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IMPERIAL LOOTING AND THE CASE OF BENIN

A dissertation Presented
By
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IMPERIAL LOOTING AND THE CASE OF BENIN

A Dissertation

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In December, 1970, the British Museum put on show a large selection of bronzes from the city of Benin, Nigeria. Shortly after the opening Mr. Chukwuma Osugi, General Secretary of the All Africa Students and Workers Union, publicly asked Lord Eccles, British Minister for the Arts, "to instruct the British Museum to explain when and how they acquired the bronzes, now worth a fortune to western collectors." I have written the following paper in answer to Mr. Osugi's request.

Mr. Osugi reminded us of an historical truism: the least predictable outcome of an historical event frequently proves to be of the greatest historical consequence. The British expedition into what later became Nigeria, which confiscated the bronzes for the British Museum, had as its goal the extension of rule into the Nigerian hinterland, and the punishment of a recalcitrant native monarch. Both these results were readily accomplished, and so the matter might have ended, were it not for the fact that the two leaders of the expedition, Sir Harry Rawson, and Sir Ralph Moor, ordered the removal of all the native art work. The results of that action are only beginning to be explored, whereas those of the former were readily accessible and have now been thoroughly examined by British and African historians. The reason for the failure to perceive the significance of the action at the time, and for the next seventy years, lies in the attitude of mind which
the British had toward their imperial victims, and it is the dimensions of this attitude which I hope to make clear.

Earlier empire historians who failed to take account of the moral implications of empire are rapidly being supplanted by those who approach the subject of expansion from the native point of view. But the earlier pro-British viewpoint is interesting precisely because it lacks the moral imperative so obvious to us today and thereby mirrors more precisely the state of the imperial mind at its zenith. Work from the native point of view has, thus far, taken the real motives for expansion, as opposed to the professed ones, as the jumping off place and thus tended to see native attitudes and actions, perhaps correctly, in terms of response. It should be possible to pinpoint incidents in which the imperial power and the native culture confront each other in some sense in their fullness. If one is willing to allow the artifacts of a culture some role in the culture, then the Benin Expedition of 1897 is such an historical incident. No one person from the kingdom of Benin could speak as eloquently for the culture as could those ancient and beautiful bronze heads.

Already when the British mounted their expedition against Benin the British intellectual world was becoming sensitive to the destruction which followed in the wake of the imperial advance. An interest in primitive culture, however, thriving in England since the founding of the ethnological societies in the 1840's, was still limited to the preservation of what was rapidly being destroyed in order to satisfy the curiosity of the destroyers.
It had nothing to do with justice or injustice. Sir Harry Rawson, for example, recognized that bronzes found in the city might be of historic interest to the British Museum, and after the expedition the government was criticized for not sending along an anthropologist who could catch a glimpse of the culture before the inevitable destruction. No voice was raised in defense of leaving the objects where they were.

Anthropologists, who did begin to play a part in imperial administration after political boundaries had been fixed, were the first to realize that imperially imposed political structures were not adequate to deal with African tribal structure. For the historian Benin did not become extricated from the history of the Niger Coast Proctectorate until Chief Egharevba wrote a general history in 1930. He managed to put down the oral traditions of the Bini while those elders of the tribe, who had matured before the coming of the British were still alive and could tell him. Earlier, in the 1920's, the bronzes, along with other works, aroused general enthusiasm for "primitive art", and have subsequently received a fair share of critical attention, but the Benin history project in 1957 was the first attempt to deal with the history of Benin as a whole. This project, under the direction of Professor Onwuke Dike then of the University of Ibadan, included an historian, an art historian, and an anthropologist. It was an interdisciplinary attempt to deal with the problem of writing the history of illiterate peoples. All three members of the team have now published books about Benin, helping to unfold the complexities of the culture
before and during the early advent of the Europeans, to explain the role which the now famous bronzes have played in the life of the city and its inhabitants, and to document the irreversible changes wrought by the British take-over in 1897. Alan Ryder, the historian, decided to divide Bini history at 1897 with good reason. After the expedition the conquerors imposed a form of government upon the inhabitants of the city comprehensible to the British but foreign to the Binis; and removed from the city most if not all of the art which had played an integral role in the life of the culture.

Two points should be advanced concerning the removal of the art. In the first place, the arrival of the objects in England occasioned a flurry in intellectual circles then attempting to come to terms with the "culture" of the non-western world. Not that the objects from Benin directly influenced a change in the appreciation of "primitive" art - that is a phenomenon of the 20's - but Benin objects flooded the market momentarily in 1897 and those interested in West Africa were obliged to take a stand on them. Charles Read, the curator of the Ethnological department of the British Museum in 1897 and the first non-political or military figure to see the bronzes when they arrived in England, concluded finally, after discovering the intricate method which had been used in casting the pieces, that they had been made by wandering Egyptians. His technical assistant, who analyzed the content of the bronzes, believed that they had been made by Portuguese
sailors on board ship off the coast of Benin. Even Mary Kingsley who knew more about West Africa in 1897 than most people, suggested that some of the pieces were probably made in Birmingham to be used as trading items. In short, a theoretical framework for appreciating the objects in a way which we consider intelligent today was missing in 1897. Why then, did the British bother to take them?

Secondly, in a most interesting way the bronzes serve as a focal point for bringing together two facets of imperial history, that of political conquest and cultural contact. My intentions here are not ambitious enough to deal directly with either of these vast areas in terms of Benin. But an interest in the when and the how, as Mr. Osugi phrased it, two aspects of the Benin expedition thus far overlooked by imperial historians who write either from the British or the African point of view, and art historians who are presently interested in understanding the pieces themselves, as well as a general interest in exploitation, led me to wonder why those involved in the punitive expedition decided to remove the pieces, how they went about doing it, and what they did with the pieces when they got them home. Chapter Five discloses how the British shipped them out and what they did with them, an event relatively easy to trace. The why of this tragic episode I felt could only be understood by attempting to understand the whole short history of the Niger Coast Protectorate, an area which never occupied the full attention of the Foreign Office, under whose jurisdiction it lay until after 1897, and which only came into public view
when the punitive expedition was mounted against Benin. The British meant by the Benin expedition to teach a lesson, not to the Binis but to all those under the yoke of empire, on the effects of failure to cooperate. The failure of the British even to recognize what they were doing in Benin can only sadden the reader today.

I have taken the story up to the point where some two hundred of the bronzes became the official property of the British Museum. Protectorate officials disposed of some of the loot privately, and Foreign Office officials of the rest. I have not attempted here to deal with the development of an aesthetic regarding primitive art and the role played by Benin, nor with to me the more interesting question of discovering, if it is still possible, what the Bini reaction to the removal of the bronzes was. I do not deny my bias. I pursued the subject enraged against the British, yet such changes as occurred in Benin seem to be part of the fabric of history. Their inevitability, especially in the modern world, only makes them the more tragic.

Since the days when slaves bearing the conquered treasure of the Mediterranean world marched behind triumphal Roman Legions in parade looting has been a constituent part of empire. What foot soldiers grabbed in the heat of battle pro-consuls distributed at home if the objects seemed to have either great beauty or great value. The conquerors rationalized such activity with codes and regulations, but to those looted general and
soldier were equally thief. The right of booty has been a traditional part of war throughout history. To the victor belong the spoils, human slaves, gold, food, objects of beauty. But by the end of the 19th century the British explained their imperial activities to themselves not in terms of conquest but of a civilizing mission. For military activities carried on within this framework there should have been a transformation in the ancient custom of taking booty. In light of their self justification their continued looting was totally improper. I hoped to express the irony inherent in their activity by employing the term imperial looting to describe the activity in Benin.
In the beginning of 1897 the Benin kingdom was an obscure and relatively unexplored part of the interior of the Niger Coast Protectorate. It constituted an area of approximately 4,000 square miles not yet under the sway of either direct British administration or trade, but claimed by the British as part of their sphere of influence following the Berlin West Africa conference of 1885. To strengthen the claim the British signed a treaty with the king in 1892. Had it not been for the activities of a rather obscure young career officer, son of an Anglican clergyman and graduate of Cambridge named James R. Phillips, the Protectorate might have remained unknown to the British public. But Phillips, by his death at the hands of natives from Benin after a hastily prepared and ill-thought out expedition to the city, occasioned a massive retaliatory effort against King Overami which resulted in his exile and the establishment of British rule. The British also removed the bronzes, for which the city is now famous. Conveniently, officials of the Foreign Office, as well as earlier historians of Nigeria, saw the conquest of Benin as a response to the murder of Phillips. Yet policy had dictated for a long time that the king would have to be deposed. Had it not been for Phillips, however, the expedition would have been much smaller, and might not have ended in the total destruction of the city and the consequent looting. The removal of an estimated 2500 art objects and artifacts can in no way be seen as a premeditated act. It was, rather, a
thoughtless act, committed with no awareness of consequences, no consciousness of guilt. Rather it resulted from the general British ignorance of Africa - its polity, its religion, and from the prevalent European belief in cultural evolution which provided the non-scientific mind with a confident belief in the superiority of the white race.

The King, or Oba, of Benin, before his exile in September, 1897, could trace his lineage back at least to the 14th century. He lived with his court in a separate part of the city, roughly in the middle of his kingdom, and he ruled a vast empire with boundaries as a modern anthropologist terms them, "continually expanding and contracting as new conquests were made and as vassals on the borders rebelled and were reconquered." Kings from the time of Eweku I, about 1200 A.D., exacted tribute from the settlements in their empire and were both temporal and spiritual leaders of their people. They, in turn, recognized the spiritual authority of the Oni of Ife, to the west of Benin, the city from which legend says that the Binis originally came, and from which they learned how to cast bronze.

The city had been known to European traders since the 15th century when the Portuguese initiated trade with the west coast Africans and natives of Benin; several published travellers' accounts were available in the 1890's in English, by Portuguese, Dutch, French, and early British travellers and traders. But since the abolition of the slave trade the area had been of little interest to the British. Since 1892 no Protectorate official had visited the city. A Londoner with an interest
in Africa would hardly have singled out Benin, even though there was a relatively large literature about it. The early accounts interested administrators primarily because of the geographic knowledge they could provide, but to the armchair anthropologist of the time there were enough theoretical works like Edward Tylor's *Primitive Culture* available to limit the usefulness of such musty travelers' records. While most of the officials who wrote about Benin—Sir Richard Burton at an earlier period, Sir Claude Macdonald, the first Consul General, and Captain L. H. Gallwey, the first vice-consul to the Benin district of the Protectorate—were familiar with early accounts, a noted expert on Africa, whose first book on West Africa came out in January, 1897, Miss Mary Kingsley, knew little of Benin. And she claimed to have spent fifteen years reading up on everything available before actually going into the field. For the British public in general Benin was merely a part of the hinterland of the Niger Coast Protectorate.

Even the Protectorate hardly enjoyed extensive press coverage. When Macdonald was chosen Consul-General in 1891 the *Times* simply identified the area as "one of the most trying regions in Africa." Lord Salisbury, the Foreign Secretary under whom the major decisions affecting the Protectorate were made, thought of the whole Niger area as a "malarious African desert". Africa in general held a certain fascination for him, and at one point he surrounded himself with maps of the areas into which the imperial arm was reaching. But West Africa was a rather unattractive pawn to be played off in the larger game of controlling the Sudan. A momentary flurry of interest bristled in
Parliament and the press when in 1895 the men of Brass, a city in the Protectorate, had attacked the adjoining lands of Sir George Goldie's Royal Niger Company, killing several people. They shocked the British public because they ceremoniously ate their victims, but after a few days public attention waned, and neither the Times nor the Manchester Guardian made any attempt to supply background information.

The interest in Benin in 1897 owed much to the fact that the British had no doubt about their innocence and the guilt of the natives. To them it seemed clear that savage natives had massacred innocent British officials. Here was justification for pseudo-scientific theories and racial opinions, as well as proof of heroism. The massacre appealed to the popular imperialist mind as well as to the more scientifically interested, and the "Little Englander" could not complain about imperial spending. Also, Benin itself was fascinating for its lurid and spectacular past. Sir Richard Burton, famed British explorer, had been to the city in 1863 and had written, "The place has a fume of blood, it stinks of death." For what was most astonishing about Benin was the frequency of human sacrifice practiced there. Burton saw crucified bodies on trees, "green and mildewed skulls lying about like pebbles," bodies in various stages of decay. The fact that Binis practiced human sacrifice helped strongly to justify for the British in their own minds whatever action they took against the city.
Burton thought the city difficult to reach, decadent, and like all West African towns, full of drunken chiefs and thieves. He knew about the earlier accounts, knew that to the Portuguese of the 16th century it had been "Great Benin", but believed it to have been ruined by 1700. By then European trade had stopped almost completely, the final fatal blow to prosperity coming with the supression of the slave trade in the 19th century. Burton believed that whatever greatness there had been in Benin was to be attributed to contact with Europe and European goods. The breaking of that brought a return to savagery. Sir Richard lamented that in the England of his day Benin was just "the unknown kingdom".

Captian H. L. Gallway, writing some thirty years later, echoed most of Burton's views when he described his trip to Benin to secure the treaty. He thought the whole area "the most unhealthy place in the world." Although he mentioned the earlier travellers' accounts he felt that little of value to the administrator was known about the city. To him it was a frightful place, untouched by Christianity, littered with skulls and bodies and other evidence of human sacrifices, and ruled by a king under the thumb of fetish priests who exercised a reign of terror. These two accounts strongly colored the press presentation of Benin in 1897.

The British knew nothing of the kingdom, the power of the king, or the way in which political power was used. Gallwey
said that not even the king knew the limits of his power.\textsuperscript{18} No one knew of the pressures on the kingdom to the north from the Moslem inhabitants of Nupe; to the west from the city of Ekiti; and to the east from the Royal Niger Company\textsuperscript{19} nor indeed, how the king reacted to pressure from the south, from the Protectorate. No one in the Protectorate, or for that matter in the press at home, even entertained the notion that the powers within the kingdom of Benin might be alive to external pressures and in turn, be developing counter strategies to control them.

Recent historians of West Africa agree\textsuperscript{20} that the fate of places like Benin, in the hinterlands was sealed when in the last decades of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century informal commercial ties were replaced by formal government protection; government protection, a kind of inexpensive expansion, replaced by the extension of administration. The British in the Niger Coast Protectorate were especially interested in defining their interior boundaries against the encroachments of the Germans and the French. Bluff was no longer a safe way of securing boundaries in the mid '90's. To set a boundary surveys had to be made, and an officer present all the time to drive away the interloper.

A further reason for penetration into the hinterland related to the extension of trade. For centuries Europeans had been trading with Africans through middlemen, entrepreneurs who would carry European goods into the interior and return, sometimes years later, with commodities; at first slaves, and later palm oil, nuts, and rubber. George Goldie of the Royal Niger Company
realized that a more efficient system could be worked out if the African middleman was removed. The middlemen suffered in the eyes of the British for having been identified with the slave trade anyway,\textsuperscript{21} and the British often accused them of controlling trade for their own interests. The Liverpool traders who worked in the Protectorate lands were eager for the removal of middlemen because more profit would accrue to them. Indeed removal of the middlemen formed a part of Protectorate policy from the very beginning.\textsuperscript{22} The extension of trade, much talked about in the '90's as a good which would benefit all, was in fact a policy which demanded the elimination of a large segment of native economy.

A third justification for the extension of rule into the hinterland was the humanitarian motivation, what one historian has aptly called a "rescue service" for natives.\textsuperscript{23} Macdonald, the first Consul General of the Protectorate, typfied many imperial administrators of his day. He opposed the monopolistic practices of Goldie in the company lands because he believed in free trade. He also opposed Goldie's policy of non-interference in native affairs because he thought it his duty to bring civilization to the African people, even if it meant changing their lives drastically. However, he also believed that Africans would see the virtues of British civilization and choose it themselves if they received a proper introduction to it. The man who followed him as Consul-General, Sir Ralph Moor, was an able administrator. But in his eagerness to get
things done, he lacked the particular patience of his predecessor. In an area as small as the Niger Coast Protectorate this lack of patience became extremely important in determining events. While Macdonald intuitively acknowledged the dignity of African rulers, no matter how small their domain, Moor thought them despots holding their people in chains. Although the goals might be the same, the means which these two men employed were vastly different. Where Macdonald had used the palaver, Moor favored the punitive expedition.

Under Moor the punitive expedition against the king of Benin was mounted and the expected results achieved. The expedition, a complete success, could be pointed to with pride as a masterpiece of planning and adaptability to the unforseen. The "bloodthirsty monarch" was removed and the rule of law put in his place. The land was opened up to trade. The advance of civilization was expressed by the creating of a native council, a post office, and a golf links. And the bronzes from Benin went on show at the British Museum.
NOTES: CHAPTER ONE


4. Europeans did not discover the sculpture of Ife, 90 miles east of Benin, until fifteen years after the Benin expedition. Consequently, in 1897 the British had no way of making a connection between the Benin sculptures and the earlier Ife pieces.

5. Major's Life of Prince Henry the Navigator, which touches on the Portuguese connection with West Africa, was published in London in 1868; and in 1892 the Hakluyt Society of London brought out Discoveries of the World, which included early information on Benin. Also available in London was India Orientalis, DeBry's compilation of Dutch sources about West Africa and other non-western areas, published in German, Latin and French at Frankfort-on-Main in about 1600. Better known authorities were also available, Van Nyedael, Dapper and Bardot, Villault, Lieutenant King, Captain Fawckner, Messers Moffat and Smith, and Sir Richard Burton. For a complete list see the article by C. H. Read and O. M. Dalton, "Works of Art from Benin City", Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, Vol xxvii, 1898.


9. See Lady Gwendolen Cecil's *Life of Robert Marquis of Salisbury*, Vol iv, London, 1932. She writes: "The maps of Central Asia or the Balkan States which had made modest appearance in the Secretary of State's room at the Foreign Office, had been superseded by huge sheets, representative of every district in Africa, which curtained walls in aggressive profusion and were repeated in crowded layers on those of Lord Salisbury's own study at Hatfield, their tracings of rivers and contours were clothed with imaginative body by the reports, verbal and written, which he invited from all and sundry as to the characteristics of each district in dispute." (p. 254.)

10. For the most forceful presentation of this argument see Robinson and Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians, the Climax of Imperialism*, New York, 1968. Without accepting their thesis completely there seems ample evidence for its validity in West Africa.

11. The term "Little Englander", while under suspicion from historians today, was used by those at the time who wished to accuse others of not properly shouldering their imperial responsibilities. See especially Commander R. H. Bacon, *Benin, The City of Blood*, London, 1897, p. 18 and *Nemo* (A. C. Douglas), *Niger Memories*, (undated), p. 55.


13. Ibid., p. 287.


15. Ibid., p. 416. Burton believed, as did most Englishmen of his time and immediately after, that any evidence of civilization in Africa was due to contact with Europeans or Muslims and when that contact was broken a return to savagery was inevitable. For the other side of the picture see Ryder, *Benin and the Europeans 1485-1897* where he attempts to point out the limitations of this one-sided view.


17. Ibid., pp. 122, 128.


21. The Times, July 31, 1891.

22. Ibid.


24. The Times, October 19, 1897.
CHAPTER TWO: PRELUDE TO PHILLIPS

When the British decided to develop administration in what had so far been a "paper protectorate", Salisbury approached Claude Macdonald with the offer of the consul generalship rather than H. H. Johnston, who had been serving in that capacity. The foreign minister was interested in a conservative diplomat for the post rather than a man whom one historian has called a "rabid imperialist," who might be expected to tax the budget too quickly. Macdonald, a career soldier, had graduated from Uppingham and Sandhurst, had fought in the Egyptian campaign of 1882, had served as military attache to Sir Evelyn Baring in Cairo, had been on the Suakin expedition of 1884-85, and had served as acting consul general in Zanzibar from 1887-88. In 1889 he had headed a special commission to the Niger territories to decide what sort of administration should be imposed. Salisbury at the time favored handing the territories over to the Royal Niger Company so that Sir George Goldie would have the private responsibility for developing empire in terms of trade. Macdonald, however, discovered that the Africans themselves preferred crown rule. The earl accepted his findings, with modification, and Macdonald was an obvious choice to head the new Protectorate.

Macdonald had wanted the area, then known as the Oil Rivers, accepted as a Crown Colony, but the Foreign Office opted for Protectorate status until such time as an effective administration could be established. Development was to be the key word. So far as Macdonald was concerned, only the grandchildren of the
present generation would reap the rewards of work now being done.³ Reaction to his appointment was favorable. The Times noted: "He has shown so much competency, tact, and knowledge of African conditions in the past, and has been so successful in the performance of many trying duties, that there is every reason to believe that his appointment to the Oil Rivers will be attended with the best results."⁴ The new consul arrived in the Protectorate in July, 1891, with his staff and six vice-consuls. He divided the area into six districts with Old Calabar, his residence, as the capitol. Bonny and New Calabar constituted the second district, Opobo the third, Brass the fourth, Warri the fifth, and the Benin River, under Captain Henry Lionel Gallwey, the sixth. To head a native constabulary Macdonald hired Ralph Moor. Moor, a young Irishman, had served as a district inspector in the Irish constabulary, and had resigned on private grounds to make his way to the Protectorate.⁵

The Foreign Office instructed Macdonald to find out what treaties had been made with local chiefs, and to make sure the chiefs understood them. Eventually the Foreign Office hoped to bring them all under a "uniform system of government."⁶ The consul was to develop trade, put an end to slavery, and promote civilization by ending barbarous customs.⁷ The six vice-consuls possessed a separate Queen's commission to enable them to perform acts which otherwise would have demanded the permission of parliament. They then had some degree of freedom, at least in carrying out the assignments of their chief. The Times had
stressed the humanitarian aspect of the administration. It noted that "the whole of the Consular staff will endeavor by developing legitimate trade, by promoting civilization, by inducing the natives to relinquish unhuman and barbarous customs, and by gradually abolishing domestic slavery, to pave the way for placing the territories over which Her Majesty's protection is and may be extended directly under British rule." The article further commented upon the formation of the constabulary and noted "in time we may hope that the law will reach well into the interior, and that free traffic will be carried on without the intervention of middlemen." 

Goldie, bitterly disappointed at not getting the extension of territory for which he had hoped, had moved quickly. He secured treaties from hinterland chiefs before the interior boundaries were officially settled. He even forged some treaties. The head of the Niger Company wanted to make particularly sure that the powerful Brassmen would be barred by boundary from their former markets. The Foreign Office, dimly aware of the competition, had accepted Goldie's progressive policy of direct trade, and had agreed to a line which divided the Brassmen from their markets. Both Macdonald and Moor would suffer from the Foreign Office's lack of foresight.

Macdonald issued his own instructions to his vice-consuls. They should open up friendly relations with towns near their stations; assess the natural resources of their areas; sign
new treaties; collect intelligence; collect import duties; and operate postal services. Communication with the hinterland was essential for effective administration. Macdonald continued in his area using the methods he knew, the palaver and the treaty. The year 1891 saw no bloodshed and an increased revenue.

In 1892 Vice-Consul Gallwey signed a treaty with the King of Benin. Gallwey, a graduate of Cheltenham and Sandhurst, the son of a colonial official serving in Bermuda, was on his first assignment in West Africa. The year before he had gone into the hinterland of his district and decided that the Itsekiri and Urhobo chiefs were incapable of making a treaty, or, if made, incapable of keeping it. The Bini chiefs he found somewhat more accessible, for his treaty with the king of Benin followed upon this initial failure. In his report on the event he noted "I am of the opinion that there are very great possibilities for this district. Time and much patience will be required, however, before the resources of the district can be, even in a measure, developed, the great stumbling-block to any immediate advance being the fetish 'reign of terror' which exists throughout the Kingdom of Benin, and which will require severe measures in the not very distant future before it can be stopped." "Now that a treaty exists between Her Majesty and the King of Benin," he added, "it is to be hoped that the undoubted wealth of the country will be developed, and the barbarous customs, more especially the human sacrifices, abolished." He concluded, however, with a question. "How far the King of Benin is to be trusted remains to be seen; his advisers appeared to me
to be a set of intriguing and lying individuals." The implication was clear: the land was promising, but the British ability to make use of it depended upon the king. If he would not abide by his treaty, and Gallwey did not think for a minute that he would, then other measures should be considered.

Consul-General Macdonald's Annual Report for the Protectorate for 1892 showed an increase in revenue from £96,000 in 1891 to £169,000 and had noted an absence of conflicts between British and natives. Macdonald received the KCMG. At home on leave, he summed up his policy to a Liverpool audience: "...to advance slowly, leaving no bad or unfinished work behind, to gain the respect and liking of natives, by a firm and judicious conduct of affairs....are the means which, in my humble opinion, lead to success in Africa." If Macdonald sensed the incompatibility between his own ideas and those of his subordinate, Gallwey, he did not remark on it.

In the Spring of 1893 the name of the Protectorate was changed from the Oil Rivers to the Niger Coast Protectorate. The change reflected a new boundary agreement with the Germans, concluded in mid-April, 1893. The new boundary extended German territory northward in order to limit French advances, for the British feared at this time that the French wished to forge an east-west link across Africa. Had the French been able to achieve such a goal it would have threatened the
British in the Sudan. A bit of hinterland seemed a small price to pay to prevent the danger.

By 1894 Macdonald's staff had grown to forty people, and by the summer, there had been no bloodshed. At what did not appear to be a critical time Macdonald went home on leave and Ralph Moor took over as Acting-Consul-General.

Before his superior returned in December Moor organized and carried out the first armed expedition against a native chief in the Protectorate. The object of the attack was Chief Nana, son of the Itsekiri chief Oluma who had been in charge of trade in the Benin River in the 1880's. When Oluma died the British Consul in the area had appointed Nana to succeed him. With the gradual development of the policy of eliminating African middlemen, openly accepted in 1891, Nana's days were numbered. Although he had already been deprived of his title of governor of the river by the British Consul in 1890, yet he persisted in directing and controlling trade.

In April of 1894 Macdonald warned him that he did not have exclusive rights in the river. Nana, however, refused to give up his privileges. In June, with Macdonald gone, Moor sent the ship Alecto up the river to threaten him. The chief momentarily backed down, but in August, he was back directing trade. Once again Moor sent the Alecto, this time with directions to fire rockets. The Acting Consul succeeded in prodding the lesser chiefs in the river to band
together and sign a treaty requesting protection against Nana. It read: "Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, Empress of India, in compliance with the request of the Chiefs and people of Benin River and Jekri country, hereby undertakes to extend to them and to the territory under their authority and jurisdiction, her gracious favor of protection."22

On August 22nd Moor reported to the Foreign Office his trouble with Chief Nana,23 and on the 31st notified them that he had sustained heavy casualties while reconnoitering in the area.24 The Foreign Office then authorized him to remove the troublesome chief. Moor burned and destroyed Nana's capitol city but the chief managed to flee to Lagos where he finally gave himself up, throwing himself on the mercy of the British government and asking the Foreign Office to intervene in his behalf.25 At his trial in Lagos Nana maintained that Consul Moor had interfered with his attempts to control the trade of his sub-chiefs. Subsequently the Consul had begun "to persecute him, interfering with his trade and starving his people, and after a time the Alecto came and blew up his gates."26 Nana had indeed resisted Moor, fearing the exile which had been the fate of a previous trader on the river.27 The chief was found guilty and was exiled; the Foreign Office sent word that his goods and chattels were to be declared forfeit.28 A chief more amenable to British control was put in his place.

But Consul Moor remained unsatisfied with conditions on
the river. The Bini appeared likely to take over where Nana had left off, and an obscure expedition to Benin by a Mr. McTaggart of the Royal Niger Company made him fear that the King would be more alert to the likelihood of attack. \(^{29}\) Whatever others found there, for Moor Benin was clearly "showing signs of disturbance." \(^{30}\) Yet even Moor's picture is ambiguous: it appears from Gallwey's 1892 Report that Moor did not think the Binis brave fighters; \(^{31}\) and in his retrospective summary of his activities at this time Moor wrote "I had all arrangements made for bringing up a force to march into Benin City, as from the messages I had exchanged with the King I was of the opinion that very little resistance would be experienced in establishing a military post there." \(^{32}\) There is scant evidence for the opinions of the King after the attack on Nana, but it is likely that from this time on he feared that a similar fate would befall him.

Before Moor could move against the king Macdonald returned to the Protectorate. Moor recalled later, "On the 5th December Sir Claude Macdonald arrived, and I informed him of the steps taken, when the matter was fully discussed and the conclusion arrived at that pacific means should be tried for a further period...." \(^{33}\) Macdonald—aware that the other chiefs were concerned over the treatment meted out to Nana, fell back upon his former policy, successful since 1888, of consultation with them in an effort to win their confidence. He visited Sapele, Warri, Brass, Degema, Bonny, Opobo, and Old Calabar, \(^{34}\) but not Benin.
In 1895 Sir Claude decided to extend administration to the Ibo hinterland. The attack of the Brass natives on the headquarters of the Royal Niger Company at Akassa however, prevented his acting. This most serious disturbance, which erupted in February, owed to circumstances extending back to the founding of the Royal Niger Company, and Goldie's expressed goal of removing the African middlemen. The Brassmen, a strong group of up river traders, had for a while found an ally in the Liverpool African Association, which sided with them in the hope of crushing Goldie's monopoly. In June of 1893, however, Goldie had succeeded in winning over the Liverpool traders. The Brassmen were left defenseless. The boundary of 1891 had separated their homes from their markets and with the African Association out of the way, officials of the company began a systematic attempt to eliminate the Brassmen as competitors by keeping them from their markets. The Brassmen countered with a system of smuggling hampered by pot shots from the Company shores. In November, 1894 a new King had succeeded to the Brass throne, and under him the attack took place. It was a great success: "The stores and warehouses were looted and torn down. The Prisoners and booty were loaded into 40 or 50 war-canoes, and triumphal return to Nimbe began, with drums beating and flags flying, openly parading past the house of the amazed and impotent vice-consul." Retribution was bound to be
fast. Goldie quite naturally wanted Nimbe destroyed, but Macdonald, aware of the real grievances of the Brassmen, urged no reprisals. An attack on British property and the cannibalising of native servants had to be dealt with however, and the Royal Navy was ordered to organize an expedition against Nimbe. The force consisted of two gunboats, one yacht, two company steamers, three Protectorate launches, three men of war steam pinnaces, and eight surf boats. They advanced against Nimbe and the adjoining town and on February 28th Admiral Bedford telegraphed to the Admiralty that he had destroyed Fishtown and Nimbe.36

The raid and subsequent attack occasioned comment in Parliament and in answer to a query by T. Bayley, Sir Edward Grey explained that the attack was unexpected. He said "It was known that the Brassmen, who previously had been in the position of middlemen and had a monopoly of the trade from the interior, had lost that monopoly by the opening up of the country in the interior by the Niger Company. This was believed to have been the cause of the outbreak."37 Macdonald had explained the commercial situation to the Foreign Office, causing Clement Hill, the Permanent Under-secretary for African Affairs to comment, regarding Macdonald's softness, "It is strange that cannibalism is continuously ignored."38 On February 28th Sir Charles Dilke commented in Parliament on Macdonald's assertion that the Company had deprived the Brassmen of their livelihood, and that natives complained of sniping by Company agents.39 The natives, indeed, claimed that they had been made to "eat the dust", 40 a dramatic metaphor for the reality
of having been cut off by boundary from their food supply. Dilke proposed that there be an inquiry, and Grey agreed to hold one. The subsequent inquiry headed by Sir John Kirk, recommended that customs barriers be removed between Company and Protectorate lands and that the Company function as a purely administrative unit, as had the East India Company in its last years of power in India.

With the situation settled, at least in theory, Macdonald once again prepared to return to England. Before leaving he discussed the Benin situation with Moor, who would be in charge during his absence. They agreed that Vice-Consul Major Copeland-Crawford should make an attempt to reach the city of Benin on a friendly visit. Macdonald left, not for the leave he had anticipated, but to be transferred to Peking. On his recommendation, Ralph Moor became Consul General.

Moor wanted Gallwey, the original appointee in the Benin district as his Deputy Commissioner, but the Foreign Office appointed James R. Phillips instead. Phillips had served in a variety of jobs in West Africa and his appointment was due either to seniority or influence at home. His father was an archbishop in England, whereas Gallwey's was an administrator in Bermuda.

As Consul General, Moor outlined his plans for Lord Salisbury. He intended to undertake peaceful expeditions to
explain the aim of government and to start friendly relations with native chiefs; he hoped to organize native councils in towns where friendly reception occurred; he planned surveys for roads and resources; he intended to make treaties of peace and friendship. But he also would inflict punishments and suppress piracy.

When Moor assumed his duties three areas demanded his immediate attention: Brass, to be administered according to the report of Commissioner Kirk; the Cross River where trade was disrupted by rival fighting; and the Bonny and Opobo hinterland already earmarked by Macdonald as the next target for the extension of rule. Less pressing, but important to Moor was the situation in Benin. A pattern emerges in Moor's dispositions of these areas. In the case of Brass, he offered concessions which he had worked out with Goldie. When they were rejected by the king, he went over the king's head and established a native council. To the warring Cross towns he sent a force of 180 men under Captains Roupell and Cockburn who shelled and burned them. He had heard that human sacrifice was practiced in the two hinterland towns. Against one he organized an expedition with Gallwey of 105 men. Even though the king asked for peace Moor deported him and his priests, and burned the juju houses. Captain Roupell led 120 troops into the other town, burned the houses, chopped down trees, and looted what was left of the livestock.
In dealing with Benin Moor was less successful. Major Copeland-Crawford left for Benin in August, 1895. Messages had been sent by Crawford to King Overami to inform him of the intended visit and arrangements for guides to carry the men into the bush were complete. On August 3rd a detachment of 30 men and a maxim gun arrived under the command of Captain Maling to escort Crawford. Some days later the messengers to the king returned. They reported the king anxious about the expedition for he had heard that a large number of warships sailed to attack him. The king's own messenger who accompanied Crawford's agents, was to personally see whether the rumor was true. After assuring the King's messenger that no warships accompanied the expedition, Crawford started out. He arrived by boat at the town of Gwato, 20 miles from Benin and was warned by friendly natives not to land. When he disembarked anyway, his carriers refused to march the rest of the way to Benin and left him in the night. Crawford went home.

In his subsequent report to the Foreign Office, Captain Crawford included some details about an exchange of notes with the king in which the latter complained about his being unable to get gun powder after his signing the treaty with the Queen. Crawford concluded:

"Notes have been made as to Gwato town, its approaches and capabilities for the housing of troops in case of any further trouble; the same
has been done with respect to Oubagilligilli about 3/4 of a mile from Gwato on the same bank. Information has also been gained of the water-way to Icoro, another route to Benin city; rough soundings have been taken occasionally from the first island in Gwato Creek to the junction of Icoro and Gwato town Creek. Captain Mailing has taken a rough sketch plan of Gwato town and its approaches, which is duly forwarded to you...."47

In recording his experiences later for *Macmillan's Magazine* Crawford mentioned a conversation supposed to have taken place before his expedition, between a British officer and the king of Benin. When asked if he would extend trade the king replied, "I have allowed the white queen to place four small factories at the mouth of my river; but I am always King of Benin, and the next white man who enters my creek will be shot."48 Crawford also talked about an ivory fence and fine stores of ivory worth L1,400 a ton, which he had heard about from traders.49 The king of Benin, Crawford thought, was "merely a blood-thirsty savage", but he wanted to point out that there was more to Africa than savages.50 He compared the subjects of Benin, "heathen and rank savages", to the negroes to the north, "tinged with the semi-civilization of the Arabs": It was easy to distinguish them: "the one is a savage; the other is something better."51 Crawford was not alone in this feeling of aversion toward natives of the Protectorate in favor of Moslem negroes. Ralph Moor, when organizing the constabulary in 1891 had chosen Hausas from the north, thinking them more reliable than the inhabitants of the Protectorate.53

Moor sent Crawford's official report to the Foreign Office with his own conclusions. He explained that few have
ever reached the city, but at least one who had stated: "Benin city reeked of human blood." Human sacrifices, Moor asserted, were frequent. The treaty of 1892 had been practically inoperative. The king according to Moor's interpretation, had refused to see Crawford because of his juju celebrations for new yams which occasioned numerous human sacrifices. The country should be brought under British control "if necessary by force". Finally the Consul concluded, "I am sure that any expenditure incurred would be fully compensated by the large increase that would result in the sale of British manufactured goods in the country opened up." 

Recalling the report later Moor commented: "I recommended that force should be employed to open up this country to civilization and trade and to prevent the horrible human sacrifices and cruelties which were continually taking place therein. The instructions in reply to this were that pacific measures should be employed for a further period before resorting to force." 

Nothing further happened in Benin until the Fall of 1896 when Moor went home on leave, leaving his Deputy Commissioner, James Phillips, in charge.
NOTES: CHAPTER TWO


3. The Times, May 13, 1891.

4. The Times, July 31, 1891.


6. Anene, Southern Nigeria...., p. 139.

7. F. O. 84/2110, F. O. Draft Instructions to Macdonald, 18 April, 1891, quoted in Anene, Southern Nigeria...., p. 139.

8. The Times, July 31, 1891.

9. Ibid.

10. Flint, Sir George Goldie...., p. 188.


12. Ibid., p. 142.

13. Ibid.


15. F. O. 403/187, Sir Claude M. Macdonald to the Earl of Rosebery, 12 January 1893, with enclosure from Captain H. L. Gallwey, 31 July, 1892.


18. The Times, May 17, 1893.


22. F. O. 403/200, Acting Consul-General Moor to Foreign Office, 15 August, 1894, with enclosure of treaty.

23. F. O. 403/200, Moor to Foreign Office, 22 August, 1894.

24. F. O. 403/200, Moor to Foreign Office, 31 August, 1894.


29. F. O. 403/200, Moor to F. O., October, 1894.

30. F. O. 403/234, Moor to Foreign Office, 26 December, 1896.


32. F. O. 403/200, Moor to F. O., 21 October, 1894.

33. F. O. 403/234, Moor to Foreign Office, 26 December, 1896.


42. F. O. 403/234, Moor to F. O., 26 December, 1896.

44. Ibid., p. 184.

45. Ibid., p. 182.

46. Ibid., p. 184.

47. F. O. 403/216, Moor to F. O., 12 September, 1895, with enclosure from Vice-Consul Crawford to Acting Consul-General Moor, from Warri, 16 August, 1895.


49. Ibid., p. 38.

50. Ibid., p. 39.


52. See Anene, *Southern Nigeria*..., p. 138; Geary, *Nigeria Under British Rule*, pp. 101-102; Charles Henry Robinson, *Nigeria, Our Latest Protectorate*, New York, 1969, (First Published 1900), which maintained that the Hausas were the only significant population in the protectorate.

53. F. O. 403/216, Moor to F. O., 12 September, 1895.

54. Ibid.

55. F. O. 403/234, Moor to F. O., 26 December, 1896.
CHAPTER THREE: THE PHILLIPS MASSACRE

Phillips was certainly aware of the programs and policies of his chief. Perhaps he and Moor had even talked over the possibility of carrying out an expedition against the king of Benin in the dry months of 1897. At any rate, in November of 1896, shortly after he assumed his duties as Consul General, he wrote to Lord Salisbury at the Foreign Office: "I ask his Lordship's permission to visit Benin City in February next, to depose and remove the King of Benin, and to establish a native council in his place, and take such further steps for the opening up of the country as the country may require." Furthermore, Moor was "fully cognizant of all matters dealt with in this despatch". As an afterthought, probably with Crawford in mind, Phillips added: "I have reason to hope that sufficient ivory may be found in the Kings house to pay the expenses incurred in removing the King from his stool." He obviously added this optimistic hope in order to encourage Lord Salisbury, disinclined to spend a penny more than necessary on West Africa.

For reasons which remain obscure, Phillips, while waiting for a reply from the Foreign Office, decided to make a prior visit to the king. Perhaps, confident of Salisbury's approval, he wanted to make one last try to bring about by peaceful means what would inexorably come by force. Several other officers from the Protectorate agreed to go with him on a peaceful mission; Captain Maling, who had been with Crawford as the
intelligence officer in 1895; Crawford himself, just back from leave; Locke, one of the men whom the Brass chiefs had accused of harraunging them; and Captain Alan Boisragon, who had re- placed Moor as head of the constabulary. Boisragon wrote a newsy letter home to his wife on November 25th announcing the expedition, and giving as a reason for it that Phillips wished to see the city. The leaders decided to include traders who knew the country. They invited the representatives of James Pinnock of Liverpool to go with them. Pinnock had been with Gallwey in 1892. Unable to go himself, he sent two other traders, Powis and Gordon, in his stead. Powis was comparatively new to the river, but Gordon, who Brassmen had also mentioned, had been in the area for about five years and was popular with the traders.

While he proceeded with his own arrangements for this small expedition, Phillips sent to the Foreign Office a letter which he had solicited from Mr. J. W. Brownridge, an agent for the Scottish trading company of Alexander Miller. The letter intended to encourage action on his scheme. It outlined the sorry state of affairs in Benin and attempted to pinpoint the blame on the king. It began:

"In answer to your request for a few facts regarding Benin and its trade, I may say that the primary cause of the present stoppage of trade is the raising of the price of guns, powder and gin.

"The king, finding that he cannot buy these articles at the price he likes, is now keeping on the stoppage to extort as much money as possible from the Jackris. Stoppages of trade are of common occurrence in Benin...."
"There are also various times in the year stoppages on account of fetish, when numbers of human beings are sacrificed.... the subjects of the King of Benin have no inducement to trade whatever. Were a native to trade well and amass money, it would be highly dangerous to him; the king or his chiefs would bring some trumpery charge of witchcraft against him, which either means death or the loss of all his money."

There followed further references to the dreadfulness of life in Benin, whose people suffered robbery and menace of the King's messengers. Brownridge concluded:

"The stable articles of trade in this country are salt, common fathom cloths, and gin, etc., silk and other superior articles being very little bought, which goes to show they are a very poor race. This, I think, is through the lack of opportunity, and the insecurity of life and property....If Benin was under proper government, and the resources of the country properly developed, I am firmly of the opinion that the exports would be very great. So long as the King of Benin is allowed to carry on as he is doing at present it means simply losses to the merchants, native Jackri trade, as also the Protectorate."\(^5\)

The letter obviously fortified Phillips conviction that he should attack the king. And here, from both the commercial and humanitarian viewpoints, was ample justification. But Francis Bertie, permanent Under Secretary at the Foreign Office, had already taken some steps of his own, even before the Brownridge letter arrived. On December 24\(^{th}\) he forwarded Phillips first letter to Consul-General Moor, then in London. At the same time Bertie requested information from the Intelligence Division of the Foreign Office about the feasibility of a
punitive expedition to Benin.

Moor responded immediately. For Bertie's, and ultimately Lord Salisbury's, benefit he attempted to recapitulate the connection which he and the Protectorate had maintained with the King and City of Benin. He referred to his plans of November, 1894 when, after putting down Chief Nana, he had hoped to move on to Benin, only to be told by Macdonald to pursue peaceful means. He told of how he and Macdonald had decided upon sending Copland-Crawford to Benin in the summer of 1895, of the failure of that visit, his own desire to use force, and of Macdonald's instructions again to follow peaceful measures. Moor stated that such measures had been tried, but

"...further pacific measures are quite useless and only likely to damage the prestige of the Government with all the surrounding native tribes. The state of the case", Moor continued, "and the position of affairs is generally very clearly put by Mr. Phillips, but he does not, I think, lay sufficient stress on the human sacrifices which it is known are carried on extensively and the state of abject misery in which the people are kept by the exactions of the King and his JuJu men, and by their being prevented trading ....Both European and native Jekri traders are being gradually ruined by the attitude adopted by the King, and the advance of civilization is actually stopped."/

Moor, convinced as he had been for sometime that force was now the only remedy, seemed to assume his readers at the Foreign Office of like mind. For he now addressed himself to the question of what size force should be used. In determining size, he wished his superiors to know that he was confident that all necessary intelligence work had been carried out, and that a reliable guess as to the expected enemy force could be made.
"The king", he said "should be deposed and removed from the country, and the ring of JuJu men broken up." The only time to carry out the operations, he felt, would be February or March before the rains. He anticipated scant opposition from Benin, but suggested that a gunboat and a small force of marines with a Maxim gun should be used. Moor stated his willingness to proceed to the Protectorate immediately, if such should be thought necessary.

While he digested Moor's comments Bertie received a reply from the Intelligence Division on the 30th "on the subject of a possible punitive expedition to be undertaken against the King of Benin...." The writer warned of but scanty information "as to this potentate's power of resistance". Moor had based his opinion solely on the chance comment of Gallwey in 1892 that the Binis were not brave and not likely to be helped by their neighbors. The intelligence correspondent referred to Gallwey's report "that the population of Benin city does not exceed 10,000." He briefly described the approach to the city and argued that a force of 400 native troops officered by Englishmen and armed with breech-loaders, 2 seven pound guns, one Maxim and one rocket apparatus, should be adequate. He mentioned that Sir John Ardagh "conscious of the untoward results which might ensue from the jamming of the single Maxim gun detailed to accompany the force would, as a matter of precaution, prefer to see another of these weapons added to the armament of the troops forming the expedition." The objection to a large force,
the writer pointed out, was that it would destroy the element of surprise. With surprise assured, the force proposed should be adequate. The Brownridge letter arrived on the 1st of January, and on the 4th the Colonial Office sent word that Joseph Chamberlain, Colonial Secretary, would "instruct the officer administering the Government of Lagos to render Mr. Phillips such assistance as he can with regard to the contemplated expedition."^9

All seemed in readiness for Phillips to move in February, but on the 6th of January word came from the Intelligence Division to the Foreign Office that it would not be safe to remove troops from Lagos at the moment. Perhaps troops could be obtained from the Gold Coast, Sir John Ardagh had suggested.\(^10\) A small force of marines could also be included. There followed some checking around to see if troops might be obtained from the Gold Coast. It was discovered that they were unavailable, being occupied in manoeuvres against Bona, Wa and Gambaga.\(^11\)

Sir Clement Hill summed up the situation for his chief Lord Salisbury on January 6th. Phillips, Hill noted, had proposed 400 men, and Sir John Ardagh did not consider it safe, with the limited information available, to go ahead with fewer. Moor, however, Sir Clement continued, believed two gun-boats might safely substitute for the loss of from 150 to 250 troops. Hill reviewed correspondance dating back to 1895. When Moor proposed action in that year he had not thought the Protectorate force adequate. Hill now averred:
"What with the Gold Coast "Hinterland", Ilorin, the Niger Company's expedition, the possible difficulty with Brass, the necessity of keeping New Calabar back, and the ordinary chances of native movement, the West African Colonies and the Protectorate have their hands pretty full. The tyranny, cruelty, and commercial obstructiveness of the King of Benin are very great and galling to the Protectorate, and the local authorities do not think that there would be much risk in dealing with him now.... The native traders are suffering and have appealed for protection; the British traders urge action. There will be some loss of prestige if we abstain, and that may lead to greater difficulties hereafter; but a failure would be worse, and the means locally at our disposal seem hardly adequate to make sure of success, though I do not think the risk is great."

Lord Salisbury apparently thought the risk of failure greater than the possible loss of prestige. He wrote to Phillips on January 9th that the expedition would have to be postponed for another year because 400 troops could not now be raised.12

With the planned expedition which Moor had hoped for since 1894 cancelled, affairs in the Protectorate should have returned to their usual quiet, and faded into the background of concern at the African desk in the Foreign Office. It might have been so had not Phillips, while waiting for word, decided upon a preliminary, and as it turned out, fatal, unarmed expedition to the King. On January 10th, just one day after word had been sent to inform him of the postponement, a telegram reached the Foreign Office from the Benin district, informing them that Phillips and those with him had been ambushed on their way to Benin, and were supposed dead.
II

The explanation of why Phillips had undertaken this preliminary trip never came out.

When the telegram arrived at the Foreign Office, it caused considerable commotion. Salisbury, at his country home, was immediately notified and came directly into London from Hatfield. 13 Ralph Moor was called in for immediate consultation with Curzon, the Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and Sir Thomas Saunderson, Permanent Secretary at the Foreign Office. Mr. Goschen, the First Lord of the Admiralty, was informed. The Manchester Guardian noted that "most of the captives" for they were not then known to be dead, "were well known in official and club circles in London." 14

Almost immediately the wheels were set in motion for a punitive expedition to be carried out against the king. No one spoke in public of the arrangements of the previous two weeks. The press, and through them the public, knew only that savage natives had ambushed government officials. Soon they learned that the ambush had resulted in death. On January 26th the papers carried a telegram from Gallwey: "No possible doubt, Phillips, Maling, Crawford, Campbell, and Elliot shot dead in the ambush. Boisragon and Locke in no danger." 15
Nor was there any doubt that the group had been unarmed when attacked. Captain Boisragon, safely back in the Protectorate, related how Phillips had insisted that they go without weapons visible. Since the weather was hot, probably in the low eighties, they wore no jackets and consequently had their revolvers in their baggage, carried by porters some distance behind them. When first attacked Boisragon announced that he was going to get his revolver. But Phillips, in a moment of high drama, and no doubt still hopeful, commanded: "No revolvers, gentlemen, no revolvers!" Thus he and his companions died. Boisragon and Locke, both wounded, crawled into the thick bush and, drinking dew and eating leaves for five days, made their way painfully back to safety.

The apparent circumstances, therefore, cried out for vengeance. Policy statements were unnecessary. The papers could now create a picture of the king and of his society which would explain the ghastly act. Available information about the city was difficult to interpret. The accounts of Burton and Gallwey emerged as authoritative and human sacrifice as the single most interesting fact. For the first time Benin, the City of Blood, became generally known in England.

Papers first carried news of the disaster on the 12th. The Times simply named those English officials known to have been on the expedition. The Manchester Guardian located the city some 60 miles up the Benin River, "a large town, the seat of a powerful theocracy of fetish priests... (which) used to be famous for its human sacrifices."
On January 14th the Guardian talked of the "Benin tyrant" and reported an interview with Sir John Kirk who had conducted the Brass inquiry of 1895. In the interview he described the Benin people as "a degraded race very much on a level with the Ashantis...." The Oba, Kirk said, although he admitted that he personally knew nothing of the king, "stops all trade to Benin, will allow no white trader to enter his district, and was constantly having executions." Kirk summed up his feeling about the whole area as follows:

"I heard....not from people who were likely to exaggerate, but from people who had been there and described what they saw, that there were dead bodies and remains of executions lying about the town. It was absolutely certain that there must have been an expedition against him sooner or later if he did not reform, and I do not think there was the least chance of his giving up his evil customs, as he was entirely in the hands of the fetish priests. It was a disgrace upon any civilized Protectorate to have such a center in its sphere."\(^{21}\)

The death of Phillips offered proof of the savage character of Benin, proof of the need for a civilizing mission. A humanitarian interpretation, complete with evil leaders and people needing to be saved from them dominated the telling of the Benin story. Hints in the press that another type of expedition had been planned against the king with no Phillips to justify it went unnoticed. A Reuters correspondent in Liverpool interviewed a trader who chose not to reveal his name, who said: "An attack upon Benin had been much talked of. For two years at least it has been threatened, and I have no doubt at all that the king of Benin has been fully acquainted with all these rumours."\(^{22}\)
Thomas Gordon, one of the traders killed in the massacre, had confided to an artist for the Illustrated London News in the previous year that an expedition was in the offing, and Sir Alfred Jephson, the Agent General for the Protectorate until 1895, related in an interview for The Times, "It has always been recognized that eventually Benin City must be taken and trade allowed to flow towards the sea, but it was clearly understood that the King could not be smashed without the employment of a properly prepared force." The implicit criticism of Phillips, which only came out officially in 1899, and the hint that policy questions were involved went unnoticed. The overwhelming impression created by the press was that the expedition being mounted against the king was a result of his attack on Phillips.

From the time that the massacre was announced until the punitive expedition left, the press identified the people of Benin and the King in an unfavorable light. As a race they were "reported to be indolent, cowardly, and chiefly occupied with agricultural pursuits and the production of palm oil." The Oba of Benin's country is the most barbarous spot of the whole Protectorate,"and the outrage which he has not feared to commit upon the British expedition rendered inevitable the speedy end of a system which has been allowed to endure too long."

In an article which referred to the King as a "savage potentate" the two men who had escaped, Boisragon and Locke were described as "splendid fellows....just the men one would expect to survive the danger, fatigue, and privation of the long struggle through the bush which they appeared to have
To another reporter the natives of Benin were "utterly barbarous", ruled by a king of "fierce and cruel disposition". "Human sacrifices are there even more frequent than in Ashanti or Dahomey before European intervention." Consul-General Moor added his weight: the king was "certainly a barbarian". An expedition against him would extend British authority throughout the area, end the atrocities constantly committed there, establish peaceable government, promote trade, and improve the condition of the natives. Removal of the ruler would open up the resources of the Protectorate to the entire population. And in Liverpool, the trader, James Pinnock, chairing a meeting of the Geographical Society in which Benin was the center of interest, declared: "Our bluejackets, West Indian troops, and forces of the Niger Coast Protectorate would soon clear this Gehenna, which was at present a disgrace to the whole civilized world."

Behind this type of rhetoric lay the firm conviction that Britain had a job to do to rescue natives from the clutches of incompetent and evil rulers. One writer talked of the veneer of civilization which often shielded the casual visitor to the West African coast from the truth: "Scarcely a few miles from the station where officialism reigns supreme," he wrote, "are to be found the rankest superstitions and a swarming native population, a prey to fetish worship and the cunning priests who hold sway in its name. It is an indisputable fact that, although in some parts of the West Coast Europeans have traded and factories have existed for quite 200 years, yet no successful attempt has up to now been made to rescue the native pop-
ulation from grovelling superstition and ignorance." For this writer Gallwey was the authority and he talked in 1892 about the disgusting sights he had seen: "there is little cause to think that matters have improved since that time....the favorite mode of execution is crucifixion, the victim being sacrificed on any occasion when the malevolence of evil spirits requires to be appeased." He concluded, "although little authentic knowledge of the Benin people is current, the main characteristics of the surrounding tribes are thought to be theirs also in an intensified degree, finding expression in habits of disgusting brutality and scenes of hideous cruelty and bloodshed, ordained by the superstition of a degraded race of savages." 

Not until February 1st could the press present any information about the immediate cause of the massacre, but it only reinforced the impression already conveyed about Benin. On that day The Times carried a first hand report from a Reuters correspondent in the area. "The king", he wrote, "was carrying out an annual butchery of slaves, and did not want to see the white man, who had been received at Gwato, the landing place for the city, with a friendly welcome, and who, under the impression that matters were all right, had proceeded on their journey. They simply intended to remonstrate with the King against these fearful butcheries." That Phillips was on a purely humanitarian mission, and that the king had perpetrated the massacre because he did not want to be interrupted in the middle of his human sacrifices became an acceptable
rendering of events. Added to it was the probability of treachery. The king had actually lured Phillips into an ambush by ordering a welcome for him, according to Boisragon, who stated that as the party advanced from Gwato the ruler had sent them cordial messages. 36

The press switched its attention from the explanations of the massacre to accounts of the punitive expedition after it began on February 15, but the official details of the massacre and expedition did not shed much light on either Phillips' intentions or the Bini motivation for the massacre. It did note the size of Phillips party—11 white men, 200 native carriers, a government interpreter, the consul-general's chief cook and clerk, 2 orderlies, 1 store keeper, 1 servant to each officer, and the drum and fife band from the Protectorate. The band had been sent back from Gwato because a friendly chief along the way had convinced Phillips that it would give a warlike impression. Its own prior intentions against the king, the Foreign Office did not reveal and so shed no light on Phillips' reasons for undertaking the trip. He had not notified them before leaving. The Parliamentary paper included Moor's estimate of the whole venture in a letter he had written to Admiral Rawson, the commander-in-Chief of the punitive expedition:

"The operations in their result up to the present have not served in any way the ill-fated expedition of the late consul Phillips, all the members of which, except perhaps a few natives, are, I fear, murdered; but they will, I trust, be far-reaching in doing away with a barbarism as appalling as ever
witnessed by Europeans and bringing the benefits of civilization to a most wretched people."

At the time Moor wrote, August of 1897, the king was still at large in the bush. Not until 1899 when the last of the chiefs involved in the massacre was finally brought to trial, did Moor admit that Phillips had shown poor judgment. Then it came out that he had been warned repeatedly by several friendly chiefs to turn back, but had persisted in pushing on. Even then, however, the question of why he had gone could not be answered.

Boisragon published a full account of the trip and the massacre in September, 1897, but it threw remarkably little light on the question of motivation. Could Boisragon not have known of the plans which Phillips was making with the Foreign Office? He recapitulated what had happened in Benin since Gallwey's visit of 1892. No white man had been in the city since then, except MacTaggart of the Royal Niger Company, the man who had so annoyed Consul-General Moor. Boisragon talked of the removal of Chief Nana but gave no reasons for the attack against him. He did mention, however, that in response to the treatment meted out to Nana, the King of Benin had ceased to trade with the British. Boisragon credited Moor with success in getting Overami to open up trade again, but claimed that the King started to charge tribute. Shortly after Phillips took over in the Protectorate the king raised his price, and Phillips urged the chiefs of the river not to
pay. As a result of a meeting of the chiefs, with Phillips present, a note went to the king, announcing a visit. "The object of the expedition", according to Boisragon, "was to try and persuade the king to let white men come up to his city whenever they wanted to. All their horrible customs could not be put down at once, except by a strong-armed expedition; but could be stamped out gradually by officials continually going up. Trade would also be opened up." This line Macdonald had always taken, convinced that inhumane customs had to be stopped, but through peaceful means. If Phillips had been committed to these means, why had he written to Salisbury asking for armed support to remove the king and establish a native council? Perhaps his meeting with the chiefs had occurred after he wrote the letter, and they had convinced him that the king would listen to reason. Perhaps he wanted to make a name for himself before Moor returned. Boisragon, if he knew, did not tell. But he was convinced of the treachery of the king and the complicity of the whole countryside. He recounted how as they passed a certain spot they had their feet washed by JuJu priests, a sign that they had the freedom of the country. Then "At each village, as we halted, some of the men came out to welcome us, grinned all round their black faces, and seemed very pleased to see us—knowing as they did what was in store for us, for I suppose they all expected to get a share of the forthcoming loot." Sufficient cause for the murder, according to Boisragon, had been the audacity of the white men in coming ahead when the
king did not wish to be disturbed in the midst of sacrificing "some hundreds of unfortunate slaves."45

The innocence of the king, and his precise role in the massacre was not known until late September 1897, but by that time the city had been destroyed.
NOTES: CHAPTER THREE


2. Ibid.

3. The Manchester Guardian, Jan. 18, 1897.

4. Ibid. Jan. 15, 1897.


6. Moor's letter written on December 26th, was received at the Foreign Office on December 29th. He received the memo on the 24th.

7. F. O. 403/234, Moor to F. O., 26 December, 1896.

8. F. O. 403/234, Intelligence Division to Foreign Office, (Received December 30).


10. F. O. 403/248, Intelligence Division to Foreign Office, (received January 6).

11. F. O. 403/248, Memorandum by Sir C. Hill of the proposed Expedition to Benin, 6 January, 1897.


14. Ibid.

15. The Times, January 26, 1897.

16. Captain Boisragon did not publish his account in book form until September, but gave out stories to the press beforehand. See Illustrated London News, Feb. 6, 1897, for story about article appearing in the Daily Telegraph by Boisragon.
17. Much was made of the fact that the expedition went unarmed. In fact they did carry revolvers. An eye-witness to the preparations in early December had reported his impression that while they appeared unarmed, they would be prepared to charge if necessary. See The Manchester Guardian, Jan. 15, 1897.

18. The mean temperature in the area from Feb-April is 83-91; and for April-Jan., is 71-74. See Bradbury, The Benin Kingdom and the Edo-Speaking Peoples of Southwestern Nigeria, London, 1957, p. 174.


20. The Manchester Guardian, January 12, 1897.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid., January 18, 1897.


24. The Times, Jan. 15, 1897.


26. Ibid.

27. The Manchester Guardian, Jan. 16, 1897.


29. The Times, Jan. 18, 1897.

30. The Manchester Guardian, Jan. 18, 1897.

31. The Times, Jan. 15, 1897.

32. The Manchester Guardian, Jan. 21, 1897; The Times, Jan. 21, 1897.


34. Ibid.

35. The Times, Feb. 1, 1897.


37. Great Britain, Vol LX, 1898, Papers Relating to the Massacre of British Officials Near Benin and the Consequent Punitive Expedition, presented to both Houses of Parliament by the Command of Her Majesty, August 19, 1897.


41. Ibid., pp. 56-58.

42. Phillips' letter to Salisbury was dated November 16. Boisragon mentions only that the meeting with the chiefs occurred in November.

43. This was hinted at by a not too reliable minor official in the area at the time. See Nemo, Niger Memories, p. 35. Nemo in his memoires admits that he knew Phillips only briefly.

44. Boisragon, The Benin Massacre, p. 95.

45. Ibid., p. 59.
CHAPTER FOUR: PUNITIVE EXPEDITION

The British Foreign Office masterminded the expedition against the king, calling upon the resources of the admiralty and those of the imperial forces in Sierre Leone. Admiral Harry Rawson commander of the fleet at the Cape received the supreme command and his orders were to rescue survivors, to punish the king, and to occupy the town. ¹ By January 30th ships and men for the expedition had rendezvoused in Sierre Leone, coming from the far corners of the empire. Rawson, now acting on his own discretion, decided upon a force of a thousand men, ² nearly three times the number thought necessary by the Foreign Office. Taking no chances he decided upon a three-pronged attack upon the city which would allow for no escape to the south. Rawson himself would accompany the center group which would take the city, the other two acting to encircle the area, and if necessary, drive hostile forces inward. On February 6th with all arrangements complete, ³ the slow march forward began.

When the Foreign Office gave over the command to Admiral Rawson, a naval commander who had never set foot in the Protectorate and who, in his actions there in the first few days revealed his ignorance of past Protectorate policy, it sanctioned conquest. As the three forces advanced towards the city of Benin they destroyed what lay in their way. One eye-witness recorded the procedure followed by the troops upon entering a native village on the way to Benin:
As the launch and surf boats grounded we jumped into the water, which reached to our waists, at once placed our Maxims and guns in position, firing so as to clear the bush where the natives might be hiding. We rushed on some hundred yards, again put our guns in position, and, in conjunction with volley firing, again cleared the bush...  

All who stood in their way had become the enemy. Unfortunately this carnage was characteristic of the advance.

By the morning of February 17th the central force, led by Admiral Rawson and Consul General Moor, and consisting of 250 Protectorate troops, 120 marines, 100 sailors, 30 scouts and six medical men, was within striking distance of Benin. All that day they advanced under heavy return fire in the unaccustomed heat and the unfamiliar terrain, forced to walk in single file because of the narrowness of the bush paths. That night they camped six miles from Benin. Early the next morning they broke camp and marched for seven hours, fired upon constantly. At last, dry, dirty and exhausted, but with their Maxims having secured them entrance, they came to a clearing in the path. Before them spread out a broad avenue, unlike anything they had so far seen, and beyond it, enveloped in a cloud of dust, lay the ancient city of Benin.

The Bini warriors left in the city fired from behind an embankment, but the second-hand ordnance of the European trader to the West African coast could not match British machine guns, and soon the last of the Oba's men disappeared into the dense and protective bush. The city belonged to the British. Word
reached London in *The Times* on February 23rd, with a telegram from Consul-General Moor: "Advanced from Ologbo 14\textsuperscript{th} in two columns, joined upon the 16\textsuperscript{th}, Benin city taken afternoon 18\textsuperscript{th}." In Parliament, at the request of Sir John Colomb of Great Yarmouth, Moor's telegram was read to the house.\(^6\)

II

The men, after they had slaked their thirst, now had to clean up the city. All natives, including the King and the priests had fled Benin into the surrounding bush to the north when the fate of the city seemed sealed. There were no prisoners taken, only the wounded of the attacking force to care for and the bodies of those left behind by the Binis to be removed. The seemingly hundreds of corpses which the Punitive force came upon were not casualties from the fighting, but the remains of human sacrifices. The scene indelibly impressed itself upon the senses of those who witnessed it. Felix Roth, a doctor with the expedition, summed up his reaction:

"As we neared Benin City we passed several human sacrifices, live women-slaves gagged and pegged on their backs to the ground, the abdominal wall being cut in the form of a cross, and the uninjured gut hanging out. These poor women were allowed to die like this in the sun. Men-slaves, with their hands tied at the back, and feet lashed together, also gagged, were lying about. As our white troops passed these horrors
one can well imagine the effect on them—many were roused to fury, and many of the younger ones felt sick and ill at ease. As we neared the city, sacrificed human beings were lying in the path and bush—even in the King's compound the sight and stench of them was awful. Dead and mutilated bodies, seemed to be everywhere—by God! may I never see such sights again."

When they reached the King's compound they found things as they had been left. Roth described the scene:

"In the king's compound, on a raised platform or altar, running the whole breadth of each, beautiful idols were found. All of them were caked over with human blood, and by giving them a slight tap, crusts of blood would, as it were, fly off. Lying about were big bronze heads, dozens in a row, with holes at the top, in which immense carved ivory tusks were fixed. One can form no idea of the impression it made on us. The whole place reeked of blood. Fresh blood was dripping off the figures and altars..."

On the night of the 18th the men slept out in the open amidst the death and debri too sickened by the smell of blood to sleep in the compounds. The next morning they set about burning those compounds and destroying the JuJu houses. All through the city they came upon bones, skulls and bodies. In front of the palace they found trees upon which human sacrifices had been carried out, and heaps of bones mildewed around the bottom. In the surrounding bush they found more bodies, decapitated. "It was a gruesome sight," wrote Roth, "to see these headless bodies sitting about, the smell being awful." The troops discovered a large pit full of bodies from which emanated screams. To their surprise they managed to pull out some of the carriers who had been with Phillips.
Those unfortunates told how Phillips and his men had been killed on the Gwato road, but not brought in to the city to be sacrificed. Only their belongings reached the Palaver house where Roth and the others found them.\textsuperscript{10}

In the midst of the blood Roth's sense of beauty was also touched. He thought the King's house really quite extraordinary. He made note of the delicate brass figures embossed on the doors of the palace, and of the artistically carved rafters.\textsuperscript{11} Another eye-witness, Intelligence Officer Bacon writing later, was also moved to comment on the "handsomely carved ivory tusks" and the "very antique bronze heads."\textsuperscript{12} Some of the objects, he thought, showed traces of Egyptian design, or perhaps Chinese influence.\textsuperscript{13} In a tour of the city he saw no evidence of industry other than a blacksmith's shop and perhaps concluded that the art objects were not indigenous. Their beauty was marred, however, by the use to which they were put: "Blood was everywhere," he wrote, "smear ed over bronzes, ivory, and even the walls, and spoke the history of that awful city in a clearer way than writing ever could. And this had been going on for centuries! Not the lust of one king, not the climax of a bloody reign, but the religion (save the word!) of the race."\textsuperscript{14}

On the 20\textsuperscript{th} the systematic destruction of the city began. Admiral Rawson, with a strong force went to Ojumo, a chief's compound, at the beginning of the Gwato road and burned it.
He also burned chief Ochudi's compound, consisting of more than a hundred houses, "whose roofs made a good blaze.” On Rawson's orders all the houses in the area about the King's compound were cleared for purposes of protection. Another party went to the Queen Mother's house and destroyed it.

On the 21st an unplanned fire broke out in the afternoon. It jumped from hut to hut, even burning the trees. Roth commented:

"As soon as we noticed it, we removed our medical stores; the men tried to move their stores but were too late, and most of them had everything burnt. Even the things which had been placed in the middle of the big compounds caught fire, the heat being very great. In less than an hour the conflagration had burnt itself out, and the whole place was strewn with ashes. The next day we found what a blessing had come to us, for fire, smoke and charcoal seemed to have removed all the smell, and the city became sweet and pure again."  

Bacon's opinion of the fire matched Roth's. To him:

"there was a dim grandeur about it all, and also there seemed to be a fate....fire only could purge it, and here on our last day we were to see its legitimate fate overtake it, and see this, the centre of bloodshed, burn before our eyes in retribution for the millions of lives that had been wilfully sacrificed."  

On the morning of the 22nd, as Moor had predicted, the white force, having accomplished its mission, prepared to march back to the sea. Only on the next day would London learn of their success, and readers of The Times be treated to the Reuter's description of Benin: "The whole town reeks of human blood, and the bodies of many sacrificed and crucified
human beings have been found about the place. This afternoon the forces have been occupied in the destruction of 'crucifixion trees' and 'JuJu' houses, thereby breaking the power of the fetish priests."\(^{19}\)

The Commander-in-Chief and his naval brigade reached Warrigi on the 24\(^{th}\); the Sapobar force on the 25\(^{th}\), and the Gwato force, on the 27\(^{th}\). By the evening of the 27\(^{th}\) the whole white force had reembarked. A week later the hospital ship Malacca left for Britain, and on March 13\(^{th}\) Admiral Rawson was back in South Africa. The force, and indeed the Expedition, won praises and encouragement from the press and honors from the Queen. Rawson was elevated to the Order of the Bath, and 18 awards went to officers who had taken part in the expedition.\(^{20}\)

III

Once the navy and marines had left the city the officials of the Protectorate set about organizing an administration. Moor felt it imperative that he finish the expedition according to his own lights, including the final deposition of the King. "It is imperative" he wrote to Salisbury, "that a most severe lesson be given the Kings, Chiefs, and JuJu men of all surrounding countries, that white men cannot be killed with impunity, and that human sacrifices, with the oppression of
the weak and poor must cease." 21 Moor felt that the permanent results expected from the expedition had not yet been achieved.

"The punishment of the individuals responsible for the massacre is of these the first, for it will be an object-lesson in civilization for the poor and weak to see the rich and strong punished for misdeeds perpetrated by their order. Civilization with protection to life and property has then to be introduced, and the country opened up to trade--this must be the work of years." 22

When a Permanent Resident for Benin was appointed, Moor was free to pursue the King into the bush.

Moor had never doubted the king guilty of the Phillips massacre, nor had any other British. It was Bertie's note to the War Office of January 14th which reflected this assumption as did Galtrey's ultimatum to the king, forwarded to the Foreign Office. 23 As more information about events in Benin filtered out, his guilt seemed assured. Perhaps, as The Times commented on the 9th, the king might have been misguided by reports from his chiefs to the effect that the white men were spies. If so, Moor might prove complicity and arrest them as well as the king. On March 12th, the Consul reported to Salisbury that he had tracked after the king to the north, through 7 villages, meeting no resistance. He had, he told Salisbury, come upon a new bush town of probably 2000-3000. The inhabitants fled before he could catch them, and he burned the town. 24

In one village Moor caught the headman and demanded that he and two others serve as guides on pain of death for a false lead. After the headman was killed in an attempt to flee, the
other two served adequately. Moor was especially proud of the destruction of the "embryo town." He described it for Salisbury as having apartments for the King and Chiefs on the model of Benin. "I am inclined to think," he wrote, "that the destruction of this bush town will have as much effect on the taking of Benin City, for the Bini little thought that they could be tracked into the fastness of their bush, and I anticipate that it will eventually result in the King and Chief's coming in." 25

Moor was patient, confident of his tactics in burning the last hope of the King, but the King remained illusive. Moor decided to attend to other duties in the Protectorate. He returned to Old Calabar and in the beginning of August word reached him that the king had given himself up on August 3rd. It seems he could neither hide nor run. The 40 year old King, Overami, whom Roth considered "stout" and "intelligent," with about 800 followers, 20 wives and 10 chiefs, led by messengers carrying a white flag, proceeded into town in the wake of a reed band. The white men hid themselves when they saw him enter. The King established himself in the house of Chief Abeseke, who was now a member of the native council established by the Resident. Two days later, Overami nerved himself to enter the Palaver house with his boys and several chiefs where the Acting Resident, Roupell received him. Roupell had tactfully kept his own forces out of sight, although they were prepared to act instantly should the need arise.
The King, in his ceremonial dress, was, in Roth's words,

"covered with masses of strings of coral, interspersed with larger pieces, supposed to be worth many pounds. His head dress, which was in the shape of a Leghorn straw hat, was composed wholly of coral of excellent quality, meshed closely together, and must have weighed very heavily on his head, for it was constantly being temporarily removed by an attendant. His wrists up to the elbows were closely covered with coral bangles, so were his ankles. He only wore the usual white cloth of a chief, and underneath, a pair of embroidered and brocaded trousers; he had nothing in the way of a coat, but his breast was completely hidden from view by the coral beads encircling his neck." 27

Roupell called out for Overami to make his submission. The King, obviously agitated, consulted with his chiefs, while a crowd of about 1000 people gathered. Chief Aro asked if the King could not submit in private, but Roupell refused. This scion of an ancient house was forced to make submission in his accustomed manner. He knelt on the ground before the young Roupell, and rubbed his forehead in the ground three times. 28 The chiefs followed the example of their leader. Roupell then explained to Overami that he was no longer King, but a political prisoner. The Acting Resident could do no more, as Moor was not expected back for another two weeks. The King returned to Abeseke's house.

Inevitably, in keeping with Moor's views of Overami's guilt, the British determined to try the fallen monarch. The trial began on September 1st in the late afternoon. Consul Moor called upon witnesses and cautioned them to speak the truth. He told them that the trial was not about the fighting,
because they could be proud of the courage with which they defended their country, but that it was about the death of Phillips. The trial, he told them, would be conducted according to native law, and the 1st thing to settle was who had ordered the massacre, King or chief. 29

The first witnesses, three chiefs' boys, attested that although they knew the expedition was unarmed, their chiefs instructed them to kill the white men. The chiefs thus named were arrested and put in the guard room. When one of them committed suicide by hanging himself his body was strung up for a day in front of the King's compound.

On the 3rd day Moor summoned the chiefs as witnesses. One after another they defended the innocence of the King. According to Benin custom he never left his compound. Chiefs came to him, he gave them orders, and then they did as they thought fit. Overami, occupied with an annual festival at the time of the Phillips expedition, was informed of the movements of Phillips by his messengers. He stated explicitly that no harm was to be done to them. Indeed he wanted to talk with Phillips to see if he meant war. But the chiefs ignored him. Testimony singled out as the leader one in particular, Ologbosheri. Evidence also emerged that the chiefs had feared, from the time of Nana's exile, that their turn was coming. They were of course correct in their estimate as the previous narrative attests, but the trial concerned itself only with the massacre in its narrowest sense.
On September 3rd the court met for a verdict. Moor asked for a definition of native law and was told by the chiefs that since seven white chiefs had been killed, seven black chiefs must die. But the Consul General wished to sentence only those who had discovered the white men to be unarmed but attacked anyway. He found six chiefs guilty. Of the six, two were already dead, one was a boy, one was at large, and two were in his hands. Moor condemned them to be shot the following morning. Ologbosheri, the instigator, was at large. The Consul General suggested that the other chiefs find him, or Britain would exact the full price demanded by native law.

The executions took place the following day. Then it was Moor's duty to explain to the king what would befall him. Moor told him, according to Roth, that he

"could no longer order the people about as before, but...proper villages would be apportioned to him, with servants, food, and all other necessaries as for a big chief, for he would probably still be the biggest chief, that position depending upon his ability to govern. At the same time, the Consul-General proposed to take the king and two or three chiefs, with their wives and servants, on a tour for a year or so to Calabar, Lagos and the Yoruba country to see how other lands were governed."30

Moor then told Overami to consider the matter and report to the Palaver house on September 9th. How much Overami understood of what was happening to him and of what his future held one cannot know. Having fled once from his city and
attempted, in a futile gesture, to build a new Benin in the bush, he decided once more to deny the fait accompli which had displaced him. He refused to appear on that day and Moor sent a guard of fifty men to bring him to the Palaver house. Frightened, Overami fled into the bush again. Moor then threatened to burn every house and shoot every chief if Overami did not appear by 4:00 P.M. Chief Ojumo finally admitted that the king was hiding in his compound.

Roupell went with a few men to the compound. He went in by the front door and sent the others around to the back. When Overami heard noise in the front he rushed out by the back, only to find himself in the arms of the others. He was taken back to Moor who, on the spot, sentenced him to be banished for life from Benin.$^{31}$

Moor had obviously decided that the king would be difficult to deal with in the native council, and his exile would better serve imperial purposes. Overami, now very dejected, attempted to bribe the Consul General with 200 puncheons of oil and 500 ivory tusks. Moor refused. On the 15th in the dead of night so as not to excite the people, the troops brought Overami, bound and gagged, in a hammock, down to Gwato.

Readers of The Times in London learned on September 24th that: "The King of Benin has been put on board the Protectorate Yacht Ivy in order to be taken to Old Calabar." It was from the Commander of the Ivy that the first word of the
massacre had come to London, following the rescue by the
Commander of that ship, of Boisragon and Locke. On the next
day, September 25th, an exhibit of bronzes from Benin opened in
the Assyrian basement of the British Museum.
NOTES: CHAPTER FOUR


4. Ibid., p. v.

5. Ibid., p. ix.


7. Roth, "A Diary of A Surgeon....", p. x. See Ryder, Benin and the Europeans...., for an explanation for the last frantic behavior of the King before fleeing the city.

8. Ibid., pp. x-xi.

9. Ibid., p. xi.

10. Ibid., p. xii.

11. Ibid., p. xi.


13. Ibid., p. 92.

14. Ibid., p. 89.

15. Ibid., p. 104.

16. Ibid.

17. Roth, "A Diary of A Surgeon....", p. xii.


20. The Times, May 26, 1897.
22. Ibid.
24. Ibid., Moor to Salisbury, 12 March, 1897.
25. Ibid., Moor to Salisbury, 18 March, 1897.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid., pp. xiii-iv.
29. Ibid., p. xiv.
30. Ibid., p. xvii.
31. Ibid.
CHAPTER FIVE: THE BRONZES

The show in the Assyrian basement of the British Museum in September 1897 contained about three hundred bronze plaques. The papers thanked Lord Salisbury and Consul-General Moor for making the exhibit possible. They failed to credit Admiral Harry Rawson, though he was as responsible as Salisbury and Moor.

When the Admiral's flying column had entered the city of Benin on the afternoon of the 18th they had proceeded down the broad streets directly to the King's compound. The compound was huge, several acres in size, and with many buildings. Amid the debris of bodies, blood, dirt and signs of hasty departure the men saw metal and ivory objects. The imperial forces immediately organized a search and in one of the many buildings they found hundreds of plaques together, half buried and covered with dried blood. Rawson and Moor, realizing that the deserted city was full of these objects, took council. Moor thought them hideous, tangible proof of the evils of superstition, but Rawson thought they might have some historical interest. Rawson cabled to the Foreign Office announcing the find, and then put his mind to other matters. He gave Moor charge of everything of value in the city. The Consul-General ordered all objects brought to one place, and ordered his troops not to loot. Then he posted a guard over the central area and, in agreement with Rawson, allowed trophies to all officers involved in the expedition. The Admiral picked out what he wanted for himself and chose a large carved tusk for a gift to the Admiralty.
Office and a suitable trophy was also chosen for the Queen. Moor, and then all the other officers present gathered trophies for themselves. What remained they packed up. The control Moor exercised over looting outside the King's compound depended upon the integrity of the individuals involved. Since only the officers received tangible rewards, many of the smaller bronze pieces may have found their way into the pockets of the first sailors or marines to lay eyes upon them, and then gone to England unobserved in seachest or duffel bag. Since each house had an altar of some kind, and the compound included not only the King's but the large compounds of the chief and the Queen Mother, the pickings would be easy.

Rawson thought that the British Museum might be interested in what had been officially gathered. He did not record whether his men transported these spoils with them when they left on the 22nd, or whether Moor disposed of them from Benin. But on the 28th of February the district commissioner in Sapele wrote to the Crown Agents in London, announcing the sending of two bronze plaques, with a request for them to be valued in England. The plaques probably went on the hospital ship Malacca, which left for England on March 5th. On the 24th they reached the Crown Agents where Mr. E. E. Blake took charge of them. He wrote the British Museum asking for someone to come over and give an opinion. Mr. Charles Read, who had served the Museum's Department of British and Medieval Antiquities and Ethnography since 1880, and had headed it since 1896, came to look at the bronzes. He was not an African expert and he returned to the museum to do his homework. He soon found, poss-
ibly to his surprise, a large body of literature on Benin at least in its relation to Europe. While he studied, Blake, still with the Crown Agents, cabled Moor to send home as many more pieces as he could. Read had promised an official report. On April 2nd Maude Thompson of the Museum staff informed Blake that Read, having examined the bronzes, had concluded that they were of native manufacture, without, as he put it, "any admixture of European or other civilized art." Read felt that since that was the case the pieces would not shed much light on the history of the city. Nevertheless, from the point of view of the evolution of art, he would like more pieces for the museum. He didn't suppose the pieces to be of much value financially.

At about the same time the Illustrated London News received drawings from H. C. Seppings-Wright, the artist who had arrived in the city of Benin in the wake of the conquering force. At the end of March the paper ran a large supplement, complete with drawings by Seppings-Wright, on Benin. The author of the article, possibly Seppings-Wright, who had arrived after the loot had been divided up or packed away, lamented that the fire had raged through the city, "spoiling all the valuable ivory tusks and other curios which had been stored in the center of the palaver house." Apparently he was completely unaware of the existence of the official booty. In a follow-up article on April 10th, entitled "Spoils from Benin", the author again expressed distress at the loss of objects which would have been of great antiquarian interest, "relics of a civilization which dates back far beyond the Portuguese colonization of three
centuries ago, and probably owes much to Egyptian influence." Seppings-Wright, if he were the author, may have picked up some gossip in the camp from among the more sensitive officers. The origin of these pieces must have stirred speculation from the first. The author believed, however, that Mr. W. J. Hider, a sailor, who had stored his collection in a building with a brass roof possessed the only objects to survive the flames. When he returned to England Hider immediately sold his objects to Mr. Horniman for his free ethnographic museum at Forest Hill. The paper noted that the collection contained two hand bells "rung to announce a human sacrifice." 

While the press published its limited information, official interest in the bronzes continued, although no one ever explained how the pieces survived the flames and were removed from Benin. After Read had given his opinion to the Crown Agents and Moor had been notified, the two plaques sat in Blake's office. On the 14th of April he wrote to the Consul-General asking him what to do next. Should Blake send them to the Museum, or to the Foreign Office? Moor apparently replied that they now belonged to the Foreign Office and should go there. Accordingly, Blake announced to the Foreign Office on the 13th of May that he was sending them two bronze plaques from Benin. Fraser of the Chief Clerk's Department at the Foreign Office scribbled on Blake's note "...await the arrival of the other bronzes and then see if the British Museum or South Kensington will buy." Someone else along the line of command changed the order, scribbling underneath, "They belong to us. Please ask Crown Agents to send them over."
The two bronze plaques thus reached the Foreign Office where they remained, since no one took personal charge of the loot. On June 30th the Crown Agents informed the Foreign Office that three "very bulky" casks containing bronzes from Benin had arrived and lay in the Quadrangle near the entrance to the Colonial Office. The agents requested instructions from the Foreign Secretary as to their disposal "as we have no instructions as to the wishes of the Commissioner." At this point someone informed Clement Hill of the situation and Hill requested further background information. Clerk Fraser wrote, in his own hand,

"The history of these bronzes...is to the best of my recollection as follows. Some time ago when I went to see Mr. Blake he showed me the two bronzes which are at present in our room which had just been sent here by Moor from Benin who had said there were a lot more which it was proposed to sell that the market value of such things is very little and must now be less than ever in consequence of the large number that must have been brought home by officers—not to mention that to throw puncheons full on the market at once would bring it down to zero."

Hill commented on the memo:

"If the market value has gone down it seems hardly worth while to have brought them over. Perhaps we had better tell treasury in the first instance, as they may claim the bronzes as part payment of the Benin expenses."

To inform the treasury, however, raised a question of policy, for treasury interference might limit, as Fraser observed, the decision-making power of the Secretary of State with regard to revenue raised in the Protectorate. Imperial expenses differed from Protectorate Revenue. Fraser in his response to Hill wrote that selling puncheons of curios to offset the expenses
of the expedition "is somewhat of a new departure as regards the Niger Coast Protectorate where being a self-supporting institution the Secretary of State, i.e., the Foreign Secretary, represents the Lords of the Treasury in matters of finance." The Foreign Secretary could himself decide on the sale of the bronzes without consulting the treasury, "a course which might be highly inconvenient at some later date." Hill, in turn, resenting the implied aspersion upon his intelligence, commented:

"This is hardly put correctly. My idea was that before disposing of the contents of the casks we should ask Treasury whether they had any wishes or views as to the best method. They will certainly pay, either directly or through the Admiralty, the greater part of the cost of the expedition, and may expect a voice in the disposal of the plunder. Say the loot had mounted up to a million sterling, would you have given it all to the Protectorate without consulting Treasury?"

Fraser replied on July 14th:

"What I feel is that the Treasury is in no better position than the Secretary of State to decide what is the best method of disposing of these curios and that if we consult them on what is practically a money point we shall be introducing a new system which it will be subsequently difficult to stop. If the Treasury were going to pay the whole of the expedition expenses they might have some interest in the disposal of the plunder which would (help) to reduce those expenses but as, in accordance with settled policy in these cases, they will only demand a contribution from the Protectorate and will fall under the general direction of the Secretary of State. My suggestion is that after inviting the inspection of the British Museum and perhaps S. Kensington any of the curios not required might be sold under the direction of the Crown Agents, and the proceeds of the sale credited to the funds of the Protectorate."
Hill yielded the point on the 17th, "I have no objection. My only wish was the the Treasury should not be able to blame us--Proceed as Mr. Fraser suggests."

On that same day, a note came to the Foreign Office from the Crown Agents marked PRESSING. It announced the arrival of three more casks and asked for orders as to their disposal. Hill endorsed the message: "We are waiting a decision on theirs of June 30th as to how to proceed", and then composed a memorandum to acquaint Salisbury with the facts. It related that six casks of bronzes had now been sent to England by Consul General Moor:

"The question arises whether they should be sold by public auction, the British Museum being given the chance of selecting what it wants, and the proceeds paid into the Protectorate accounts, or whether the treasury should be consulted as to their disposal. The treasury has nothing to do with the funds of the Protectorate but it is possible that it may claim the curios as loot, if the Imperial Government pay the expenses of the Benin Expedition without asking for a Protectorate contribution. The chief Clerk's Department advocate sale without consulting treasury."

Hill clearly did not want to be responsible for a decision which might later prove sticky. Salisbury scribbled in "Yes" and added an "S" in red. The matter interested him very little.

The six casks now went over to the British Museum where they were cleaned, analyzed as to metallic content, and prepared for exhibit. The Foreign Office deemed them saleable objects, similar to the gold cups from Ashanti which had been melted down to pay military expenses. They constituted
official booty, to be used to help in future development of the Protectorate.

Rawson had originally claimed 1000 pieces as official booty. Only three hundred pieces graced the museum. Seven hundred remained unaccounted for. Furthermore a vast amount of bric-a-brac and smaller objects had never been officially declared. Since Admiral Rawson had originally supposed the objects of possible historical interest, he and Moor no doubt agreed that a representative selection rather than the whole lot would be sufficient to send to England. Accordingly they sold off the excess. Moor later commented: "The greater part of the property of value found was disposed of locally as opportunity offered, or shipped home.... I think speaking from memory that about £1200 or £1500 was realized locally and credited to Protectorate funds." He did not name or describe the local buyers.

German companies along the coast of West Africa controlled the art market companies at this time. In whatever the way the pieces got from Benin to the coast, many of them fell into the hands of German dealers. Several pieces from Benin were presented to a German Anthropological Association meeting in Luebeck in August, 1897. Many more pieces also began to show up in London at art dealers and auctioneers' houses. A large auction held at Hale's and Son, London, came to the attention of a young German anthropologist, Frederick Von Luschan. He arrived in the knick of time to buy several items
for the Berlin museum. The objects so impressed him that he informed himself of the events surrounding their arrival in England, and on a hunch, cabled the German Consulate in Lagos, to buy up all available antiquities from Benin, regardless of price. Consul Edward Schmidt followed his advice and purchased a large number of pieces then available in Lagos. Another German named Bey put together an even larger collection of 176 pieces from the coast market.

Individual British collectors also acquired privately many of the antiquities. Probably at the Hale's and smaller auctions General Lane Fox Pitt-Rivers picked up some examples of work from Benin. Pitt-Rivers, a wealthy colonial official and ethnologist, had collected artifacts from the colonies for decades. A friend of the famed anthropologist Edward Tylor, the General exhibited his collection in his own museum in Oxford. Pitt-Rivers constantly watched for objects which would fill out his collections, and that summer of 1897 must have been a fruitful time. The British Museum by contrast, always short of funds, apparently could buy only one ivory tusk at the sales.

When the exhibit of plaques opened at the Museum on September 25th, an article in The Times commented that they would be of great value in helping to assign other objects from Africa to their proper area. In themselves, the author noted, "both by the novelty of the subjects and the technical perfection of the work, (they) are surprizing evidence of the skill
of the Benin native in the casting of metal." 25 The reporter only echoed the opinion of experts for, as Charles Read wrote shortly after: ". . . at the first sight of these remarkable works of art we were at once astounded at such an unexpected find, and puzzled to account for so highly developed an art among a race so entirely barbarous as were the Bini. . . ." 26

It shocked the experts to discover that the process by which the bronzes had been cast was the same as that which had produced "the finest bronzes of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Europe. . . ." 27 The Times reporter still doubted whether the bronzes should be called art, but that they were well cast he could not deny. He referred to the attempts by the experts to discover their origin and, echoing Read, lamented:

". . . there was a faint hope among those who thought of possibilities, that among the loot from Benin might be found some traces of the more ancient civilizations of Northern Africa, drifted down among the unheeding negroes through the trade routes which have served from time immemorial as the avenues by which the great natural riches of Central Africa reached the Mediterranean." 28

To think the natives of Benin had made the pieces on their own was so far impossible:

". . . whether they are the work of negroes or of some wandering tribe of alien craftsmen, with whom casting was a hereditary occupation, they are certainly the most interesting works of art which have ever left the western shores of the Dark Continent." 29

Read's immediate reaction upon seeing the pieces had been to suppose Binis had made them. But as he read the early history of Benin he changed his mind. That Benin was "one of the first
important negro kingdoms which became known to Europeans" did not sufficiently explain to him how the bronzes had been made. He believed that the kingdom had been oriented to the north, and thus open to possible influence from the Mediterranean. "Who can say", he wrote, "what shreds and patches of Mediterranean civilization may not have drifted with the drifting people far into the darkness of the interior?" The cire perdue, or lost wax process by which the casting was done was so intricate that only those long acquainted with casting could have used it. Read commented: "...we thus find the Benin savages using with familiarity and success a complicated method which satisfied the fastidious eye of the best artists of the Italian Renaissance." How shocking to the cultural evolutionist! Read valued the pieces chiefly because they constituted a collection, "so large and various as to furnish a complete history of the dress, weapons, and ceremonies of the Benin natives."

Officials at the museum were now eager to make sure that they could keep permanently the bronzes presently on exhibit. E. Maude Thompson wrote a personal letter to Salisbury on December 28th, noting that the "remarkable collection" had excited interest from the general public as well as the scientific community. "This interest" he said

"is caused by the unusual and unexpected style of the art, and by the rarity of objects of any kind from the city of Benin. The collection now deposited here shows that at some former time there was in Benin a highly developed art of modelling and casting of metal though the decline of the kingdom during the last hundred years would appear to have led to the abandonment of such crafts. The
He further commented that he understood the show was to continue until January and that in the meantime he was to choose those which he wanted for the Museum's permanent collection, returning the others to the Crown Agents "to be sold for the benefit of the Niger Coast Protectorate". He informed the Prime Minister that he had made his selection and that it included two hundred plaques. "The trustees consider these objects of sufficient interest", he informed Salisbury, "to make them the subject of an official publication to be issued shortly in which the property of the Museum will be figured. For this reason it is important to have your Lordship's confirmation of the understanding above mentioned, in order that the publication may be proceeded with, and I have therefore to ask if your Lordship will be pleased to authorize the Trustees to retain the desired selection."

Francis Bertie replied for Salisbury that the Foreign Office had no objection. It would, however, like to know when the remainder of the plaques would be returned to the Crown Agents, and would also like to have six copies of the proposed publication. Thompson, in turn, assured Bertie that six copies of the book would be sent, and that the panels would be sent to the Crown Agents on or about the 25th of January. On February 8th the Crown Agents informed the Foreign Office that they had delivered the 104 expected bronze plaques. What
should they do with them?" 37 "Mr. C. H. Read," one of the Crown Agents said, "of the British Museum has suggested that private collectors and foreign museums should be allowed to purchase some of these bronzes and has offered to advise as to the prices which should be required in each case. And with the Secretary of State's approval we propose to dispose of the bronzes accordingly." The Secretary of State approved. Pricing of the objects and arranging the sale took some time. At the end of April, Blake from the Crown Agents wrote again to the Foreign Office announcing the arrival of eleven more bronzes with no instructions as to their disposal. 38 Read had looked at the new arrivals and selected two. The remaining nine, Blake reported, "we would propose to dispose of in the manner authorized in your letter of the 22 February."

Meanwhile, Ralph Moor now back in London, had gone to the Foreign Office apparently to bestow gifts of Benin trophies upon various officials who had been involved in planning the punitive expedition. Someone had scribbled a note on the back of Blake's letter questioning Moor's right to distribute the loot as gifts. Then he crossed it out, adding "The question of the Benin bronzes presented by Sir R. Moor to members of the African Dept. ought not to be discussed on the back of a letter from the Crown Agents respecting other bronzes intended for account of the government. I regret that I was induced to make a minute on the subject...." 39 He had mistakenly assumed that all objects from Benin were to be handled as the 300 bronze
plaques had been. "If Sir R. Moor," he further noted, "made a present to certain members of the Foreign Office of bronzes which personally belonged to him, I do not see that any decision is required. If that is not so", he continued, "or if there is any doubt on the subject, there should be a minute stating the circumstances and Sir R. Moor's opinion as to his right of property and presentation, in order that Lord Salisbury's decision may be obtained." He concluded "I do not know what Sir R. Moor's 'share of the loot' means exactly—but it does not sound as if it could be quoted to the Auditor General of the House of Commons."

The whole question of the rights of looting had not hitherto been examined. The fortuitous appearance of Ralph Moor giving out trophies coinciding with the disposal of the declared official booty, had raised the question. A search was ordered by the Foreign Office to see just what the regulations regarding looting were. On May 7th a lawyer at the Foreign Office, Mr. Clarke, reported on his findings. 40

"The Naval Prize Regulations (Navy List - p. 769) which, at least so far as the Naval Brigade was concerned, should properly be applicable to the Benin Expedition do not unfortunately say anything about captures by land and have therefore no bearing on the matter.

Army Prize forms the subject of a voluminous Blue Book issued in 1864 which contains amongst other matter a scale of the various amounts of prize money receivable by officers and men of all ranks from a commander in chief to a bugler. The regulations however, to be found there, including a Treasury Minute, seem to contemplate only operations on a large scale; and something more germane to the matter in hand may perhaps be found in a remark in a letter from the Secretary to Chelsea Hospital by whom all questions of prize, etc., are dealt with to the effect
that "sometimes after the capture of small quantities of booty the General Officer commanding takes on himself to distribute it on the spot, a practice which is irregular but not inconvenient."

The foregoing remarks show however beyond all question that the principle of prize or booty has been recognized for years; and that there need be no fear lest, supposing the matter brought before the House of Commons or the Auditor General, either of these authorities should find subject for remark in the fact of Sir R. Moor having had a share of the booty taken at the capture of Benin."

Not content with Mr. Clarke's admirable summation of British policy in the matter, the Foreign Office requested Sir Ralph, no doubt to his great embarrassment, to submit a memorandum regarding the bronzes in order to close the issue. Moor did so on June 9, 1898. He told of the arrival of the troops into the city, of Rawson's decision to place him in charge of all objects of value found in the city, and of his decision to forbid looting. He went on to describe how the objects were collected together in one place, the officers choosing each a trophy, and of the subsequent local sales. "I may mention," he commented, "that the stories of Benin City's stores of ivory and wealth were found to be of the fairy description, and such new ivory as the King possessed was I found in September last, got away by the Natives and never recovered and I did not think it wise to attempt its recovery." Moor mentioned that eight or nine bronzes had been given to the African Department on the same principle that trophies had been distributed to those officers actively involved. He concluded, "I may mention that Her Majesty the Queen was
graciously pleased to accept some trophies of the operations sent through Lord Salisbury—and I believe that His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales and the First Lord of the Admiralty also accepted trophies sent by Rear Admiral Sir H. H. Rawson. "Clement Hill commented dryly, "quite satisfactory". 

The Crown Agents went ahead with the sale of the remaining bronzes. Charles Read informed Von Luschan of the event and the German acquired thirty-two plaques for the Berlin Museum, others going to a private German collector, Dr. Hans Meyer, for the Leipzig Museum. General Pitt-Rivers heard of the sale and was allowed to choose before the general public. Later, in commenting on his own collection of more than 300 pieces from Benin, Pitt-Rivers criticized government policy. They had as usual taken no anthropological authority along on the expedition who could have given a clue as to the use of the objects after seeing them in place. The natives had proven worthless as suppliers of information. H. Ling Roth, brother to Dr. Felix Roth, and himself an anthropologist, also criticized British policy. While he complimented Pitt-Rivers on his speed in buying up what he could, he castigated the government for letting so many pieces slip out of the country into the hands of the Germans. Charles Read, he said, had been hampered by "want of proper pecuniary support", as a result:

"Not only was the national institution thus deprived of its lawful acquisitions, but at the same time another government department sold for a few hundred pounds a large number of castings which had cost thousands to obtain, as well as much blood of our countrymen." 

The Germans, by contrast, had demonstrated alertness.
'"For many years", Roth exclaimed, "the Germans have foreseen that the study of native races and their development, a study known to us under the awkward name of Anthropology, is essential to every civilized community which trades with, or is called upon to govern native communities, and with their characteristic throughness they have become leaders in a branch of science in which the Americans alone have been able to equal them...."46

German ethnologists could obtain money from their government, and when that ran out, from their Kaiser, and when that was finished, from German industry. So could the Americans. By contrast, the British did not even try to raise money. Clearly, in Roth's mind, the British lagged behind. He felt the study of native races essential in order to govern them well, and to avoid bloodshed. Furthermore, he believed they were disappearing all too rapidly, if not literally as the Tasmanians had done. "....The West African will never be wiped off the face of the earth", he concluded, "but intercourse with the white man alters his beliefs, ideas, customs, and technology, and proper records of these should be made before we destroy them."47 Alas, his sensitivity came too late to help Benin.

By the end of 1898 the cognoscenti knew a fair amount about Benin. But the king lived in exile in Old Calabar; the art of centuries had been dispersed across Europe; and the kingdom was no longer independant.
NOTES: CHAPTER FIVE


3. The original of this telegram is in Admiral Rawson's Daybook, believed to be in the archives in Lagos. Mr. Picton, assistant to the head of the Ethnography Department, British Museum kindly provided this information.

4. F. O. 83/1610, Moor to F. O., 9 June, 1898.


6. Ibid.

7. Ibid., E. Maude Thompson of British Museum to Crown Agents, 2 April, 1897.

8. Illustrated London News, Special Supplement on Benin, March 27, 1897.

9. Ibid., April 10, 1897.

10. Ibid.


12. Ibid., endorsement on letter.

13. Ibid., added in holograph to letter on separate sheet.


17. This is according to Mr. Picton at the British Museum.

18. 83/1610, Moor to Foreign Office, 9 June, 1898.


20. Ibid.

21. Ibid., p. 8. He does not mention the year but other evidence suggests that it was the summer of 1897.

22. Ibid., p. 8.


25. The Times, Sept. 25, 1897.


27. The Times, Sept. 25, 1897.

28. Ibid.


31. Ibid., p. 362.

32. Ibid., p. 372.

33. Ibid.

34. F. O. 83/1539, E. Maude Thompson to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 28 December, 1897.


36. Ibid., Thompson to Lord Salisbury, 22 Jan., 1898.

38. F. O. 83/1606, Crown Agents to Foreign Office, 30 April, 1898.
39. Ibid., holograph note on back of letter.
40. Ibid., memo by Clarke, dated 7 May, 1898.
41. F. O. 83/1610, Moor to Foreign Office, 9 June, 1898.
42. Ibid., endorsement.
46. Ibid., p. xix.
47. Ibid.
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