

JOHN HILL'S ACCOUNT OF LIFE ON GOREE ISLAND  
1807-1808

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Bathurst in The Gambia was founded by Captain Alexander Grant who came from Gorée with a detachment of the African Corps. He sailed from Gorée on 19 March 1816, with Ensign Adamson, an assistant surgeon, fifty men of the African Corps and twenty-four artisans. He landed at Banyon Point on Banjul Island, and felt that this would be a better place to establish a settlement rather than rebuild on James Island, which was somewhat distant from the mouth of the river. He approached the king (mansa) of the Kombo who agreed to cede Banjul, his country having been raided recently by Spanish slave traders.

Some of the merchants who settled in Bathurst had previously been in Gorée - William Waterman, Edward Lloyd, and Charles Johnson had been in Gorée in 1806. John Wynne arrived in Gorée in 1811. Charles Grant, a cousin of Alexander Grant had also been in government service in Gorée. William Foster, who headed one of the leading firms in Bathurst- Foster and Smith - had started trade in Gorée. Thomas Chown came a few years later. Thomas Joiner, who had been carried off as a slave to America, had purchased his freedom and set up trade in Gorée before 1810, and had been trading in the Upper Gambia .

[Following J.M.Gray: A History of the Gambia, 1940, 299, 309-310.]

So the account of Gorée in 1807-08 shows an interesting light on the people who later founded the settlement on The Gambia.

## INTRODUCTION

In the course of research in July 1973 Patricia Wilson came across John Hill's Diary and a Wolof vocabulary, and subsequently located and linked up three later vocabularies in two other archives. In spite of ill health and lack of funds, she carried out a remarkable piece of research, tracking down and putting together the information relating to Hill's life.

As I had some knowledge of Wolof she asked me to evaluate the vocabularies. I did some preliminary work on them in 1973-74, but our joint work was never brought to completion. Patricia Wilson had to concentrate on her Ph.D. thesis, and after this her field of interest switched from West Africa to China. She became resident in Beijing for a while with the result that correspondence became very sporadic.

On a visit to West Africa in 1979 I spent a day on Gorée, but had no opportunity to carry out research on archival material.

Later, in 1986, while in The Gambia, I had Alhaji Hassan Njie of Radio Gambia record on cassettes two of the vocabularies and sentence lists, so that I could test out Hill's accuracy, and compare his material with Gambian Wolof.

In 1990-91 I had been working on a dictionary of Gambian Wolof and my thoughts turned to earlier vocabularies. I unearthed Hill's material from storage, and began working through it afresh. But Hill, who received no credit for his work during his lifetime, and for more than a hundred and eighty years later, had come close to being consigned to oblivion again. On a visit to The Gambia in 2004, I tried to solve the mystery of some of the remaining words, but was able to clarify only two or three words.

Professor George Brooks of the History Department of Indiana University who knows the history of Gorée well, and has written extensively on the signares, is to be thanked for providing a number of useful references to people mentioned in Hill's Diary.

We hope that those who read this material and have knowledge of Gorée or Freetown will let us know if they come across any further references to John Hill, or other people he mentions, in either printed or manuscript sources.

David P. Gamble

May 2005

## THE LIFE OF JOHN HILL

This is a biographical history without certain dates for his birth or his death. He was unimportant in his lifetime, but has emerged from the past as a result of a series of fortunate chances, and his manuscripts provide fascinating, though at times frustrating, material, and one of the earliest extensive vocabularies of the Wolof language.

### John Hill: his early years.

His birthdate is not known. From a letter to Dr Adam Clarke, about whom more will be said later, John Hill wrote that, "Being bred, born & Educated in Edinburgh, the Scottish pronunciation is pretty familiar to me ..."<sup>1</sup>

A search through the parish registers at the General Register Office in Edinburgh produced two possibilities, one more probable than the other. Considering how many births went unregistered in the late 18th century, however, such a birth record being John Hill's can only be conjecture without further evidence.

Since John Hill went on a missionary voyage in 1798, he must have been born between about 1760 and 1778, as missionaries in those days were generally chosen from young men. Of the Hill families who produced sons named John in Edinburgh and recorded their births, there was one John Hill, a smith by profession, and his wife Ann. Under the registration dated Saturday, 9th March 1771, is the entry: "John Hill, Journeyman Smith in New North Kirk parish and Ann Smith his spouse a Son named John, witnesses James Adam and Andrew Finlay both Journeymen Smiths in Edr. the Child was born 1st Curt." The main reason for considering this as John Hill's possible birth date is not only is the year a suitable one, but also he himself became a smith. Such trades and crafts often ran in families.<sup>2</sup>

If this indeed was his birth and these were his parents, the records show that there were other older children as a result of this union. There was a daughter, Janet, born on the 8th December, 1759; a son, James, born on 22nd March, 1762; a daughter, Margaret, born on 13th May, 1764; a daughter, Elizabeth, born on 15th February, 1767; and finally a son John<sup>3.</sup> on 1st March, 1771.

The other possible birth date is that of John Hill on 25th April, 1767. The father John Hill was by profession a "Workman" and the mother was Rachel Waugh. Both witnesses were also workmen, called Alexander Grey and James Hill. The birth was registered at the Tolbooth parish on 29th April, 1767. However, the father's profession makes it more likely that this is not the John Hill we are concerned with.<sup>4.</sup>

Of his early years little is known, but Hill wrote that he was educated in Edinburgh. He was a literate and in some respects a well-read man, yet whether this was the result of an early education, or education received while undergoing missionary training, or self-education, is not stated. He wrote in his letter to Dr. Clarke that he had been "brought up to the Art of Edge Tool Making". Thus he learned the trade of a smith, possibly from his father.<sup>5.</sup>

From various missionary documents, it is stated that John Hill was married to a wife named Mary. In the recorded Edinburgh Marriages for 1751-1800, there is the following entry: "Hill/Lugton Edinburgh 4th January 1798. John Hill, Smith, and Mary Lugton, both in High Church parish Daughter of George Lugton, Gentleman's Servant, Edinburgh."<sup>6</sup>  
This would almost certainly be his marriage entry.

1. Letter of John Hill to Dr. Adam Clarke, George Town (= Freetown), Sierra Leone, September 28th, 1809, B.M. Egerton MSS 933.
2. "London Missionary Society: A register of missionary deputations, etc. from 1796-1896," J.O. Whitehouse, London, 1896, p. 9.  
Parochial Registers, Co. of Edinburgh, 1769-1771, 685/33, p. 27 in General Register Office, Edinburgh.
3. Parochial Registers, op.cit., 1759-1761, 685/30, p. 102.  
1762-1765, 685/31, pp. 28, 264.  
1766-1768, 685/32, p. 127.
4. " " op. cit. 1766-1768, 685/32, p. 151.
5. Letter of John Hill to Dr. Adam Clarke, op. cit.
6. Copy of a Diary of J. L. Vardy, Dec. 19th, 1798- Feb. 5th, 1799, L.M.S. Archives, Journals, South Seas, 1796-1803.  
This is the only source which mentions Mrs Hill's name as Mary.

Other sources include: W. Gregory, "A Visible Display of Divine Providence..." London, 1800 ;

Typescript of Journal of William Soddy, Nov. 1798-Oct. 1799, Baptist Missionary Archives.

Register of Proclamations and Marriages, 1751-1800, General Register Office, Edinburgh.



### John Hill and the Edinburgh Missionary Society

As a result of evangelical zeal, missionary societies had been founded in the main cities and towns of Britain, with the London Missionary Society as the most influential, commencing in 1795. In Scotland the most prominent ones were at Edinburgh and Glasgow, the former having been founded in 1796. In that same year, the London Missionary Society organized the sailing of a ship carrying missionaries to the South Sea Islands. The ship "Duff" returned after a successful voyage, and so it was decided in 1798 to send it on a second one. The Edinburgh Missionary Society became involved in this way: "In this second attempt to carry the gospel to more remote isles of the sea, this Society was invited to bear a part, and with pleasure they embraced the opportunity of again co-operating with their much esteemed brethren in  
1  
England."

According to "The Missionary Magazine", the proposal to send Edinburgh missionaries was put forward at the Quarterly Meeting of the Edinburgh Society on 25th September, 1798. A letter from Rev. Ewing, Secretary of the E.M.S. was read at the Board Meeting of the London Missionary Society, on 4th October, in which it was stated that they had "three Missionaries, two of them possessing medical knowledge, and one an edge tool maker, whom they had some thoughts of sending out in the Duff..." In the Board Minutes of 29th October, another letter from Rev. Ewing was read, naming the Edinburgh missionaries as "Mr John Beattie, and Mr John Hill, married persons, and Mr. Greig who is engaged and wishes to marry." The London Society was prepared to accept them, but as all the berths for married people were fixed, it would only be with great difficulty that Mr. Greig and  
2  
a wife could be taken.

How John Hill first became involved with the Edinburgh Missionary Society is not known. The fragments that remain about the Society are few. John and Mary Hill must have undergone rigorous scrutiny and a

missionary training before being regarded as both suitable and ready for the field. Some of the criteria required of the candidates by the Society may be seen from the following Abstract of 20th July, 1797. It stated that, "In the choice of missionaries, it is the wish of the Society to employ none but those who are 'of the truth', and who seem fitted for that important part of Christian service. Much caution is therefore necessary. They always expect a candidate to be recommended, from personal knowledge, by a member of the Society, or some well known Christian. The moral character of candidates is an object of enquiry equally essential with  
3  
that of their knowledge and apparent godliness."

His training with the Society was lengthy, though how long is not stated and with the other missionaries cost £65l. 11. 11. They were also "fitted out" for the voyage from this sum, though what that entailed is not enlarged upon. On 8th November, 1798, "John Hill, and John Beattie, two Missionaries from the Edinburgh Missionary Society, set off for London..." accompanied by a Mr Macdonald from the missionary society at Perth. It is not stated whether or not Mary Hill accompanied him on the journey; it is  
4  
possible therefore that she travelled to London later.

Thus John Hill left Edinburgh, regarded by the Society as a pious and able missionary. On arrival in London, the missionaries were looked after by the London Society, for over a month was to elapse before they would embark on the ship. According to "The Missionary Magazine", on November 13th, all the missionaries were "solemnly designated to their important work at Spofield Chapel." A few days later, on 20th November, four of the missionaries were ordained at Surry Chapel, and among these was John Hill. Among the ministers who officiated were Rev. Rowland Hill and Mr Waugh and Mr Howell. It is not stated, however, what denomination he was ordained; possibly it was as an independent.

Further information can be obtained from a letter published anonymously in "The Missionary Magazine." It was written by one of the Edinburgh missionaries, and was dated 22nd November, 1798. In this it is explained that, "Last week our brethren were all called upon to speak from a passage of scripture before the Directors; and their gifts and knowledge being tried in this matter, four of them were chosen to be ordained to the office of the ministry; among them is brother Hill... These four are to administer the ordinances to the brethren on the voyage, and after they arrive at the place of their destination, and they are to be empowered to ordain any others of the brethren, whom they find qualified either by way or afterwards."

That John Hill was chosen out of all the missionaries to be ordained says as much for his ability as an orator or preacher, as for his religious knowledge. His journals and his letters reveal a man with an ability to observe details, or recount events in an interesting manner. His facility with words and his lively style must have impressed the Committee of the London Society. Certainly he was felt to be a man above the average and more able than the majority of his fellow missionaries. It was for John Hill and his wife an auspicious beginning to their new lives as missionaries.

There were other gatherings of the missionaries in London, and then on 14th December, 1798, they embarked at Portsmouth for the ship "Duff",  
 7  
 the ship leaving on 20th December.

1. J.O.Whitehouse, op. cit. "The Missionary Magazine", 1796.  
"Report of the Directors of the Edinburgh Missionary Society..July 1799." p. 49.
2. "The Missionary Magazine", no. xxix, 15th October, 1798, p. 475 .  
London Missionary Society Archives, Board Minutes 2, 1798-1801, 4th October, 1798, p. 65; 29th October, 1798, p. 68.
3. "Abstract of the Proceedings and State of the Funds of the Edinburgh Missionary Society 20th July, 1797," p. 3.
4. "Abstract or General View of the Funds of the Edinburgh Missionary Society from commencement in March 1796, to 26th March, 1799", in "Report", op. cit., p. 57.  
  
"The Missionary Magazine," no. xxx, 19th November, 1798, p. 522.
5. "The Missionary Magazine," no. xxxi, 17th December, 1798, pp. 569-570.  
  
"The Evangelical Magazine," December, 1798, pp. 509-510.
6. "The Missionary Magazine," no. xxxiv, 18th March, 1799, p. 113.
- &. Journal of John Hill, Mildmay Papers, 15M50/1574, Hampshire Record Office.  
  
Typescript Journal of William Soddy, op.cit., p. 5.  
  
Copy of Diary of J.L. Vardy, op. cit.  
  
W. Gregory, op. cit.  
  
"The Missionary Magazine", no. xxxii, January 21st, 1799, pp. 38-48.  
  
"The Evangelical Magazine," January, 1799, pp. 38-39.

The Voyage of the ship "Duff"

Apart from the sources already mentioned for the missionary voyage, there are also the reports and papers of the London Missionary Society and extracts from "The Missionary Magazine". The only printed book by one of the missionaries is that of William Gregory, already referred to. In his title, he includes the following: "...with Extracts compiled from the Journals of Messrs, Rev. Peter Levesque, Rev. John Hill, James Jones, John Levesque, and other Missionaries captured in the Duff." From this it is clear that John Hill kept a journal, which Gregory consulted and extracts from it are printed in the book.

The journal in the Hampshire Record Office is very fragmented and disjointed. It begins with the missionary voyage in December, 1799, but records this for less than a month. The rest of the journal is concerned with various aspects of his later life which will be described later. Reviewing its wide and varied scope, this journal must have been used by Hill more as a rough notebook in which to jot down events or ideas for enlargement at some future date. Since Gregory in his book quotes from Hill's journal passages which are concerned with all of the missionary voyage and not just the first three weeks, John Hill must have kept a second diary fuller than that at Winchester, or recorded the events of the voyage in retrospect for Gregory.

The fragment journal in existence was begun on 14th December, 1798, with the embarkation of the missionaries from Portsmouth. Immediately John Hill noted the complaints about their accommodation, since the married people had very inconvenient berths, not allowing the women any privacy to dress. Both morning and night the men had to wait on deck while the women changed. Also some berths were seven feet from the ground. The situation was improved when new cabins were constructed for the married couples between the decks, and single men were put in the

quarters originally intended for the families.

On 19th December, the missionaries chose a Committee by ballot. Their Captain, Captain Robson, was made the President for the duration of the voyage. The other standing member was the Rev. Howell. Two married men and three single missionaries were chosen, but they were to be replaced each week by alphabetical rotation. John Hill was voted to be one of the married men on this first Committee, which could be an indication of the esteem in which his fellow missionaries held him. Decisions were also made about services and preachers. In order that the women could hold prayer meetings also, Captain Robson offered them his cabin for the purpose. John Hill recorded that, "...there were only two out of then ten who did not spurn at it, and treat it with the utmost contempt and ridicule !!! and those women who expressed a desire of enjoying the privileges were stigmatized in a manner very unworthy the name of Christian Missionary." Although he does not state that Mary Hill was one of the two women wishing to accept Captain Robson's offer, his mentioning the incident, and Mary Hill's piety, would make it likely that she was one of the two. It also is an indication of the disunity that could prevail among any large body of people, regardless of their being missionaries.

According to Hill, bad weather forced the ship to put into Weighmouth the next day. The sight of the ship apparently caused a stir, as "Many hundreds of People came flocking to a small Hill by the beach to feast their eyes upon a vessel which they verily believed was chartered by heaven to bear the Saviours Name to distant climes !" The townsfolk even expressed their envy of the missionaries. Had they foreseen what was in store for the ship, they would have felt otherwise. Preparations were made to set sail again, but the weather became so rough that soon all the missionaries except John Hill were sea-sick.

During the storm, Hill and two other married missionaries "went to the cabins of the sick & prayed & read the Scriptures" and generally encouraged all to be resigned to the will of God. Hill noted in his journal the sentiment which gave him comfort during the storm - a small four-lined verse. Once better weather was established on 29th<sup>2</sup> December, the missionaries once again settled down to their affairs.

Yet it was not the perilous weather which was to wreck the planned voyage to the South Seas, but the danger of foreign naval interference. Captain Robson decided on 1st January, 1799, to dispense with a naval escort, since it was slowing up progress. Hill recorded that the Captain observed that more than ever they should give themselves up "to God for protection and safety, which we professedly did by prayers!" Fresh anxiety was caused on 3rd January, 1799, by the sighting of a sailing ship, possibly hostile. Hill wrote that, "We entertained some fears of her being a Cruizer from her formidable appearance..." The ship, however, proved to be the friendly Letter of Marque from Philadelphia. The "Duff" sailed past Madeira and Palma uneventually. Then a grievance arose over the lack of fresh provisions, and so a meeting was called to discuss this, and a menu for the week decided upon. The fare was very monotonous, consisting of salt pork or beef, with either pease soup, pease pudding or potatoes. At this meeting several resolutions were also passed concerning the welfare of the missionaries during the voyage. It was with the discussion of these that Hill's Journal, as preserved in Winchester, ends<sup>3</sup> abruptly on 8th January, 1799.

On 29th January, the island destinations of the missionaries in the South Seas was finalized, John and Mary Hill were to go to the Marquesas, in company with two other married men. These were none other than the two Edinburgh missionaries, John Beattie and George Greig. There were<sup>4</sup> two of the single men also designated there. The voyage passed without

much occurrence until 19th February, when the "Duff" was apprehended by a French ship, "Le Grand Buonaparte", under the command of a Captain Carbonell. The families were split up between the two ships and with the "Duff" in tow they headed for Montevideo. During this time, according to Gregory, "Mrs Hill was at times very much afflicted with sickness." Montevideo was reached on 12th March, but the missionaries were kept on board the ships for a few days until they were allowed to go ashore on 23rd March. The shock of having been captured on their voyage of missionary intent must have deeply disturbed them. The Directors of the London Missionary Society were meanwhile quite ignorant of the fate of their missionaries, and to send dispatches to London and await a reply might take months, if they ever got to their destinations. Thus the missionaries ashore at Montevideo had to decide their own future.



1. Journal of John Hill, Mildmay Papers, op. cit.  
Typescript Journal of William Soddy, op. cit., pp. 5-6.  
Copy of Diary of J.L. Vardy, op. cit., pp. 4-5.  
W. Gregory, op. cit., p. 2 ff.  
"The Missionary Magazine", no. xxxii, 21st January, 1799, pp. 38-47.  
"The Evangelical Magazine", January, 1799, pp. 38-39.

For another disunited missionary group, cf. the London Missionary Society mission to the Fula (Fulbe), as described by C. Fyfe in his book "A History of Sierra Leone", O.U.P. 1962, p. 75.

2. Journal of John Hill, op.cit.
3. Journal of John Hill, op. cit.
4. Typescript Journal of William Soddy, op, cit., p. 14.  
Copy of Diary of J.L. Vardy, op. cit., pp. 24-25.  
W. Gregory, op. cit., p. 12.
5. Typescript Journal of William Soddy, op. cit., pp. 17-20.  
W. Gregory, op. cit., p. 76.

Letter of Thomas Robson to Directors of London Missionary Society, at sea, the Rock of Lisbon, 21st September, 1799, LMS Archives.  
Home Office Box I, 1795-1800, Folder 8 Jacket A.

6. Typescript Journal of William Soddy, op. cit., pp. 29-38.  
W. Gregory, op.cit., pp. 60-113.  
Letter of Captain Robson to Directors of London Missionary Society, op. cit.

The weeks in South America and their second voyage.

They remained in South America for just a few weeks, during which time they were able to recover from their ordeal and regain their morale. By the end of March a house owned by a Senor Vascers in a valley near Montevideo was found for the families. This was imperative because two of the women, Mrs Gregory and Mrs Jones, were in an advanced state of pregnancy. Mrs Hill delivered the Gregory child by herself on 31st March. Gregory mentioned Mary Hill frequently in his book and seemed to have thought highly of her. He also appears to have been quite friendly with John Hill, as he records several occasions when they spent time together. The child of Mrs Jones was born in April, though it is not stated if Mrs Hill assisted at this birth, though it is likely that she did.

Meanwhile the ship "Duff" was sold and Captain Robson was offered another, the "Postillahio d'Amerique". At a meeting of the missionaries on 21st April, 1799, it was resolved to accept the offer, and a change in their planned voyage to the South Seas was proposed. Instead of continuing the voyage as before, they would sail to the Cape of Good Hope, or failing that to Sierra Leone, "and see if a door was opened to make a farther attempt in propagating the Gospel among the Africans or assist the Brethren already settled in that place or wait till called to proceed to the South Seas."

The missionaries were obviously very uncertain as to God's will regarding their South Seas mission, yet why did they choose South or West Africa as alternatives, and why did they simply not return to Britain? These questions can only be partly answered because there is no evidence on this. The London Missionary Society had missionaries based at the Cape of Good Hope and Sierra Leone, George Greig being a brother of one of these. Perhaps they did not wish to return home because they still wished to be

useful and active in the mission field. Those supporting the motion to go to Africa included John and Mary Hill. Though the ship never reached there, it is ironical that the Hills should find themselves at Sierra Leone some years later.<sup>1</sup>

Preparations to leave were made. On 7th May, the missionaries returned to Montevideo, and embarked the following day. Captain Robson wrote that the missionaries had so enjoyed their weeks in South America that some of them would gladly have stayed and their leaving was with some reluctance. The ship left port on 9th May heading for the African coast. In less than a month the ship was captured, this time by a Portuguese Commodore commanding a large ship of seventy-four guns and a frigate. Again, the captive missionaries were divided up among the three ships, though the accounts vary as to which one the Hills were on, so possibly they were moved about.<sup>2</sup>

The treatment on the Commodore's ship the "Meduza" was bad, and the men on board signed a letter complaining of this. The signatures included that of John Hill. The women suffered also and Mrs Hill was "much indisposed". Mrs Hill was again called upon to act as a midwife. Why she should be chosen from all the women for this service is not known, but it leads to the possibility that she had had some degree of training or experience in nursing or midwifery. On 2nd August, Mrs. Greig one of the Edinburgh missionaries, was in labour, and her husband asked the Commodore if he might send for Mrs. Hill. This was at first refused, but when he agreed and the boat brought Mrs Hill, it was too late and Mrs Greig had been delivered of a daughter, who died. At this Mrs Hill wrote a letter expressing her faith in the will of God, from which Gregory quotes in his book. According to Soddy, John Hill went to join his wife the next morning, but the Commodore "was greatly offended and would not permit him to go into the Cabin to speak to his wife..." Thus the missionaries

were subjected not only to privations, but also unnecessary mental stress.

The ships became becalmed and money was collected to pay a priest on board to pray for wind. John Hill, never very warm in his appreciation of Roman Catholicism, commented scathingly, "How insulting to the common understanding of man, as well as dishonourable to God." At the end of August, Mrs Hill was requested to help another Edinburgh missionary wife in her delivery. When on 12th September, Mrs Beattie had still not given birth to a child, Mrs Hill returned to the "Meduza". 4.

Lisbon was reached by 21st September, and here it transpired that Mary Hill was herself pregnant. She began to feel labour pains and so her husband asked if he could send for Dr Turner, a surgeon missionary. This being refused, Hill asked if they could go ashore. When the Commodore would not permit this, Mrs Hill became very distressed, pleading to be allowed to leave the ship, so that finally the Commodore agreed. In her state she found great difficulty in descending from the high ship. Ashore, Hill had to take the first lodging-place he could find, which turned out to be a public inn. The following day he went to Dr Turner to assist Mary Hill and "at half-past ten o'clock at night, Tuesday the 24th, she was delivered of a dead child." In a letter Captain Robson stated that the baby was premature, which is not surprising considering the strain of the voyage. Hill and a fellow missionary, Broughton, buried the baby boy, "near the remains of the worthy Dr Doddridge", presumably in a Protestant cemetery. It must have been a bitter disappointment to lose their first son thus, but John Hill, while not revealing his own feelings, wrote that his wife "was enabled to acquiesce in what it had pleased the Lord to do and said, It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth good in his sight, and that the Lord would be better to her than ten sons."

After the birth, Mary Hill became seriously ill, so that her death seemed likely. A gentleman resident in Lisbon sent his physician to attend to Mrs Hill and with proper medical treatment she began to recover. She was still too unwell to travel home with the rest of the missionaries on 4th October, and Mrs Hughes, one of the wives, was also very ill. Thus Captain Robson, the Hills and Mr and Mrs Hughes remained behind. By 12th October Mrs Hill had recovered sufficiently to start the journey to England, and the Hills were accompanied by Captain Robson. Mrs Hughes died later in October, and then her husband also returned. Her death was the only adult<sup>6</sup> fatality despite all the rigours of the past year.

Many of the missionaries ceased their connection with the London Missionary Society when they reached home. As a result of the series of misadventures that had befallen them, they believed that God's will was against such missions. Likewise when John and Mary Hill reached London on 12th November, they too resigned from the Society. This was noted in the minutes thus: "Mr Hill appeared & stated his design of retiring from<sup>7</sup> the Miss: work" and it was dated 18th November 1799.

Although his formal connection with the Society had ended, John Hill's name appears in the minutes again. At a meeting of the Directors on 13th October, 1890, almost a year after his resignation, it is written that, "Mr Wilke having stated that Mr Hill one of the Missionaries that had returned home after the capture of the Duff was in very straitened Circumstances and had applied for some further assistance, it was Resolved that the sum of £10 be allowed him."<sup>8</sup>

It is not stated where he was residing at this point; possibly he was in London; or perhaps he was in Edinburgh, but if there he would have been in a position to seek assistance from his former colleagues or family. In "The Missionary Magazine" for December, 1799, it was reported that "Mess. Broughton, Miller, and Beattie, who made part of the intended

Mission to Otaheite, are returned to Edinburgh..." There is no mention in later editions of the Hills returning there, but that does not exclude the possibility, for it is very likely that they would wish to see their families and friends in Scotland.

9.

The entry in the minutes for 1800, is the first indication found that John Hill was in severe financial difficulties. One of the sad features of his life, few as the details are as yet, was that his financial problems were a constant anxiety.

Both the manuscript and printed extracts of John Hill's journal of the voyage reveal a pious individual, who indulged in the expression of religious sentiments by verse and quotations. His later manuscript journal entries are very different and preoccupied more with his secular life, though periodically an interest in religious activity re-occurs.

1. Typescript Journal of William Soddy, op. cit., pp. 39-46.  
W. Gregory, op. cit., pp. 115-167.  
Letter of Captain Robson to Directors, London Missionary Society, op. cit.  
"The Missionary Magazine", no. xl, 16th September, 1799, pp. 420-432,  
no. xli, 21st October, 1799, pp. 470-475.
2. Typescript Journal of William Soddy, op. cit., pp. 50-52.  
W. Gregory, op.cit., pp. 197-220.  
Letter of Captain Robson to Directors, London Missionary Society, op. cit.
3. Typescript Journal of William Soddy, op.cit., pp. 54-66.  
W. Gregory, op. cit., pp. 228-241.  
Letter of Captain Robson to Directors of London Missionary Society,  
op. cit.
4. Typescript Journal of William Soddy, op.cit., pp. 72-74.  
W. Gregory, op.cit., pp. 245-6, 261-8.
5. Typescript Journal of William Soddy, op. cit., pp. 79-81.  
W. Gregory, op. cit., pp. 275, 278-9.  
Letter of Captain Robson to Directors of London Missionary Society,  
op. cit.
6. Typescript Journal of William Soddy, op.cit., p. 81.  
W. Gregory, op.cit., pp. 283-290, 294.  
Letter of Captain Robson to Directors of London Missionary Society,  
op. cit.  
"The Missionary Magazine", no xlii, 18th November, 1799, pp. 512-515.  
no. xlii, 16th December, 1799, pp. 561-2.  
"The Evangelical Magazine", November 1777, pp. 470-73.  
London Missionary Society Archives, Board Minutes 2, 1798-1801,  
16th October, 1799, pp. 128-29.  
Letter of J. Hardcastle, W. Shrubsole, & J. Eyre, London to Rev. D.  
Vanderkemp, Cape of Good Hope, LMS Archives, South Africa I,  
1797-1801, Folder 2, Jacket c.  
J.O. Whitehouse, op. cit. p. 9.
7. London Missionary Society Archives, Committee Minutes Candidates  
(Examination) I, Book I, May 27th, 1799-June 10th, 1816, p. 19  
J.O. Whitehouse, op.cit., pp. 7-11.  
London Missionary Society Archives, Historical Note by T.E.Soddy,  
Journals I, South Seas 1796-1803.
8. London Missionary Society Archives, Board Minutes 2, 1798-1801,  
13th October, 1800.
9. "The Missionary Magazine", no. xliii, 16th December, 1799, p. 562.

John Hill and the Sierra Leone Company.

From October, 1800 until March, 1806, there is no reference so far found about John Hill. In 1800 he was in a difficult financial position with a wife to support. Without any evidence, it is impossible to conjecture what he did in the intervening years to earn a living and where he was living.

In the Church Missionary Society Archives, there is a letter from John Hill dated 21st March, 1806. It is written from Freetown in Sierra Leone and addressed to a Mr Robert Ogle, a bookseller in London. In this letter Hill mentioned that he had little news, except that his wife was beginning to recover from a serious illness, which he regarded as a "mirical". He was in good health, but he felt that Mrs. Hill would have to return to Britain for health reasons, and if possible he would accompany her. There is no indication in the letter as to how long he had been in Sierra Leone. As it contains very few impressions or news, it is possible that he had been there for some months at least.

This letter intended for Mr Ogle, caused quite a stir in the Church Missionary Society, since John Hill added a paragraph of criticism about the missionaries in Freetown. They were, he wrote, "...still in a state of inactivity and standing as it were all day long in the Market Place! ...In short were the good people in England and other places aware to what little account their money was given for Missions to Africa and the East they would be more cautious how they gave it! Missions to this Coast  
1  
under present circumstances is a mere chimera...

John Hill's letter was brought to the notice of the Church Missionary Society during a Committee meeting of 2nd June, 1806. An enquiry was being made into the state of the colony at Sierra Leone and the progress of Christianity there. A printer, recently returned, remarked that one



of the missionaries was considered both weak and lazy. Zachery Macaulay, a director of the Sierra Leone Company, added that a letter had been written by a servant of the Company to Mr Ogle, the Bookseller in Turnstile, "wherein he particularly notices the present want of efficiency in Missionary attempts." The Society requested to see the letter and it was duly handed over to the Committee of Correspondence for consideration. Thus it was preserved by chance for posterity.

On 4th June, 1806, Hill's letter was read by the sub-committee, and it was interpreted as meaning that the general state of the country was unfavourable to missions. It was concluded that ".....the Committee did not think it necessary to enter further into the business." This motion<sup>2</sup> was adopted also by the general Committee, meeting five days later.

Hill's remarks about the missionaries not only preserved the letter, but also revealed that he was in the service of the Sierra Leone Company, which had been founded by an Act of Parliament in 1791. This the Rev. John Hill, a former missionary, had become an employee of a secular organization. What position he held was not mentioned by Zachary Macaulay, but this is shown in a list of Company servants in the Public Records Office. The list was dated 13th July, 1807, and signed by Macaulay. In this John Hill was<sup>3</sup> described as a clerk with a salary of £120 per annum.

Being a literate and able person, it would not have been so difficult for John Hill to find clerical employment, but how he came to join the Sierra Leone Company, or when, is not yet known. In the Church Missionary Society Archives, there is a letter to one of the missionaries from the Company, dated Freetown, 9th April, 1806. Beside the signatures there is inscribed, "Exd. J. Hill", which is an example of his clerical duties. This particular letter dealt with instructing a missionary to gather information about the spread of Islam in the Mandinka and Susu areas. It

also requested that the missionary find out "...the manner in which the Mandingoes both write & speak Arabic, & in what manner they accommodate the Arabic characters to the writing of their own or other tongues." Having had access to this and other communications, may later have enabled John Hill to begin collecting his own information in a systematic fashion.

Part of the fragmented journal in Hampshire Record Office contains a section devoted to Hill's accounts. The first of these is dated November, 1806. Since it contains items such as yams and rice, it is clear that Hill was still in West Africa. This is corroborated by his including three names: "To Scouring 4 Rooms by Mrs Dore" ; dinner at "Berdin's"; and a crossed-out reference to "Lucy Thornton". All these people were Nova Scotian settlers, who had come to Sierra Leone. According to his expenditure account his total for November, 1806 was in dollars 31.06, while his income was only 30 dollars. Thus even in Sierra Leone, he seemed to be having  
5  
financial problems.

The next page of accounts for November, 1806, was blank. The entry following was dated November, 1807. This is not, however, a mistake in date. A year elapsed before he continued his accounts in that notebook, but there is no certain explanation for this. There is, however, some evidence which suggests a plausible answer.

Fragments of information survive in the Public Records Office and Hull University Library. In the former, there is an extract from a surgeon's report for the Sierra Leone Company for the year 1807. In this it is mentioned that Walter Robertson, one of the employees, was sick and had been sent home having been ill since the autumn of 1806. It continues that it was also thought "...necessary for Mr Hill to return to Europe; he had suffered much from repeated Attacks of fever, affection of the Liver and Spleen; and at the time he left this place I was very apprehensive he would become  
6.  
dropsical."

When John Hill returned home is not stated, though it must have been between November, 1806, when his accounting stops, until August, 1807. In Hull University Library in the collection of papers of Thomas Perronet Thompson, there is a letter written by Zachary Macaulay to Thomas Ludlam at Sierra Leone, and it is dated London, 28th August, 1807. Macauley wrote that Robertson was better though still unable to use his hands. Referring to John Hill he said, "The Court of Directors have remitted to Mr. Hill, who is now pretty well, the balance of his Account, and have advanced him a little money for his present support till he can obtain employment." <sup>7</sup>

Thus it is evident that although John Hill was recovering from his illness, he was no longer in the employment of the Company. It can be assumed that he was paid off between the date of the list of servants of the Company, signed 13th July, 1807, and Macaulay's letter of 28th August. No reason was given for not continuing his employment, but perhaps it was because of his ill health. The Sierra Leone Company was also due to be liquidated and its holdings transferred to the Crown on 1st January, 1808. <sup>8</sup> Many who had worked for the Company transferred to government appointments.

It can be seen from Macaulay's letter, that John Hill was also in need of financial assistance. With such insecurity, it was necessary for Hill to find a means of support as soon as possible.

1. Letter of John Hill to Robert Ogle, Freetown, Sierra Leone, 21st March, 1806, CMS Archives, CAL/E1/42.
2. Committee Minutes I, vol. 1, from 15th April, 1799-3rd May, 1813, CMS Archives, G/C1, 2nd June, 1806, p. 223 ; 9th June, 1806, p. 325. Minutes of Sub-Committee, CMS Archives, GSC/1, 4th June, 1806, p. 42.
3. C. Fyfe, op. cit., p. 27. "A list of the Servants of the Sierra Leone Company at Sierra Leone with their Salaries", Z. Macaulay to E. Cooke, 13th July, 1807, PRO: WO/1/352.
4. Letter of Ludlam, Smith, & Vanneck to P. Hartwig, Freetown, 9th April, 1806, CMS Archives, CAL/E1/46.
5. Journal of John Hill, op. cit. References to Dore, Burden and Thornton are in PRO: WO/1/352 section above. Other references to Martha Burden are in the PRO and C. Fye, op. cit., p. 102. Lucy Thornton also appears in the CMS archives CAL/E2 as a subscriber to the Society from Oct., 1810-May, 1811.
6. Journal of John Hill, op. cit. "Extracts from Surgeon's Report 1807", PRO: CO/267/24. According to the List of Servants, the surgeon was W. A. Leedam.
7. Letter of Z. Macaulay to T. Ludlam, London, 28th. August, 1807, Hull University Library, DTH/1/2.
8. C. Fyfe, op. cit, p. 97.

John Hill's return to West Africa.

After a severe illness in Sierra Leone, which caused him to be repatriated, John Hill soon made the decision to return to West Africa. What prompted this is not known, though perhaps financial considerations were important. His life was preoccupied with the struggle to make ends meet, as his account pages are covered with sums and totals. Living in Britain his existence, if healthier, might be bleaker. In West Africa there was always the danger of a fatal illness and also the chance that he might be able to make a better life for himself. In his letters from West Africa, written between 1808-9, there is a constant attempt to solicit employment in a situation he would prefer. To these ends he worked, meanwhile accepting what employment he could.

Instead of returning to Sierra Leone, he made his choice a small island called Gorée, opposite Cape Verde and the town of Dakar. Why he chose this island can only be a matter of speculation. It is very likely that Hill stopped at Gorée on his passage to or from Sierra Leone, when employed by the Company. He himself records in 1808, meeting up with former Sierra Leone Company colleagues, whose ships stopped at the island. If Hill had visited Gorée briefly, then he might have formed a good impression of the place and surveyed the possibilities of settling there.

Another link, though less obvious at first than the above one, was through George Fraser of New City Chambers. In one of Hill's letters from Goree he stated that all communications from London should be directed to him through George Frazer. From the Public Records Office information about George Fraser can be gleaned. He was none other than the brother of Lt.-Colonel John Fraser, who was the Commandant of Gorée from 1800-4. George Fraser was listed as a Merchant, and had furnished the Garrison at Gorée with supplies. How John Hill and George Fraser came to be linked together is not known, but since Hill acted as a trader on Gorée, it is possible he

was in some kind of partnership or acting as an agent for Fraser.

Before leaving England, John Hill had been in contact with the British and Foreign Bible Society, and with its secretary, Joseph Tarn, in particular. From his first letter to Tarn, it transpires that Hill had agreed to collect information for the Society about the extent to which Arabic was understood and read in the area around Gorée. Thus although he had given up his missionary life years before, he still retained connections with evangelical societies, and in this respect he similarly had dealings with the Religious Tract Society, from whom he received many tracts for distribution to the garrison on Gorée. According to the Religious Tract Society Minutes, for 6th October, 1807, it was resolved that "Tracts to the Amount of £3.3.0. be placed at the disposal of Mr. John Hill for<sup>2</sup> distribution at Gorée and Sierra Leone to be selected by Mr. Campbell.

In his first letter to Joseph Tarn, dated 31st May, 1808, John Hill said that he had come to Gorée on the brig "Lively" under Captain Blakesly. In a later letter he stated that the ship was owned by a Mr Bowers. The letter book of Bowers contained no information about the "Lively" or John Hill. There is a letter, however, written by Zachary Macaulay to Governor Ludlam in Sierra Leone, dated London 12th October, 1807. Macaulay says that the letter will be dispatched on the ship belonging to Bowers "called the Lively bound to the Rio Pongas." The fragmented notebook in the Hampshire Records Office contains the journal entries for much of Hill's residence at Gorée. That section begins 11th November, 1807 with the following: "Arrived, and anchored in the harbour of Gorée about 11 M.P." From this it seems certain that Hill sailed on the "Lively" shortly after 12th October, 1807. It is also clear that he had not spent much time in<sup>3</sup> Britain recovering from his illness.

Gorée has been described in many languages, both flattering and uncomplimentary throughout the hundreds of years it was in European

possession. The tiny island less than a mile long or half a mile in width, was described by John Lindsay in 1758 as "resembling nothing so much as a ham of bacon." The island could be divided into three sections; a high volcanic rock on which was built a fort; lying below that lay the town; and towards the north point was a natural mole. The barren rock, "qui ne peut rien produire," had severe problems of a water supply, most of which was brought in boats from the mainland.

The importance of the island to the European powers was that it provided a safe anchorage for shipping. Later it was seen to have strategic possibilities in the administration of colonies. During the Napoleonic wars, France was in control of Gorée until it was captured by a British naval force under the command of Sir Charles Hamilton on 4th April, 1800. The French, however, recaptured it on 18th January, 1804, only to occupy it for some weeks until an English force again gained control on 9th March. From then until 1814, Gorée was linked to the colony of Sierra Leone, and garrisoned by the men of the Royal  
4  
African Corps.

When John Hill landed at Gorée in November, 1807, he went on shore and breakfasted with the Commandant, Lt.-Colonel Lloyd. If they had not met before, Hill would want to introduce himself. John Hill arrived as a petty trader, a purveyor of cloth, rum, tobacco, etc. Some of these he had brought with him, for he asked Captain Blakesly if he could take his goods ashore, but it was not until 15th November that this was done. That day he tried to sell some and found that "...they were not of a fine enough quality nor the proper patterns for the Ladies of Gorée," although he still managed to sell about £3 worth. In January he attended a public sale of tobacco and rum, purchasing a quantity of both, which he intended to re-sell at a profit. His journal of life on Gorée and his accounts often mention his transactions, and also bear witness

that as a trader he was no great success and still pursued by financial worries;

Having arrived on Gorée, he had to find accomodation. Where he lodged at first is not stated, but on 9th January, 1808, he offered "Hannah Goosburn 6 Drs. per month for 2 small Rooms and a store, but was refused." Two days later he successfully hired a room and store for 5 dollars a month from someone, and on 12th January he moved into his new quarters. Since he makes no mention of moving, he presumably stayed there until 26th September, 1808, when he noted that he had moved to new quarters. This move was immediately after an interview with the new Commandant, for whom he had agreed to read prayers to the garrison, and perhaps it was connected with this.

To ease his financial situation Hill agreed to tutor pupils. (In the absence of schools, the Inhabitants used to have their sons tutored by members of the Garrison, etc. See Boilat, p. 10.) One of his pupils was the son of a leading family, the Pepins, whom he began to instruct on 31st December, 1807. He recorded teaching him again on 2nd January, 1808, but after that he does not mention it again. On the 18th March he stated that he began teaching a young man attached to the garrison, but also made no further reference to this individual. In a letter to Joseph Tarn, 31st May, 1808, John Hill wrote that if the Society would send him some school books, paper, and pens, he felt sure that he would be of use to the young people of the island, adding that, ".... indeed the want of them has prevented me from being useful in a school department in which the Col. offered to patronize me." This suggestion was not taken up by the Society.<sup>5</sup>

His life as a trader was supplemented by a government appointment on 19th May, 1809. From his journal there is no indication what that



was, since Hill writes only that the Commandant, Lloyd, had handed him the appointment saying ".....he was sorry he could not at present give me a better. " What this was is revealed in a letter from Commandant

Maxwell, who replaced Lloyd, to the Governor of Sierra Leone, Thomas P. Thompson. Writing from Gorée on 4th April, 1808, Maxwell said that he found John Hill there ".....in the situation of Provost Martial, to which office he was appointed by Lieut. Colonel Lloyd, during my residence here he has conducted himself to my satisfaction; & I have found him forward in executing any service I had occasion to require of him." The work of Provost Martial is to enforce military discipline and to secure prisoners until brought to trial. Just before Lloyd handed Hill the appointment on 15th May he asked Hill to attend to a prisoner who was to be executed and read the death sentence to him. Perhaps that was a test<sup>6</sup> case to see how Hill performed those duties.

Towards the end of Lloyd's term of duty, Hill seems to have had a difference with him, and it might have been with relief that he welcomed the new Commandant Major Maxwell, on 11th September 1808. In situations where the local administrator had the power to give or recommend appointments, it was imperative for those without power or influence to remain on good terms with the authorities. On 25th September Major Maxwell asked Hill to read the prayers to the garrison, since he understood that Hill was "a fit person for that business." John Hill began reading prayers on Sundays to the soldiers, but his journal stops after a few instances of this. It was, however, a thread linking him to his former ordained status.<sup>7</sup>

John Hill went on a mission to the Damel, the head of the Wolof State of Cayor. It is not explicit whether or not he did this on the orders of Major Maxwell, but from the fragments so far found about the visit, he was anxious to procure a horse for the Commandant. In the notebook in the Hampshire Record Office, there are a few entries about this mission. They appear before the entries for Hill's arrival on Goree, but are chronologically later. The entries for daily life on Goree

end in October, 1808. Those for the visit to the Damel are dated from Friday 9th, 1808 to Saturday, 17th. By a calendar calculation it becomes clear that the mission took place during December, 1808. Since the fragments deal with the period when he had already arrived at the Damel's town and before he left, it is not known when Hill began or completed the journey.

In September, 1809, John Hill wrote to Dr. Adam Clarke, a learned Methodist, stating that he was sending him, with the letter, his original copy of his journal recording the visit to "King Damel", since he had been unable to make a copy. The journal was also sent with a vocabulary. The letter and vocabulary are in the British Museum, but there is no trace of the journal. It seems unlikely that the fragmented notebook in Winchester is the journal he sent to Clarke, because of its diversity. If it is not, then the journal remains missing, for it was not among Dr Clarke's papers in the Methodist Archives, the Methodist Missionary Archives, or those of the British and Foreign Bible Society. This journal evidently pleased John Hill for he mentioned it several times saying it contained information also about "the Jaloff Customs". Yet his visit was not an unmitigated success as Hill himself owns. The Damel for various reasons was "less  
8  
courteous than perhaps he otherwise would have been".

In keeping this journal of the journey to the Damel, it is possible that Hill was trying to emulate his famous fellow Scotsman, Mungo Park. From the various references he made to Park it is clear that Hill was conversant with Park's book, "Travels in West Africa", which had been published in 1799. It should also be remembered that Park had set out from Gorée on his second attempt to reach the Niger. Rumours about his disappearance and fate were always reaching Gorée and Hill noted these in  
9  
his letters.

John Hill continued to find it difficult to live comfortably on Gorée because of his finances, and so despite his love for the island and its people, and despite his interest in the Wolof language and customs, he decided to leave. In a letter to Joseph Tarn of September 1809, he wrote that he had explained his reasons for leaving to Dr Clarke. From Clarke's letter the reason is clearly financial. His government appointment had been "...but barely sufficient to support the necessary expences of a very economical and plain method of housekeeping: And as the Commandant (tho' very willing) could not better my income without advices from home, I resolved 10. trying my fortune once more at Sierra Leone! "

In his letter to Governor Thompson of Sierra Leone, Major Maxwell wrote on 4th April, 1809, that John Hill was about to leave Gorée for Sierra Leone "to solicit some employment". He further added that Hill had "met with some disappointments in his views, in life; and is anxious to be employed so as to be useful to the community and to himself." This suggests a picture of a rather troubled person, who nevertheless felt some ambition to improve his situation.

Hounded by his constant anxieties over money, and having received no encouragement from the British and Foreign Bible Society for whom he had collected Arabic manuscripts and to whom he had sent his linguistic work, John Hill sailed for Sierra Leone. Unknown to him replies had been sent by the Society a month earlier with books and paper. It was typical of John Hill's luck that he left just before these arrived for him. As he later wrote, if he had received these, he would have remained on Gorée, whatever the financial problems. Instead he left Gorée on 6th April, 1809, and 11. sailed for Sierra Leone.

1. Journal of John Hill. op.cit.  
London Directory, 1791-1838 - here Fraser is described as first an Agent and Insurance Broker, and later from 1799 as a Merchant.  
In the PRO there are several mentions of Fraser, especially, Letter of G. Frazer to Mr Huskisson, London, 15th August, 1801; and Letter of G. Frazer to Hobart, London, 11th October, 1803; both in WO/1/351.  
Letter of John Hill to J. Tarn, Goree, 9th August, 1808. B&FBS archives.
2. Letter of John Hill to J. Tarn, Gorée, 31st May, 1808, B&FBS archives.  
Minutes of the Religious Tract Society, vol.iii, April 1806-May 1809, p. 156, United Society for Christian Literature Archives. The Mr Campbell was probably John Campbell, who had been an ironmonger in Edinburgh and then come under the influence of Rev. Ewing of the Edinburgh Missionary Society. He had founded a Religious Tract Society in Edinburgh and then come to London in 1803. It is very likely that he had met John Hill before 1807, with their common Scottish evangelical background.
3. Letter of John Hill to J. Tarn, Gorée, 31st May, 1808, op. cit.  
Letter books of Nataniel Bowers, Minet Library, London Borough of Lambeth.  
Journal of John Hill, op. cit  
Letter of Z. Macaulay to Gov. Ludlam, London, 12th October, 1807, HUL DTH/1/2.
4. J. Lindsay, "A Voyage to the Coast of Africa in 1758", 1759, p. 48.  
M. Saignier, "Relations de Plusieurs Voyages à la Cote d'Afrique..." Paris, 1791, p. 252  
J.J.Crooks, "The Historical Records of the Royal African Corps", 1925, pp. 2, 28-32, 33-35.  
W.F.Lord, "Gorée, a Lost Possession of England," The New Review, June, 1987, pp. 767-768.  
J.B.H. Savigny & A. Correard, "Narrative of a Voyage to Senegal in 1816", pp. 306-307.
5. Journal of John Hill, op.cit.  
Letter of John Hill to J. Tarn, 31st May, 1808, op. cit.
6. Journal of John Hill, op.cit.  
Letter of Major Maxwell to Gov. Thompson, Gorée, 4th April 1809, HUL DTH/1/67.
7. Journal of John Hill, op. cit.
8. The Damel of Kayor was Amari Ngone Coumba, 1790-1809. For further references see F. Brigaud, "Histoire du Sénégal"; V. Monteil, "Esquisses Sénégalaises"; Remy, "La Sénégamie",  
Journal of John Hill, op. cit. Letter of John Hill to Dr. Adam Clarke, 28th September, 1809 and "A Vocabulary of the Jaloff language formed by J. Hill at Gorée and Senegal", 27th September, 1809, BM. Eg. Mss. 933.  
Concerning Dr Adam Clarke, a brief account can be found in the "Dictionary of National Biography", vol.iv, pp. 413-4. His papers are with the Methodist Society Archives.

9. M. Park, "Travels into the Interior of Africa", 1799, vol. i, pp. 509-513.  
Letter of John Hill to J. Tarn, 9th August, 1808, B&FBS archives.
10. Letter of John Hill to J. Tarn, George Town (i.e. Freetown), Sierra Leone, 28th September 1809, B&FBS archives.  
Letter of John Hill to Dr. Clarke, 28th September, 1809, op. cit.
11. Letter of Major Maxwell to Gov. Thompson, Gorée, 4th April, 1809, op. cit.  
Letter of John Hill to J. Tarn, Sierra Leone, 28th September, 1809, op. cit.  
Letter of John Hill to Dr Adam Clarke, op. cit.

John Hill and daily life on Gorée

The journal of his daily life on Gorée lacks the nicety and religious sentiments so frequently expressed in his letters of the period to Joseph Tarn and Dr Adam Clarke. It is also very different from the pious entries of the voyage on the "Duff", nearly ten years earlier. This journal from 11th November, 1807, to 22nd October, 1808, reveals a secular side of John Hill not previously seen. There are incidents which are a reminder of his missionary past, such as when an old soldier begs to have some tracts that were given to Hill by the Religious Tract Society; or when he tried to pray and give spiritual comfort to a soldier about to be executed; or as mentioned already when Maxwell asked him to read prayers to the garrison. Compared to missionary journals, this journal appears to have been written by a layman, rather than a former missionary. Unlike his letters, perhaps this journal was not intended for public gaze.

The population of Gorée was estimated in 1811 to be just over 3000 people. A small percentage of these were Europeans, either officers of the Royal African Corps or civilian traders such as John Hill. There were also a large number of people of mixed African-European descent, with surnames indicating their European origins. Many were leading families such as the Pepins or the St. Jeans. John Hill in referring to these people called them the "Inhabitants",<sup>a</sup> and rarely "Mulattoe". The rest of the population was African, either free or slaves, for Gorée was notorious for its slave-trading carried on by the "Inhabitants" long after the abolition of the trade. John Hill notes incidents of slaves escaping from their masters.<sup>1</sup>

On a small island such as Gorée, human relationships were of the greatest importance. Much of John Hill's diary is concerned with his friendships and the activities he participated in with his friends. In one of his

a) L'Abbe Boilat in Esquisses Senegalaises, 1853, writes: "...mulâtres, dont les hommes prirent le nom d'habitans, et les femmes celui de signares, du mot portugais signora (dames)." p. 5. (DPG)

letters he wrote that he was "much attached to the Inhabitants of the Island, who on all occasions treated me with respect and friendship!" It was from these people that he chose his friends, and his journal records the times he spent at their houses or accompanying them to the mainland. He mixed freely with their families and often attended parties and balls.

The ladies of Gorée, known as "Signaras", were renowned for their beauty and charm. It was acceptable that some formed temporary or permanent attachments with resident or visiting Europeans. It is not explicit from John Hill's journal whether or not he had a mistress, but it is clear that he spent time in the society of the ladies and young girls. One of his first attempts at Wolof which he records in his journal he translates thus "My excellent girl, come to my heart. I love you. You are beautiful in my eyes. You are very young but very good. Kiss me. My heart beats with pleasure. "

But when writing to the British and Foreign Bible Society, the specimen he sent was a translation of the Lord's prayer.

He described the ladies as "sober and I may say virtuous, yet they are partial to sweet liquors, which they drink in moderate quantities, never to excess." In April, however, he fell foul of the ladies by what he termed "An unlucky observation"; it was in fact a remark interpreted as racist, and rightly so. Not only was he treated to a "volley of abuse," but also the threat that all the ladies would be told and dissuaded from holding company with him, including those he "had a regard to". To teach him a lesson, the ladies assembled and humiliated him. A rather unpleasant side to Hill's character is shown as he vents his spleen against the "female wantons". This was not done publicly, but his anger is expressed



in the journal. Among the ladies was "the girl supposed to be my favourite", Hill wrote in fury. With bitterness and unfortunate hypocrisy, he reflected: "What a pity it is that Europeans in general, should so far forget their kindred & Country women, as to pay so much attention & respect to French, Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese, English & even negro bastards, and many of adultrous bastards. "<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps at this point he was thinking also of his pious wife, Mary Hill. Since the mention of her ill health in March, 1806, while they were in Sierra Leone, John Hill made no reference to her either in his journal or letters. In June, he recorded that he ".....wrote a letter to Mrs. H. & one to Mr. J. Tarn. The most obvious "Mrs. H. " would be his wife, although it could also be his mother, or someone with no connected with his family. (Note from D.P.G. - He had just taken leave of Hamilton, whom he knew in Sierra Leone. If Hamilton's wife had been in Sierra Leone, maybe Hill addressed a note to her.) If Mary Hill were still alive and in Britain, perhaps after the scene with the ladies he was ruefully speaking for himself when writing about Europeans forgetting about their wives. Yet he does not mention his wife at all, nor consider her in his plans to remain in West Africa. Another point is that he never mentions having children. If he did have a wife and family, they were kept apart from his daily life in West Africa, nor mentioned in his letters to others.<sup>3</sup>

His other main category of friends and acquaintances were the officers of the Royal African Corps; He spent much time drinking coffee or dining with the Commandant, Lt-Colonel Lloyd, and others. With these men he socialised, drank, and gambled. In March he noted playing cards and his losses of 1/3d and 5/-. He also recorded incidents connected with the garrison, such as target practice, drilling French soldiers who had deserted from Senegal, and the drowning of a soldier. His good relations with Lloyd seem to have been broken after a scene. The entry in his journal reads well until the final word which could either be "Do"

standing for ditto, or "Dr." In his accounts he uses "Do" which looks very similar to the word in the entry. This would also explain why John Hill subsequently would not attend a ball given by the "inhabitants" to say farewell to Lloyd. Two days before the ball in September, 1808, a party was given to celebrate the occasion of Lloyd's departure. Hill wrote that he was, "Grossly, & in a truly blaggouard manner insulted & violently treated by Do." From the sense of the entry he seems to have been referring to Lloyd, but what caused the outburst is not stated.

There are many accounts of visits to Gorée by Europeans, but only two published for the period of British control from 1800-1814. These are by J. Corry and F. Spillsbury, the former of which John Hill referred to and with which he was obviously familiar. Spillsbury's account is<sup>5</sup> interesting, and contains more information than Corry's about Gorée. John Hill had a flair for language and a style which is rarely pedantic or boring. His observations are made by a detailed and intelligent mind, and written with a spontaneity sometimes lacking in his letters. Thus he provides a unique and historically valuable picture of island life for the period of about one year from 1807-1808.

1. Journal of John Hill, op.cit.  
Letter of John Hill to J. Tarn, Gorée, 31st May, 1808, op.cit.,  
9th August, 1808, op. cit.  
Maxwell to Commissioners for Investigating Forts and Settlements in  
Africa, I. of St. Louis, 1st January, 1811, PRO: CO/267/29.
2. Journal of John Hill, op.cit.
3. Letter of John Hill to R. Ogle, 21st March, 1806, op.cit.  
Journal of John Hill, op. cit.
4. Journal of John Hill, op.cit.
5. J. Corry, "Observations upon the Windward Coast of Africa," 1807.  
F. B. Spillsbury, "Account of a Voyage to the Western Coast of Africa...."  
1807.

### John Hill and his linguistic work

One of John Hill's pursuits while on Gorée, or the mainland, was compiling Wolof vocabularies. He was aware of other attempts by Europeans to collect small vocabularies, which were included in their published work about their travels. He specifically mentions the lists of words made by Mungo Park, Corry, and a Frenchman, Golberry. He criticizes all for their spelling, and points out that Corry unblushingly copied his Wolof word list from Golberry's book.

John Hill worked on his vocabularies despite his daily activities, without encouragement or recognition, uncertain that his efforts would ever be appreciated. Only a genuine intellectual interest could have sustained him and his ambition, for he found that his attempts "met with some little Jeerings from some in this place." <sup>1</sup>

In all he compiled four vocabularies in Wolof and English. The first was a vocabulary, which is to be found in his notebook at Winchester. (Started January 1808). On the 16th January, 1808 Hill wrote in his Journal "Made some application to the Jeoliff language. Completed in words and sentences about Three hundred and fifty - of such as are correct." This was the first indication of his interest in Wolof, just two months after his arrival at Gorée. Two days later, he again recorded spending time on the language and also on 25th. January. After that he does not record this, but in various places he makes short entries in Wolof;

The second vocabulary contains virtually the same number of words as the first, but over 200 short sentences and the Lord's Prayer have been translated. There is an introduction on his spelling and pronunciation. This is dated 1st June, 1808, and was sent to the British and Foreign Bible Society, by the Brig Lively which sailed on June 2nd ;

The third vocabulary extant is dated 10th August 1808. It too was sent to the British and Foreign Bible Society; The words in the vocabulary had been increased by about half compared with the earlier one, short phrases had been added under the appropriate words, and the major sentences had been listed under the initial letter of the first word;

There were fewer sentences than in the June manuscript, but the series ends with the letter N, so there may well have been further pages, particularly as the Lord's Prayer which ends the previous manuscript is also missing;

In December 1808 he visited the Damel of Kayor, and it is clear that he took advantage of his journey to enlarge his vocabulary; He could follow some parts of conversations, but he needed ~~an~~ interpreter to help him when he visited the Damel.

It was not until he had received some response from the Society, by which time he had left Gorée and settled in Sierra Leone, that he sent home the fourth vocabulary. This was addressed to Dr. Adam Clarke, and was dated 27th September 1809. It was much enlarged, sometimes contained elaborate notes on words, and ended with a rudimentary attempt at a grammatical analysis of Wolof, unfortunately by following English models of grammar.

In his letters he reveals some details of how he compiled the vocabularies. He studied the Wolof spoken on Gorée and the mainland, and found that the language on the mainland was much purer, so that he included some words which he had gathered on the mainland, which could not be understood on Gorée. Writing to Dr. Clarke, he said, that ".... it was by frequent excursions to several places on the mainland in company with some of the principal Inhabitants, as well as a pretty constant intercourse with the youth of both sexes, that I was enabled to collect my Vocabulary ! " It was with great satisfaction that Hill

found his work was "so correct that I never read it without exciting in them (i.e. the Wolof people) the greatest surprise."

It was his conviction that Wolof was "both appropriate, copious, & significant." He repudiated Golberry's assertion that the language was "poor", and stated that the more he studied it, the more he admired it. He was convinced that Wolof required "the attention of a person of more general knowledge and abilities than mine, and whose time and circumstances might enable him to appropriate his time chiefly to its study."

It is possible that John Hill wanted to be that person, free from the necessity to earn a living, and free to give all his energies and intellect over to the study of Wolof. In his letters to the society and Dr Clarke he offered himself by innuendo and to Dr Clarke quite plainly as a candidate for employment by the Society, in translation or other work on Gorée or at Senegal. In response to Dr Clarke's request that he try to form a Wolof Grammar, he wrote that he would have to return to Gorée or the mainland, as he was in Sierra Leone at that point, and he added that "this I would cheerfully do, & prefer such a situation to any thing else!"<sup>4</sup>

Dr Adam Clarke was asked by the Society to make a report on the first two vocabularies they received from John Hill. Clarke stated in his report to the Society on 2nd January, 1809, that Hill had suggested that the Scriptures, or part of them, if printed in Wolof, would be well received by the literate Muslims. He added that, "To shew the Society the nature of this Tongue, he has with considerable pains & industry formed a short vocabulary..... Thus Clarke was not unappreciative of Hill's efforts. Clarke then assessed the language as "irregular gibberish, adorned here & there with arabic words". He did find it nevertheless "curious & certainly of considerable importance even in a philological point of view." He recommended that John Hill should be encouraged to continue the work, and to Hill he wrote a letter dated 1st March, 1809.

In this he asked Hill to attempt to analyse the language to make a grammar, and gave him a structure to follow. Also to encourage him in his work he sent books and paper. All this arrived after Hill had left Gorée, reaching him in Sierra Leone. Hill was very encouraged and wanted to return to study Wolof further.

5

What first prompted John Hill to take an interest in Wolof is not known. Certainly his contact with the British and Foreign Bible Society which concentrated on Biblical translations must have influenced him. Also he had been in contact with the Edinburgh Missionary Society which had sent to Sierra Leone in 1798, two missionaries, one of whom was Peter Greig and the other Henry Brunton. The former was a brother of Hill's fellow missionary, George Greig, and the latter compiled books in Susu, published in 1801. These were the first books to be published in Britain in a West African language. It is possible that Hill was aware of these attempts.

6

John Hill's vocabularies have a unique position. The first book to be published as a linguistic work in Wolof and English was in 1820 by Hannah Kilham, a member of the Society of Friends, with the assistance of two Wolof-speaking Africans, Mahmadee and Sandanee, from The Gambia. In French, J. Dard published his Wolof Dictionary in 1825, and a Wolof grammar in 1826. So Hill's work preceded Kilham's by more than ten years, and Dard's by fifteen.

1. Letter of John Hill to Dr Adam Clarke, 28th September, 1809, op. cit.  
John Hill's Notes on Pronunciation, Wolof Vocabulary, 1st June 1808,  
B&FBS archives.  
D.P.Gamble: "The Wolof of Senegambia", 1967, in which accounts containing  
Wolof words are listed, p. 81.  
Letter of John Hill to J. Tarn, 31st May, 1808, op. cit.
2. Draft Vocabulary , in Journal of John Hill, op. cit.  
In British and Foreign Bible Society. Wolof Vocabulary dated Gorée,  
1st June, 1808 ; Wolof Vocabulary, Gorée, 10th August 1808.  
In the British Museum, Vocabulary dated Sierra Leone, 27th September,  
1809.  
In his pronunciation Hill stressed that the nearest sounds to Wolof  
were those made by the Scots, with similar guttural letters written  
kh and ch (e.g. loch) etc.
3. Journal of John Hill, op.cit.
4. Letter of John Hill to J. Tarn, 9th August, 1808, op. cit.  
Letter of John Hill to Dr. Clarke, 28th September, 1809, op. cit.  
Letter of John Hill to J. Tarn, 10th June, 1808, op. cit. 31st May 1808.
5. Misc.Book, No.3, April 19th 1806- Jan. 31st 1810, Report of Dr Clarke,  
2nd January, 1809.  
Letter of Dr Clarke to John Hill, London 1st March, 1809. B&FBS archives.
6. "The Missionary Magazine", 1798, contains several reports about Bruntun  
and Greig. C. Fyfe, op. cit., p.76.
7. H. Kilham, "Ta-re Wa-loof, Ta-re book Juk-a. First Lessons in Jaloof",  
1820, published anonymously.  
J. Dard, "Dictionnaire Français-Wolof", 1825; "Grammaire Wolof", 1826.

John Hill and Arabic manuscripts.

John Hill had agreed to collect information for the British and Foreign Bible Society "respecting the knowledge the natives of this part of the Coast, had to the Arabic language." He was able to report that their knowledge of Arabic was good and to give proof of this he sent the Society some Arabic specimens that he had collected. Although he did not feel that the Muslims would be very receptive in some areas to the Bible printed in Arabic, he thought that if parts of the Bible were translated they would be read more favourably. The parts he suggested were the "Story of Joseph & his brethren & many other of Moses writings", since the Muslims<sup>1</sup> were very fond of these.

Books and manuscripts being highly valued amongst Muslims in West Africa, it was decided at the end of the 18th century to consider disseminating Christianity through the translation of the Scriptures into Arabic. Mungo Park related in his "Travels", that he had been shown an Arabic gospel, which must have come through the Middle East or North Africa, since there was no attempt at that time to circulate Arabic translations in West Africa. In "The Missionary Magazine" for May, 1798, there was a query as to whether or not any **Societies** had considered printing an Arabic Bible for distribution in Africa. A year later, in 1799, the Professor of Arabic at Cambridge University, Professor J. D. Carlyle, proposed publishing a new edition of the Scriptures in Arabic, inspired by the reports of the extent Arabic was read in parts of Africa. Carlyle, however, died unexpectedly and there was also a difficulty over the contract for types, and these events put a stop to the work for some time. The British and Foreign Bible Society then took a part in the work at the suggestion of Bishop Porteus of London in 1806, who was supported in this also by the Bishop of Durham, Shute Barrington. Porteus wrote in a letter that the decision to print an Arabic version of the Scriptures



for Africa would "redound no less to the credit of the Society than to the benefit of that numerous unenlightened race for whom it is designed, the Moors of Africa." These African Muslims were, he felt, more ready for conversion than non-believers.<sup>2</sup>

It is not surprising therefore that John Hill was asked to collect information by the Society, since they were involved in the scheme to print an Arabic version of the Bible. In the journal in the Hampshire Record Office, Hill recorded how he collected specimens of Arabic. The first mention of this was on 14th January, 1808, when two men from "fottah", presumably Fuuta, came to ask him for paper. In exchange for this, they wrote some Arabic for him. Later that month, on 23rd, he similarly obtained another specimen from a "Mahomedan from Ducaŕ" (Dakar). The following day, another man from Dakar asked for paper, to which Hill agreed in return for a "full sheet of Arabic." Seeing Hill was pleased with his work, the man asked for sugar and then increased his demands<sup>3</sup> until Hill "almost got out of temper".

There were, however, difficulties in collecting the specimens. One was the limited supply of paper that Hill had brought with him, and that the most acceptable payment for the Arabic specimens was to give paper to the Muslims. The other was that he had not brought a copy of Richardson's Arabic Grammar with him, and this he regretted, so that he asked the Society if they could favour him with a copy. This request was not unusual, since Mungo Park records in his "Travels" that when he produced a copy of Richardson's Arabic Grammar to some "Slatees on the Gambia, they were astonished to think that any European should understand and write the sacred language of their religion." (Slatees were the leaders of trading caravans, and generally Muslim).

While awaiting a reply from the Society, Hill acquired or borrowed a copy of the book and noted that in October, 1808, while at Dakar, the Muslims found difficulty in reading it. At the court of the Damel

however, he found an ambassador from "Abdulkadir" who could read the "Arabic Grammar" and who was "astonished to find his favourite language so clean & beautifully written." This account is  
5.  
very similar to that of Park's above.

Another comparison can be made between Hill and Winterbottom. Thomas Winterbottom had studied medicine at Edinburgh and Glasgow. In 1794 he went to Sierra Leone as a doctor in the service of the Company. His books were not published until some years later in 1803, and so it is possible that Hill was acquainted with them. Concerning the Africans' understanding of Arabic, Winterbottom wrote that some had been shown Richardson's "Arabic Dictionary", and that they had given "the sound of the words very nearly as they are written, and in general explaining the meaning of them very exactly."

Hill in a letter to Tarn, 31st May, 1808, wrote that he had borrowed or bought a copy of the 'Arabic Grammar' from Captain Blakesly, who had just arrived back at Gorée. This he had shown to a "Jaloff on the Island." The man had expressed his astonishment in Arabic. When Hill pointed out parts of the book he read it "with facility". In order to verify his understanding, Hill had the man explain what he had read in Wolof and by signs. This satisfied Hill that "he had perfectly understood what he had read even the different verbs with their conjugations were intelligible to him." 6

Of the Arabic manuscripts that Hill sent to the Society with a letter dated 31st May, 1808, Dr Clarke reported that they were a "very fair, tho' not elegant" specimen, and that he felt certain that any printed Arabic Bible sent to the area would be easily read. He also suggested sending John Hill copies of Richardson's "Arabic Grammar", his Arabic and Persian Dictionaries, and a supply of paper. He also asked to know more about superstitions and sorcery among the Muslims,

when he wrote to Hill.

In his reply to Clarke, Hill said that the Muslims practised "conjunction" to a large extent. In his journal he noted such an incident at Madame Pépin's in April, 1808. He described a similar happening to Clarke: "...the conjuror with his hand smooths a certain and convenient space of surface which is always of sand. He then with the fingers of the right hand pricks out so many marks or dotes, in several rows, & after counting the dotes a great many times over & muttering to himself; he smooths the sand again & begins afresh with his dotes: And this being repeated several times over, he lays his two hands across & appears to be in deep contemplation, when at last awaking from his mimic reverie, he acquaints his employer with the result." Winterbottom also has a description of this in his book, the practice he calls "casting the sand". This type of divination is widespread in West Africa.

1. Letter of John Hill to J. Tarn, 31st May, 1808, op. cit.
2. Mungo Park, op. cit., p. 241. "The Missionary Magazine", no. xxiv, 21st May, 1798, p. 231. no. xxxv, 20th May, 1799, pp. 217-218; no. xxxix, 19th August, 1799, pp. 337-341.  
J. Owen, "History of the Origins and First Ten Years of the British and Foreign Bible Society, 1816, pp. 303-4, 104-7.  
W. Canton, "A History of the British and Foreign Bible Society", 1904, vol. i, pp. 133-4.  
Dr Clarke was very involved in the printing of the Bible in Arabic;  
See Owen, op. cit., pp. 304-7.
3. Journal of John Hill, op. cit.
4. Letter of John Hill to J. Tarn, 31st May, 1808, op. cit.  
M. Park, op. cit, p. 242.
5. Journal of John Hill, op. cit. The ambassador was not from 'Abd al-Qadir, the Almami of Futa Toro, who had ruled until 1805. Who this was has not yet been identified.
6. Th. Winterbottom, "An Account of the Native Africans in the Neighbourhood of Sierra Leone...", 1803, vol. i, p. 221.  
Letter of John Hill to J. Tarn, 31st May, 1808, op. cit.
7. Report of Dr Clarke, 2nd January, 1809, op. cit.  
Letter of John Hill to Dr Clark, 28th September, 1809, op. cit.  
Journal of John Hill. T. Winterbottom, op. cit pp. 133-4.

John Hill's return to Sierra Leone

Having left Gorée on 6th April, 1809, John Hill reached Sierra Leone after a visit to Kaikundy, on 21st April, 1809. Having shown his letter of recommendation from Maxwell, Hill was soon rewarded with a government appointment. On 6th May, he was made the Superintendant of the Smith Department at a salary of £150 per annum. In his letter to Dr Clarke of September, 1809, Hill wrote that because he had been an edge tool maker, the Governor had thought him the "fittest person" for the Smith Department, "where all kinds of work for gun carriages & in short iron work for every part of Public works is done."<sup>1</sup>

\*\*

Governor Thompson was a controversial figure, who was eventually replaced in 1810; he made several innovations, one being to change the name of Freetown to Georgetown, which Hill wrote on his letters. Hill mentioned little about the Governor in the three letters he wrote from Sierra Leone, all dated 28th September, 1809. He said that the Governor had been very ill. Of life in the colony he wrote very little, except a paragraph about the case of the Derwent and another slave ship,<sup>2</sup> which the Governor had been too ill to deal with.

Despite his government appointment, Hill was still faced with financial problems. His salary with house rent and a Krooman was £230, according to his letter to Clarke. But he complained that "every article of Provision, washing, tear, & wear, both of clothes & household furniture is so exorbitant, that it is impossible to make it answer!" What sort of accommodation he was in is not stated but when referring to the dirty state of his journal, he writes, "the wooden houses of this colony in general are so leaky, and the rains this season have been so very severe, that it is with difficulty any papers can be kept clean."<sup>3</sup>

\*\* Hill had met Governor Thompson when the latter stopped briefly at Goree, on his outward voyage; (DPG)

Apart from his appointment as a Superintendant of the Smith Department there are two other mentions of Hill in the Council Minutes. He and some others were appointed to act as Commissioners of Requests for the coming year on 12th September. A few weeks later, on 1st October, 1809, the salaries of some officials, including John Hill, were raised. Hill was to receive £200 per annum.<sup>4</sup>

John Hill did not envisage his stay in Sierra Leone as permanent. He stated in letters his desire to return to "the dear little Island, which I shall always love", where the Commandant had promised to welcome him back to his former position. If he was to continue his linguistic work and try to form a Wolof grammar, it was imperative that he return to Gorée or Senegal. To Clarke he suggested that if the British and Foreign Bible Society or any other "whose object may be, the civilizing or christianizing of Africa, would allow me a small salary (say £200 stg.) or otherwise provide for annual necessities", he would work for them in whatever capacity required.<sup>5</sup>

In earlier letters Hill had mentioned that Gorée or Dakar would be a suitable place to introduce Christianity to West Africa. He praised highly the "King of Dakar" for his humanity and intelligence, who would protect any European residing in his state, and who although he was a strict Muslim was "devested of all bigotry" concerning Christians. Having made his suggestion to Clarke, Hill added that Dakar would be a suitable place for a mission because some of the Inhabitants of Gorée had built good houses there and for one of these he thought the rent would be "but trifling".<sup>6</sup>

He stated his intention of leaving Sierra Leone as soon as possible, and most probably he thought it would be towards the end of October, "in a vessel then expected to sail to Gorée." With his return fixed, Hill asked the Society to send him some copies of the Bible in French, as this would be easily read by the male inhabitants of Gorée, but less so by the women

and girls, who though more religiously inclined were "suffered by their parents to grow up without the least knowledge of letters!"

After the letters of 28th September, 1809, the British and Foreign Bible Society received nothing more from John Hill. Similarly, after the Council Minute of 1st October, there is no further mention of Hill. Nor is there anything in "The Sierra Leone Gazette" or "The African Herald". There are, however, two brief references to John Hill in the Public Records Office. One is dated 10th March, 1810, under the heading of Sundry Debts. It reads: "Due from the estate of the late John Hill & Bills drawn by Govr. Thompson on Cashier £71.9.0. Signed by the late cashier, F. Leedham". For 24th March, 1810 in a Book of Debts of Civil Store as left by Governor Thompson there is the entry: "John Hill £6.11.6." 8.

In one of his letters of 28th September, 1809, John Hill related that the rains were severe, and that many were ill. He had suffered from a "pretty smart attack of fever", from which he was recovering.

One can only suppose that he had another attack, and died shortly thereafter.

1. Letter of John Hill to J. Tarn, 28th September, 1809, op. cit.  
 Letter of Maxwell to Gov. Thompson, Gorée, 4th April, 1809, op. cit.  
 Minutes of Council Papers, copy, 6th May, 1809, HUL DTH/1/57.  
 Letter of John Hill to Dr Clarke, 28th September, 1809, op. cit.
  
2. C. Fyfe, op. cit. pp. 105-110.  
 A.B.C. Sibthorpe, "The History of Sierra Leone," pp. 20-24.  
 Thompson himself wrote about his illness in September, 1809 to  
 a friend called Nancy. The first, dated 16th September, states  
 that he cannot remember ever having been ill for a week before.  
 A second one, dated 30th September, says that after the previous  
 letter he was "seized with another fever, a divers beast, on the  
 heels of the other...which quickly brought me down somewhat lower  
 than before." These are found in HUL DTH/1/74. Letter of John  
 Hill to J. Tarn, 28th September, 1809.
  
3. Letter of John Hill to Dr Clarke, 28th September, 1809, op. cit.
  
4. Minutes of Council Papers, copy, 12th September, 1st October, 1809,  
 op. cit.
  
5. Letter of John Hill to J. Tarn, 28th September, 1809, op. cit.  
 Letter of John Hill to Dr Clarke, 28th September, 1809, op. cit.
  
6. Letter of John Hill to J. Tarn, Gorée, 31st May, 10th June, 1808. op. cit.  
 Letter of John Hill to Dr Clarke, 28th September, 1809, op. cit.  
 Dial Diop was the Serin of Ndakarou from 1795-1815. He was a very  
 learned man who had successfully liberated his people, the Lebou,  
 from the yoke of the Damel, Amari Ngone Couma.  
 For further information, see F. Brigaud, op. cit., J. Remy, op.cit.  
 and A-P. Angrand : "Les Lebous de la Presqu'île du Cap Vert,"  
 1946.  
 For English accounts see J. Corry, op.cit., and F. Spilsbury, op. cit.
  
7. Letter of John Hill to J. Tarn, 28th September, 1809, op. cit.  
 Letter of John Hill to Dr. Clarke, 28th September, 1809, op.cit.
  
8. PRO: CO/267/27 for 10th and 24th March, 1810.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF GOREE

The island had been visited in the 15th century by early Portuguese voyagers, who named it the Ilha da Palma (Ile de Palma).<sup>1</sup> It was a conspicuous island, which provided a sheltered anchorage, and a beach where landing was easy, but it had little water, though there was a small spring in the south-west of the island. Supplies of water, wood, livestock, etc. had to be obtained from the inhabitants of the mainland. It soon became a major stopping point on the routes to the Indies, across the Atlantic to Brazil and the West Indies, and for those trading along the African coast. In the following centuries French, English, Dutch, Portuguese, Danes, and others all sent ships to this area to trade or conquer new lands.

The nearby bay was called the Bay of Bezeguiche. This was the name given by Diogo Gomez to a chief he dealt with on Cape Vert in 1456. Gorée was then referred to as the Isola di Beseghichi, or some such variant (e.g. Baizaguiche in Barbot.) In the writings of Rainolds and Dassel the name was used to refer to a village on the mainland.

The Wolof refer to Goree Island as Bër, and the various governors as Boroom Bër (Owner of Ber). Bër is the name of a tree with a soft white wood. The Wolof commonly identify places by the name of a conspicuous tree, e.g. Ndaxaar, daxaar, which gave rise to Dakar, means 'a tamarind tree'. Elders used to refer to Dakar as Ndaxaar Dial Diop - "The Tamarind of Dial Diop."

Valentim Fernandes, writing about 1506-10, describes the Ilha da Palma, stating that a stone church had been built there by the Portuguese on their way to construct the castle of 'Sam Jorge em a Mjna' (= Elmina in Ghana). Many who died while trading on the coast were buried there. The island had numerous baobab trees, and many birds, but water was in short supply. Duarte Pacheco Pereira<sup>2</sup> writing about the same period, indicates that voyagers could obtain water, wood, and meat, subject to the good will of the people on the peninsula.



"It was common for Dutch ships destined for Guinea to carry on board as far as Cape Verde the materials for constructing a sloop. The prefabricated sloop would then be assembled on shore in two or three weeks. Such sloops were particularly useful for trading in the rivers between Cape Verde and Sierra Leone...." Footnote in Pieter de Marees: Description and Historical Account of the Gold Kingdom of Guinea (1602), p.8.

About 1617 the Dutch, who had gained their independence in Europe, and were now expanding their power on the sea, took formal possession of the island. Some write that permission was granted by a fisherman Denga or Danga Mafal, who used to dry his catch on the island, and a local ruler on the peninsula named Biram.<sup>3, 12</sup> Some writers, e.g. John Barbot, name Biram as 'King of Kayor'. The island was then named Goree from the Dutch Goede Reede (Good Harbor), or perhaps from a similarly named island in Zeeland.

A good description of the period under the Dutch is given by Francisco de Lemos Coelho: "The island of Berseguiche lies past Cape Verde and a League away from the mainland. In my day the Dutch were masters of it and they called it Guré Island. They had two fortresses there, the larger one opposite the mainland, on the waterside, where the trading post and the houses of the general and the other soldiers stood, and the other one opposite that, facing the sea, a musket shot away, where every day part of the battalion guarding the lower fortress was stationed. All told there was a garrison of 80-100 men, not counting those persons required to deal with trade.

The General was in charge, both in war time and in peace time. To operate the trade (done from the island), he always had iron and other goods from Northern Europe in large quantities and normally three or four small vessels which were used to transport the hides procured on the mainland in one or other of the ports there. From these ports they obtained more than 60, 000 hides.

Ships from Cacheo also came here, or the general sent his own ships there to trade, and from Cacheo he annually obtained 900-1000 quintals of wax and ivory. Every year two or three large ships came here from Holland, to load up with this merchandise, which they carried to the city of Amsterdam, where the Dutch had the headquarters of the African Company, as they called it."

English Vice Admiral Sir Robert Holmes, who was in the Gambia River in December 1663, and learned of increasing Dutch activities in that river, decided to attack Gorée, though England and Holland were at peace at the time. Gorée surrendered in January 1664. Holmes then attacked various Dutch settlements on the Gold Coast, after which he headed back to Europe. Various biographies over some 200 years have attributed to him the capture of Manhattan Island and the Dutch settlement of New Amsterdam, founded in 1626, which was then renamed New York, but it was in fact an expedition under Richard Nicolls who had been appointed deputy governor to the Duke of York, to whom Charles II had granted a large section of north-eastern America, that captured New Amsterdam in August 1664. On news of Holmes' activities reaching the Dutch they protested to the British Government. The Royal African Company demanded that the Dutch prizes might be made over to them in compensation for Dutch reprisals. Holmes was briefly imprisoned (Jan. 1665), but released to resume his activities because of a formal state of war with Holland, being granted a full pardon in March, and taking over command of the 'Revenge'.

The Dutch, meanwhile, instructed their admiral in the Mediterranean Admiral de Ruyter (De Ruijter), to recapture Gorée, at that time regarded as more important than New Amsterdam. He took on provisions at Cadiz, eluded the vigilance of British ships after passing through the Straits of Gibraltar, and reached Gorée in October 1664. Though British reinforcements had reached the island a week before, they had made no preparations for



REAR-ADMIRAL SIR ROBERT HOLMES, KT.

*(From the original in the possession of Lord Heytesbury.)*

\* Born, 1622. Served Charles I. ashore in the Civil War. Cruised with Prince Rupert, 1649-1650. Commanded a squadron on the Guinea coast, 1660-1661. Reduced New York, 1664. Knighted, 1666. Commanded at Vlieland and Ter Schelling, 1666. Governor of the Isle of Wight, 1669. Commanded against Dutch Smyrna fleet, 1672. At Solebay. Died, 1692. Buried at Yarmouth, Isle of Wight.

From Wm. Laird Clowes: The Royal Navy: A History.... 1898.  
Vol. II.

PORTRAIT OF SIR ROBERT HOLMES

From: Richard Ollard: Man of War: Sir Robert Holmes and the Restoration Navy.

pp. 104/5. Portrait by Lely.





Michael de Ruyter, the  
finest Dutch admiral of  
his time, swiftly  
retaliated against  
English encroachments  
upon his country's  
strongholds in West  
Africa.

From Maurice Ashley: Rupert of the Rhine, 1976. p. 160.



L'Amiral d'Estrées

From Jean Delcourt: Goree: Six Siecles d'Histoire.

defence, and were taken by surprise. De Ruyter obtained their surrender, allowing them to leave for the Gambia River and Sierra Leone.<sup>5</sup> De Ruyter then re-took Cormantyne on the Gold Coast, and crossed the Atlantic, attacked a fleet of merchantmen at Barbados, and raided shipping from the West Indies to Newfoundland before returning home.<sup>6</sup>

Gorée remained in Dutch hands until December 1677, when it was taken by the French Admiral D'Estrées, on his way to attack Tobago, a Dutch possession in the West Indies. The French possession of Gorée was confirmed by the Treaty of Nimeguen (1678). It was then entrusted to the Compagnie de Sénégal.

Fourteen years later (1693), an English Governor in The Gambia, James (John ?) Booker, captured Saint-Louis on the Senegal, and then Gorée, destroying the fortifications, plundering whatever he could lay his hands on, and then returning to The Gambia, not having a large enough force to hold the island. Six months later a French force took it back.<sup>7</sup>

During the Seven Years' War in Europe (1756-1763) the English Prime Minister Pitt marked out Gorée for capture, as it was believed to hold the key to the west coast of Africa. Commodore Keppel sailed in 1758 with a large force, first captured Senegal (St. Louis), and then reached Gorée at the end of December. The island was taken in January 1759.<sup>7,8.</sup> The French Commandant Blaise Estoupande Saint Jean at first refused to surrender, but his troops gave up after a second bombardment. Gorée remained in English hands until it was restored to France by the Peace of Paris (Treaty of Paris) in 1763.

The British, however, retained Senegal, and created the Province of Senegambia (1765-1783), comprising the Island of St. Louis where Governor Charles O'Hara took up residence, and James Island in The Gambia. The French continued to occupy Gorée, their power there being considered insignificant. From 1776-1783 England was engaged in the War of American

Independence. In 1778 France declared war on England, and in that year re-took St. Louis, and moved their people from Gorée to that town, a yellow fever outbreak having decimated the population of Gorée.

The following year (1779) Admiral Hughes, Lord Macleod, and two companies of the 73rd Highlanders, arrived to take back Gorée, but found it already evacuated by the French, and quietly re-occupied it.<sup>9</sup> It remained under British control until it was restored to France by the Treaty of Versailles in 1783.

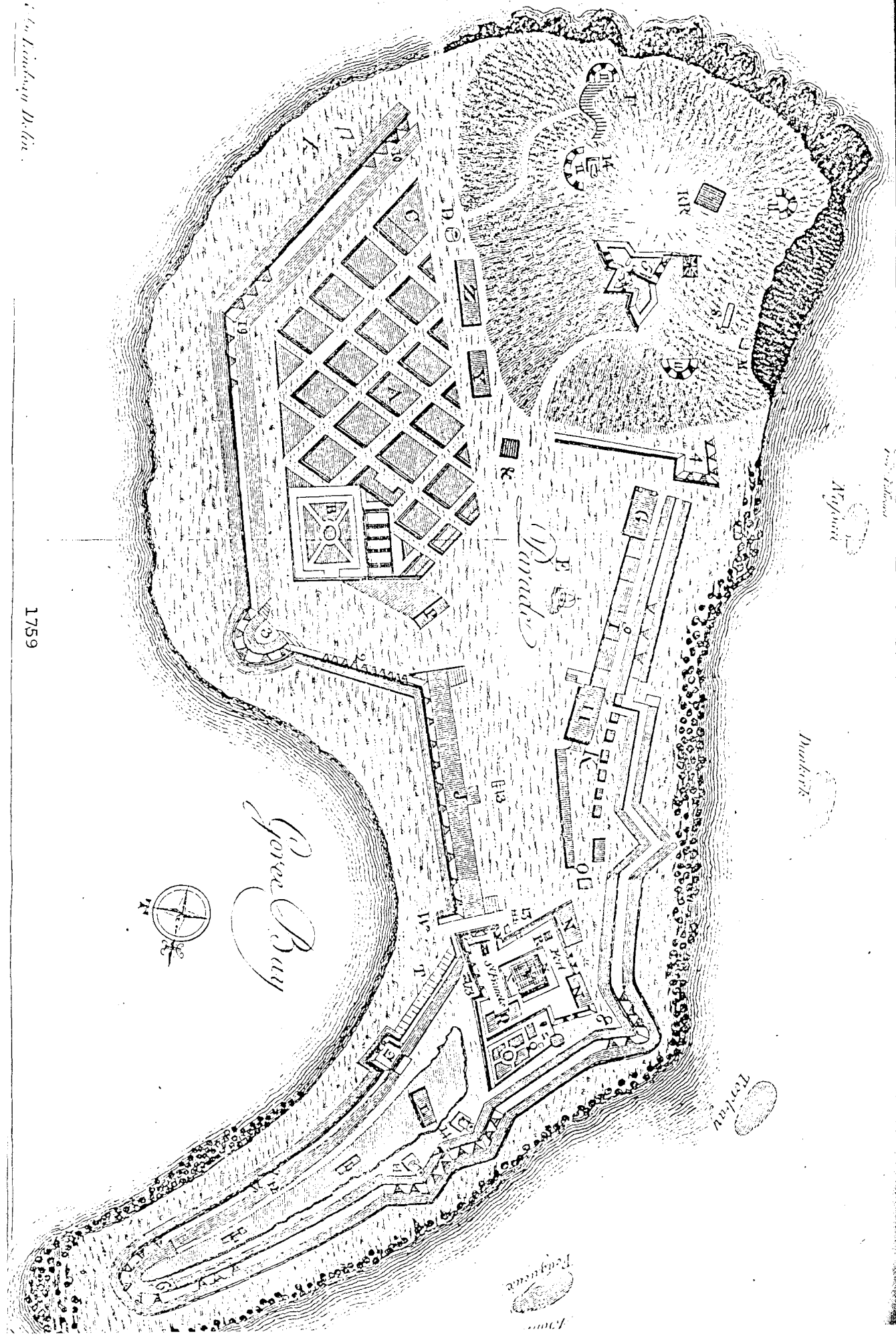
Lord MacLeod appointed a man called Adams as Governor, but the Secretary of State did not confirm him, and appointed Wall, who had been in the Gambia River, as Governor, without revoking Adams' commission, or even informing him. So in July 1790 there was one Governor on the island, and one on board ship in the harbor, both holding valid commissions. After acrimonious communications Wall decided to withdraw and make for Senegal. At sea he discovered the ships of Adams taking off from Gorée with food, money, arms, and ammunition. He captured them, and returned to Gorée. Adams was tried at a court martial over which Wall presided, and at which he was the chief witness. A few years later (1782) Wall had a soldier flogged to death, a sentence of 300 lashes having been given. He was accused of murder, but at first managed to escape trial by fleeing to the continent of Europe where he remained for nineteen years, after which he returned, expecting that all the witnesses would have died.<sup>10</sup> But he was finally brought to trial, found guilty and executed in 1802.

During this period the British allowed the inhabitants to build homes along the waterfront, where there had previously been some fortifications, provided that loopholes were left in strategic positions, in case there was another attack on the island.

It would have been at this time the Pepin's house was built, later becoming famous as the "Slave House." A map dated 1778/9 shows



1759

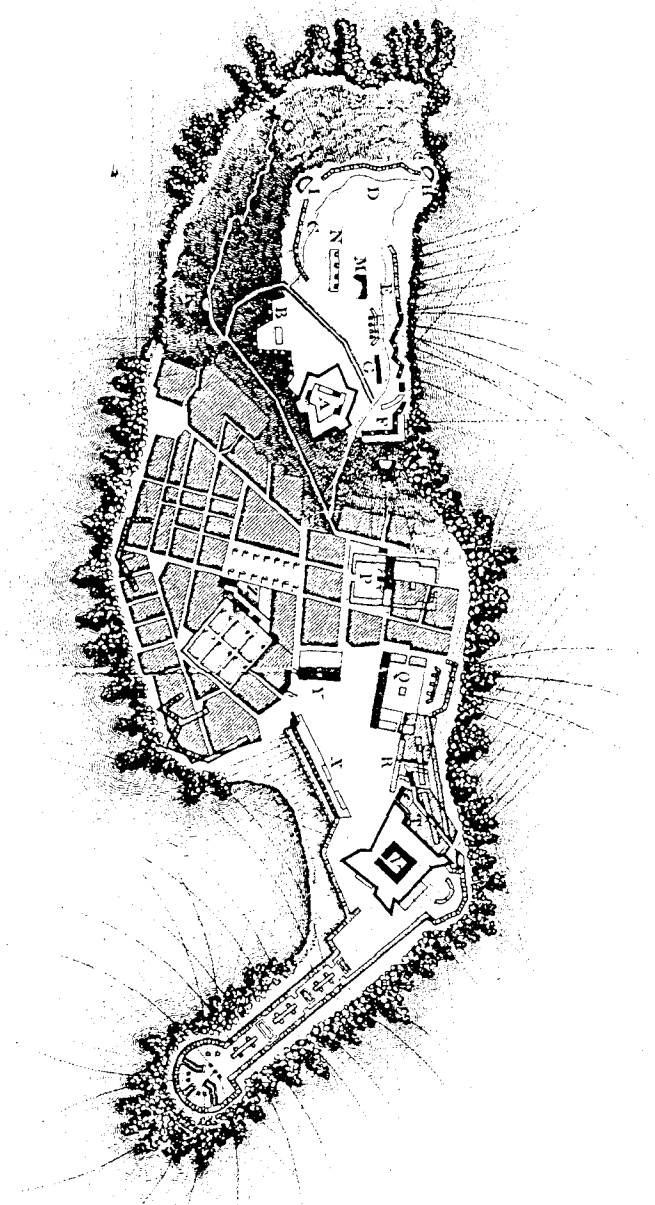


# PLAN

DE L'ENSEMBLE DE LA VILLE.

CANAL DE DAKAR

Etat en 1860.



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Echelle de 200 Toises.  
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Imprimé par J. B. L. à Paris, chez M. L. B. et C.

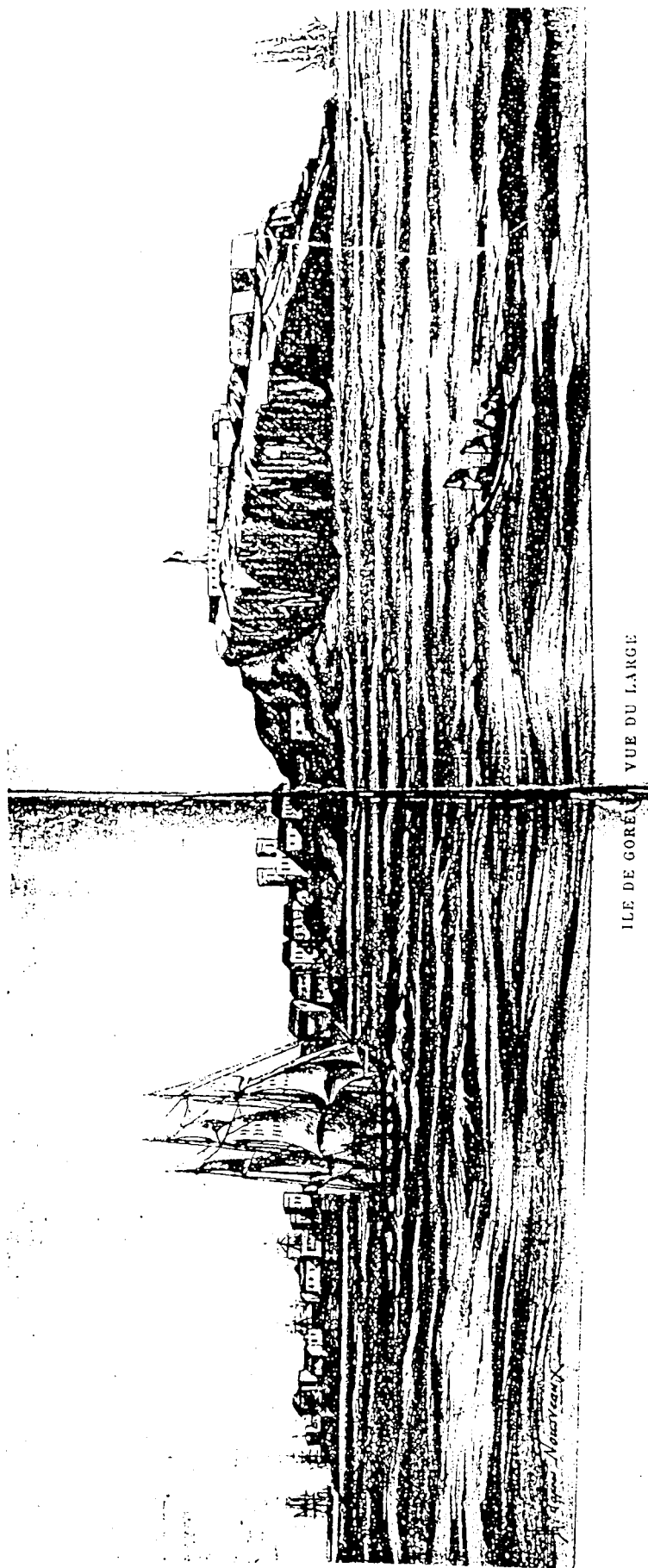
From: Joseph Corry: Observations upon the Windward Coast of Africa... 1805 and 1806.

Opp. p. 16.

ISLAND OF GOREE

From a sketch by I. Corry





ILE DE GOREE VUE DU LARGE

Colonel Frey: Cote Occidentale d'Afrique, 1890, p. 188-189.

From Jean Delcourt : Gorée: Six Siècles d'Histoire

Le Chevalier de Boufflers



fortifications along the sea front, but no houses. A 1786 map shows house plots.

The French controlled the island from 1783 to 1800. During this period the famous Chevalier de Boufflers visited the island and decided to make it his residence as he was not fond of Saint Louis (1786). He may well have stayed at the Pepin's house. In 1787 he returned to France before the Revolution.

In 1800 Sir Charles Hamilton retook the island for the English, raids by French 'pirates' based on Gorée on British shipping in The Gambia being one of the motives for the action. Colonel Fraser became the new Governor. Fraser attempted to re-capture Saint-Louis but failed.

The Inhabitants seemed to have been willing to switch their allegiance easily, favoring whoever seemed to allow them the most freedom in their private trade. Wadstrom in An Essay on Colonization (1794), p.190 wrote: "The late Senegal Company of France had contrived to obtain the most extensive privileges ever enjoyed by any similar establishment. Every article from which a mercantile profit could be squeezed, not excepting the natural curiosities of the county, fell under their grip. (The author could not even obtain a parrot, without its passing through the hands of the company's agents ! ) In short such was their unconscionable rapacity, as not only to rouse the vengeance of the negro nations, but also to excite the silent but deep felt resentment of the mulattoes of Gorée and Senegal, whose very existence depended on their commerce with the neighbouring countries."

The Treaty of Amiens, by which Napoleon hoped to gain a breathing space (1802) was supposed to have led to the relinquishing of Gorée by the British, but the English kept stalling, and remained.

Meantime an expedition from French Guiana, many of the men

taking part being ones who had trafficked in slaves at Gorée, and knew the area well, set out to recapture it, as their main source for slaves had been cut off. After fierce fighting the English surrendered in January 1804.<sup>11</sup> However, in March fresh British forces under Captain Dickson recaptured it without difficulty, and British occupation lasted until the island was returned in accordance with the Peace Treaty of 1814. As instructions from Europe took a long time to reach the West Coast of Africa, and orders for Gorée and Saint Louis had then to pass through the Governor's hands in Sierra Leone, it was not until 1817 that the British actually relinquished control.

In 1808 international trade in slaves was abolished, and the British navy became active in capturing slave ships. But there was no manumission of existing slaves, and the island had a high proportion of 'domestic slaves', who constituted the labor force.

St. Louis had been blockaded, and ships were rarely able to reach it, though Hill's Diary shows that there was individual contact, traders coming from Saint Louis to Gorée, French officers coming to try to recover deserters, etc. In July 1809 it was finally taken by the British.

In the Gambia River the fortifications on James Island had been demolished by French forces in 1779, and no attempt had been made to rebuild them, but vessels from Gorée would visit the river to obtain supplies - building materials such as wood and lime, hides, rice, etc.

But Gorée was the focal point for vessels trading with the islands, and various coastal ports, a stopping point for vessels coming from or going to Sierra Leone, and a frequent port of call for naval vessels engaged in the suppression of the slave trade. Vessels from America sometimes made it their first port of call.

John Hill arrived in Gorée on 11 November 1807, leaving on 6 April 1809 to go to Sierra Leone, a period when major changes were happening as a result of the abolition of the slave trade on the high seas, and warfare in Europe.



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Translated by Th. Monod, A. Teixeira da Mota & R. Mauny.  
Bissau, 1951, pp. 21-25.
- 2 Pereira, Duarte Pacheco : Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis.  
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- 3 Gaffiot, Robert: Gorée, Capitale Déchue, Paris, 1933, 41-42.
- 4 Francisco de Lemos Coelho: Description of the Coast of Guinea (1684)  
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Chapter 1, paras. 4-6.  
(The author also mentions that local blacksmiths (on the mainland) could forge iron parts for a rudder, and that there was a safe place to beach a ship for repairs).
- 5 Lord, W.F. : "Gorée, a lost possession of England," The Nineteenth Century, May 1897, 759-768.
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- 7 Lord, W.F. Ibid, p.761.  
See also Gray, Sir John: History of The Gambia, Ch IX, 107-114.  
Lord refers to James Booker, Gray to John Booker.
- 8 Lindsay, John: A Voyage to the Coast of Africa in 1758 containing a succinct account of the expedition to, and the taking of the island of Gorée, by a squadron commanded by the Honourable Augustus Keppel.  
London, 1759.
- 9 Lord, W.F. *ibid*.p. 763.
- 10 Lord, W.F. *ibid*, p.765.
- 11 The loss and recovery of Gorée in 1804 are described in The Gentleman's Magazine, April 1804, pp. 364-5, and May 1804, p.460.
- 12 L'Abbe P.D, Boilat: Esquisses Senegalaises, 1853, 1-5.

## Other sources

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Jean Delcourt: L'île de Gorée, 1977.

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Michael Renaudeau: Gorée. 1978 (A photographic study). Text by Jean-Claude Blachère.

Jean Delcourt: Gorée. Six siècles d'Histoire.

# THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF GOREE

The population of Gorée, based primarily on Boilat's description<sup>1</sup>, consisted of:

- (a) Officials. In Hill's time, a military garrison, and European traders.
- (b) Prominent mulatto families, the men calling themselves habitants, the women signares.
- (c) Free blacks, that Boilat calls gourmets.
- (d) Slaves.

The mulatto families were often wealthy, owned plots of land on which they had built substantial houses, and were nominally Catholic by religion. They were found in all the major trading centers, Saint Louis, Joal, Rufisque, etc. besides Gorée. The women often formed alliances with Europeans - whether officials or traders. The children took their father's surname, and sons were often sent to Europe for education. The families possessed large numbers of domestic slaves, who could not be sold unless found guilty of a serious crime. These carried on a variety of occupations as cooks, household servants, carpenters, masons, tailors, etc. and they could be hired out for the benefit of their 'owners'.

The term 'signare' ( señora or signora in its Gambian form) seems to have become current in the 18th century, though intermarriage dated back to earlier Portuguese traders. Golberry in his Fragmens d'un voyage en Afrique pendant les années 1785, 1786 et 1787, wrote (I: 156) that all the free and rich negresses, and all the mulatresses have themselves called signares, and the use of this title is widespread in all this part of West Africa.<sup>2</sup>

Hill uses the term 'inhabitants', but does not use the term 'signares'. He refers to the 'ladies', or when giving a name 'Madam', e.g. 'Madam Pipin'. He does not use 'gourmet', but when describing the

guests at a wedding refers to "whites, mulattoes, & free blacks."

The Rev. Morgan who visited Gorée in the 1820s writes: "European gentlemen of lax morals, both French and English, mercantile and military, while residing on that coast find at Gorée and Senegal temporary wives. The female offspring follow their mother's mode of life, and inherit their property which consists of slaves and jewelry. Being heathens<sup>a</sup> they seem to be unconscious of sin from such intercourse with Europeans. Some of these Signoras have complexions as fair as Europeans." A signora who had heard him preach at Bathurst offered him the use of her parlour for Divine Service, and promised to get him a congregation. About 17 people (3 men and 14 signoras) turned up. The signora could not, however, find him a Bible- his own had unfortunately been left behind, and all she was able to produce was a Latin Prayer Book, which was of no use to this good Methodist preacher.

Morgan also describes the ladies or signoras of Bathurst. "These ladies were native of Senegal and Gorée...brought to St. Mary's by merchants and gentlement in the service of Government as temporary wives. Their property consisted of jewels and slaves, which they brought with them. Their slaves were hired out as labourers. Of jewels some of them have a profusion, which they are fond of exhibiting. They seldom burden themselves by carrying them, but a female slave sometimes walks before her mistress heavily laden with rings of gold on her arms and legs, others stretching her ears, with chains and various trinkets hanging to her neck...and other parts of her person. (Cf. p.79). These they have received as the reward for service to former husbands or inherited from their mothers." 3

a. They were, in fact, Roman Catholics, but the Rev. Morgan seems to have had strong anti-catholic sentiments.

The Free Blacks - gourmets.

This term appears in Crioulu as grumete, in Portuguese as grumete, in English as grumet, grummet, grometta, gramater, etc. The word is generally translated in dictionaries as ship's boy or cabin boy. On the other hand A.C. De C.M.Saunders in A Social History of Black Slaves and Freedman in Portugal 1441-1555, when describing the crews of the caravels and navios translates the term as 'ordinary seamen', cabin boys being pagens, and able seamen marinheiros.

Corry (1807) uses the term 'grumittas' to mean 'free black people', indicating that many were artizans - smiths, carpenters, joiners, masons. (Description of Bance Island, Sierra Leone).<sup>4</sup>

Hill does not use any specific term apart from 'free blacks', though his accounts mention payments to blacksmiths.

In the early 19th century they were men primarily engaged in maritime activities or in river transport, either as members of crews, pilots, interpreters, etc. They were generally Christians, and had adopted European style clothing. Many were employed by European traders as their agents to travel up river, etc. for wax, ivory, gold, etc. and clearly they also traded on their own account.

In his account of Saint-Louis Boilat indicates that the well educated and honorable "gourmets" would be counted among the "habitants".

Mage, writing in 1877, indicated that the term laptot was used in the 19th century for men engaged as sailors, gourmet then being used for higher grades such as 'quarter-master'.<sup>5</sup>

By the end of the 19th century the term gourmet became equivalent to 'Christianized African' in contrast to one who was a Muslim, but the term is rarely used now.

Slaves. The mulatto families had a large number of dependants who were born into slavery, and as such could not be sold unless they had committed a serious crime.

On the other hand slaves who were captured in local wars, or were criminals sentenced to be sold, were embarked for the Americas as soon as possible.

In Hill's time the Damel of Kayor bore a grudge against the people of Gorée because of this. In a war with the Ruler of Siin, "he was greatly worsted, and had a number of his soldiers taken prisoner, and sold by the Bur Siin to the Inhabitants of Gorée. The loss of these men affected the Damel very much. He had frequently applied for their redemption, but without effect. At last he heard the distressing accounts that several of the men had actually been sold and sent to the West Indies." Hill continues "This circumstance I believe was still fresh on Damel's mind, and rendered him less courteous than perhaps he otherwise would have been." [Letter to Rev. Adam Clarke, 28th September 1809]. Around this time as well, the people of Cape Verd Peninsula (Lebus and Muslim Wolof) were involved in a struggle for independence from the Damel, and were supported by the people of the island. They finally achieved their independence in 1809.

# References

- 1 L'Abbé P.D. Boilat      Esquisses Senegalaises. 1853 .
- 2 S.M.X. Golberry      Fragmens d'un voyage en Afrique.... 1802 .
- 3 Rev. John Morgan      Reminiscences of the founding of a Christian Mission on The Gambia. 1864.
- 4 J. Corry      Observations upon the Windward Coast of Africa. 1807, 4-5.
- 5 Mage      Voyage dans le Soudan Occidentale, 1877, p.21.

An excellent account of the lifestyle of the signares is to be found in: George E. Brooks: "The Signares of Saint-Louis and Gorée: Women Entrepreneurs in Eighteenth Century Senegal,"  
In: Women in Africa: Studies in Social and Economic Change,  
coedited by Nancy J. Haffkin & Edna G. Bay, 1976, 19-44.

See also:

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Regine Goutalier : "Splendeur et déclin des signares du Sénégal,"  
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LIFE ON GOREE: THE ECONOMY.

There is surprisingly little information printed about Gorée under British rule.<sup>1</sup> French accounts seem to ignore this period.

Gorée had been dependent on the slave trade, but international commerce in slave had been prohibited as from 1 January 1808, and the British navy had become active in seizing vessels engaged in the trade. In vocabulary IV Hill mentions that the people of Gorée considered Captain Hamilton of the Derwent as a "pillager" for the raids he made on shipping. Hill's Diary for Sept. 1808 records the seizure of a schooner belonging to two Gorée merchants, which had to be redeemed at a price of £50 per head for each slave found on board, five in number. Later (Oct. 1808) he tells of the escape of six slaves from the island. The cessation of the slave trade, however, did not include the manumission of those already enslaved. Lt. Col. Maxwell records the population of Gorée in 1810 as 3268 persons, of whom 10 were Europeans, 502 mulattos, 400 free negroes, the remainder (2356) being in a state of slavery.<sup>2</sup> The labour force of Gorée was, therefore essentially a slave force. It is not clear whether Col. Maxwell's figures included the garrison, which would have been officers and about 150 men.

The people of the Cape Verde peninsula, predominantly Lebu, and Muslim Wolof from Cayor, gained their independence from the Damel of Kayor in 1809, and had as their head Dial Diop of Dakar. Four low symbolic walls, protected by magical forces<sup>1b</sup> had been built, one across the peninsula, and three close to Dakar to restrain the forces of the Damel. These showed up on aerial photographs taken in World War II, the military analysts interpreting them as new anti-tank devices !<sup>3</sup>

Maxwell describes the economy of the people of the peninsula thus: "They subsist on the produce of their agricultural labour, the cattle and poultry which they rear, but above all the commerce they carry on with

Gorée in fish, stock, vegetables, and many other necessities of life; for this they receive in return iron, tobacco, gunpowder, beads, and muskets." When blockaded by the *Damel* they had received food supplies from Gorée, and so regarded them as allies. As little water was to be found on Gorée, both the island and ships had to obtain water from the mainland. At a watering place called Bambara, huts were built by the inhabitants of Gorée, and servants would spend the dry season there, supplying water, washing clothes, preparing lime, etc.

Most of the people of the peninsula were Muslims, yet there were still palm wine tappers, who, judging from the words given by Hill, were Serer, rather than Wolof.

Excursions to the mainland by Inhabitants and Europeans generally included visits to the palm winetapping groves. (Diary, 11 Feb. 08, 21 Feb. 08, 5 May 08) . Hill goes into the subject of palm wine tapping and the types of palm wine in great detail. On two of the occasions after he had visited the tappers he had to spend the day in bed to recover ! Maxwell waxes lyrical about palm wine, writing "Many of them even deny themselves the gratification of drinking the sweet, and in that state, unintoxicating juice of the palm, the most delicious and most harmless beverage with which nature had blessed mortality (sic) (= humanity)." <sup>2</sup>

Regarding the people of the peninsula Maxwell writes:  
 "Having constant intercourse with Gorée and accustomed daily to see Europeans and those who have adopted European modes amongst them, their manners have assumed a character of greater mildness, and they act more in conformity to our ideas than the other natives of the vicinity."



Some of the inhabitants of the island also had dwellings on the mainland. Hill describes a visit to a hut owned by the Pepin family at Bambara (May 08), and the Chevalier de Freminville<sup>1c</sup>, who went ashore in 1822 also describes how he received hospitality on two occasions at a "European house near Dakar", which belonged to the Pepin's. M. Pepin, however, was absent at the time, having gone to Albreda in The Gambia, but his servants provided water and fruit (pawpaws).

The dead were also buried in cemeteries on the mainland during this period.

The account of a voyage by George Howland in 1811 in the Brig. Pilgrim from New England gives interesting details of trade with America.<sup>4</sup> "She was loaded with Rum, Tobacco, Powder, drygoods, cutlery, glass and crockery ware &c, (Howland had also loaded two casks of old yellow codfish, which proved useless for trade.)

"Our cargo was sold to merchants in Gorée, and to the native chiefs on the coast, and our Butter, flour, and Potatoes and Onions was sold to the British garrison, which had taken the Island from the French... Our Cargo was sold at a great profit for gold and silver, ivory, gum, and hides."

In a later voyage (1822-23) he writes:

"We loaded the Brig in N.E. Rum, Tobacco, Calcutta cotton goods, English cotton goods, all of flashy colours, Glass and Crockery Ware, Coral and glass beads, Pipes, muskets, and bird guns, Machettas, Dutch knives, Cases of American gin, Hats, shoes, boots, Flour, Cheese, Butter, Potatoes, Onions, Codfish in Boxes, Crackers, and a great variety of other articles, including cork for fishing seines, a large quantity of powder in kegs, a deck-load of lumber and new boats, &c."

Gorée had at this time reverted to the French, and was now open to American commerce (1822). The lumber and boats and the vegetables - onions, potatoes, etc. were sold to the Commandant of the French garrison, rum and tobacco went to native and French traders. The marabouts and chiefs also bought some goods paying in gold.

The Commandant, whether British or French, clearly controlled the landing of goods from ships, so that the needs of the garrison, and, one presumes, of the señoras associated with many of the officers, could be taken care of first. This probably explains why it was a couple of days before Hill's goods could be landed from the ship.

With the slave trade virtually gone, the main export became hides. No mention of this occurs in the diary. Presumably small amounts of gum, beeswax, and ivory were also exported. With the British blockade of the river Senegal, the 'Dumb Moor' pantomimed for Hill the fact that there was an accumulation of ivory awaiting shipment at St. Louis. Gold, when it reached the island, was probably used locally for the ornaments of the ladies of the island.

Rice was also brought from the south - the Saalum and Casamance Rivers, and transshipped to the Cape Verd Islands. Salt produced in Bonavista was shipped south. From the Americas came rum and tobacco.

"In commercial transactions on the island the current medium of exchange was the Spanish dollar but in purchasing fish, stock or other provisions and necessities....tobacco, gunpowder, and other articles of merchandise are used." <sup>2</sup> Hill's accounts show such entries as "tob. for Arabic." "tobacco for eggs." "tobacco for pumpkin." In a letter Hill remarks that when sent to obtain a horse from the Damel he was not provided with "tobacco, powder, cloth, corral, amber or beads of any description." These would have been necessary for local purchases or gifts.

With the suppression of the slave trade there was an interest in other exports. During his visit to Kayor in December 1808 Hill writes:

"In consequence of having mentioned to our Landlady some days ago, that the African Institution would give a premium to any person who would raise a ton weight of indigo or cotton, she has begged of me that I would interest myself in endeavouring to dispose a camel's load for her at Gorée." But he does not indicate that anything came of it.

The arrival of Hill on Gorée did not provide any serious competition to other established traders. The goods he brought with him "were not of a fine enough quality nor the proper patterns for the ladies of Gorée," though he did make a few sales. The next month he attended a "Public vendue of tobacco and rum." But the tobacco he obtained was not of the best quality. He also bought a barrel of sugar and some pork, which he proceeded to pickle (Jan. 4-6, 1808). In March he records buying a hogshead of rum; in April, selling a few pieces of linen and muslin. His fragmentary accounts show payments to military officers (e.g. Odlum, for cloth); traders (Hughes- sugar), Ship's captains (Irvitt), Inhabitants (Pepin), Señoras (Madam L. Combe), presumably for goods purchased wholesale and then retailed.

- 1 Visits to Gorée include:
  - a F.B.Spilsbury: Account of a Voyage to the Western Coast of Africa performed by His Majesty's Sloop Favourite in the Year 1805... 1807.
  - b J. Corry: Observations upon the Windward Coast of Africa.... 1807.
  - c "Le Chevalier de Freminville a Dakar (1822)", Notes Africaines, No.66, avr. 1955, 41-47.
- 2 "Answers to Questions proposed to Lt. Col. Maxwell,"  
- Goree." Appendix to Report from Select Committee on Papers Relating to the African Forts. 17 June 1816. pp. 154-155.  
Reprint: Irish University Press.
- 3 R. Mauny. "Du nouveau sur les murs tata de Dakar," Notes Africaines, No. 40, pp. 14-15.
- 4 N.R.Bennett & George E. Brooks, Eds. New England Merchants in Africa: A History through Documents 1802 to 1865. Boston University Press, 1965. 59-63, 105-106.

SOCIAL LIFE

On the island Hill was involved in a variety of social activities. In the first place there was interaction with members of the Garrison. The Commandant often invited Hill for coffee, either in the evening or in the morning, and there was an occasional formal invitation to dinner.

Initially he spent a great deal of time with Captain McGregor, and later with Lieut. Grant, both undoubtedly being fellow Scots. Another Grant (possible a relative of Lieut Grant) was supervising brick making on the mainland, and Hill made frequent trips with him.<sup>1</sup> In the case of Lieutenants Bird, Megaw, et al. he mentions small parties and card playing. It would also seem that the officers were engaged in trading on their own account, and Hill apparently obtained goods on credit from various individuals.

Eventually he was given a formal position with the Garrison, being appointed Provost Martial, responsible for looking after prisoners awaiting trial, etc. and was asked to prepare a prisoner about to be executed to meet his death. Under Governor Maxwell he was appointed to conduct Sunday services for the garrison.

Secondly there was interaction with other traders. Minimal information is given in his Diary. He visits traders from time to time, and goes on board ships in company with them to purchase supplies. The small boats of the traders were also used for journeys between the island and the mainland. The coming and going of various individuals is noted. Initially he seemed friendly with Mr. Carew, but later had a 'difference'.

Thirdly, hospitality was shown to the Captains of ships, and passengers stopping off at the island, either on the way home (Vanneck, Hamilton), or who were on their way to Sierra Leone (e.g. Governor Thompson). Captains and high ranking officials would no doubt have been the responsibility of

1 But see p.100 where the brick maker is referred to as Lieut. Grant.

the Commandant and senior officers, but Hill took Governor Thompson to a Wolof dance. In this way Hill continued to maintain contact with various people he had known in Sierra Leone, and made new contacts with those going there.

There were also visitors to the island from the mainland, e.g. St. Louis. The "Dumb Moor", whose tattered letters of recommendation were re-written by Hill on fresh paper, the son of General O'Hara, and so on, and Hill was always looking for people who could provide him with examples of Arabic writing.

A good deal of his time was spent with the "Inhabitants". He was close to the Pepin family. Early on (January 3rd, 1808) he mentions "Several parties among the Ladies. It is the practice in Gorée of giving and receiving visits among the inhabitants & spending the evening in card parties - singing, &c. &c."

On January 10th he describes in detail one such event. "A large party of Ladies this evening met at Sophia Mary's for singing & otherwise diverting themselves. The following is a description of the manner during the assembly. The Ladies sit upon chairs in a circle, their domestics sit at their feet upon mats on the ground. As they sing, they, with great exactness, clap their hands, the sound of which is distinct and clear, and when well performed (as is generally the case) not at all unpleasant to the ear...Tho' the Ladies understand and dance to the violin & other music yet when they meet in this way above mentioned, their music consists chiefly of their voice, their hands, & part of the trunk of an old tree hollowed out and covered with a piece of goat's skin upon which they beat. Their songs are generally composed of sentences expressing joy or sorrow respecting either a parent, relation, guardian, friend, &c. as the case may be.

Some of them are addressed to God, or as they say Yallah, and are chiefly composed of Guiliff and Arabic words &c.

A couple of days later (Jan.12) his diary states: "Spent part of the evening with Ladies, at an African Dance...In these dances the same mode is observed as is peculiar to almost all the rest of Africa. There is in general some order observed, but no regular or systematic method. Those ladies who can play the most capers with their bottoms and hands & rgle (=wiggle) in the most wild and unmeaning manner are generally reckoned the most skillful & dextrous in the art as they conceive it to be. Previous to the commencement of the dance, I was desired to acquaint them with the name of my sister and mother. I requested to know the reason of their request, they told me it was that they might honor me with a song which they should sing on their account.

These Ladies are sober and I may say virtuous, yet they are partial to sweet Liquors which they drink in moderate quantities, never to excess ! "

On Jan.17th he "attended a juvenell female assembly in the evening, received from one of them the present of a watch chain composed by her, of red and yellow silk."

After attending such social events Hill decided to turn his attention to learning something of the "Jeoliff language."

In addition to social events such as are described above, there were also Christenings and Weddings. Hill does not mention any funerals.



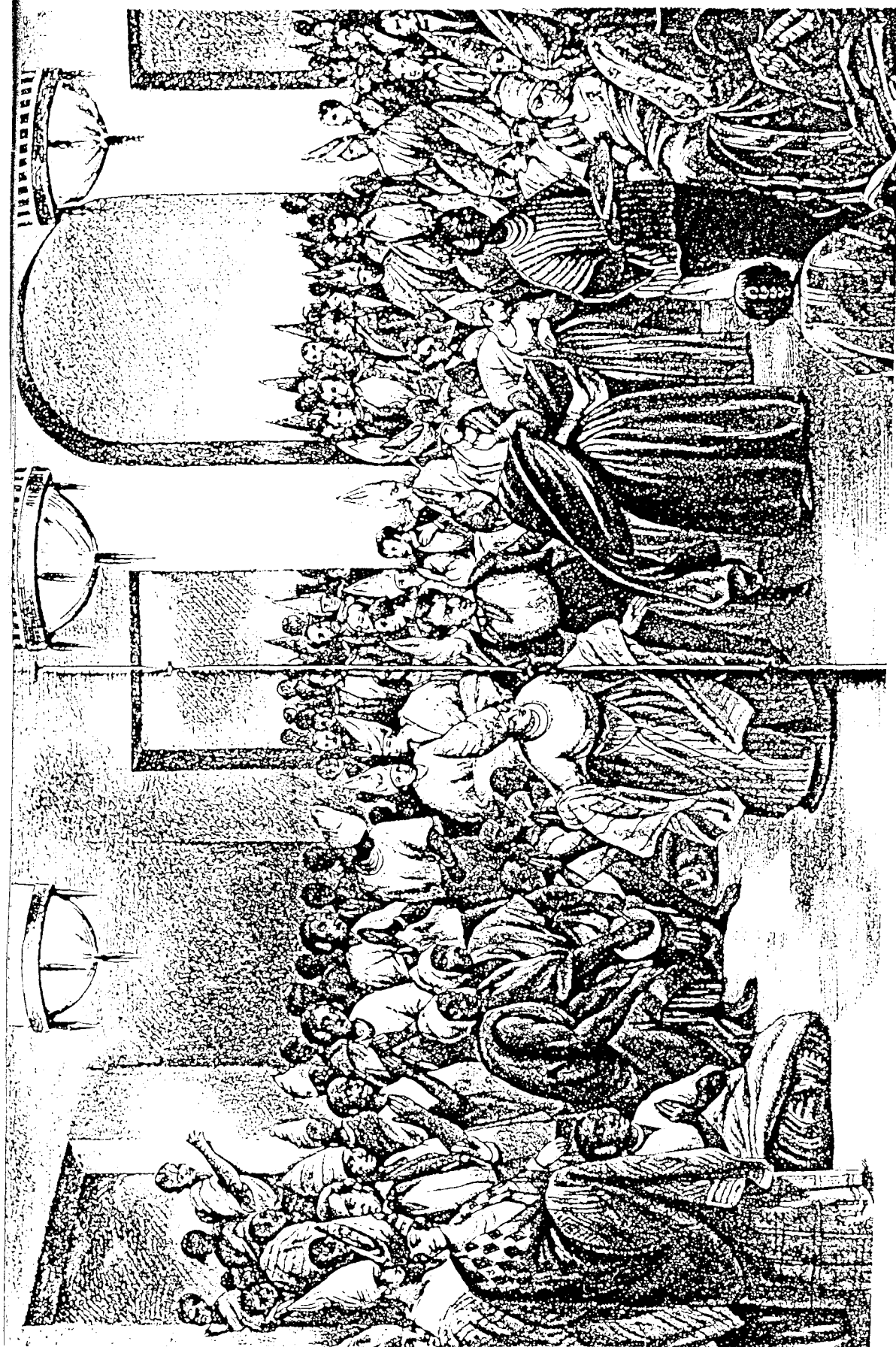
SIGNARE DE GORÉE, D'APRÈS UNE AQUARELLE DE DARONDEAUX

Col. Frey CÔTE OCCIDENTALE D'AFRIQUE.  
(1890)

p. 193

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Colonel Frey: Cote Occidentale d'Afrique..1890, 12-13.



Fig. 9.—INTÉRIEUR DE SIGNARE (Aquarelle inédite de Derondeau).

Colonel Frey: Cote Occidentale d'Afrique...1890, p.16



NEGRISSES JOUANT AU KOURI (Appareille musée de Paris, etc.).

Colonel Frey: Cote Occidentale d'Afrique... 1890, p. 9.

16th April. "In the afternoon called at..... where M. Misar (Musard ?) was christening a few black girls and children. The people who attended this christening did not seem to have the least idea of its being a holy ordinance from the levity & gaiety they observed on the occasion. I confess from the manner the ceremony was conducted, tho I frequently heard the holy trinity mentioned I would hardly persuade myself that it was even in their way of thinking a religious ordinance."

A Wedding was described on the 24th. June. "The same day a large wedding dinner was given by Mr. Francis Laport & ball in the evening, the number of whites, mulattoes & free blacks which sat down to dinner in his different rooms amount to (blank)...The Ladies were very richly attired, the Gold, amber & coral displayed by them on this occasion was really astonishing, even their slaves and domestics seemed loaded with gold.

One black girl that waited upon one of Pipin's daughters, had not less than two hundred pounds worth of Gold about her, her earrings were worth about 30 or 40 £. Her necklaces were very tastefully hung round her neck, the one next her neck being the shortest & smallest & all the rest gradually increasing both in length and size."

Illustrations, though from later in the century, show what the signaras looked like, and informal and formal gatherings.

Though there was no church or priest on the island at that time, the major religious events were still observed.

#### Christmas Eve

"They appear to have no church or priest and seldom meet above once a year to worship, when one of the Principal Inhabitants reads a few prayers in Latin, neither himself nor any of the rest understanding a single word. The time they meet is on Christmas Eve & part on the

X mass morning !

The Room fitted up for worship is hung round with some pictures chiefly of departed saints, the place where (if they had a Priest) the sacrament would be partook of, is ornamented with a crucifix, the Virgin Mary, above them on canvas the representation of the Saviour on the cross, the whip that scourged him, the spear that pierced him, the cock that crow'd on Peter's acct, and a number of other things supposed to have been peculiar to that event. Around that are a number of Penny Pictures representing the Prodigal Son in his different stages of prodigality with his return to his father."

Easter was also observed.

On February 28th. "the young people began their play of Mardigras..."

The next day there was a "Masquerade Ball."

April 15th. "This being Good Friday the Inhabitants pretend to observe it very devoutly, by abstaining from animal food of all kind & tho' the men observe the day as well as the women in point of fasting, yet they make no difference in point of dress, whereas the women old and young through (=throw) off their gay pangs (=pagnes) & ornaments and put on Pangs of a coarse dull blue colour which with the colour of their skin gives them at once a gloomy and forbidding appearance." (See p. -for a diagram of "Mourning Dress.")

April 17th. "This being Easter Sunday...the inhabitants open their church to worship in the forenoon. The afternoon is spent in eating & drinking and visiting. They appear to take great pride in appearing fine & richly dressed."



SIGNARES EN COSTUME DE DEUIL

Col. Frey: Cote Occidentale d'Afrique, p. 125 (1890)

There is only a brief mention of one Muslim event.

February 7th. " This day I am informed is a great day among the Mahomedans & tho' part of it is spent by them in acts of worship or offering which they call Tobasky, yet the other part is spent in the same manner English spend an Holy-day...."

In addition "Send-off parties" for prominent individuals leaving the Island were an important tradition. "Dinned, Danced & Supped with a large party. The occasion Col. Lloyd's leaving the island..." Two days later the inhabitants gave a farewell dinner for Col. Lloyd.

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Visitors to the Island describe the meals at the houses of the inhabitants. J.A.Carnes writes of breakfast "Coffee was poured out to us in cups of porcelain, and hot cakes and boiled fish were furnished us in plates of the same material. But the greatest novelty to me was the "coos-cous".....(p.40).

"Dinner was served up about three o'clock....We had French soup, fricassed and baked fowls, fried eggs, fried plantains, sweet potatoes, yams, etc...besides wines of different kinds, and all the various fruits that could be obtained...such as oranges, pine-apples, bananas, guavas, etc., of delicious flavor...."

Supper included tea and coffee. "We had served up several viands, such as chickens, baked and fricasseed; pork, cooked in two or three different ways, but very rich and palatable, and several other dishes containing dainties that I knew nothing about, diffused their grateful odor around the board. The favorite dish of "coos-coos" was not omitted."

Hill, on the other hand, has little to say about food. As he always seemed to be in poverty, his ordinary fare would have been simpler.

He mentions mixing an egg with milk, when he was short of milk, and had a guest to feed. Remarks in his vocabulary show he had developed a taste for coos-coos.

J.A. Carnes: Journal of a Voyage from Boston to the West Coast of Africa...  
1852. His visit to Goree, 35-58, describes the period when  
Goree was under the British.



VISITS TO THE MAINLAND

(a) The Palm Wine Tappers

This is one of the longest entries in the Diary, and reveals Hill's thoughts about the people and education.

"5th May 1808. At 6 P.M. in company with M. Dupé in M. Newton's Pinnacle to Baow [= Mbaow], a noted place for palm wine. We arrived about 8 at a small shack constructed with a few stakes stuck in the ground covered with grass. Its inhabitants consisted of a few miserable looking natives who reside there solely for the purpose of drawing the wine from the trees, which they send to their families who reside at the town a little way off. These natives are purely pagan as they profess no religion whatever save their blind superstitious notions of witches & hobgoblins, they have not the least distinct idea of God. Neither do they seem to have the most distant wish for the improvement of their mind, a striking proof of this they afforded while we were there.

M. Dupé told them here was a Gentleman who would willingly learn them education; one of the poor pagans looking at all his various impliments of art and warfare (which consisted of a gun & a powder horn, a challa ach fitta (bow and arrow), candama (the strap which they place round the tree and by which they ascend), capara (the chisel with which they pierce the tree) gumba (the gourd which receives the wine) & c. replied these were his education. Intimating that the knowledge of the use of these was perfectly sufficient for all that was necessary to support & comfort nature.

Indeed I was not a little struck with the apparent sincerity and contentment which sat on his countenance, yet all that can be said in favour of such apparent content is the utter ignorance these pagans have of any thing better, for I have often observed that these people

are extravagantly fond of all sort of European articles of every description which they happen to set their eyes upon. If they cannot obtain them by the articles of barter which they may be in possession of, they ...(writing obscure).... an opportunity to deprive you of life in order to obtain them. During the time we stopt in this place we partook of four different qualities of palm wine from the tree...."

The palm wine tappers, who were apparently Serer, would probably be reluctant to harm notables of Gorée, who were among their best customers. A stranger, on the other hand, might well have been in danger.

(b) An incident during the visit to Cayor.

"Tuesday, 13th December 1808.

About 2 o'clock Peter [the Interpreter] and I went into the fields to eat a water melon (to) allay hunger & thirst...on the road the people who met us cursed my mother, & seemed much surprised that I took no notice of it. I asked Peter what could be the reason of their using such language to me. He said the people all believed that we had caused the well to fall in, & on that account they cursed us. The well unfortunately fell in yesterday, & the cause of its falling was attributed to the following singular circumstances, viz. Two or three evenings before the catastrophe happened, as Hammerstone and I were leaving the well where we had watered our horse, he pulled a small twig from a tamarind bush for one to whip the horse as I went along. The people indeed told him when he pulled it not to do so, but he did not understand their meaning. So very blind & superstitious are these pagans that they sincerely believe every well & every particular tree has its devil, who when offended will

work them some evil."

[In Wolof thought tamarind trees are the abode of powerful spirits. Many folktales tell of a person resting under such a tree and a spirit coming to help them. DPG ]

(c) Picnics on the mainland

There is one entry in the Diary which refers to a party of ladies going to the mainland. "There were about 12 of them with a great number of attendants. They (furni)shed themselves with cold ducks..Madeira, French liquors." A number of the men ("inhabitants") were already on the mainland.

This event, hwever, ended in a fracas. Hill's writing here is difficult to read, but apparently there was a quarrel among the men over accomodation, and a scuffle ensued, which also involved the intervention of the people of Dakar. Hill states that he could not understand the parties to the dispute, nor make himself understood to the people of Dakar, and so stood aside. Later the ladies returned to the island "in the midst of much fear and alarm."

(d) Hill's visit to the Damel of Kayor ,

Hill along with an interpreter (Peter) and Hamerstone (presumably from the Garrison), went to the Damel with the object of obtaining a horse for the Major. There is only a small portion of a diary relating to this, from Friday 9th (December) 1808 to the 17th, but further information is contained in a letter to Dr. Adam Clarke, to whom he sent the original journal.

Hill went in plain clothes, which "as it proved was a great disappointment o Damel, who expected nothing less than a Commissioned Officer in full and rich uniform." He lodged with one of the Damel's

wives, and describes the Damel as "going round the town to visit all his wives, and as our landlord is the last he visits, being close to his own yard, he is in general three parts over with pogh (millet beer ?) before we have the honour of his visit." The Damel was accompanied by attendants and a singing man, "an artful rogue (who) repeats some appropriate verses and strikes his Guitar, whilst the whole company, with one mouth, exclaim at every sentence the king drops, 'wagh na Dug', or 'Daialaid' [He has spoken the truth, or 'That is true.']

Each time he asked about the horse, he would be told either "It is coming later today", or "It is coming tomorrow."

Hill and his companion ran into trouble when a branch was broken from a tamarind tree.

Circumcision ceremonies were apparently taking place, for Hill picked up a number of words relating to the ceremonies, and the Damel "in a jocular manner asked me if I had been circumcised."

Eventually a horse of poor quality was produced which was turned down, the interpreter explaining that "such a horse would spoil his good name not only in Africa, but in England", and a better horse was promised, but when the diary ceases, they were still waiting.

The king had several ambassadors, including one from Abdul Kader.. Logically one might expect him to be from Fuuta Toro, but in fact the Abdul Kader there had died a couple of years previously, though maybe the ambassador had been there for several years. This ambassador, however, could read Richardson's Arabic Grammar. Another Ambassador came from Saalum, and two more from unnamed places. The Damel showed an interest in Hill's watch and pocket compass, and indicated that he wished to be given the watch.

The last vocabulary has a number of place names from Kayor, so Hill might well have travelled extensively in going to the Damel's town and returning.

THE PEOPLE NAMED IN HILL'S DIARY

In writing names in his Diary Hill normally adds titles, e.g. Capt. Macgregor, Dr. Heddle, Lieut. Grant etc. Visiting Frenchmen are designated as Mon<sup>r</sup> - Mon<sup>r</sup> Da Roque. The wives of officers are referred to as Mrs. The inhabitants and traders are always given the formal title Mr. Mr. Pipin, Mr. Hughes, etc, or Messrs, if he is alluding to several people.

The signaras he indicates with the formal title Madam - Madam Pipin, Madam L. Combe, though several women are referred to - Miss Betsey, Sophia Mary - without surnames.

The only instances where he used both first names and surnames are in the case of James Dodd - a soldier sentenced to death,

Mr. Francis Laport - who gave a wedding dinner.

Charles O'Hara - to whom he wrote a letter.

Hannah Goosburn - who refused to rent him a room.

There are two cases of an M. , perhaps indicating Mr. rather than Mon<sup>r</sup>.

(1) In the first place there are the officers of the Garrison:

Names supplied by Patricia Wilson in [     ].

The Commandant - Col. [Richard] Lloyd.        Mentioned by Corry, 1807, p.12.

Succeeded by Major [Charles] Maxwell, Sept. 1808.

Captain [John] MacGregor.

Captain [Henry] Odium                                Mentioned by Spilsbury, p.28

Captain [John] Kingsley

Captain [John] Cready                                i/c the Garrison sloop

Adj.[Donald] MacKenzie

Commissary[Samuel] Hamilton                        Mentioned by Corry, 1807, p.13  
Corry stayed with Hamilton.

Dr. [James] Wilson

Dr. [John] Heddle                                    Mentioned by Corry, 1807, p.13  
Fyfe calls him an "Orkadian army  
doctor"

Lieut.[Alexander] Grant

Lieut.[Lewis] Bird                                    Left in Sept. 1808 with Col.Lloyd

Lieut [John] Ware                                    "     "     "     "     "     "

Lieut [James] Megaw

Lieut [James] Simpson                                Quartermaster

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James Dodd    a soldier - sentenced to death

Hamerstone, who accompanied Hill on his visit to the Damel of Cayor,

to obtain a horse for the Major, was also probably from the Garrison.

Major Maxwell, later Lieut-Colonel, was appointed Governor of Sierra

Leone (1811), and took with him Dr. John Heddle, whom he appointed

Colonial Secretary (Fyfe: p.116)

Lieut. Grant, would later have been the Captain Alexander Grant, who

established a military post on St. Mary's Island in the Gambia,

and founded the town of Bathurst. (Gray: 307-309)

Hill normally gives the military rank with the names of members of the garrison. In a couple of instances, however, he writes Mr. Grant, and not Lieut. Grant. It would seem therefore that there was a second individual with that surname, a cousin ? . Gray p. 309 writes "Charles Gray, a cousin of the settlement's (Bathurst's) first Commandant, had also been in Government service at Gorée."

(2) The Captains of visiting ships, particularly those going to or coming from Sierra Leone, are frequently mentioned.

Capt. Blacksley/Blakesley of the Brig Lively (with whom Hill travelled out).

Capt. Frederick Parker of the Brig Derwent (cf Fyfe, 106, 109).

Capt. Macaulay of the Schooner Ann

Capt. Irvitt/ Iverett of the Agnes.

Hill lent the last named a copy of "Parfet's Journal" to copy. This dealt with trade along the coast, and he received a "Dozen of Porter & Ale." in return. Patricia Wilson found in the A.P.Kup edition of Adam Afzalius Journal 1795-96, a note mentioning Parfitt, who had been a Sierra Leone Company Storekeeper. His accounts were in such a mess that the Company "made him a supercargo on the Company's ship Calypso which voyaged to Gabon and back in June to December 1796, telling him to get his accounts straight whilst on board, which he seems to have done...Parfitt was sent home in early 1798." p.86, note 33(4).

It was probably notes made on this voyage that Hill possessed.

Capt. Cummings of the Brig Lucy (?)

The Diary entry is somewhat obscure. Two vessels arrived together, one bringing reinforcements for the garrison, the other had passengers for Sierra Leone and Gorée. Cummings I have assumed to be a ship's captain, rather than a member of the garrison.



(3) People with Sierra Leone connections.

## a) Stopping on the homeward voyage.

Magoune	John MacGoune, a Master Mason at Sierra Leone (PW)
Vanneck	"A ..Dutch employee, Sergeant Vanneck." (Fyfe, p.92) [Abraham Vanneck] (PW)
D. M. Hamilton	Molloy Daniel Hamilton, originally an accountant with the Sierra Leone Company, who later entered government service (Fyfe, 111, 152, 158).

## b) Stopping on the outward voyage.

[William] Dawes	See Fyfe, p.105.
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Governor Thompson [Thomas Perronet]	Fyfe, p.106. He was the son of a rich banker in Hull, who had served in the Navy and Army, taking part in an attack on Buenos Aires. He accepted the governorship of Sierra Leone at the age of twenty five.
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Mr. Robertson	Not identified with any certainty. There was a George Robertson, who was a Liverpool trader.  Patricia Wilson identifies him as Walter Robertson, who had been a clerk with the Company.
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(c) Parfet	Ellis Loedsby Parfitt
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(4) Visitors from Senegal (St.Louis)

Frenchmen -	Da Roque Le Fue
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The "Dumb Moor"-	"old Muma" .Had been taken to England at one time by Governor Wall.
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O'Hara, Charles	A son of General Charles O'Hara, formerly Governor of Senegambia (1765-76).
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(5) Women's names.

Hannah Goosburn (= Gusban)

She refused to rent Hill a room.

Sophia Mary

Hill attended a party at her place.

This may well have been Sophia Boucher (Sophy Boucher) who was a prominent signara engaged in trading, and who 'married' Dr. Heddle by whom she had several sons, including Charles, who was later a prominent businessman in Bathurst and Freetown, and James who was killed in the Gold Coast.

(Fyfe, p. 239. A Capitaine Bouchertook over the island in 1778, on the death of Armeny de Paradis, a military engineer. (Jore, 1965, p.54).

Miss Betsey. The girl friend of Lieut. Grant.

She accused Hill of slandering the women of the island. "Talking with Lieut Grant respecting his brick making, he broke one which was hardened only in the sun, the colour being that of a dirty dull yellow, I observed without any intention of giving offence that the colour approaches pretty near to some of the young ladies in the Island." Betsey, however, overheard this remark, and poured a volley of abuse on him. The next day she called together the girls, held the brick up to Hill's face, and told him she thought the brick was more like him than any of the girls.

Madam L. Come [Lacombe]. The Garrison was commanded in 1746 by

Directeur de la Combe, who was succeeded by Blaise Estoupande Saint Jean. A cit. Lacombe is mentioned in Prélong's article "Mémoire sur les Isles de Gorée et du Sénégal," Annales de Chimie et de Physique, 1793, p.271, referring to the year 1787. Lacombe is mentioned as having found ambergris in the Salum river area. The name De La Combe appeared frequently in Bathurst (Gambia) in the middle of the 18th century.

Madam Pipin (Pepin). No first name is ever indicated, so there is no way of knowing whether she was the wife of Nicolas Pepin, or the famous Anne Pepin, though I would favor the latter.

Mrs. Odium The wife of Capt. Odium.

Mrs. Johnson Hill's Diary does not mention the husband of Mrs. Johnson, only her arrival "from the mainland". Gray (p. 309) names a Charles Johnson who had set up business in Gorée in 1806, and later moved to Bathurst.

#### (6) European traders and Inhabitants

Dupé, Dupuy [Rene] He is mentioned as having a Schooner. This is certainly Anne Pepin's first husband, a merchant from Bordeaux, who left because of an epidemic, and returned later. In Hill's Diary he is mentioned several times along with Pepin (who after all was his brother-in-law). He took Hill with him on a trip to the mainland which included a visit to the palm wine tapping area.

Newton [Augustus] Hill refers to him as having a Pinnace.

C.B. Wadstrom (1794) refers to a conversation he had at Gorée with a captive Tumanififi (Tumani Sise ?) who came from Fouta Jallo, and "was very much regarded and trusted by his master, M. Augustus<sup>8</sup> Newton of Gorée, with whom he had lived ten years....."

C.B. Wadstrom : An Essay on Colonization....p.41.

[After the capture of Gorée by the British in 17959, there was a Newton, who was promoted to be Lieut-Colonel, and was appointed Governor of the Island, in 1762 (?). (Duke, p. 121 , 123).

Waterman, William, Hill mentions him as 'coming from Senegal',

Gray (p.309) writes : "William Waterman..had settled at Gorée soon after its occupation by the British in 1800." He was one of the

original merchant settlers at Bathurst, when that town was founded.

The Pépin family. Hill spells the name Pipin; Corry, Peppin.

In 1767 a count of the population of Gorée indicates that a Signare Catherine Baudet had three successive husbands, Porquet, Pépin, and Franciéro. The second, Jean Pépin, was a surgeon of the Compagnie des Indes. She gave birth to Anne Pépin, about 1756, Jean & Nicolas Pépin, Marie-Anne Poquet, and Pierre and Andre Franciéro (Cariou<sup>10</sup>, Delcourt<sup>11</sup> )

Anne Pépin, from her mother's inheritance, her own trade in slaves, and money from Bernard Dupuy, a trader from Bordeaux, became one of the outstanding women of the island. Bernard Dupuy left the island when it was evacuated by the French due to a yellow fever epidemic (1778). When the Chevalier de Boufflers came to the island in 1786, he may have stayed first at the Pépin's house which had recently been built. Anne became his mistress, and he had built for her a house at the extreme end of Rue Blanchot, overlooking the sea, in a more secluded spot. The house apparently stood until about 1916. The Chevalier de Boufflers left in 1787, before the French Revolution. (Cariou).

Nicolas Pépin was literate, and acted as spokesman for the inhabitants.

Bernard Dupuy returned to the island, married Anne again, giving her two children, Nicolas and Jean. Anne Pepin lived until 1837. Nicolas and Jean both acquired land on the mainland when Dakar was founded. Nicolas was Aide commissaire de la marine à Gorée.

Hill "attended one of Mr. Pipin's sons to instruct him in English." (Dec. 1807; he visited the Pipins to see a leopard brought as a present for the Commandant; accompanied Mr. Pipin on board a vessel to make purchases; watched a diviner at work for

Madam Pipin; stopped in a hut belonging to the Pipin's at Bambara; went with Pipin on excursions to the mainland; dined at his house, etc."

Dupuy is mentioned from time to time, as being with Pipin, either on trips or dining together.

#### Mr. Carew

Thomas Carew was an Afro-Barbadian, once employed by the Sierra Leone Company (Fyfe, p.147). Spilsbury, who visited Gorée in 1805 mentions: "We were recommended to a free man a Mr. Crew, where we found the most liberal accomodations; he had lost his wife and had a fine boy who was a more perfect black than himself..he had once lived in Sierra Leone, and is well known for the goodness of his disposition and the pleasantness of his manners. He had lately been in England, and intends sending his son <sup>thither</sup> to finish his education." Spilsbury writes that the governor (Lloyd) would not allow bodies to be buried on the island for fear of infection, but had them sent over to the mainland, where they were often dug up and devoured by the tigers (sic) and other wild beasts."

The Chevalier de Freminville <sup>12</sup> who visited Dakar in 1822 mentions a tomb, three feet high "In memory of Mrs Clarissa Carew who departed this life the 19th of December 1804, in the 44th (year) of her age." He believed it to be the grave of "some romantic Englishwoman, who had died on board ship." But <sup>it</sup> ~~is~~ was clearly the wife of Thomas Carew. The stone still existed at Bel-Air in 1944, when it was apparently destroyed. <sup>13</sup>

Carew, "who had made a fortune at Gorée," eventually returned to Freetown and "in 1818...was appointed mayor." (Fyfe, p. 147).

When the French were establishing the town of Dakar, and making lists of plot owners (buyers and sellers) the name Méry Crew appears, the widow of Nicolas Potin.<sup>14</sup> (About 1857) .

Martin (William)

Mentioned as having a house on the mainland.

Corry (1807) p.17, describes him as "one of the principal inhabitants of Gorée. Along with Mr. Hamilton, he accompanied Corry to the mainland. William Hutton in 1816 was lodged at the house of a "Mrs Martin, a fine mulatto woman, who treated us with great hospitality and attention."<sup>15</sup>

St. John (= Saint Jean). Blaise Estoupande Saint Jean was commandant from 1747-1758. He built a house for his senora Marie-Thérèse.<sup>\*\*\*</sup> Their son Jean Francois de Saint Jean build a house nearby. Blaise Estoupande Saint-Jean was defeated by the British in 1758.<sup>16</sup>

A Cit. Saint-Jean is mentioned in Prélong's article "Mémoire sur les Isles de Gorée at du Sénégal," Annales de Chmie et de Physique, 1793, p. 271., referring to the year 1787.<sup>7</sup>

Corry writes of St.John: "I am much indebted to him for his judicious remarks, and very intelligent observations. This native received his education in France, and has acquired a very superior intelligence relative to the present condition of his country."<sup>1</sup>

The Saint John's were one of the leading families on the Island.

Laport, Francois. Gava a lavish wedding dinner.

From one of the leading families on the island. In later years

a Laport was a "Membre du Conseil d'arrondissement de Gorée (1846-47),

Defontine ) A Desfontaines was Secrétaire du Conseil des  
M. Foutané ) Travaux de la Marine at Dakar, 1856-66  
[Francis Defontenay PW]

\*\*\* John Lindsay, however, refers to Saint-Jean's mistress as the Princess Pennetica, who seems to have been a formidable lady. (p.80) A Voyage to the Coast of Africa in 1758. She was the daughter of of former, and niece to the then Brak of Walo.

Misar (= Musard ?) [Jean B. Mussard]

Mentioned as conducting christening ceremonies.

La Police [Pierre] This name occurs later in connection with the attempt to re-open the trading station of Albreda in The Gambia.<sup>17</sup> Governor Roger writes (17 Jan. 1824). "J'ai chargé de cette mission M. Moustey qui connaît bien le pays: il s'est adjoint de mon consentement le Sr. Lapolice, indigène de Gorée."

M. Pepin had also visited Albreda in 1822.

Hughes , Thomas. Florence Mahoney<sup>18</sup> tells how "One John Hughes, the son of a highly respected British Merchant , Thomas Hughes, who had resided in Gorée for many years was sent away at an early age. At the death of his father, he was left with little more than the education he had been given in England. Thus at the age of sixteen, the young Hughes was obliged to return to Gorée, where he found employment as a clerk in the establishment of a British merchant, John Finden, who was himself married to a Señora of considerable wealth. "

The father, Thomas Hughes, would have been the Hughes that Hill mentions.

So, in the end, we have pieces of information about most of the people mentioned in Hill's Diary, though Hill remains a shadowy character whose name does not occur in the published accounts of Gorée !

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The So-Called "House of Slaves" at Gorée

When visitors come to Gorée at the present day, the emphasis is placed on one particular spot - the house labelled "Maison des Esclaves". (The House of Slaves), overlooking the ocean. One enters a large courtyard, sees a magnificent dual flight of stairs leading to the apartment above, while between them runs a narrow passage with an opening over the sea, with small dark rooms on either side of the passage.

The house has achieved world wide fame, and is visited by numerous African-American groups in search of their origins. Photographs of it appear in books, videotapes, and films. The door overlooking the ocean is now known as 'the door of no return'.

From various guidebooks one reads such statements as :

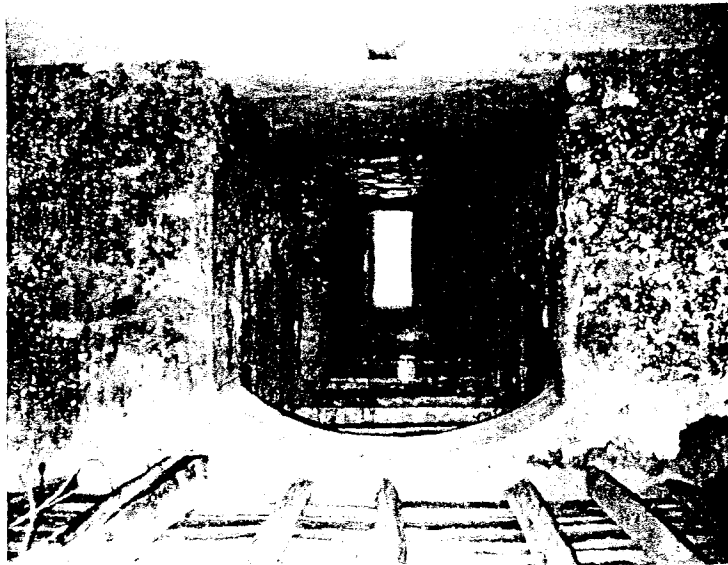
"In Goree.....this House of Slaves was a last "stop" for tens of thousands of Africans before being shipped to Europe and the Americas as slaves."

"In these underground dungeons the slaves were kept while waiting to be shipped overseas. They were led through the rectangular opening, lowered into rowboats, and taken out to the sailing slave ships..."

[Senegal in Pictures]

The impression is given that a large proportion of the slaves from West Africa left through this door, so the place has acquired an almost mystical value.

In the book "Imaging African Art: Documentation and Transformation" by Daniell Cornell and Cheryl Finley, Yale University Art Gallery, 2000, we read of two photographs by Carrie Mae Weems: (p.28)



"The photograph on the right is a now familiar view of the 'door of no return' at Goree Island but its relatively recent frequency in the visual vocabulary of many diaspora blacks makes it no less haunting, indeed the door of no return pictured here has come to stand as a visual symbol for the initial passageway through which millions of Africans forcibly left the shores of their homeland for points unknown across the Atlantic... the door of no return is always shown open, revealing the expanse of the undulating Atlantic Ocean topped by the blazing sun-scorched horizon. The blinding light let in by the open door is framed in black by the darkness of the dungeons and outlined by an arched opening."

Slaves are said to have been lowered to the rocks below, put in rowboats or canoes, and taken out to slave ships anchored in deeper water.

Visitors are sometimes offered soil from outside the door which they treasure and take back to America, or else pick up a small stone. as a remembrance.

Yet when one looks critically at the past literature, one finds that it is all a recent symbolic creation, with little relation to reality. The house was a family house belonging to the Pepin family one of the leading mulatto families of the island. It was built relatively late in time, in the period 1776-78, when the island was <sup>British</sup> under/occupation. The international trade in slaves was declared illegal in 1807, so it could not have been used as a transit point at the height of the slave trade.

The door is high above sea level, and below are rocks. No small boats could come easily to this point, because of rocks, the tides, and swirling currents. How would the slaves descend ? by ladder ? by ropes ? If they were fettered descent would have been more difficult

and slow. When one looks at old plans of the island , one finds that "barracks for slaves" and "courtyards for slaves", were next to Fort St. Francois, or later, near the old botanical gardens. These sites were convenient to the bay where the present day ferry from Dakar docks, and there would have been no difficulty in loading slaves into small boats, and quickly conveying large numbers to vessels anchored in the bay.

Sometimes the statement is made that dead slaves would be thrown through the "door of no return" on to the rocks below. I doubt if the inhabitants (especially the elegant senyoras) would consent to having decaying bodies stuck on the rocks below their living quarters. In addition if water was drawn from this area to clean the main courtyard, etc. one would hardly want water from an area where corpses were rotting.

Visitors are told that "white slave dealers" lived in the apartment above, while slaves were confined in the small dark rooms below. But the inhabitants were in fact fashionable women, and their domestic servants (household slaves) often lived in the upper apartments too. They were needed to fetch food and drink, look after small children, aid in the dressing and hair-dressing of their mistresses, played games with them such as worri, and were expected to be at hand at all times.

Could there have been any other explanation for the door and passageway below ? Apparently when the authorities (at that time the English) gave permission for building along the sea front (where there had previously been some fortifications), they wanted loopholes left, so that if any attack came from the sea, there would be opportunities to fire back. Could the passageway have been intended for a small cannon ?

it height giving it considerable range. Balls and gunpowder could have been stored in the small windowless rooms on each side of the passage. But no such attack seems to have taken place, later transfers of the island between nations took place as a result of treaties signed in Europe. So the question remains unanswered.

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Hill, as recounted in his Diary, visited the Pepin house many times, but does not mentioned "slaves" in connection with it. In his notes he mentions that the Commander of the Brig Derwent which seized vessels suspected of carrying slaves, was regarded by the local people as himself being a 'bandit, plunderer, pirate'. After a visit to the ruler of Kayor, Hill describes an incident which apparently happened earlier. The king was displeased with the inhabitants of Goree, because in a battle with the Ruler of Siin, some of his forces had been captured, and then sold to the people of Gorée, where they had quickly been put on board vessels sailing to America. The Damel of Kayor felt that he should have had a chance to ransom his captive subjects, but had not been given the chance.

The various references to the Portuguese, or Dutch, etc. building the house seems to reflect a reluctance to believe that Africans themselves could design, build, and live in elegant apartments - there were certainly a large number of craftsmen - carpenters, masons, etc. on the island, their work being organized by the Mulatto families..