gazettes themselves, for example, in the Gold Coast in 1905 opposition was raised to the registration of a camel design by H. B. W. Russell & Co, for Class 42, prepared food and provisions.¹¹³ An amended notice was published in the *Gazette* the following year, rectifying the class of goods the mark was registered for and reiterating the distinctive qualities of the mark.¹¹⁴ Whether approved for registration or not, the *Gazette* data represents a significant body of data on the trade marks in use in British West Africa from the early twentieth century. Given the ephemeral nature of these trade marks, often printed on tickets and labels, disposable containers and receptacles or directly onto rarely surviving consumer goods, the *Gazette* data offers a rare source of information on the use, ownership and protection of trade marks in foreign markets.

In order to create a viable dataset from the gazettes to allow for further analysis of the trade mark applications, the information from each published application was collated by country and year into a database. From this dataset, it is possible to observe

¹¹³ The National Archives, Colonial Office, Government Gazette, Gold Coast, 8th July 1905, CO 99/17, p.449.

¹¹⁴ Colonial Office, Government Gazette, Gold Coast, 26th May 1906, CO 99/18, p.712.

general trends in the first decade of trade mark registration in West Africa and highlight changes and common practices within particular groups of consumer goods or specific firms. The dataset also allows for comparisons to be made between the three West African colonies.

As a dataset, the trade mark sample is relatively small, covering around 10 years in the case of Nigeria and the Gold Coast and only one year in Sierra Leone. Evidently, this data cannot reveal any long-term developments in the registration of trade marks in the colonies or in the trading relationship between Britain and West Africa. A much larger study of trade mark applications would be necessary to draw such conclusions. However, detailed analysis of this ten-year period, from the beginning of trade mark registration in the colonies to the outbreak of war in 1914, has a number of advantages. As the dataset charts the first ten years of registration, it is an indication of the impact registration had on the use of trade marks and how trade mark registration was received. Secondly, during the first ten years of registration, marks in use prior to the trade mark Ordinances were noted and often an indication of the length of time the mark had been in use for was recorded. Thus, applications made between 1903 and 1914, also reflect the use and design of trade marks several years prior to the introduction of registration. Similarly, the trade mark data gathered for Sierra Leone, while documenting only the year 1914, contains trade marks in use prior to registration. The nature of the Sierra Leone data also allows for a potential analysis of the firms that saw trade mark registration as an important marketing tool, as the data represents those who acted quickly to ensure their marks were registered within a year of the Ordinance coming into law.

The establishment of trade mark registration in British West Africa was complex and beset with a number of obstacles, namely the opposition of merchants

and manufacturers in Manchester. Centring on a focused but significant point in time for the registration of trade marks, allows for greater recognition of the external factors governing the trade and the move for legal protection of marks. The textile industry continued to voice their disagreement with the introduction of trade mark registration in the colonies and petitioned for the amendment of various aspect of the legislation during the first ten years of trade mark law in Nigeria and the Gold Coast.

As the debate continued on the establishment of similar trade mark legislation in Sierra Leone, opportunities were raised to amend the existing laws in Nigeria and the Gold Coast. As such, from 1903 to 1914 the legislation and the registers were subject to change. Most notably, this can be seen in the amendment of the classification of goods in Nigeria. When registration was introduced in 1902, only nineteen classes of goods were described, with goods grouped into larger, more general categories.¹¹⁵ It was not until 1906 that the Nigerian Ordinance was amended, increasing the number of classes to fifty, a move that allowed the standardisation of the classification of goods across the West African possessions, bringing Nigeria in line with the Gold Coast.¹¹⁶ In order to effectively compare the registration of marks in each country and over time, marks registered under the nineteen-class system have been converted, as closely as possible, to the fifty-class system. Focusing on the first ten years of registration allows for a greater understanding of these precise but significant shifts in registration and presents a more accurate view of the registration of trade marks in West Africa.

One disadvantage of focusing on trade mark applications is the loss of the materiality of the trade mark as part of an object as well as an image. Trade marks are

¹¹⁵ Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1897-1903, 10th November 1902, GB127.M8/4/2.

¹¹⁶ Colonial Office, Government Gazette, Gold Coast, 6th February 1906, CO 99/18, p.52.

often thought of as two-dimensional, static representations of a brand or product. However, it is important to remember that trade marks came in many forms. For instance, shipments of textile goods carried many different marks, some with distinct and specific purposes, others which intersected and overlapped. The British Merchandise Marks Act, for example, made it obligatory to mark goods with the country of origin.¹¹⁷ These stamps, often found on the selvedge or beginning and end of the bolt, had a distinct and official purpose.¹¹⁸ Equally, marks stamped on folded woven goods indicating the number of yards in each piece again fulfilled a legal requirement.¹¹⁹ However, shippers' tickets, manufacturers' names, trade marks and descriptions of the type or quality of the product were used in combination to provide additional information to the retailer and consumer.¹²⁰ These additions could form part of the cloth, printed or woven in to the selvedge, or could be attached as stickers or tickets to the bolt, bale or parcel.¹²¹ Frequently, a variety of these methods would be used in each shipment, creating several layers of communication with the merchants, retailers and consumers of the goods. Thus, it is vital that the trade mark applications are understood, not just in terms of the printed image, but also in terms of the tangible object.

¹¹⁷ Lawrence Langner, 'The International Trademark Question', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 83 (1919), (p. 135).

¹¹⁸ Philip A. Sykas, *The Secret Life of Textiles: Six Pattern Book Archives in North West England*, (Bolton: Bolton Museums, Art Gallery and Aquarium 2005), p.149.

¹¹⁹ Bently, 'Modern Trade Mark Law', p. 38.

¹²⁰ Andreas P. Zangger, 'Chops and Trademarks: Asian Trading Ports and Textile Branding, 1840-1920', *Enterprise and Society* 15/4 (2014), 759-90, (p. 766).

¹²¹ David M. Higgins and Geoffery Tweedale, 'The Trade Mark Question and the Lancashire Cotton Textile Industry, 1870-1914', *Textile History* 27/2 (1996), 207-28, (p. 210).

6.2 Trade Mark Registration in Nigeria, the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone

Trade mark registers were introduced in Nigeria and the Gold Coast after the enactment of Ordinances for the provision of trade mark registration in 1901 and 1902 respectively.¹²² In both countries, a number of amendments were made after the initial Ordinance. In Nigeria, the most significant amendment was the requirement that all marks to be registered in classes ten and nineteen (cotton and silk goods, and miscellaneous goods) were registered for the same goods in Britain.¹²³ As a result of such amendments, the first trade mark applications to be published in the Government *Gazette*, were in 1903 in both Nigeria and the Gold Coast. As discussed above, trade mark registration was not introduced in Sierra Leone until 1913 and this is reflected in the publication of trade mark applications in the Sierra Leone *Gazette*.

The trade mark data gathered from the applications published in the gazettes, illustrates that a wide variety of firms, from a number of different countries applied for trade marks to be registered for an extensive assortment of goods. This data helps shed new light on the way manufacturers and merchants employed trade marks in overseas markets and the relationship between producer and consumer. Between 1903 and 1914, 423 individual marks were submitted for registration in Nigeria, 360 in the Gold Coast and 138 were submitted in 1914 in Sierra Leone. The number of marks registered in individual years, fluctuated considerably; just 11 marks were registered in the Gold Coast in 1909, compared to 82 in 1912. Similarly, in Nigeria just 12 marks were submitted in 1904, compared to 54 the following year. The highest number submitted in any one year in Nigeria was 78 in 1914. Graph 6.1 reveals that there is

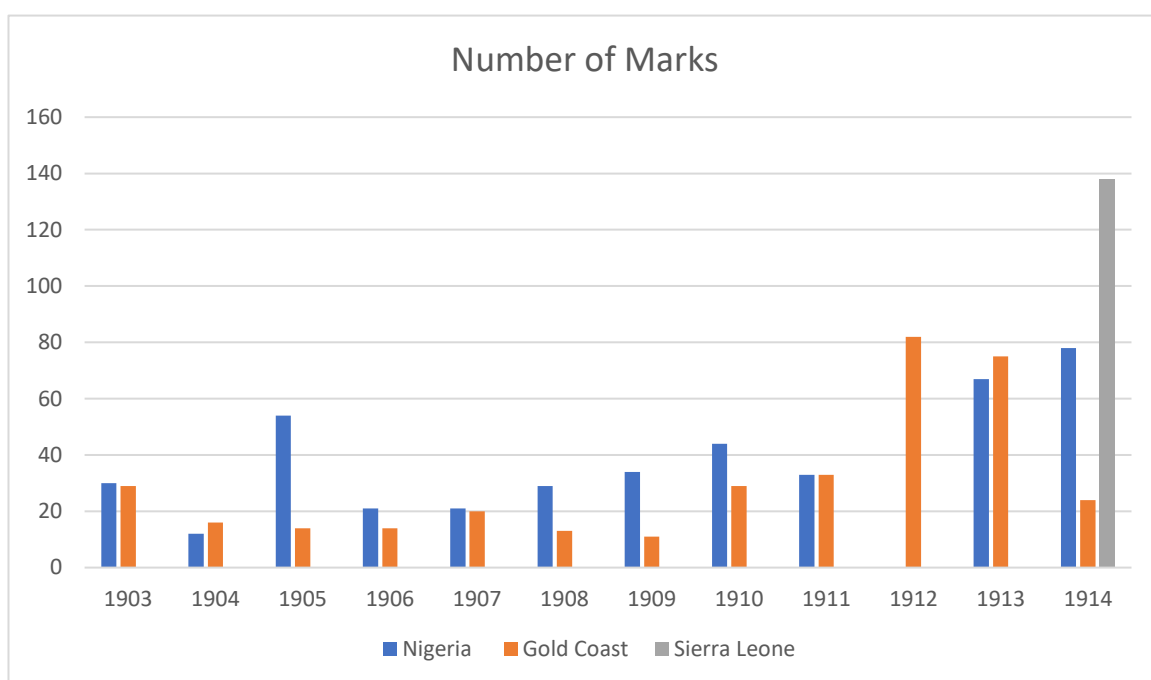
¹²² Colonial Office, Acts, Lagos, 1886-1901, An Ordinance Providing for the Registration of Trade Marks, No.4 1901, CO 148/2.

¹²³ Colonial Office, Government Gazette, Southern Nigeria Protectorate, 6th February 1906, CO 591/2, p.54.

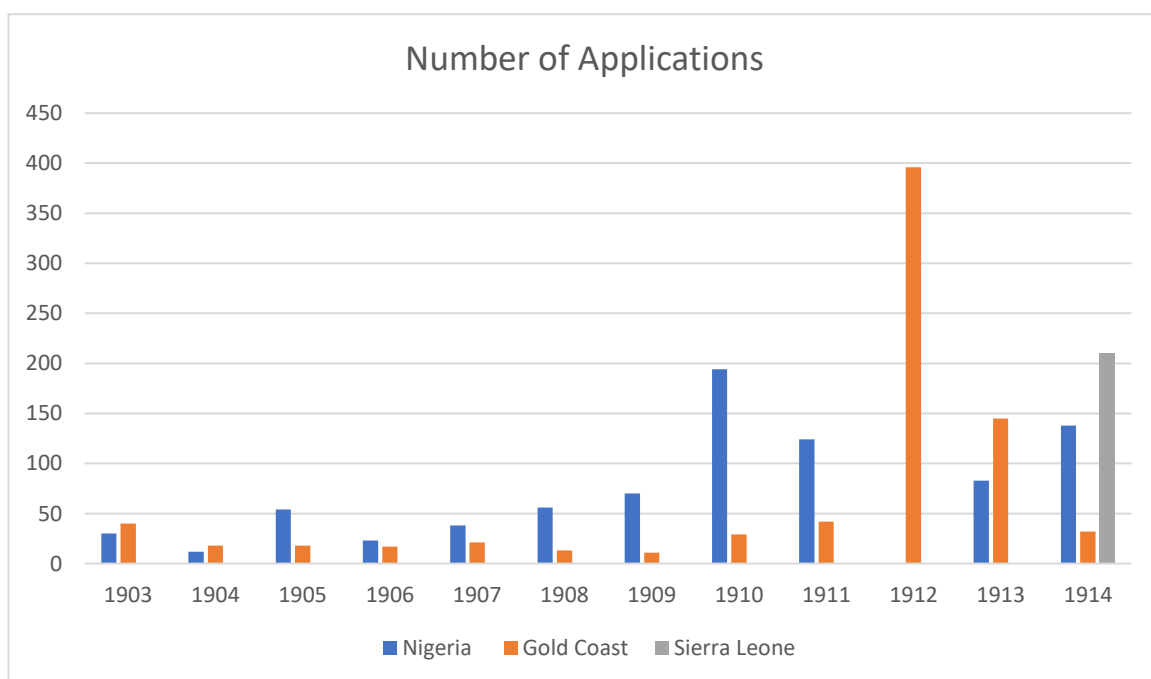
not a consistent pattern of growth in the number of marks and that the number per annum fluctuates significantly during the early years of registration.

In addition to the number of different marks submitted for registration, the number of applications received is also significant. Each trade mark was registered in one or several classifications of goods, ranging from chemical in Class 1 to cotton piece goods in Class 24 and tobacco in Class 45. It was the responsibility of the applicant to indicate which classifications the trade mark should be registered in, on application to the registrar. Often, a number of applications for the same mark were received from the same applicant, each pertaining to a different classification of goods. More infrequently, applications to register an already registered mark, under a new classification were received, months or even years after the original application. Thus, an applicant could register one mark but submit multiple applications, one for each classification that the mark would be registered in. From comparing graphs 6.1 and 6.2, a correlation can be seen between the number of marks and the number of applications, as both following the same general trends.

Analysis of the number of applications made in each year, indicate a similar pattern to that of the number of individual marks. However, there are a number of instances of significantly higher number of applications than individual marks. For instance, in 1912, in the Gold Coast, 82 individual marks were registered compared to 396 applications. Likewise, in 1910 in Nigeria, 54 marks were submitted, equalling 194 applications. Large differences between the number of marks and the number of applications indicates that marks were registered in multiple different classifications and, subsequently, were used across a wide range of goods.



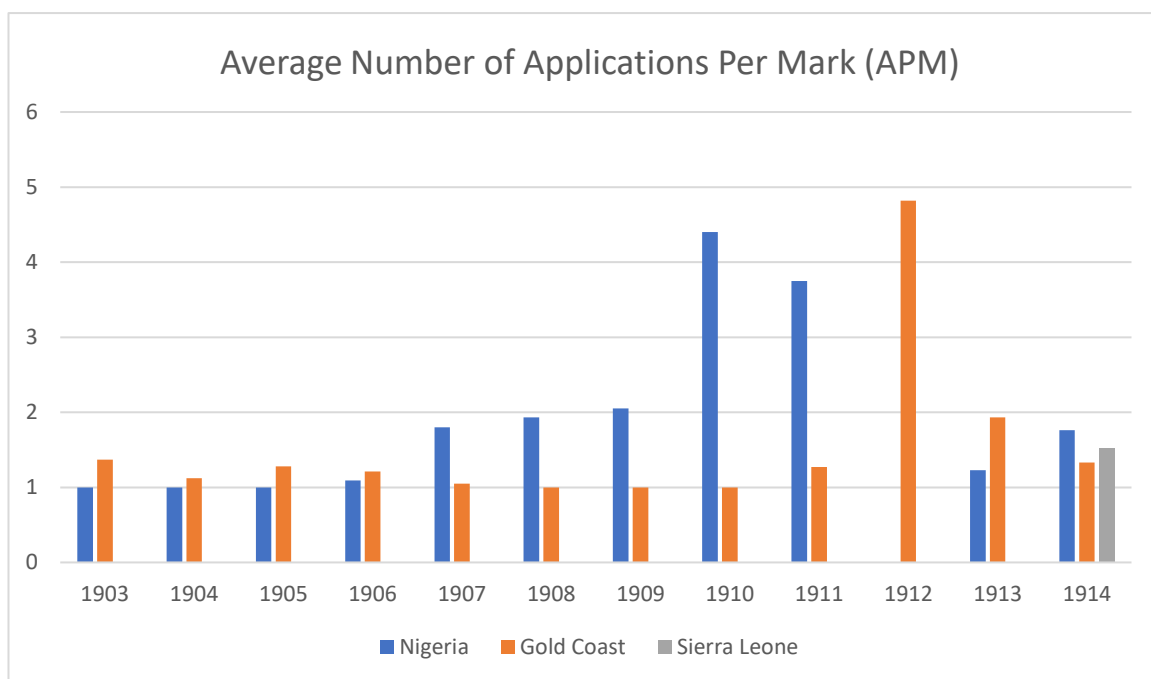
Graph 6.1: Total Number of Marks Per Country, Per Year 1903-1914



Graph 6.2: Total Number of Applications Per Country, Per Year 1903-1914.

The frequency with which marks were registered in more than one classification is better expressed in terms of the average number of applications per mark (APM). Analysis of the APM enables the identification of countries where trade mark registration was heavily dominated by a handful of firms, who were registering one mark for multiple classifications of goods. In turn this gives an indication of the degree to which trade mark usage was specialised for certain types of goods. The APM allows for a more accurate comparison between the different countries and as demonstrated in graph 6.3, this reveals a different pattern from an analysis of the number of marks or number of applications alone. For instance, in 1911 the same number of marks, 33, were registered in Nigeria and the Gold Coast. However, using the APM, it becomes evident that significantly more applications were made in Nigeria than in the Gold Coast. Indeed, the average number of applications per mark in Nigeria was 3.75, compared to only 1.2 in the Gold Coast.

Comparison of the number of individual marks registered and the number of applications submitted, indicates that there were significant geographical and temporal differences in the number of classifications that one mark may be registered in. Both the Gold Coast and Nigeria experienced periods of parity in the number of marks and the number of applications. For Nigeria this can be seen in the first three years of registration and is related to the high number of marks submitted for fermented spirits and liquors (Class 43). These marks were generally more specialised than those for other goods, reflecting a strong sense of product and brand identity, making them ineffectual for use for other types of goods. In the Gold Coast, the decline in the number of applications occurs between 1908 and 1910, coinciding with a general decline in the number of marks. Class 43 was also the most common classification during this period.



Graph 6.3: Average Number of Applications Per Mark, Per Country, Per Year 1903-1914.

The most significant differences between the number of marks and the number of applications occur in 1910 in Nigeria and 1912 in the Gold Coast. Yet, these two examples illustrate the unpredictable nature of trends in trade mark registration. In Nigeria, for instance, the dramatic increase in the difference between the number of marks and the number of applications, is not related to any one applicant or any particular class of goods. During this year, six different applicants submitted marks for multiple classifications, including the Company of African Merchants Ltd who registered one mark in seventeen different classes, and Pickering and Bertoud Ltd who registered six different marks, each in eight different classes. Although, while none of these applications have an obvious connection, the classifications for which they were submitted relate to the classes of goods found in general stores. For instance, amongst the most frequent classifications are soap and candles, cutlery and edged tools, clothing, food, and mineral waters.

On the other hand, the sudden fluctuation in the number of applications in the Gold Coast in 1912, can be attributed to the Compagnie Française de l'Afrique Occidentale (CFAO). The firm applied for the registration of eighteen different marks, each in between thirteen and eighteen classes of goods. In this instance, the CFAO appear to have, in the space of one year, registered all of their trade marks which were in use in West Africa. Although relatively rare in the West African trade mark dataset, blanket registration of marks across numerous classifications reduced the risk of misappropriation by another firm and protected the rightful owner even if the mark was only actually used for one or two classes of goods. Significantly, none of the CFAO marks registered in the Gold Coast in 1912 were for cotton piece goods.

6.2.1 The Applicants

The high number of applicants that registered trade marks across the three West African colonies is also an indication of the structure of the trade with Africa. As expected, the majority of applicants were British based, accounting for 70 percent of the total applicants in Gold Coast and 65 percent in the Sierra Leone. Of these, London had the highest concentration of applicants, representing 41 percent of marks in the Gold Coast and 34 percent in Sierra Leone. However, the situation in Nigeria was significantly different. Only 36 percent of marks were registered by British based firms, while 18 percent were registered by companies with offices in Britain and West Africa and a further 17 percent by West African-based traders. Likewise, only 14 percent described their location as London.

Care must be taken when extrapolating information on the geographical dispersal of trade mark applicants from the *Gazette* data. Given their prominent roles in the West African trade, Manchester and Liverpool seem underrepresented in the

trade mark applications. However, it is important to remember that many firms had multiple offices in Britain and across the Empire. Thus, the location of a number of Manchester-based firms is described, for instance as London or Lagos. For firms such as G. B. Ollivant & Co., established in Manchester but with several offices in West Africa, there was an increasing decentralisation of business from Britain in response to pressures to better understand foreign markets and remain competitive.¹²⁴ All of Ollivant's applications in Nigeria, cite the firm's location as Lagos. However, in the firm's applications in Sierra Leone, they are described as being located in Manchester and Sierra Leone.¹²⁵ A number of other applicants also cited their location as West Africa however these were largely British or European traders with warehouses, offices and stores in Lagos, Freetown and Accra.

The trade mark data also includes a number of applications from German, Dutch, Scandinavian and French firms, offering an alternative perspective on the question of foreign competition. A significant number of foreign firms and merchants applied for the registration of trade marks in British West Africa. The majority of foreign applicants were based in continental Europe, predominantly in Germany, France and Holland. Over 22 percent of applications in Nigeria were submitted by European firms, 17 percent in the Gold Coast and 32 percent in Sierra Leone. The trade mark data alone, cannot demonstrate the extent of foreign competition in colonial markets. However, in this instance, the trade mark data does corroborate with trade statistics and contemporary commentaries that competition from Germany, France and Holland was significant.

¹²⁴ A. G. Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa* (London: Longman, 1973), p. 152.

¹²⁵ Colonial Office, Government Gazette, Sierra Leone, 1914, CO 271/20, p.ii.

The registration of a trade mark is not direct evidence of having secured a share of the market or of commercial success. This data cannot, therefore, be used as evidence of Britain's loss of market share to foreign rivals. However, it does indicate that, in certain classes of goods, British products did face significant competition. For example, the majority of foreign trade mark applications were for fermented spirits and liquors, illustrating that there was potentially greater competition facing British manufacturers from Dutch and German goods.¹²⁶

The frequency with which European firms applied for trade mark registration in British West Africa, was also raised as a concern by the Manchester Chamber of Commerce's African Sectional Committee in 1910.¹²⁷ The Committee believed that preferential treatment was being given to German applicants in Southern Nigeria, as registration was being granted to marks where evidence of registration in Germany was supplied.¹²⁸ The Committee argued that this was iniquitous as Germany had refused to establish a reciprocal agreement for marks registered in Southern Nigeria, for use in Germany.¹²⁹ An analysis of the applications submitted in Nigeria by German merchants, suggests that there was little risk of the misappropriation of marks or unfair competition due to the registration of these marks. Many of the marks submitted by German firms, featured the name of the company, as a brand, and related to a specific product. From the trade mark data, there is no evidence that these goods were in direct competition with British counterparts. For example, marks submitted by G. L. Gaiser

¹²⁶ John C. Brown, 'Imperfect Competition and Anglo-German Trade Rivalry: Markets for Cotton Textiles Before 1914', *The Journal of Economic History* 55/3 (1995), 494-527.

¹²⁷ Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1910-1914, 5th October 1910, GB127.M8/4/4.

¹²⁸ Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Minutes of the African Sectional, 1910-1914, 17th November 1910, GB127.M8/4/4.

¹²⁹ Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1910-1914, 28th November 1910, GB127.M8/4/4.

and Witt & Busch, for fermented spirits and liquors demonstrates the specificity of many of these marks. (Figures 6.1-2)



Figure 6.1: Trade Mark of G. L. Gaiser & Co., Hamburg. The National Archives, Colonial Office, Government Gazette, Southern Nigeria Protectorate, 5th May 1909, CO 99/21, p.630.



Figure 6.2: Trade Mark of G. L. Gaiser & Co., Hamburg. The National Archives, Colonial Office, Government Gazette, Southern Nigeria Protectorate, 29th January 1908, CO 99/20, p.125.

The merchants of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce had little reason to believe that the registration of marks by German applicants would jeopardise the value of trade mark registration or create unfair competition between German and British goods. Given the specific nature of the marks and the goods they related to, the only reasonable opposition Manchester merchants could raise to their registration was based on the lack of reciprocity for British marks in Germany.¹³⁰ It is likely that the opposition of the African Sectional Committee arose more from the growing fear within British industry of foreign competition and the reactive desire to protect the colonial markets.

¹³⁰ Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1910-1914, 4th November 1910, GB127.M8/4/4.

Notably, there were also a significant number of applications from the United States. Between 1903 and 1914 18 applications were received in Nigeria by American firms and 22 on the Gold Coast. The majority of these applications were from firms based in New York, but California, Missouri, Pennsylvania and Michigan were also represented. Similar to the applications from continental Europe, these were confined to very specific types of goods, mostly for industrial and household oils and fuels, chemicals and machinery.

The trade mark data highlights the geographical diversity of those trading in West Africa. While British firms dominate the trade mark registers, there are significant numbers of European and American firms also trading on the West Coast of Africa. In many cases foreign companies appear to have traded in specialist goods, potentially filling gaps left in the market by British traders. Although the extent to which of foreign competition can be considered a threat to British merchants cannot be judged from the trade mark data alone, it certainly emphasises the fact that British firms did not, by the turn of the twentieth century, have a monopoly over its colonial markets. The desire of Manchester merchants to limit the accessibility of trade mark registration to foreign firms can be interpreted as a response to a perceived increase in competition from countries such as Germany and The Netherlands.

6.2.2 Use Prior to Registration

One of the concerns of manufacturers and merchants regarding the development of trade mark legislation was that adequate protection should be afforded in the registration process to those trade marks already in use prior to the legislation. The trade mark applications also give an indication of how important the history of a trade

mark could be, as many record the length of time the trade mark had been in use by the applicant prior to registration. Designed to prevent the misappropriation of marks through the registration process, the practice of establishing the age of the mark continued for many years after registration first began.

Despite the lengthy debates and amendments to trade mark legislation in Britain and the colonies, the exact legal protection afforded by registration remained, to a certain extent, unclear. Many contemporaries believed that registration was not a necessary prerequisite to prove ownership of a trade mark and that ownership could be demonstrated through evidence of use over a long period of time. Several cases seemed to support this view and as a result, there was little sense of urgency on the part of trade mark owners, in the early years of registration, to afford themselves further protection against misappropriation. The situation in the colonies was further complicated by the uncertainty raised by the role of the British trade marks registers in overseas possessions.¹³¹

Thus, in Nigeria and the Gold Coast as late as 1914, ten years after the establishment of the trade marks registers, prior usage of marks continued to be published. In some cases, the applicants claimed the mark was in use prior to the introduction of the Ordinance, others simply stated the number of years the mark has been in use for. For instance, one application by Price's Patent Candle Company, submitted on the Gold Coast in 1914, claimed the mark had been in use for 'upwards of thirty-three years' prior to the registration. In Sierra Leone, over 94 percent of applicants claimed the mark had been in use prior to 1914.¹³² However, it is likely that this high percentage relates to the late enactment of trade mark legislation in Sierra

¹³¹ Arthur Redford, *Manchester Merchants and Foreign Trade Vol.II 1850-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1956), p. 139.

¹³² Colonial Office, Government Gazette, Sierra Leone, 1914, CO 271/20.

Leone, in comparison to other British West African possessions. Nonetheless, the high number of marks that were in use for several years before registration, particularly when registered a number of years after the original introduction of trade mark registration, begs the question, did merchants see registration as an effective means of protecting their ownership and did the economic benefit derived from protecting a trade mark outweigh the cost of registration in the context of the colonies?

6.2.3 Classification

The registration process required that each mark be registered in relation to one or more classes of goods. The classification of goods was divided into 50 categories designed to encompass all kinds of products from cement and machinery, to food and cloth.¹³³ The aggregated data from applications for trade mark registration indicates a number of important trends in the merchandising of particular classes of goods and provides a useful comparison to the domestic market.

Across the three West African possessions analysed, the majority of applications were for consumable goods such as tobacco, alcohol, packaged food, household sundries such as matches and sanitary products such as soap. Registrations for fermented liquors and spirits are also consistently high in all three cases, accounting for almost 22 percent of applications in Nigeria, 15 percent in Sierra Leone and 12 percent on the Gold Coast.¹³⁴

¹³³ Teresa Da Silva Lopes and Paulo Guimaraes, 'Trademarks and British Dominance in Consumer Goods, 1876-1914', *The Economic History Review* 67/3 (2014), 793-817, (p. 812).

¹³⁴ Colonial Office, Government Gazette, Gold Coast, 1901-1914, CO 99/12-27; Government Gazette, Sierra Leone, 1914, CO 271/20; Government Gazette, Southern Nigeria Protectorate, 1900-1913, CO 591/1-12; Government Gazette, Nigeria, 1914, CO 658/1-2.

However, the data also indicates a number of significant differences in the distribution of applications across classifications of goods. For instance, in Sierra Leone, tobacco accounted for the highest number of applications in any one class, at twenty percent of the total registrations. In Nigeria, however, tobacco registrations only accounted for around six percent of total applications and was only the fifth most common classification.

The distribution of trade mark applications amongst the various classes was generally consistent throughout the period considered. However, it is possible to identify peaks and troughs in registrations for particular classes in certain years. For instance, in 1910 a significant increase in the number of applications for food substances, alcohol and waters can be seen in Nigeria and a similar pattern is also identifiable in the Gold Coast in 1912.¹³⁵

Teresa Da Silva Lopes and Paulo Guimaraes have argued that trade mark registration can be understood as a reflection of innovation and competitiveness within a particular industry or sector of consumer goods manufacture. They argue that in light of consumer goods industries, these developments in branding and marketing allowed British firms to remain competitive. For instance, Lopes and Guimaraes posit that tobacco and fermented liquors and spirits appear frequently in the early period of registration in the United Kingdom, due to the already advanced nature of trade mark usage in the alcohol and tobacco industries.¹³⁶ It is possible that a similar pattern occurred in West Africa and the most represented classes of goods come from industries that had innovated in terms of marketing and brand development.

¹³⁵ Colonial Office, Government Gazette, Southern Nigeria Protectorate, 1910, CO 591/7; Colonial Office, Government Gazette, Gold Coast, 1912, CO 99/24.

¹³⁶ Da Silva Lopes and Guimaraes, 'Trademarks', pp. 794-804.

Understanding the nature of the trade mark data, the general trends and how trade marks were used by a wide range of firms and industries, is vital to interpreting the role of trade marks within the cotton piece good trade. As demonstrated, trade mark registration can be used to chart moments of innovation, competition within the market and how merchants communicated with their consumers at home and overseas. However, it also illustrates that there are considerable differences in the number of marks registered for each classification of goods. Analysis of the marks registered for cotton piece goods illustrates the extent to which the specific context of each trade, influenced the number of trade marks registered by merchants.

6.3 The Registration of Trade Marks for Cotton Piece Goods

Central to the opposition to the introduction of trade mark registration in Britain in the 1860s, was the vast quantity of trade marks used for cotton textiles in Britain during the middle of the nineteenth century.¹³⁷ It would be impossible, industry leaders argued, for the rightful owners of these marks to protect their legal rights by registering each one.¹³⁸ Furthermore, many of the marks used in the cotton industry would be ineligible for registration as they were not sufficiently unique in design, or consisted solely of common words, such as 'quality'.¹³⁹ Almost fifty years later, similar arguments were raised by the Manchester Chamber of Commerce in relation to the introduction of trade mark registration in British West Africa.¹⁴⁰ Cotton marks,

¹³⁷ David M. Higgins, 'The Making of Modern Trade Mark Law: the UK, 1860-1914. A Business History Perspective', in *Trade Marks and Brands: An Interdisciplinary Critique*, ed. by Lionel Bentley, Jennifer Davis, and Jane C. Ginsburg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 42-61 (p.42).

¹³⁸ Redford, *Manchester Merchants II*, p. 141.

¹³⁹ Higgins and Tweedale, 'The Trade Mark Question', p. 207.

¹⁴⁰ Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1897-1903, 10th November 1902, GB127.M8/4/2.

committee members claimed, were not comparable to other trade marks and thus, should not undergo the same registration process.¹⁴¹ As a result, it was agreed by government officials in Nigeria, the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone, that applicants wishing to register a cotton mark in the colonies, had to provide evidence that said mark was also registered in Britain.¹⁴²

The unique nature of trade mark within the cotton industry is stated frequently by contemporaries, particularly in reference to foreign markets. Yet, there is little elucidation of what this unique nature might be. Textile merchants emphasise the sheer number of marks in circulation and the paramount importance of these marks to the success of the industry, but there is little or no discussion of exactly how trade marks were created, how ownership of a mark is established (prior to registration) or what commercial advantages, manufacturers and merchants believed, were procured by the use of trade marks.¹⁴³ However, close analysis of the West African trade mark data, begins to shed light on how cotton marks differed from other types of trade marks and why registration was often neither necessary nor desirable for cotton traders.

The representation of textile goods, and in particular cotton piece goods, in the trade mark data, varied considerably across the three countries. Notably, Nigeria had the largest number of trade mark applications for cotton goods, 67 marks were registered over the ten-year period, representing 8 percent of the total number of applications. Only liquor and tobacco appeared in more applications than cotton piece goods, with 22 percent (178 marks) and 12 percent (98 marks) of applications respectively. In comparison, there were only 6 applications for marks under the class

¹⁴¹ Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1897-1903, 6th January 1903, GB127.M8/4/2.

¹⁴² The National Archives, Colonial Office, Acts, Lagos, 1902-1905, Ordinance No.5: An Ordinance to amend the Trade Marks Ordinance of 1901, 1903, CO 148/3.

¹⁴³ Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1897-1903, 12th October 1902, GB127.M8/4/2.

of cotton piece goods on the Gold Coast, representing less than 1 percent of the total applications. Applications in Sierra Leone suggest a similar pattern to Nigeria, accounting for almost 6 percent. Significantly, Nigeria not only had the highest number of cotton mark applications but trade marks for cotton goods were also registered in every year from 1903 to 1914, demonstrating a consistent use of cotton marks in Nigerian markets.¹⁴⁴

The most defining feature of the cotton piece good marks is the conspicuous lack of attempt to register distinctive and remarkable marks. However, rather than being the result of neglectful and indolent merchants, these characteristics highlight the unique nature of cotton marks. In reality, the trade marks reflect a number of overarching themes which characterise the printed textile industry from the second half of the nineteenth century; the continuous quest for novelty, the influence of printing techniques on the designs produced, the development of printed cottons as a distinctive aesthetic or typology of textiles and the tension between tradition and modernity.

Applications made by G. Gottschalck & Co. in Nigeria, are prime examples of a large proportion of the trade marks registered for cotton piece goods. G. Gottschalck & Co., listed in a 1911 trade directory for Manchester, as trading globally in ‘all classes of goods’, submitted eight marks for registration in relation to cotton piece goods in June of 1914.¹⁴⁵ Applying for trade mark registration for the first time since the introduction of the Ordinance, these eight applications are the only reference to Gottschalck’s registration of trade marks in any classes across Nigeria, the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone in the period under study. The example of the Gottschalck marks is

¹⁴⁴ Colonial Office, Government Gazette, Southern Nigeria Protectorate, 1900-1913, CO 591/1-12; Government Gazette, Nigeria, 1914, CO 658/1-2.

¹⁴⁵ *Slater’s Manchester, Salford and Suburban Directory 1911* (Manchester: Salter’s Directory Ltd., 1911) p.1998.

representative of a number of other registrations recorded in the gazettes, which indicate the specialist nature of cotton marks and the way they were employed by manufacturers and merchants. Gottschalck's eight marks feature illustrations of a cherub on a swan, a coat of arms with the motto 'semper eadem' (ever the same) and a tall ship. They bear no resemblance or relation to the goods they are intended to market nor do they attempt to attract consumers with images of local significance. (Figures 6.3-5)



Figure 6.3: Trade Mark of G. Gottschalck & Co. The National Archives, Colonial Office, Government Gazette, Nigeria, 18th June 1914, CO 658/1, p.1011.

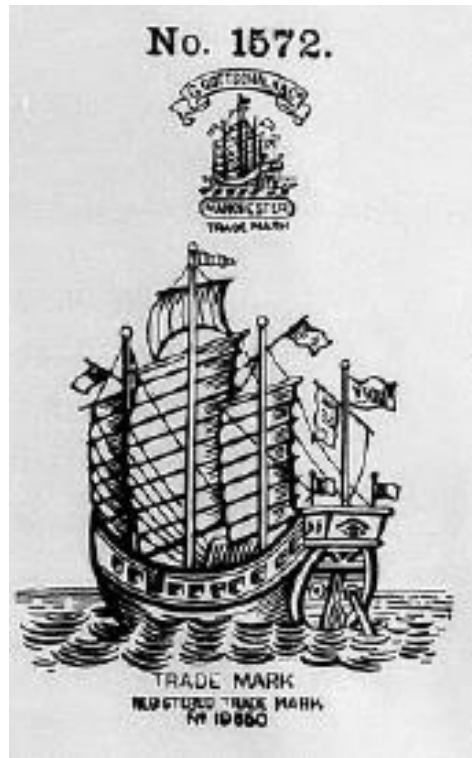


Figure 6.4: Trade Mark of G. Gottschalck & Co. The National Archives, Colonial Office, Government Gazette, Nigeria, 9th July 1914, CO 658/2, p.1071.



Figure 6.5: Trade Mark of G. Gottschalck & Co. The National Archives, Colonial Office, Government Gazette, Nigeria, 9th July 1914, CO 658/2, p.1071.

A similar pattern can be observed in the marks registered by the Compagnie Française De L'Afrique Occidentale, or the CFAO. The CFAO, established in 1887 as successor of the Compagnie du Senegal, were general traders on the West African coast, dealing in a wide variety of goods from food stuffs and spirits to metal goods and articles of clothing.¹⁴⁶ Although the CFAO was a French firm, as merchants and shipping agents the company had offices in Paris, Manchester and Liverpool.¹⁴⁷ They acted as middlemen for the sale of Manchester cotton piece goods, along with other British goods. Large merchant firms like the CFAO came to characterise the West African trade from the 1880s, accounting for up to 75 percent of the trade by the 1920s.¹⁴⁸ The CFAO is representative of the European export trade with West Africa and are vital to understanding the ways in which brand identity and consumer loyalty developed by these larger firms who were dealing in a wide range of goods.

The firm were frequent applicants to the registers in all three countries, applying for the most registrations in Sierra Leone and the fourth highest number of registrations in Nigeria and the Gold Coast. The firm registered a total of thirty-three individual marks, with a total of four hundred and thirty-four different applications, across the three countries between 1903 and 1914. As such, the CFAO are a useful case to consider the difference in trade mark registration across classifications of goods and in different British possessions. The CFAO also registered a significant number of marks for cotton piece goods, allowing for valuable comparison between cotton marks and those for other classes of goods.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa*, p. 199.

¹⁴⁷ Société d'études coloniales de Belgique, *Recueil des sociétés coloniales et maritimes*, 1902, http://www.entreprises-coloniales.fr/afrique-occidentale/Recueil_stes_1900-AOF.pdf [accessed 17/12/2018]

¹⁴⁸ Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa*, p. 199.

¹⁴⁹ Colonial Office, Government Gazette, Gold Coast, 1901-1914, CO 99/12-27; Government Gazette, Sierra Leone, 1914, CO 271/20; Government Gazette, Southern Nigeria Protectorate, 1900-1913, CO 591/1-12; Government Gazette, Nigeria, 1914, CO 658/1-2.

Notably, analysis of the CFAO trade marks, indicates that cotton marks were considered distinct from marks used for other goods. Of the eight trade marks registered in Nigeria for cotton piece goods, only one of these was also registered under other classes (Figure 6.6) Similarly, in Sierra Leone seven marks were registered solely for use on cotton piece goods alongside 14 further marks, the majority of which were registered in multiple classifications.



Figure 6.6: Trade Mark of the Compagnie Française de l'Afrique Occidentale. The National Archives, Colonial Office, Government Gazette, Nigeria, 30th April 1914, CO 658/1, p.839.



Figure 6.7: Trade Mark of the Compagnie Française de l'Afrique Occidentale. The National Archives, Colonial Office, Government Gazette, Nigeria, 14th May 1914, CO 658/1, p.871.

The only other classification in which the CFAO registered individual marks, was that of fermented spirits and liquors. However, a number of these marks were registered in multiple classes in other countries. For instance, the only application for the 'Puncheon Brand' trade mark to be submitted in Nigeria was in 1914 for fermented spirits and liquors. (Figure 6.7) Yet, on the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone the same mark was registered in 18 and 6 classifications respectively, relating to a wide range of goods including cutlery, tobacco and wool yarn. Notably, the mark was also registered for spirits in the Gold Coast but not in Sierra Leone. Only two of the CFAO's marks registered before 1915 were exclusively used for spirits and liquors. The design of these marks gives a clear indication that they were designed as labels to be affixed to consumable goods and in the case of the second mark, specifically for Geneva gin. (Figures 6.8 & 6.9) Thus, the CFAO's marks illustrate that marks registered for cotton piece goods were on the whole, unique marks, not associated with

any other class of goods and that this sets them apart from the majority of trade marks used in Britain's West African possessions at the beginning of the twentieth century.



Figure 6.8: Trade Mark of the Compagnie Française de l'Afrique Occidentale The National Archives, Colonial Office, Government Gazette, Gold Coast, 20th August 1910, CO 99/22, p.807.

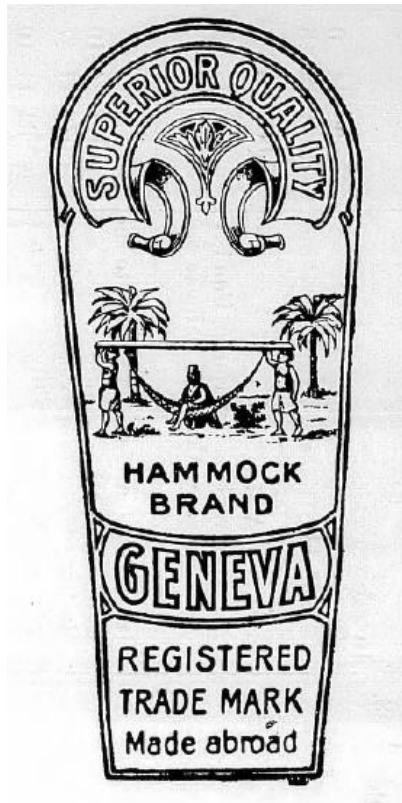


Figure 6.9: Trade Mark of the Compagnie Française de l'Afrique Occidentale. The National Archives, Colonial Office, Government Gazette, Gold Coast, 20th August 1910, CO 99/22, p.807.

Equally, as seen in Gottschalck's marks, the cotton marks registered by the CFAO are visually distinctive from trade marks registered in other categories. The majority of the CFAO trade marks indicate an attempt to create and develop a recognisable brand, either under the name of Compagnie Française de l'Afrique Occidentale or under an ancillary brand, such as the 'Auto Car Brand', the 'Brood Brand' and the 'Hammock Brand'. However, the cotton marks of the CFAO do not feature any text, except the phrase 'registered trade mark' in some examples, and give no textual indication of the manufacturer, merchant or agent. It is possible that it was not considered necessary to include this information on cotton trade marks, as it was provided to the customer in other ways. For instance, the packaging of cotton piece goods often included the addition of various tickets, stamps and labels and the

selvedge of the cloth itself often carried information on details such as the manufacturer, the width of the cloth and the quality.¹⁵⁰ Thus, the notable lack of the CFAO's name on the cotton trade marks does not necessarily mean that it was not evident to the consumer that these were the company's goods.

Nevertheless, the CFAO's cotton marks remain visually distinct in other ways. For instance, almost all of the cotton trade marks depict images of animals, mostly native to West Africa and the surrounding land, such as lions and parrots. Equally, however an Indian elephant, recognisable from the African elephant from their ears, and a tiger, found across Asia are also depicted in the cotton marks for West Africa. A further mark portrays a sphinx with two figures leading a camel in the foreground, evidently inspired by Egyptian architecture. Thus, while the cotton marks of the CFAO were distinct from marks for other goods, generally featuring animals or other simple, memorable images, they made no particular reference to West African cultures or visual traditions. In this way they differ from the CFAO's other trade marks which often feature recognisable visual tropes such as the golden stool or cowrie shells or include Arabic script. (Figures 6.10 & 6.11)

¹⁵⁰ Sykas, *The Secret Life of Textiles: Six Pattern Book Archives in North West England*, p. 149.



Figure 6.10: Trade Mark of the Compagnie Française de l'Afrique Occidentale. The National Archives, Colonial Office, Government Gazette, Nigeria, 6th August 1914, CO 658/2, p.1181.



Figure 6.11: Trade Mark of the Compagnie Française de l'Afrique Occidentale. The National Archives, Colonial Office, Government Gazette, Nigeria, 6th August 1914, CO 658/2, p.1181.

A lack of knowledge or understanding of West African visual cultures could be responsible for the arbitrary nature of the cotton trade marks. However, the ability of British manufacturers and merchants to produce textile designs suitable for and successful in West African markets has been demonstrated. Equally, the networks of agents and traders established and nurtured by firms such as John Holt & Co. and Paterson Zochonis & Co. suggests that, the necessary knowledge of local market conditions was sufficient.¹⁵¹ Yet, the trade marks registered by West African-based, British firms, such as John Walkden & Co. and G. B. Ollivant & Co. follow the same pattern as those of Gottschalck and the CFAO.

Analysis of the trade marks indicates that the primary purpose of the cotton marks was not to establish, in the mind of the consumer, a particular relationship between the trade mark and the individual firm. Close examination of the marks of John Walkden & Co. reinforces the notion that cotton marks were distinct in nature and did not follow the patterns of other marks. Trading in West Africa since 1868, John Walkden & Co. began as mail order company for manufactured and consumer goods.¹⁵² Walkden was also an influential member of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce's African Sectional Committee, holding the post of Vice Chairman from 1892 to 1898.¹⁵³

In 1913, the firm submitted a mark for fermented liquors and spirits in Nigeria. The mark features many of the tropes of trade mark design for food and alcohol, representing a label, and bearing the name of the brand and product. (Figure 6.12) In comparison, the firm registered 3 marks for cotton piece goods in 1908, also in Nigeria. These marks give no indication of the name of the merchant or manufacturer

¹⁵¹ Pedler, *The Lion and the Unicorn in Africa*, p. 241.

¹⁵² Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa*, p. 152.

¹⁵³ Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Minutes of the African Sectional Committee, 1892-1916, GB127.M8/1-4.

or provide any obvious information to the consumer. (Figure 6.13) Compared with Walkden's other marks, the cotton marks first appear to illustrate a lack business acumen and understanding of the importance and role of a trade mark.



Figure 6.12: Trade Mark of John Walkden & Co., Manchester & Lagos. The National Archives, Colonial Office, Government Gazette, Nigeria, 15th January 1914, CO 658/1, p.1181.

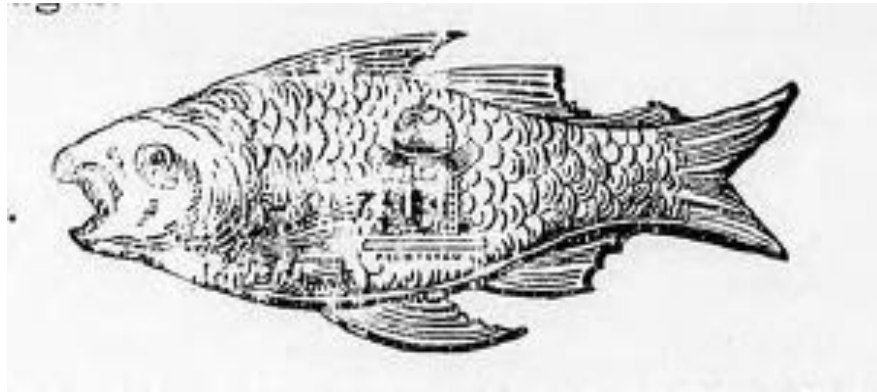


Figure 6.13: Trade Mark of John Walkden & Co., Manchester & Lagos. The National Archives, Colonial Office, Government Gazette, Southern Nigeria Protectorate, , 29th January 1908, CO 591/5, p.125.

One determining factor, however, in the development and use of cotton marks was their ability to be stamped directly onto cloth. It is likely that many of the trade marks registered for cotton piece goods, were produced using stamps like the one seen in figure 6.14. This stamp, in the Museum of Science and Industry (MOSI) , Manchester, is almost identical to a trade mark registered by Paterson Zochonis & Co. for cotton and silk goods and fermented spirits and liquors in Nigeria in 1909.¹⁵⁴ (Figure 6.15) The stamp was donated to the museum by Cussons International Ltd, the successors of Paterson Zochonis & Co. This example illustrates the necessity of creating an image which could be replicated in the form of a stamp like this one, to be printed directly onto cloth. Similarly, the Compagnie Francaise de l'Afrique Occidentale's lion trade mark, would have been produced with a stamp constructed in a similar fashion to the one seen in figure 6.16, also held in the MOSI collection. These stamps drew on the traditional method of using thin strips of metal, inserted into the wood horizontally, to produce the fine and precise lines which were unobtainable when carving directly into the wood block.¹⁵⁵ Wood blocks such as these, continued

¹⁵⁴ Zochonis, one of the founding partners of the firm, was also secretary for the African Sectional Committee of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce.

¹⁵⁵ Stuart Robinson, *A History of Printed Textiles* (London: Studio Vista, 1969), p. 24.

to be used by textile printers to add supplementary detail to roller-printed or resist-dyed cloth or in this case to add a makers mark, an indication of quality or a trade mark.¹⁵⁶ Unlike the vibrant and visually striking tickets and labels, marks produced using stamps and printed directly onto the cloth, were monochrome and were similar to a line drawing.



Figure 6.14: Trade Mark Stamp, Paterson Zochonis & Co. Science and Industry Museum, Manchester, made by Shaw and Latham, 1913, 57x200x150mm, Y1994.131.26.

¹⁵⁶ Sykas, *The Secret Life of Textiles: Six Pattern Book Archives in North West England*, p. 54.



Figure 6.15: Trade Mark of Paterson Zochonis & Co. The National Archives, Colonial Office, Government Gazette, Southern Nigeria Protectorate, 19th May 1909, CO 591/6, p.718.



Figure 6.16: Trade Mark Stamp. Science and Industry Museum, Manchester, late nineteenth century, 35x105x175mm, Y1969.71.1.

However, evidence of cotton trade marks designed to be reproduced as labels and tickets is also visible in the *Gazette* data. A number of marks for cotton piece goods resemble much more closely those of fermented spirits and food stuffs, than the simple cotton marks. Purveyors of cotton goods often employed a combination of marks stamped directly onto the fabric and tickets or labels pasted onto the fabric or packaging.¹⁵⁷ A volume of trade tickets held by Manchester Archives, illustrates the different types of tickets and stamps used by the textile industry and the visual differences which were determined by the mode of affixing the mark to the fabric.¹⁵⁸ These two different styles of trade marks closely mirror those found in the West African registers. (Figures 6.17 & 6.18)

The development of two very distinct styles of trade marks for cotton goods, can be seen as an important innovation in the marketing of textiles in foreign markets. Whereas, the tobacco and alcohol industries focused on producing trade marks which acted as labels, containing all the necessary information which the consumer required in one place, textile merchants marked their goods in multiple layers. First, the ticket or label, attached to the packaging or to the folded piece of cloth; second the trade mark stamped directly onto the cloth and finally, the merchandise marks, often printed on the selvedge. The first layer was enticing, visible from a far but ephemeral; the second layer was more permanent, was recognisable and could be understood by all consumers, regardless of language or literacy; the final layer, communicated the necessary information regarding the origin of the product and the quality.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 149.

¹⁵⁸ The Manchester Archives, Calico Printers' Association Collection, Trade Tickets, c.1902-1905, GB127.M75.7.1.11 [Green 1701].



Figure 6.17: Trade Ticket Designed for the Chinese market, Edmund Potter & Co. Ltd. The Manchester Archives and Local Studies, Calico Printers' Association, Trade Tickets, c.1900, GB127.M75/7/1/11 [Green 1701].



Figure 6.18: Textile Stamp. The Manchester Archives and Local Studies, Calico Printers' Association, Trade Tickets, c.1900, GB127.M75/7/1/11 [Green 1701].

Much of the literature relating to the history of trade marks during the nineteenth and early twentieth century focuses on the development of early forms of brand identity and brand image.¹⁵⁹ A number of case studies of British and American firms illustrate the association between the development of particular trade marks and the subsequent development of branding for individual products or for a company as a whole.¹⁶⁰ Early examples of this connection are predominantly manufacturers and retailers of foodstuffs, and medicinal and hygiene products including Cadbury's, Pear's and Fry's. These studies demonstrate that trade marks played an important role in the development of a company's brand when considered alongside other branding mechanisms such as advertising and packaging. By allowing a firm to claim exclusive

¹⁵⁹ T. R. Nevett, *Advertising in Britain: A History* (London: Heinemann, 1982), pp. 43-8.

¹⁶⁰ For example; D. K. Fieldhouse, *Unilever Overseas: The Anatomy of a Multinational, 1895-1965* (London: Croom Helm, 1978); Ian H. Slicer, 'Unilever and Economic Power: A Study of the Market for Margarine in the United Kingdom' (PhD Thesis, University of Warwick, 1977).

rights to a word, name or image, trade marks support the broader process of creating and reinforcing a brand.¹⁶¹

The understanding of the development of trade marks as an early form of brand identity, is predicated on the importance of trade marks in the assurance of quality. One of the principal advantages of marking goods with a trade mark to clearly identify the product with a particular manufacturer, merchant or retailer, which in turn, if the customer is satisfied with the quality of the product, can lead to repeat purchases and loyalty to a specific product or brand. Trade marks were frequently associated with a guarantee of quality as manufacturers and merchants did not want to risk losing their reputation or consumer base because of poor products.¹⁶²

Cotton marks were also used as guarantees of quality and many of the marks used in the domestic market were of this nature. Many textile marks explicitly promoted particular aspects of quality such as colour fastness or the origin of the fibres. A number of trade marks registered by firms within the Calico Printers Association are illustrations of this with many featuring phrases such as ‘guaranteed indigo’, ‘best turkey red’ and ‘fast colours’.¹⁶³ (Figure 6.18) However, none of the marks submitted for registration in West Africa belong in this category. This may appear as an obvious choice due to language barriers and low literacy rates amongst West African consumers of cheaper British textiles. Indeed, one contemporary advised that, ‘a picture is usually an excellent international mark as it has a meaning not only for the educated public but also for the uneducated.’¹⁶⁴ Yet, trade marks registered in almost all other classes regularly contain the name of the manufacturer or merchant,

¹⁶¹ Da Silva Lopes and Guimaraes, 'Trademarks', p. 795.

¹⁶² Mira Wilkins, 'The Neglected Intangible Asset: The Influence of the Trade Mark on the Rise of the Modern Corporation', *Business History* 34/1 (1992), 66-95, (p. 68).

¹⁶³ Calico Printers' Association Collection, Trade Tickets, c.1902-1905, GB127.M75/7/1/11 [Green 1701]

¹⁶⁴ Langner, 'The International Trademark Question', p. 134.

descriptions of the product and claims of its quality. A large percentage of the marks also include text in both English and Arabic, indicating that differences in language did not discourage manufactures and merchants from utilising words as a marketing strategy. Trade marks for tobacco, foodstuffs, medicinal products and distilled spirits frequently, prominently feature the name of the manufacturer and product name.

The tendency to avoid the use of words in trade marks is thus particular to the textile classes. It is possible that this relates directly to the issue of the assessment of quality. There are numerous accounts of the ways in which West African consumers, and specifically women, assessed the quality of textile goods using touch, smell and taste.¹⁶⁵ Many of the local dyeing traditions required skilled use of the senses to determine the quality and readiness of the dye. This was particularly true in the preparation of indigo dye and the timing of the introduction of the cloth to the dye vat.¹⁶⁶ The importance of the senses in the production of cloth was also translated to the purchasing of cloth. It was common for women to suck cloth in order to determine the quality – a salty taste indicated an inferior quality.¹⁶⁷ Direct contact with the goods on offer in the market place was vital to facilitating a tactile and sensory assessment of quality.

Despite asserting that a trade name is essential to attract customers to the products of a particular company, Mira Wilkins argues that this becomes less important for goods which are inspected by the consumer before purchasing.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ Christopher B. Steiner, 'Another Image of Africa: Toward an Ethnohistory of European Cloth in West Africa, 1873-1960', *Ethnohistory* 32/2 (1985), 91-110; Katherine Frederick, 'Global Competition in the Local Marketplace: The Impact of Foreign Cloth Imports on British West African Cotton Textile Industries during the Pre-Colonial and Colonial Eras' (RMA Thesis, Utrecht University, 2013).

¹⁶⁶ Colleen E. Kriger, 'Guinea Cloth' Production and Consumption of Cotton Textiles in West Africa Before and During the Atlantic Slave Trade', in *The Spinning World: A Global History of Cotton Textiles, 1200-1850*, ed. by Giorgio Riello and Prasanna Parthasarathi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 105-26 (p.126).

¹⁶⁷ Steiner, 'Another Image of Africa', p. 94.

¹⁶⁸ Wilkins, 'The Neglected Intangible Asset', p. 69.

Wilkins cites the example of apples and oranges which will be assessed for quality directly by the consumer as opposed to packaged items such as medicine or tinned food.¹⁶⁹ In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the personal examination of textile goods in the market place or shop was an important aspect of the commercial transaction and in reducing the risk to the consumer. Following Wilkins' assertion this would diminish the importance for distinctive trade names for textile goods and provide an explanation for their notable absence from the trade marks.

Trade marks may have also facilitated in this assessment yet, despite the apparent claims of advocates of trade marks on the grounds of providing better information for the consumer, it could be argued that in reality they fulfilled no such role. The protection offered to the consumer by trade marks can only be ensured if the owner of the trade mark places the long-term advantages of reputation and goodwill over any potential short-term financial benefits that could be gained from selling inferior goods under a trusted trade mark.¹⁷⁰

If the purpose of a cotton mark is not, therefore, to communicate information related to the quality or manufacturer of the cloth, why were trade marks so important to the cotton industry and, in particular to the West African market?¹⁷¹ One possibility is that trade marks on cotton piece goods were used by merchants, not to differentiate between other cotton piece goods, but to help distinguish 'Manchester goods' from other textiles in available in the West African markets.

The trade mark applications demonstrate that only European and American traders sought trade mark registration. Evidently, this may reflect an, intentional or

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Jonathan Aldred, 'The Economic Rationale of Trade Marks: An Economist's Critique', in *Trade Marks and Brands: An Interdisciplinary Critique* ed. by Lionel Bently, Jennifer Davis, and Jane C. Ginsburg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 267-81 (p.270).

¹⁷¹ Pedler, *The Lion and the Unicorn in Africa*, p. 1.

unintentional, bias in the introduction of registration which favoured Western merchants. Yet, nonetheless, it suggests that the use of trade marks, at least in an official capacity, was the reserve of European and American importers. A trade mark was not just therefore, an indication of the manufacturer or merchants but also of its origin, even when no country or continent was marked thereon. West African consumers had access to a wide variety of textiles, including those from India, Indonesia and China, all of which competed with 'Manchester goods' for the consumers attention. Trade marks such as those found in the gazettes, may have been used to indicate to the consumer that these goods were genuine European imports, as much as anything else. A similar pattern, is visible later in the twentieth century in relation to Dutch wax-prints which gained cachet, due to their status as European imported goods, as well as through their aesthetic appeal and association with the popular Javanese batik styles.¹⁷² The extent to which British textiles were favoured by West African consumers, and the significance of their status as imported foreign goods, remains allusive. However, the use of trade marks in the cotton piece good trade with Nigeria, the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone, indicates that merchants sought to set their goods apart, from other imported goods available on the market, as 'Manchester goods' through the use of trade marks. In this way, trade marks could be seen as a shorthand for the identification of European imports as opposed to Indian or Indonesian goods.

A desire to emphasise the typology of the object, rather than the specific manufacturer or brand, through the use of trade marks, may also account for the frequent use of everyday objects and Western visual tropes as trade marks. A significant number of the trade marks submitted for cotton piece goods include

¹⁷² Leslie W. Rabine, *The Global Circulation of African Fashion* (Oxford: Berg, 2002), p. 196.

references to West African cultures, flora and fauna and geography. For example, the African Association Ltd, registered a mark featuring a manilla and an arrow in 11 different classifications, including cotton and silk goods, in Nigeria in 1908. The company also registered a further two designs featuring the manilla and arrow in Nigeria and the Gold Coast in 1914. As in the textile designs, the manilla was used frequently in trade marks for West Africa. (Figure 6.19)

However, an equally significant number of marks depict images of seemingly arbitrary objects or distinctly European tropes. For instance, one trade mark submitted by the firm Herbert Whitworth Ltd. of Manchester, in Nigeria in 1914, depicts a mechanical hand whisk. (Figure 6.20) A mechanical whisk may not elicit any association to cloth or clothing, but it may represent, in a general sense, the influx of European goods, to which these textiles belonged. It may also be an attempt to emphasise the ‘exotic’ nature of ‘Manchester goods’ and profit from the image of the Empire as the bringer of an industrialised vision of ‘modernity’.

The reproduction of apparently unrelated and arbitrary images in the cotton trade marks, also runs parallel to the importance of novelty to the printed textile industry. Novelty had long been seen as one of the determining factors in the success of the printed textile industry. Critics claimed that the endless quest for novelty had stripped the industry of any artistic value and perpetuated a constant stream of new, but tasteless, designs. The Logan Muckelt designs are evidence that novelty remained an important factor in design for the West African markets, as the specialised firm attempted to create the maximum number of design permutations by combining and layering multiple motifs and backgrounds, and by introducing new colourways. Novelty, was seen as a mechanism for reducing risk, maximising output and producing a constant stream of new products for the consumer.

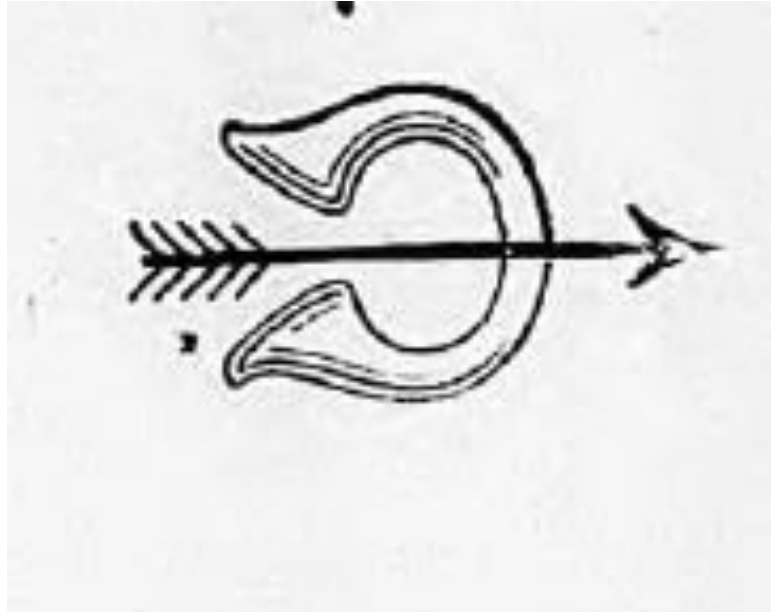


Figure 6.19: Trade Mark of the African Association Ltd. The National Archives, Colonial Office, Government Gazette, Southern Nigeria Protectorate, 2nd December 1908, CO 591/5, p.1828.

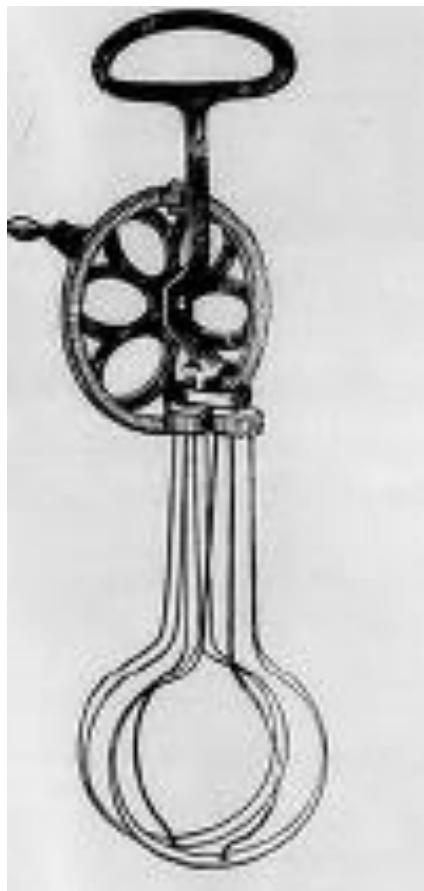


Figure 6.20: Trade Mark of Herbert Whitworth & Co., Manchester. The National Archives, Colonial Office, Government Gazette, Nigeria, 2nd July 1914, CO 658/2, p.1052.

The discussions surrounding cotton marks in the 1860s and again in the relation to West Africa in the early 1900s, also refer to the idea of novelty. The quantities of cotton marks, which were too numerous to register, speak of the industry's desire to perpetuate novelty and (an allusion of) choice. Oppositions to registration also voiced concern over the difficult task of inventing distinct new marks that would be accepted for registration when so many already existed.¹⁷³ Textile merchants appeared less concerned about the risk of the misappropriation of marks, than any restriction on the creation of new marks. The industry also questioned the meaning of a distinctive mark, alluding to the common practice of making minor alterations to create a 'new' mark.¹⁷⁴

It is possible therefore, to see the trade marks of cotton piece goods as an extension of the search for novelty. For cotton merchants and manufacturers, a name or brand held little prestige or commercial value. Thus, diminishing the value of an associated trade mark. Unlike consumables, such as food, medicine or soap, firms in the cotton industry would have had little to gain from establishing brand loyalty or sustained repeat custom. This is partly due to some of the underhand practices which were commonplace in the textile industry, such as the mislabelling of goods and the fluctuation in quality between batches of goods. As legislation such as the Merchandise Mark Act and the Folded Woven Goods Ordinance attest, the industry suffered from such fraudulent acts which made establishing trust with consumers difficult. In this context, the textile industry did not experience the level of marketing innovation seen in the tobacco and alcohol industries. The use of trade marks by cotton

¹⁷³ Higgins, 'The Making of Modern Trade Mark Law', p. 53.

¹⁷⁴ Bently, 'Modern Trade Mark Law', p. 13.

merchants developed in parallel to textile design, focusing on novelty over the development of a recognisable and reliable brand.

Furthermore, unlike consumables such as chocolate, soap and medicine, which need to be replaced on a regular basis, cloth was a less frequent purchase for the majority of consumers. This was particularly true for the poorer in society who could dedicate little money to the purchasing of cloth.¹⁷⁵ Loyalty to a brand or product developed from a sense of inertia in the repetitive process of shopping for everyday items.¹⁷⁶ While loyalty to a particular brand of soap can be reinforced by recurrent purchases in a short space of time, this might not be felt so keenly in regard to cloth which might not be a regular shopping item.

A length of cloth could also be, and frequently was, consumed many times over for many years. The consumption of a length of cloth is not a finite exercise, like the consumption of a bar of chocolate. Even if turned into clothing, this can be altered and undone. Clothing can be handed down, resold, refashioned; cloth can be stored for a future project or as a memory. Indeed, it was common for Nigerian women to inherit cloth with particular significance and for herself to add to this collection, drawing on this store to fashion her own and her families clothing when appropriate.¹⁷⁷ Textile trade marks and tickets are paradoxically, both ephemeral and enduring. One particular cotton mark may have a brief life in the market place, being replaced by a newer mark, but may survive in people's homes and may resurface in second-hand markets for many years after. The distinct ways in which different classes of consumer goods were consumed, affected the way in which trade marks functioned as guarantees

¹⁷⁵ Frederick, 'Global Competition in the Local Marketplace', p. 52.

¹⁷⁶ Nicholas Kaldor, 'Advertising and Economic Structure', *Review of Economic Statistics* 18/1 (1950), 1-27, (p. 78).

¹⁷⁷ Catherine McKinley, *Indigo: In Search of the Colour that Seduced the World* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011), p. 37.

of quality, signifiers of origin or marketing tools. The frequency with which goods were likely to be bought has significant ramifications for the nature of textile trade marks in comparison to those of consumable goods. The first of these relates to the use of text and brand names, the second the power of visual imagery and the third the question of the potential damage of the misappropriation or mistaken identity of trade marks.

Equally, it is important to consider also the lifespan of textile trade marks in relation to the importance of the visual imagery used. Textile trade marks functioned differently to those for other classes of consumer goods such as foodstuff and medicines. While firms like Cadburys and Pears utilised trade marks to further establish their brand, many manufacturers and merchants of textile goods did not create iconic and long-lasting multinational brands in this way. Their trade marks therefore, played a different role and were in many ways more transient. Textile merchants often used multiple distinct and diverse marks simultaneously and the trade marks of a firm could change several times over the course of their trading life.¹⁷⁸ In this sense Andreas Zangger has argued that textile marks can be seen as belonging to the broader culture of nineteenth and early twentieth-century ephemera.¹⁷⁹

6.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the trade mark data offers a valuable perspective of the marketing of cotton piece goods by British merchants in West Africa. It demonstrates that British merchants saw the value of marketing their goods to West African consumers, further

¹⁷⁸ Higgins and Tweedale, 'The Trade Mark Question', p. 216.

¹⁷⁹ Zangger, 'Chops and Trademarks', p. 770.

emphasising the importance of consumer agency in the textile trade. The volume and diversity of trade marks registered in British West Africa illustrates that the market was competitive and that it was necessary for merchants to promote their products.

In the case of cotton piece goods, the trade marks show how merchants advertised their goods to foreign consumers with different cultural values, languages and tastes. Textile merchants used trade marks, labels and tickets as means of communicating with consumers through symbols and images. These images could reinforce an association to a particular brand or level of quality. However, analysis of the trade marks also demonstrates that merchants were employing these visual signifiers to differentiate their goods from the other textiles available in the West African market. The trade marks encouraged consumers to associate European imported textiles with ideas of modernity. This promoted the characteristics which made them distinct and set them apart from other textiles in the marketplace.

Conclusion

This thesis presents four key findings relating to the export of British printed and dyed textiles from the 1870s to 1914. Firstly, it demonstrates the importance of the study of design and material culture and the contribution object-based research can make to economic, imperial and business histories. Secondly, it illustrates that British textiles exported to West Africa were highly specialised and designed to the tastes and demands of West African consumers. The specialisation of the trade can be seen in the design, manufacture, distribution and marketing of these textiles. Thirdly, the efforts made by British manufacturers and merchants to cater to the specific demands of the West African markets demonstrate that the Empire did not create easy markets or passive consumers. Colonised consumers continued to exercise a degree of agency over the textiles they purchased or wore. Finally, this thesis reinforces the importance of Britain's provinces in the development of overseas trade, the economy and the Empire. It highlights the role of cities like Manchester in the formation and negotiation of global networks and exchanges.

The British textile trade of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has been the focus of many studies across a range of disciplines. Scholars of economic, industrial, business, imperial and textile history have contributed significantly to our understanding of the Britain's textile export trade drawing on a diverse range of methodologies and sources. These studies have considered the production, distribution and consumption of British textiles, but few historians have mobilised the textiles themselves as evidence. The absence of material evidence in these histories is reflected in the dominant narratives which contend that British goods were not competitive and did not meet the demands of overseas markets. An over-reliance on accessible and less-exacting colonial markets encouraged complacency amongst British merchants.

In turn, the failure of the textile industry to respond to the needs of foreign consumers has been linked to the decline of the British economy from the late nineteenth century.

However, this thesis demonstrates the importance of recognising the value of material evidence and the potential of objects and artefacts in reframing these narratives of economic history and trade within the Empire. Analysis of the material evidence of the textile trade with West Africa illustrates the need to revise these narratives in order to account for the agency of colonised communities through the act of consumption. The pattern books and textile samples illustrate the ways in which the British textile printing industry adapted and developed to cater for the specific demands of the West African markets, offering a unique perspective of the industry. Likewise, the use of trade marks demonstrates the complexity of the West African markets, as competitive and sophisticated centres offering a wide range of global textiles. An examination of the material evidence provides perspectives of the trade which cannot be found in the trade statistics and official documents and highlights the importance of recognising the multiple narratives.

Objects studies have flourished in recent years and have contributed to a number of disciplines. Yet still, too often material culture and object-based histories are seen as additions to, rather than integral parts of, historical narratives. This thesis has illustrated that examination of material evidence is as valuable to histories of exchange as trade statistics and documentary evidence. This research demonstrates that bringing together a rich and diverse range of sources, including material evidence, photography, colonial publications and institutional records, uncovers new perspectives.

This thesis also establishes that by the 1870s there was a high level of market specialisation in the textile trade with West Africa. The material evidence

illustrates that manufacturers were producing goods which catered to the specific demands of the West African markets through the designs they created and the manufacturing processes they employed. Whether it was through the use of indigo, allusions to West African visual cultures or the development of novel resist-dyeing techniques, British textiles for export to West Africa were specialised goods designed for a specific market. This was also reflected in the structure of the textile printing industry as merchants and manufacturers increasingly chose to limit the number of markets they supplied and specialise in one region.

The increasing specialisation of the textile printing industry during this period was a direct response to growing foreign competition and the decline in the growth of Britain's textile exports. In response to increasing pressure from foreign competition and the approaching loss of dominance in the world market, British manufacturers and merchants trading with West Africa chose to specialise rather than diversify. In order to compete in the global textile market of the late nineteenth century British merchants adapted to the changing conditions of the market by focusing on the specific tastes and demands of global consumers.

In choosing to specialise in one specific market, merchants and manufacturers, like Logan Muckelt or Blakley and Beving, accepted the potential risk of financial loss or collapse if this trade was disrupted, contracted or became dominated by a foreign competitor. However, in catering for one market British merchants were able to produce designs and products which met the specific tastes and conditions of the West African market. To succeed in this market required specialist knowledge, newly developed manufacturing techniques and a reliable network of merchants and agents to distribute and market these goods. By designing textiles to trade in one specialised

market, manufacturers and merchants reduced the number of potential global consumers but increased the saleability of their products in the West African markets.

When the British cotton industry collapsed in the 1960s, the West African export trade survived into the twenty-first century. The firm ABC Wax manufactured printed and dyed textiles for the West African market in Hyde, Greater Manchester until 2007.¹ Despite the difficulties facing textile manufacturers in Britain, ABC Wax was able to draw on decades of specialist experience catering for the West African market, along with volumes of pattern books of successful designs and scores of engraved rollers to continue to produce their popular textiles. The firm's production has since moved to Ghana, but the brand of ABC continues to be a popular choice for West African women and a mark quality and taste. As one of the longest surviving members of the Calico Printers' Association, the survival of ABC Wax suggests that specialisation rather than diversification was a reasonable and profitable decision for the firm.

The printed textile industry firmly understood the importance of pleasing the consumer. In the face of criticism from cultural elites on the lack of artistic quality from the 1830s onwards, Manchester's printers continued to produce designs which rejected the elite fashions, privileging instead the tastes of their British working-class and global consumers. The specialisation of textiles for export to West Africa was a continuation of this principal and the belief that the success and profitability of a design was ultimately determined by the consumer. In the words of eminent printer Edmund Potter, 'to think that the world's consumption, or taste, can be regulated by

¹ Kathleen E. Bickford, 'The A.B.C's of Cloth and Politics in Cote d'Ivoire', *Africa Today* 41/2 (1994), 5-24.

anything but the wants and taste of the consumer, the *purchaser*, in fact, *and he will fix both price and taste.*'²

This thesis argues that the specialisation of the textile trade in the late nineteenth century is evidence of the importance of global consumers to the British textile industry. Manufacturers and merchants based in Manchester gathered information on the tastes of West African consumers and altered and adapted their design and production processes to reflect these. The pattern books and textile samples illustrate the lengths which textile printers went to in order to satisfy the tastes and demands of the West African markets. The voices of West African consumers have not been recorded in the same way as those of the British merchants represented by Chambers of Commerce or the colonial officials found in the National Archives. Yet they are no less important.

Few sources directly record the voices of African consumers during the colonial period. Many of the sources that do remain depict African consumers through the lens of the colonial gaze. Identifying how West African consumers responded to the import of British printed textiles is difficult to establish with so few sources. However, an absence African voices in the archives does not prove that West African consumers were passive.

The West African markets offered consumers a rich and diverse assortment of textiles from across the globe. For British merchants to succeed in the West African markets, their goods had to compete with Indian chintzes, Indonesian batiks and locally produced cloth, such as adire, adinkra, bark or bogolan cloth. As the nineteenth century became the twentieth, Manchester cloth increasingly had to compete with

² Edmund Potter, *Trade Schools: A Letter to the Rev. Chas. Richson M.A. in Reply to Opinions on 'Trade Schools Necessary to Promote National Education' Expressed in his Lecture Delivered at the Mechanic's Institute, Manchester, November 14th 1853* (London: John Chapman, 1854), p. 22.

Dutch, German and American textiles in the marketplaces of West Africa. Similarly, British textiles did not replace West African cloth or threaten the popularity of imported Indian and Indonesian chintzes and batiks. Manchester goods exhibited the possibilities of European technologies in designs and colours which were familiar to West African consumers. They formed a distinct typology of cloth within West African textile cultures. These objects were also recreated and redefined to embody the specific tastes of the consumer.

Although the pattern books and samples studied were produced by British manufacturers and are housed in British archives, they provide a vital connection to West African consumers. The designs in the Logan Muckelt pattern books, BT Registers and Charles Beving Collection, offer tangible evidence of West African consumption where few other records remain. From the material evidence it is possible to construct a history of the British textile trade with West Africa which integrates the perspective of West African consumers. Although physically absent from most of the records, their role can be located in the patterns which were designed for their consumption. Their preferences can be traced in the lives of these designs, some of which were short-lived, others which are still manufactured today. Mapping the consumption of every-day and ephemeral objects in marginalised communities, be that British working-class or colonised communities, presents many challenges. The material evidence of consumption presents a vital lens through which to explore histories dominated by Eurocentric narratives through the perspective of the consumer.

In reframing these objects as a means through which European manufacturers and merchants interacted with global consumers, this thesis counters the argument that the British textile trade was reliant on ‘soft’ colonial markets and could not compete

without the protection given by the Empire. This thesis demonstrates that the Empire did not guarantee secure or captive markets for British trade. By tracing the design and production of textiles for the West African markets from the early 1870s, it is evident that the development of colonial administration and infrastructure had little influence on the design of these goods. The rise of British imperialism in West Africa did grant certain advantages to British, and European, merchants. However, it did not reduce the necessity for merchants to provide suitable goods which met the tastes and needs of their consumers.

There is considerable scope for similar studies of other export markets for British textiles. As the largest market for British textiles, a detailed study of the designs exported to India would provide a fruitful comparison to the example of West Africa. Indian textile designs had been imitated in Britain since the first calicoes were imported in the seventeenth century and studies of the eighteenth-century trade have shown the initial difficulties facing British manufacturers in meeting the demands of Indian consumers. By the late nineteenth century identifying designs as either Indian or European became increasingly difficult after decades of exchange and the blending of visual cultures. In this sense, the markets of India and West Africa are significantly different and the responses of British merchants may reflect this.

Analysis of the West African market also indicates the value of studies which focus on the seemingly minor markets of the British export trade. The West African trade was not one of the largest markets for British cotton cloth. Yet, it reveals new perspectives of the textile industry and the interaction between trade and Empire. These smaller markets were still significant and represented a substantial portion of the British textile industry. Similarly, understanding how consumers in these markets interacted with global trade through their consumption of these textiles, would raise

new questions and further re-orientate research away from a Eurocentric perspective of economic history.

This thesis provides a further example of the multiplicity of imperial structures and relationships. In focusing on the textile trade with West Africa it identifies a number of formal and informal networks of exchange between Manchester and West African communities. The framework of the British Empire provided one means of communication between Britain and the globe. However, within and beyond the formal structure of Empire there were many modes and channels of exchange. This thesis indicates that while the Empire officially changed the structure and shape of trade, through legislation or protectionist measures, it did not eradicate or definitively disrupt existing modes of communication and exchange. It is important to recognise that trade networks could operate outside of imperial ideologies and could challenge the binaries established by empire.

Manchester and West Africa have been connected through cotton for centuries. Linked by the Atlantic trade, West African slaves worked on plantations which supplied the cotton mills of Manchester and Lancashire. Following the abolition of slavery, established patterns of trade remained and even expanded under colonial regimes. British merchants continued to seek West Africa's natural resources in exchange for Manchester goods. By the late nineteenth century, West Africa represented a significant market for printed and dyed textiles manufactured in Manchester.

Provincial merchants had communicated and exchanged with West African traders for decades before the Empire extended its hold in the region. Before West African communities were colonised subjects, they were consumers of Manchester goods. It is difficult to know how the merchants and manufacturers discussed in this

thesis understood the lives of West African consumers, but it is evident that their relationship with the Empire was complicated by the need to reconcile their characterisation as colonised subjects and consumers with agency.

There remains much to be discovered of the relationships between cities like Manchester and the Empire. However, this study has highlighted that the provinces could have very different connections to the Britain's imperial territories and emphasises the diversity of responses to the Empire beyond the centralised structures of the Foreign and Colonial Offices. The exchange between Manchester and West Africa was driven by commerce and this determined how these communities understood each other. While Manchester's merchants exploited and reinforced imperial structures, they simultaneously undermined the popular image of Africa.

The trade recognising the need to meet the tastes and demands of West African consumers and questioned the image of a homogenous Africa. This cannot be attributed to a particular sense of anti-imperialist sentiment or a rejection of contemporary ideas of race and western hegemony but rather an adherence to free-market principles.

This thesis concludes that by the late nineteenth century the trade with West Africa in printed and dyed textiles was highly specialised. From the design process to the marketing of British printed textiles in West African markets, manufactures and merchants responded to the specific tastes and requirements of the consumer. The textile trade with West Africa must be understood within the context of the Empire but it is evident that the relationship between Manchester's textile industry and West African consumers cannot be explained in the simple binaries of the coloniser and the colonised.

Appendix I

The Logan Muckelt Collection, The Manchester Archives

See attached disc for Appendix I

The Logan Muckelt Collection, held at the Manchester Archives contains 123 bound volumes from the firm Logan Muckelt and Co. The volumes date from the firm's establishment in the late 1880s to its dissolution in 1961. This appendix contains 20 of these volumes, which date from the late 1890s to around 1920. The catalogue entries for the Logan Muckelt volumes indicate estimated dates for around two thirds of the pattern books. As part of this research the dates of the volumes were verified or modified based a number of criteria.

As many of the samples in the volumes carry unique design numbers, these were used to isolate volumes which corresponded to the number series being employed in the period between c.1889 and 1914. Design repetition was also used as an indication of date. This method of dating can be imprecise as designs were reused and reprinted for decades in some circumstances. However, particular designs in the Logan Muckelt collection appear very frequently in a handful of volumes dated from the around the turn of the century and then do not reappear in later pattern books. It can therefore be reasoned that these designs, and thus the volumes they appear in date from before 1914. Many of the pattern books also include handwritten notations of the date that the design was turned off the roller; that is to say the date on which the engraved designs was ground off the copper roller allowing for a new design to be engraved or the date on which the roller was sent to be melted down for its intrinsic value as copper.³ As it was common practice to reproduce designs for a number of years and

³ *A Short History of Calico Printing in the Sett Valley* (Matlock: Derbyshire County Planning Department, 1983), p. 9.

the cost of engraving a printing roller was high, manufacturers tended to store engraved rollers as a repository of designs. Rollers were often kept for decades, until the design was considered obsolete or the value of the copper became higher than the estimated worth of the design. In the pattern books, the design in question must have been created before the date it was turned off and it is likely that it was created some years before to account for the average life of an engraved design. Thus, for designs turned off in the 1920s it is probable that they were originally engraved prior to 1914. Through an investigation of all these factors it was possible to date a further 11 pattern books to the period from 1880 to 1914 with a high degree of certainty.

Once the relevant volumes had been identified, a database of designs was created for each volume. From each database an analysis of key design characteristics was undertaken. This included the colours used, the subject of the motif (these were separated into categories including flora, fauna, geometric, abstract and symbolic), pattern repeats and if and when the pattern was 'turned off'. These allow for a quantitative analysis of the patterns as a whole and by each pattern book/collection. A digital version of this database is included with this volume.

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Pattern Book, Design No. D4981-D5480, 1919-1920, GB127.M831/28.

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Appendix II

The Board of Trade Copyright Registers, The National Archives.

See attached disc for Appendix II.

Four series of registers were consulted for this research; BT 43, BT 44, BT 50 and BT 51. Designs submitted under the 1842 Ornamental Design Act are held in the BT 43 and 44 series, the former containing the representation volumes and the later the written registers. BT 50 and 51 hold the representations and registers for the Patents, Designs and Trade Marks Act of 1883 and continue until 1908.

Prior to searching the BT registers a database of manufacturers, merchants and shipping agents involved in the printed textile trade with West Africa was compiled. This database drew from a number of primary sources including trade directories, newspapers, the Calico Printers' Association archives. John Graham's 1846 survey of calico printers in Greater Manchester was also a key source.⁴

Creating a detailed and comprehensive list of printing firms, merchants and shipping agents is not a simple task for a number of reasons. Firstly, the life of the businesses within the textile industries during this period was extremely fluid. It is rare to find a textile printer or merchant firm whose name did not change in the sixty years of this study. Changes were often the result of the vicissitudes of business partnerships, which were equally fluid and short-lived, or because the son joined the family firm. Frequently these name variations amount to the addition or subtraction of a surname meaning the firm remains easily traceable. However, previous partners would regularly join rival firms or establish new businesses and sons launch themselves as independent merchants. This creates a complex web of names across just over half a

⁴ The Manchester Archives, Graham, John, History of Printworks in the Manchester District, 1760-1846, GB127.BR ff 667.3 G1.

century. When cross-referencing these names with the BT registers further permutations arise and these must be in turn cross-referenced with other sources. For instance, the names of a firm may only be found in the trade directories of one particular year, yet it can be found in the BT registers over a period of twenty years. In this sense, the BT registers act as a design repository but they also hold vital information on the firms operating in the textile printing industry, the vast majority of which we know very little about. However, it is worth noting that as with many of the sources pertaining to the industry, the information they contain is fragmentary but when pieced together with details from other sources is very valuable.

Once a list of manufacturers, merchant and shipping agents had been compiled, the names on this list were entered into the National Archives online catalogue to search for matches in the BT registers. The recent digitisation project means names, addresses and design numbers can be searched through the online catalogue. However, while the online search facility is invaluable to the researcher reducing what was previously days' worth of work to mere minutes, a good knowledge of the structure of the archive is still required. Many of the frequently occurring names within the BT registers will easily be found, occasionally names in the register will not be found on first attempt by the online search process. However, narrowing the fields by BT series, for example inputting BT 50 Edmund Potter, into the search field may bring up previously unseen results. Similarly, some search results only include data from the written registers and not the corresponding representation volume. This is a particular problem with the BT 50 and 51 series which have not yet benefitted from the same level of digitisation as the BT 43/44 series. In this case, the design numbers must be cross-referenced manually with the representation volumes. The BT registers are testament to the fact that while the digitisation of archives is invaluable to the

historians and brings new possibilities to our research, an intimate knowledge of the archive is equally as valuable.

After a further list of firms present in the BT registers was composed, the volumes of representations with the corresponding designs were viewed in the archive and photographs taken of each design. The BT volumes, are large, heavy and in poor condition. Occasionally, designs are rendered inaccessible due the condition of the volume and the need to conserve the contents. Sometimes pages are fused together, samples have been removed or there is a mistake in the design number sequence. These occurrences are relatively uncommon and with accurate catalogue details designs are easy to locate. The images of the designs are then catalogued by the proprietor and subdivided by date and BT volume. Accompanying notes provide any necessary additional information gathered at the archives, such as the condition of a particular design, the print quality, the neighbouring designs in the register and details of any annotations. These designs are then added to a database of designs for export to West Africa for analysis. A digital version of this database is included with this volume.

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