‘So many applications of science’: Novel Technology in British Imperial Culture During the Abyssinian and Ashanti Expeditions, 1868-1874.

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Abstract

This thesis will examine the portrayal and reception of 'novel' technology as constructed spectacle in the military and popular coverage of the Abyssinian (1868) and Ashanti (1873-4) expeditions. It will be argued that new and 'novel' military technologies, such as the machine gun, Hale rocket, cartridge rifle, breach-loading cannon, telegraph, railway, and steam tractor, were made to serve symbolic roles in a technophile discourse that cast African expansion as part of a conquest of the natural world.

There was a growing confidence in mid-Victorian Britain of the Empire's dominant position in the world, focused particularly on technological development and embodied in exhibition culture. During the 1860s and '70s, this confidence was increasingly extended to the prospect of expansion into Africa, which involved a substantial development of the 'idea' of Africa in the British imagination. The public engagement with these two campaigns provides a window into this developing culture of imperial confidence in Britain, as well as the shifting and contested ideas of race, climate, and martial prowess.

The expeditions also prompted significant changes to understandings of 'small wars', a concept incorporating several important pillars of Victorian culture. It will be demonstrated that discourses of technological superiority and scientific violence were generated in response to anxieties of the perceived dangers posed by the African interior. Accounts of the expeditions demonstrated a strong hope, desire to claim, and tendency to interpret that novel European technology could tame and subjugate the African climate, as well as African populations.

This study contributes to debates over the popularity of imperialism in Victorian society. It ties the popularity of empire to the social history of technology, and argues that the Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions enhanced *perceptions* of military capability and technological superiority in the Victorian imagination. The efficacy of European technology is not dismissed, but approached as a proximate cause of a shift in culture, termed 'the technologisation of imperial rhetoric'.

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Introduction

The later Victorian experience and popular understanding of conflict on the African continent was embodied in the term and ideal 'small wars'. Variations of the term had been in use since the mid-eighteenth century to cover a range of irregular or small-unit activities, particularly those involving reconnaissance, raids, and ambushes.[1] To the late-Victorians, it had morphed to refer to any contest between a 'modern' industrial army and a technologically inferior and numerically superior enemy, thus reflecting a comparative assessment of belligerent forces. Colonel C. E. Callwell sought to systematise the study and practice of 'little wars' in his 1896 *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice*, defining the term as including, 'all campaigns other than those where both the opposing sides consist of regular troops. It comprises the expeditions against savages and semi-civilized races by disciplined soldiers'.[2] His work was a late codification of the 'school' of small wars theorists and practitioners that had become established over the preceding thirty years.[3] Looking back on decades of imperial conflicts across the globe, Callwell divided them into three classes, 'campaigns of conquest or annexation, campaigns for the suppression of insurrections or lawlessness or for the settlement of

[1] Roger Beaumont, 'Small Wars: Definitions and Dimensions', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science,* 541 (Sep., 1995), p. 21; Sibylle Scheipers, 'Counterinsurgency or Irregular Warfare? Historiography and the study of "small wars"', *Small Wars and Insurgencies,* Vol. 25, no. 5-6 (2014) pp. 883-4.
[2] Colonel C. E. Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1996 [1896]) p. 21.
[3] Daniel Whittingham, '"Savage Warfare": C. E. Callwell, the roots of counter-insurgency, and the nineteenth century context', *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, Vol. 23, nos. 4-5 (2012) p. 592; Captain C. E. Callwell, 'Lessons to be Learnt from the Campaigns in which British Forces have been Employed since the Year 1865,' *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute* 31 (1887) pp. 357-412.

conquered or annexed territory, and campaigns undertaken to wipe out an insult, to avenge a wrong, or to overthrow a dangerous enemy'.[4]

This was the sort of fighting with which the mid-to-late nineteenth-century British army was primarily engaged, the Crimean War (1853-6) being the notable exception. It was also an important component of the frame through which Victorian society came to view its relationship with the non-Western world and Africa in particular, one entwined with trade forts, missionary posts, and creeping settlement. As Whittingham stated, 'the British Army, in the nineteenth century as in the twentieth, was a small wars army'.[5] The term was not synonymous with imperialism, nor was it exclusive to ventures into Africa. Yet, this particular form of conflict was absolutely central to the Victorian expansion and maintenance of empire. At a conceptual level, the 'idea' of small wars incorporated both the struggle for, and the moral justification for, imperial conquest. It became inseparable from the image of the Scramble for Africa. There was a long history of what might be termed 'peripheral' conflict throughout the British Empire. The period of 1868-75 was, however, somewhat of a turning point both in the practical realisation and popular understanding of what small wars could be for Britain.

In 1868, an Anglo-Indian Army force under Lieutenant-General Sir Robert Napier invaded the East African Kingdom of Abyssinia to rescue several missionaries and British government representatives taken hostage by King Theodore (Tewodros II). In fewer than six months, Napier's army marched inland across hundreds of miles of mountainous terrain, defeated Theodore's army in two significant battles, and burned his capital of Magdala. The hostages

[4] Callwell, *Small Wars*, p. 25.
[5] Whittingham, *Savage Warfare*, p. 591.

were rescued, Theodore committed suicide, and only two of Napier's soldiers were killed.

In late 1873, a British Army force under Major-General Sir Garnet Wolseley launched a punitive expedition against the West African Ashanti Empire. The Ashanti King (Asantehene) Karikari had invaded the British Gold Coast Protectorate and taken several European missionaries hostage. In fewer than six months, Wolseley's army and allied Fante soldiers marched inland through thickly forested terrain, defeated the Ashanti army in several significant battles, and burned their capital of Kumasi. The hostages were freed, Karikari was forced to sign a harsh treaty, and only fourteen of Wolseley's soldiers were killed in action.

These were Britain's first successful major forays into the African interior, and turning points in the imperial project.[6] Taken together, these two successful expeditions set an ideal model in the popular memory which future ventures were expected to follow. They thus exerted a disproportionately large influence on British imperial culture. This thesis will examine the portrayal and reception of military technology as constructed spectacle in the popular coverage of the Abyssinian (1868) and Ashanti (1873-4) expeditions. It will be argued that new and 'novel' military technologies, such as the machine gun, Hale rocket, cartridge rifle, breach-loading cannon, telegraph, railway, and steam tractor, were made to serve symbolic roles in a technophile discourse that cast African expansion as part of a looming final conquest of the natural world.

There was a growing confidence in mid-Victorian Britain in the Empire's dominant position in the world, focused particularly on technological

[6] This is a strong statement, particularly since 'successful', 'major', and 'interior' are historically mutable in the African context. While rooted in practical developments, this is primarily a statement of the ways in which the conflicts were perceived, interpreted, and remembered. Much of the forthcoming thesis will work toward clarifying and justifying this very statement.

development and embodied in exhibition culture. During the 1860s and '70s, this confidence was increasingly extended to the prospect of expansion into Africa. This involved a substantial development of the 'idea' of Africa and the British place in relation to it. The public engagement with these two campaigns provides a window into this developing culture of imperial confidence in Britain, as well as the shifting and contested ideas of race, climate, and martial prowess.

0.1 A Transitional Period

G. A. Henty, special correspondent to the *Standard,* opened his account of the Abyssinian expedition with the claim that, 'since the expedition of Pizarro and Cortes in the middle ages, no such novel and hazardous expedition is on record'.[7] Benjamin Disraeli similarly told the House of Commons that, 'it resembles more than any other event in history…the advance of Cortez into Mexico'.[8] Their choice of analogy illustrated the widespread view of the African interior as a new and unknown land. Until this period, indeed until the campaigns in question, British influence was limited to the edges and far south of the continent, and even those footholds sometimes seemed tenuous and imperilled.[9] There was considerable interest in the interior. Explorers such as Bruce, Salt, Burton, Speke, Grant, Livingstone, Barth, Baker, and Reade had shown that it could be penetrated, at least by small groups.[10] The writings of

[7] G. A. Henty, *The March to Magdala* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1868) p. 1.
[8] HC Deb 27 Apr. 1868, vol. 191 col. 1338.
[9] Andrew Porter, 'Introduction,' in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume III: The Nineteenth Century*, eds. Andrew Porter and Wm. Roger Louis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) p. 14.
[10] Byron Farwell, *Queen Victoria's Little Wars* (London: Allen Lane, 1973) pp. 163-4; Charles T. Beke, *The British Captives in Abyssinia*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman's, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1867) p. xvii.

these explorers were in fact consulted, excerpted, and summarised for the War Office's expedition plans.[11]

The Royal Geographical Society (RGS) and speculative business associations funded expeditions to map river routes toward the centre. Major James Augustus Grant, formerly Speke's partner on the expedition to discover the source of the Nile, went on to serve as the head of Napier's pioneering party in Abyssinia. At least one officer referred to him as 'the Nile man'.[12] Thomas Bowdich had established political and commercial relations with the Ashanti in 1817 and Charles Beke with Abyssinia in 1840.[13] These had been the exploits of great explorers, however, and their paths had not been successfully followed by any substantial groups of Europeans. In 1868, Britain had no effective presence in Abyssinia and, as McIntyre claimed of the Gold Coast, 'British sovereignty was confined to the plots of land on which the forts were built'.[14] McCaskie was thus correct to describe the Ashanti expedition as the 'first serious British military venture into the tropical African interior'.[15]

Harcourt argued that the Abyssinian expedition, 'constituted a decisive

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[11] The National Archives of the UK (TNA), WO 107/8, 'Routes in Abyssinia, 1867', Prepared by the Quartermaster General, Bombay Army, August 1867; W. T. Blanford, *Observations on the Geology and Zoology of Abyssinia, made during the Progress of the British Expedition to that Country in 1867-68* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1870) p. 151; John Camden Hotten, ed., *Abyssinia and its People; Or, Life in the Land of Prester John* (London: John Camden Hotten, 1868); Lieut -Col Anthony C. Cooke, ed., *Routes in Abyssinia* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1867) p. 1, 6; 'The Medical Officers and the Late War', *The Lancet,* Vol. 103, no. 2641 (11 Apr. 1874) p. 521.

[12] 'A Staff Officer' [Lieut. W. W. Scott], *Letters from Abyssinia during the Campaign of 1868* ([n. pub.]: [n.p.], [1868?]) p. 6.

[13] T. Edward Bowdich, *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee, with a Statistical Account of that Kingdom and Geographical Notices of Other Parts of the Interior of Africa* (London: John Murray, 1819); Charles T. Beke, *Abyssinia: A Statement of Facts Relative to the Transactions between the Writer and the Late British Political Mission to the Court of Shoa* (London: James Madden, 1845).

[14] W. D. McIntyre, 'British Policy in West Africa: The Ashanti Expedition of 1873-4,' *The Historical Journal* 5, no. 1 (1962) p. 20.

[15] T. C. McCaskie, 'Cultural Encounters: Britain and Africa in the Nineteenth Century,' in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume III: The Nineteenth Century*, eds. Andrew Porter and Wm. Roger Louis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) p. 676.

break with the past', and inaugurated, 'a new phase of imperialism'.[16] Beckett similarly claimed that the Ashanti conflict, 'has been seen as a significant episode in the shifting dynamics of British policy towards West Africa in particular and towards empire and the projection of military power in general'.[17] This newly aggressive stance toward Africa would become characteristic of the 'scramble' and mark the British presence in many parts of the continent until at least the Great War.

Greenhalgh has found that many historians roughly follow Sir John Seeley's delineation of three phases in the development of the empire: the 'mercantile' phase up to the 1830s, the 'anti-imperial' phase up to the early 1870s, and the 'new imperial' phase from the early 1870s onward. Porter likewise described a 'happier period' of British foreign policy coming to an end in 1875, followed by 'a new era of competitive imperialism'.[18] Disraeli's 1872 Crystal Palace speech to the National Union of Conservative Associations is usually pointed to as a convenient starting point for this new, aggressive, phase of imperialism, in which he established the Tory party's position on empire and his desire that England, 'will be a great country, - an imperial country'.[19]

In his work on the British image of Africa, Curtin broadly described the period from 1850 to 1880 as transitional from an era of humanitarianism to one of imperialism. He claimed that British popular and political interest in West Africa reached its nadir in about 1865, and then rose gradually and with an

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[16] Freda Harcourt, 'Disraeli's Imperialism, 1866-1868: A Question of Timing,' *The Historical Journal* 23, no. 1 (1980) pp. 88-9.
[17] Ian F. W. Beckett, ed., *Wolseley and Ashanti: The Asante War Journal and Correspondence of Major General Sir Garnet Wolseley 1873-1874* (Stroud, Gloucestershire, UK: The History Press for the Army Records Society, 2009) p. 2.
[18] Bernard Porter, *The Lion's Share: A Short History of British Imperialism 1850-1995*, 3rd ed. (London: Addison Wesley Longman, 1996) p. 73.
[19] Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000) p. 57; Thomas Edward Kebbel, ed., *Selected Speeches of the Late Earl of Beaconsfield, Vol. 2* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1882) p. 534.

imperial bent.[20] In *Geography Militant,* Driver characterised Henry Morton Stanley's career as a bridge between 'the golden age of African exploration (*c.*1851-78) and the era of the scramble (*c.*1884-91)'.[21] Stanley's work as a special correspondent in both Abyssinia and Ashanti thus lay firmly within the age of exploration, a telling indication that these expeditions were of a transitional nature. MacKenzie surveyed a period beginning in the 1880s in his seminal work on imperial culture, *Propaganda and Empire*. He found that most historians dealing with popular imperialism and militarism in Britain concentrate on the late Victorian and Edwardian periods, 'when such manifestations are most apparent'.[22] While MacKenzie extended this range forward to the 1960s, this thesis will move in the other direction and shed light on an earlier period when British cultures of popular imperialism and militarism underwent reinvention.

William Gladstone took office as Prime Minister in December 1868, just after the Abyssinian expedition had ended, and left office in February 1874, mid-way through the Ashanti campaign.[23] The campaigns thus fit chronologically on either side of Edward T. Cardwell's tenure as Secretary of State for War in the Gladstone cabinet. Cardwell undertook a comprehensive reform of the administration and organisation of the army, known collectively as the 'Cardwell Reforms', establishing the parameters within which it would operate until the end of the nineteenth-century.[24] With Gladstone's support,

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[20] Philip D. Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780-1850* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964) p. xiii.
[21] Felix Driver, *Geography Militant: Cultures of Exploration and Empire* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001) p. 125.
[22] John M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion 1880-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984) p. 9.
[23] Philip D. Curtin, *Disease and Empire: The Health of European Troops in the Conquest of Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) pp. 29-30; Howard Bailes, 'Patterns of Thought in the Late Victorian Army,' *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 4, no. 1 (1981) p. 19.
[24] Edward M. Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army 1868-1902* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992) p. 2.

Cardwell abolished the purchase of officer commissions, introduced short service enlistment and the reserve system, and centralised power in the War Office. Bond asserted that these developments constituted a 'watershed in the nineteenth century history of the British Army'.[25] Cardwell also began the practice of holding military manoeuvres on Dartmoor to test and practice tactics under field conditions. The manoeuvres were held annually from 1871 until 1875, after which they ceased for reasons of cost.[26] The autumn manoeuvres are of particular interest for several reasons. They proved to be immensely popular and attracted large crowds of spectators just as the public appetite for imperialism was gaining momentum. Furthermore, they were couched in the principles of rational analysis and practical tests that, while never widely popular in the military, brought increasing numbers of officers to lectures at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), where matters of military technology and small war doctrine were often debated. The Ashanti expedition was, in fact, interpreted by many as a large-scale field-test of the Cardwell reforms.[27]

Britain's transition into the imperial era was aided, perhaps even precipitated, by key technological developments. Curtin argued that a performance gap between European and non-European armies had begun to appear in the middle of the century.[28] Headrick noted that many of the innovations which proved useful in the Scramble, 'first had an impact in the two decades from 1860 to 1880…Europeans who set out to conquer new lands in 1880 had far more power over nature and over the people they encountered

[25] Brian Bond, 'Editor's Introduction,' in *Victorian Military Campaigns*, ed. Brian Bond (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1967) p. 14.
[26] Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army 1868-1902*, p. 22.
[27] Sir Robert Biddulph, *Lord Cardwell at the War Office* (London: John Murray, 1904) p. 224; Sir Frederick Maurice and Sir George Arthur, *The Life of Lord Wolseley* (London: William Heinemann ltd., 1924) p. 74.
[28] Philip D. Curtin, *The World & the West: The European Challenge and the Overseas Response in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000) p. 27.

than their predecessors twenty years earlier had'.[29] Porch further reasoned that, during these decades, Europeans 'mastered the final constraint when organizational ability allied with technology combined to give them a potentially decisive advantage', citing Abyssinia and Ashanti as the two benchmarks in the realisation of that process.[30] It was in Abyssinia and Ashanti that the extent of British technological superiority, which would come to characterise small wars, was first successfully demonstrated and widely perceived.

0.2 Terminology

Both conflicts will be predominantly referred to as 'expeditions', rather than as 'wars', throughout this study. This term has been chosen for consistency with historical commentators, and also better reflects the dominant understanding of the conflicts in Victorian culture. By contemporary standards, these were expeditions in that they were short, accomplished without territorial conquest, and intended to serve demonstrative functions. As the coming chapters will explore, they were also cast in the public imagination as akin to hunting, exploration, and scientific expeditions.

Though the expeditionary forces will be referred to alternately as the 'army' and 'military', both campaigns also included Naval Brigades. This was a generic term defining any body of seamen or Royal Marines landed for active service under the orders of an Army commander. Naval Brigades were not equivalent to Army Brigades, nor were they consistent from case to case. Numbers and compositions varied widely in different circumstances.[31]

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[29] Daniel R. Headrick, *The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981) p. 205.
[30] Callwell, *Small Wars*, p. xi; Douglas Porch, *Wars of Empire*, ed. John Keegan (London: Cassell & Co, 2000) p. 108.
[31] Arthur Bleby, *The Victorian Naval Brigades* (Dunbeath, Scotland: Whittles Publishing, 2006) p. vi.

‘Abyssinia’ will be used, rather than ‘Ethiopia’, as some modern authors prefer, as this was the title used by Europeans of the time. Gondar was the traditional capital of the old feudal Christian state. After Theodore’s push for unification, in which he reasserted the central power of his throne over Abyssinia, the Emperor based his capital at Dabra Tabor in the northwest. Faced with the threat of a British invasion, he burned Dabra Tabor in October 1867 and marched his entire army to the mountain fortress of Magdala. At the time of the invasion, therefore, Magdala could reasonably be considered the capital of Abyssinia, or at least Theodore’s capital.[32] The use of some titles and terminology in this thesis at odds with modern preferred forms (or, in cases such as ‘King Coffee’, with reality) are justified on the premise that such language was integral to the primary object of investigation, the discourses of British imperialism.

At surface level, the term ‘Victorian’ refers to the temporal span of the reign of a particular monarch. It also applies more widely to the continuities of certain cultural signifiers associated with that time period, and thus characterises a particular image of a culture. Some historians have questioned the legitimacy of the concept, which might be asked of any periodisation arrangement. In response, Hewitt argued that:

> the Victorian period should be thought of as a set of complex conjunctures that defy any simple typology or literary representation, in which changes can be comprehended as the working through or consolidation of lines of development established at its outset. It thus becomes possible to argue that the years roughly coinciding with Victoria’s reign offer a periodization ‘adequate’ to the age.[33]

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[32] Frederic Sharf, David Northrup and Richard Pankhurst, *Abyssinia, 1867-1868: Artists on Campaign: Watercolours and Drawings from the British Expedition Under Sir Robert Napier* (Hollywood: Tsehai, 2003) pp. 22-3, 25.

[33] Martin Hewitt, ‘Why the Notion of Victorian Britain does make Sense,’ *Victorian Studies* 48, no. 3 (Spring, 2006) pp. 433-4.

In this thesis, 'Victorian' will be used to refer to the British population and British culture, synonymous at various points with either one. Focused on the years 1868-74, the present study does not necessarily apply to the whole Victorian era. Indeed, particular attention will be paid to the *shifts* (developments, perhaps) that occurred within Victorian culture. It nonetheless remains a useful conceptual shorthand.

In the late 1950s, Brian Bond pioneered the study of the Victorian army, linking the history of Victorian Britain to the history of empire.[34] Since the introduction of the *Studies in Imperialism* series in the mid-1980s, the social and cultural aspects of empire have received the bulk of scholarly attention, though the army itself comparatively less. As Miller claimed, 'historians traditionally see the military as simply an arm of the civil power, an institution that did not think for itself'.[35]

In its most common interpretation, 'imperialism' is understood as a projection of power, either of force or some other form of influence. While soft power and cultural components are important to the study of imperialism, in all cases these exist alongside the presence, or threat, of force. Headrick thus defined it as, 'when a powerful state uses force or the threat of force to impose its will on a weaker society, especially when the weaker society belongs to another culture'.[36] There are many older imperial histories, which might be

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[34] Roger T. Stearn, *War Images and Image Makers in the Victorian Era: Aspects of the British Visual and Written Portrayal of War and Defense c. 1866-1906* (Doctor of Philosophy, King's College, University of London, 1987) p. 2.
[35] Stephen M. Miller, 'Introduction,' in *Soldiers and Settlers in Africa, 1850-1918*, ed. Stephen M. Miller (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 2009) p. 1.
[36] Daniel R. Headrick, *Power Over Peoples: Technology, Environments, and Western Imperialism, 1400 to the Present* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010) p. 5.

described as 'traditional', that focus almost exclusively on hard power components.[37]

Over the past three decades, the social and cultural aspects of imperialism have become inseparable from scholarly discussions of the extension of power, a reflection of the wider cultural turn in military history. Drawing from MacKenzie's work, Ryan encapsulated his conception of imperialism as, 'a pervasive and persistent set of cultural attitudes toward the rest of the world informed to varying degrees by militarism, patriotism, a belief in racial superiority and loyalty to a 'civilizing mission'.[38] Imperialism, then, refers not only to the use of hard power but also to the discourses through which the imperial nation fashions, extends, and maintains an empire.

'Discourse' itself can be defined along a contested scale from structures of linguistic systems to written or verbal communication. In truth, the word will be employed in different connotations throughout this study. Ryan justified the analysis of past discourses, 'as it allows a variety of historically situated practices, concepts and institutions often considered separately – from hunting to mountaineering or from the Colonial Office to the Boy Scout Movement – to be discussed critically in relation to each other'.[39] It is in the interplay between multifarious discourses that a culture emerges from the ideas, values, and social habits from which a people derive their sense of identity and purpose.[40] Renda superbly defined 'culture' as:

> the sum total – at any given time – of a collection of overlapping but not coincident discourses and fragments of discourses. These discourses (and discursive fragments) are produced, engaged, and negotiated by a

[37] Farwell, *Queen Victoria's Little Wars*; Lawrence James, *The Savage Wars: British Campaigns in Africa, 1870-1920* (London: Robert Hale Ltd., 1985); Donald Featherstone, *Victoria's Enemies: An A-Z of British Colonial Warfare* (London: Blandford Press, 1989).
[38] James R. Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997) p. 12; *MacKenzie, Propaganda and Empire*, pp. 1-14.
[39] Ryan, *Picturing Empire*, p. 26.
[40] Porter, *Introduction*, p. 19.

> community of sorts, an overlapping but not coincident collection of groups and individuals who understand themselves to be connected to one another by their membership in a community and who use the name of that community to describe themselves. There is always some movement and flux in the sum total of these discourses, but there is also always some overlap, generally in such a manner as to overdetermine certain ideas, meanings, and images.[41]

'Imperial culture', critically, is neither strictly civilian nor solely military, but pervades and connects both. As such, it does not provide a strong causal factor for military historians. Porter has argued against a 'cultural determinist' approach to strategic thinking, whereby historical actors are assumed to be prisoners to their cultural norms. Culture is powerful, he claimed, but it is also malleable, and 'culture does not always drive decisionmakers; decisionmakers often exploit culture'.[42] He therefore defined culture in the strategic context as, '*an ambiguous repertoire of competing ideas that can be selected, instrumentalised, and manipulated, instead of a clear script for action.* Within this process strategy is made' (original emphasis).[43]

0.3 Campaign Narratives

Much of Hayden White's concept of 'emplotment' in historical writing can also be applied to the more immediate genre of journalism.[44] In seeking to make their retelling of an event intelligible and interesting, an eyewitness subsumes their observations (a selection of them, rather) under a basic plot structure, thereby creating a 'story' out of a series of memories. Spurr employed this logic in his analysis of the rhetorical features of colonial discourse through the imperial and postcolonial eras. Journalism and travel writing, he argued,

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[41] Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001) p. 26.
[42] Patrick Porter, 'Good Anthropology, Bad History: The Cultural Turn in Studying War,' *Parameters* 37, no. 2 (2007) p. 52.
[43] Patrick Porter, *Military Orientalism: Eastern War through Western Eyes* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2009) p. 15, 19.
[44] Hayden White, 'The Literary Text as Historical Artifact,' in *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

have a metaphoric as well as metonymic relation to historical actuality and thus depend on the use of rhetorical procedures.[45]

Having examined such rhetoric in much of his own work, MacKenzie claimed in 1992 that, 'we still await a full analysis of the British press and imperial attitudes, not least in relation to colonial warfare'.[46] Several historians answered this call. Stearn's 1987 thesis had already addressed some of the Victorian images of war.[47] Manning deftly analysed press coverage of the Anglo-Zulu war.[48] Koivunen, Ryan, and Maxwell unpacked the visual representations of empire and colonised people in illustrated books, newspapers, slideshows, and exhibition displays.[49]

Stafford surveyed exploration literature as a culturally powerful crossing of scientific and literary conventions, characteristic of the Saidian 'structures of feeling' that were a major component of Britain's will to expand and rule.[50] In *Ornamentalism*, Cannadine similarly set out to consider the British Empire as a set of social perceptions.[51] He argued that, from the middle of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth, the British both intellectually comprehended and physically created their imperial sociality in an essentially

[45] David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993) pp. 1-3.
[46] MacKenzie, ed., *Popular Imperialism and the Military 1850-1950*, p. 221.
[47] Stearn, *War Images and Image Makers in the Victorian Era*.
[48] Stephen Manning, *Foreign News Gathering and Reporting in the London and Devon Press - the Anglo-Zulu War, 1879, a Case Study* (PhD in History, Faculty of Arts, University of Exeter, 2005) p. 9; Stephen Manning, 'Private Snook and Total War,' *The Journal of the Anglo Zulu War Historical Society* 13 (Jun. 2003); Stephen Manning, 'British Perception of the Zulu Nation Before & After the War of 1879,' *The Journal of the Anglo Zulu War Historical Society* 16 (Dec. 2004); Stephen Manning, 'Press Confusion Over the Battles of Hlobane and Khambula in the London and Devon Newspapers,' *Journal of the Anglo Zulu War Historical Society* 18 (Dec. 2005).
[49] Leila Koivunen, *Visualizing Africa in Nineteenth-Century British Travel Accounts* (New York: Routledge, 2009); Ryan, *Picturing Empire*; Anne Maxwell, *Colonial Photography & Exhibitions: Representations of the 'Native' and the Making of European Identities* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1999).
[50] Robert A. Stafford, 'Scientific Exploration and Empire,' in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume III: The Nineteenth Century*, eds. Andrew Porter and Wm. Roger Louis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) p. 310.
[51] David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw their Empire* (London: Penguin Books, 2001) p. xviii.

ornamental mode, 'and the phrase that best describes this remarkable transoceanic construct of substance and sentiment is *imperialism as ornamentalism*'.[52]

This thesis will demonstrate that military technology was employed to an ornamental purpose in Abyssinia and Ashanti. A certain technophile impulse pervaded how the expeditions were *conceived*, but also how they were actually *performed.* A set of presupposed colonial discourses on Africa were reflected in actions, as well as words. A central claim of this thesis is that the conduct of small wars in the field reflected the sense of performance that characterised the media reproductions and narratives of those events in the home country. This thesis will bring the lens of imperial performance to the British army in pre-Scramble Africa. Particular attention will be paid to presentations of technology to Africans, to be explored in depth in Chapters 4-6, as windows into the impact that the British *desired* to have, the anxieties they were attempting to overcome, and the spin with which they chose to recount events.

In *Geography Militant,* Driver focused on the representational motifs tacitly present in the British construction of Africa. These ideas, he claimed, 'are best conceived of as dynamic, rather than inert: they have to be constructed and re-enacted in order to live on'.[53] Cultural creations thus present a challenge to the historian; they exist but are rarely declared and, while generally robust, cease to exist if not re-enacted. In *Language and Power,* Fairclough examined the hidden ideologies present in discourse, arguing that:

> invisibility is achieved when ideologies are brought to discourse not as explicit elements of the text, but as the background assumptions which on the one hand lead the text producer to "textualize" the world in a

[52] Ibid., p. 122.
[53] Driver, *Geography Militant*, p. 201.

> particular way, and on the other hand lead the interpreter to interpret the text in a particular way.[54]

Since discourses and the texts that occur within them all have histories, all texts rely on historically linked sets of presuppositions. Fairclough posited that, 'presuppositions are not properties of texts, they are an aspect of text producers' interpretations of intertextual context'.[55] The study of presupposed images, therefore, can reveal much about the historical context with which the producers of the texts engaged. Discourse analysis need not lose the link to past events, as discourses are shaped by past events.

It is therefore argued that the presence of discourse momentum, the cumulative nature of discourses across source materials, can be meaningful evidence in itself. The repetition of particular discursive tropes across numerous contemporary sources can suggest that the ideas embedded in those tropes had become forgone conclusions to historical commentators. This is the rationale and justification for a degree of evidence repetition throughout this thesis, seeking to examine British imperial culture 'in depth'.

0.4 Geography, Medicine, and Africa

The present analysis of the Abyssinian and Ashanti campaigns will tease out several such presupposed images, some of which have been touched upon in previous works. Glacken's *Traces on the Rhodian Shore* was a foundational study of the relationship of human culture to the natural environment over the *longue durée*. He argued that themes of 'environmental influence' and 'man as a geographical agent' are recurring ones in human cultures, tracing them to the

[54] Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 2nd ed. (Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Ltd., 2001) p. 71.
[55] Ibid., p. 127.

modern study of 'the geography of man'.[56] Glacken and MacKenzie noted that the concept of 'nature' has been used to signify both physical environments and also less matter-of-fact philosophical dimensions.[57] Curtin's *The Image of Africa* and Cairns' *Prelude to Imperialism* were both significant studies into the self-referential nature of British attitudes toward Africa, and African nature in particular.[58] Koivunen recently analysed how the distorted and stereotyped visual images of Africa were actually constructed. She traced the process through which illustrations in African travel journals were published and argued that each step acted to further reinforce pre-existing stereotypes.[59]

Arnold, Driver, and Martins were pivotal in delineating the idea of 'tropicality' as a manifestation of environmental otherness in European thought. Tropicality was a matrix of ideas based upon a perceived fundamental contrast between the concepts of the temperate and the tropical, and has been one of the most enduring themes in the European view of the outside world.[60] Along with Bell and Coates, these authors have demonstrated that Western images of tropicality were largely negative and pestilential, notwithstanding the simultaneous competing images of fertility and unexploited wealth.[61]

Consequently, medicine and health were central to discourses of tropicality. Arnold indicated that his main concern was, 'not so much with

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[56] Clarence J. Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967) p. viii.
[57] Ibid., p. xiv; John M. MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988).
[58] Curtin, *The Image of Africa*; Alan C. Cairns, *Prelude to Imperialism: British Reactions to Central African Society 1840-1890* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965).
[59] Koivunen, *Visualizing Africa in Nineteenth-Century British Travel Accounts*, p. 4.
[60] David Arnold, *The Problem of Nature: Environment, Culture and European Expansion* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996) p. 85, 142, 165; Felix Driver and Luciana Martins, 'Views and Visions of the Tropical World,' in *Tropical Visions in an Age of Empire*, ed. Felix Driver (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005) p. 3.
[61] Morag Bell, '"The Pestilence that Walketh in Darkness". Imperial Health, Gender and Images of South Africa C. 1880-1910,' *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 18, no. 3 (1993) p. 328; Peter Coates, *Nature: Western Attitudes Since Ancient Times* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998) p. 104.

disease and medicine as such as with their instrumentality – what they reveal about the nature and preoccupations, the ambitions and methods of an encompassing imperialism'.[62] Curtin had also unpacked the cultural dimension of British popular medical thought. In a study of colonial power and African illness, Vaughan 'viewed medical texts and medical theories rather as narratives which draw on a wide range of cultural signs and symbols for their effect'.[63] Worboys similarly examined the development of tropical medicine (later to be institutionalised in devoted schools) in the colonies in light of its symbolic role to the colonisers as a pillar of modern 'scientific' rationality.[64] Medicine in the tropics thus carried the implication of Western exclusivity and dominance.

Ideas of landscape have also been central to many studies of British attitudes toward Africa. These largely follow from Said's concept of 'imaginative geography', which links geographical knowledge to imperial discourse.[65] Ryan suggested that photographs and the processes by which photographic images were constructed, 'reveal as much about the imaginative landscapes of imperial culture as they do about the physical spaces or people pictured within their frame'.[66] He elsewhere argued that 'the very idea of empire in part depended on the idea of landscape, as both controlled space and the means of representing such control'.[67] McAleer examined such contested representations in British

[62] David Arnold, 'Introduction,' in *Imperial Medicine and Indigenous Societies*, ed. David Arnold (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988) p. 2.
[63] Megan Vaughan, *Curing their Ills: Colonial Power and African Illness* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991) p. 5.
[64] Michael Worboys, 'The Colonial World as Mission and Mandate: Leprosy and Empire, 1900-1940,' *Osiris,* Vol. 15, Nature and Empire: Science and the Colonial Enterprise, no. 207-18 (2000) p. 208.
[65] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 25th ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1979); Also see Felix Driver, 'Imaginative Geographies,' in *Introducing Human Geographies*, eds. Paul Cloke, Phil Crang, and Mark Goodwin (London: Routledge, 2013) pp. 234-48.
[66] Ryan, *Picturing Empire*, pp. 19-20.
[67] James R. Ryan, 'Imperial Landscapes: Photography, Geography and British Overseas Exploration, 1858-1872,' in *Geography and Imperialism: 1820-1940*, eds. Morag Bell, Robin Butlin and Michael Heffernan (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995) p. 74.

travel accounts from Southern Africa, a place conceived as liminal between temperate and tropical.[68] Stafford claimed that 'science operates within the same paradigm of control as technology. In Victorian Britain, they fused with exploration and Empire in support of an aggressive culture that sought to export its achievements for the betterment of Greater Britain'.[69] In the editor's introduction to Sèbe's excellent study, MacKenzie agreed that nineteenth-century empires were characterised above all by an imperial fantasy seeking to, 'sweep up the natural phenomena of the world (including its human varieties) into global taxonomies, classifying and ordering in a scientific embrace both facilitated and symbolised the military and technological advances achieved by the imperial people'.[70]

Bayly grounded his recent dissertation in the assertion that, 'these representations have a history'.[71] He argued that:

> throughout the nineteenth century, the British developed, refined, and acted upon an amorphous and contested 'idea' of Afghanistan; one that was more than simply the function of great power geopolitics. The sources informing this imagined entity were cultural, intellectual, moral, political, and social-scientific, as much as they were emotional. It was an idea, or collection of ideas, that would evolve and become trammelled by events, and ultimately leave a legacy that persists to this day.[72]

A relatively small number of travellers and writers contributed, 'to a vision of Afghanistan that would provide the intellectual universe upon which British officials would draw to guide their policy decisions throughout the nineteenth

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[68] John McAleer, *Representing Africa: Landscape, Exploration and Empire in Southern Africa, 1780-1870* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010) p. 15.
[69] Stafford, *Scientific Exploration and Empire*, p. 318.
[70] Berny Sèbe, *Heroic Imperialists in Africa: The Promotion of British and French Colonial Heroes, 1870-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013) p. xiii.
[71] Martin J. Bayly, *Imagining Afghanistan: British Foreign Policy and the Afghan Polity, 1808-1878* (PhD in International Relations, Department of War Studies, King's College London, 2013) p. 21.
[72] Ibid., p. 4.

century'.[73] The British came to view Afghanistan as a 'violent geography', a representational criteria that fixed it as a threat to their own civilisation.[74]

Arndt described a similar process of representation production in British interactions with the Xhosa peoples of South Africa. A series of small wars from 1834 to 1853 fostered a 'military knowledge system of the Xhosa', which characterised them as treacherous and barbaric. These became the dominant and lasting images of the Xhosa in British and South African culture.[75]

In a similar way, this thesis will contend, the vision of Africa that solidified during the British collective engagement with the Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions would leave its mark both on policy decisions and the public mood toward the continent throughout the imperial era.

0.5 Exploration and Explorers

The Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions were also engaged through discourses of exploration. In 1868, *The Times* described the British Empire as a, 'Geographical Society on a large scale'.[76] While presenting Napier with the Freedom of the City in 1871, Benjamin Scott, the Chamberlain of the City of London Corporation, declared that the expedition against Theodore:

> if we could divest our minds and memories of the sanguinary episode at its close, looks more like a grand geographical exploration, a philanthropic expedition – such as that undertaken by Livingstone – on a gigantic scale, rather than the march of a hostile invader, travelling in the greatness of his strength.[77]

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[73] Ibid., p. 13.
[74] Ibid., p. 15.
[75] Jochen S. Arndt, 'Treacherous Savages & Merciless Barbarians: Knowledge, Discourse and Violence during the Cape Frontier Wars, 1834-1853,' *Journal of Military History* 74 (Jul. 2010) pp. 710-11.
[76] 'Royal Geographical Society', *The Times,* 25 May 1868, p. 8; Also discussed in Helen Tilley, *Africa as a Living Laboratory: Empire, Development, and the Problem of Scientific Knowledge, 1870-1950* (Chicago, IL.: University of Chicago Press, 2011) p. 64.
[77] Speech in J. H. Stocqueler, *A Familiar History of the British Army, from the Restoration in 1660 to the Present Time, Including a Description of the Volunteer Movement, and the Progress of the Volunteer Organization* (London: Edward Stanford, 1871) p. 308.

Kennedy described 'exploration' as, 'a knowledge-producing enterprise' and 'the explorer' as an essentially nineteenth-century creation.[78] Explorers of Africa such as Burton, Speke, Baker, Livingstone, Stanley, and others achieved tremendous fame and respect in their times. Livingstone's 1857 book, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa,* sold 70,000 copies in the first year of publication alone.[79] His 1874 state funeral was conducted with full national honours in Westminster Abbey, attracting widespread media coverage and huge crowds.[80] Expeditions were powerful focal points for the imagined ideals embodied in these, as Driver termed them, 'cultures of exploration'.[81]

Thomas recently argued that exploration expeditions were 'particular cultural formations, as distinctive to their epoch as the novel or the photograph'.[82] Hinting at contemporary processes of emplotment and narrative construction, he further drew attention to, 'analogies between expeditionary history as a discursive phenomenon and the construction of literary canon'.[83] Many of the military and press accounts employed in this thesis were written, whether consciously or subconsciously, along the established rubric of the expedition tale.

British exploration culture had seen an unexpected surge following the first successful ascent of the Matterhorn in 1865. Four members of the climbing team had died in an accident during the descent, launching a public debate on the value and legitimacy of mountaineering. After *The Times* and Charles Dickens tarred it as pointless braggartism with no positive benefit, the *Illustrated*

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[78] Dane Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces: Exploring Africa and Australia* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2013) pp. 1-2.
[79] Dominic Green, *Three Empires on the Nile: The Victorian Jihad, 1869-1899* (New York: Free Press, 2007) p. 9.
[80] Sèbe, *Heroic Imperialists in Africa*, p. 62; Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces*, pp. 246-7.
[81] Driver, *Geography Militant,* pp. 117-69.
[82] Martin Thomas, ed., *Expedition into Empire: Exploratory Journeys and the Making of the Modern World* (New York: Routledge, 2014) p. 67.
[83] Ibid., p. 16; Also see Felix Driver, 'Missionary Travels: Livingstone, Africa and the Book', *Scottish Geographical Journal,* Vol. 129, no. 3-04 (2013) pp. 164-178.

London News and other supporters of empire defended mountaineering as critical to the interplay between the Empire, exploration, scientific discovery, and British manliness. Mountaineering was compared to military service, and mountaineers to soldiers and frontier explorers in Africa and Australia. The public mood swung so strongly in support of mountaineering that *The Times* and many other critics went back on their initial criticisms.[84] Soon after this popular debate, Napier found himself climbing mountains in East Africa with an imperial army and a cadre of scientists.

The Abyssinian expedition proved to be an important event for the Royal Geographical Society. Sir Roderick Murchinson, the Society's president and most ardent proponent of marrying science, exploration, and empire, managed to secure the appointment of a scientific team to accompany the army.[85] It was a resonant demonstration of the Society's special relationship with military imperial ventures, a bond that would usher in the 'scramble' era.[86] A geographer, an archaeologist, a botanist, a zoologist, and a geologist who happened to be Secretary of the RGS, joined Napier's force, effectively turning it into a functioning exploration expedition.[87] 'It is of comparatively little interest…what the military results of the Ashantee war may be', *Harper's* declared of the later campaign to West Africa, 'the chief significance of the war to the world in general is derived from regarding it as an expedition of discovery'.[88]

0.6 Empire and Public Opinion

[84] Peter H. Hansen, *The Summits of Modern Man: Mountaineering after the Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013) pp. 180-194.
[85] Stafford, *Scientific Exploration and Empire*, pp. 297-8.
[86] Driver, *Geography Militant*, p. 44, 98; Jaques Frémeaux, *De Quoi Fut Fait L'empire: Les Guerres Coloniales Au XIXe Siècle* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2010) p. 217.
[87] Trevenen J. Holland and Henry Hozier, *The Expedition to Abyssinia Compiled by Order of the Secretary of State for War* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO), 1870) p. 69; Driver, *Geography Militant,* p. 202.
[88] 'Ashantee and the Ashantees', *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 48, no. 283 (Dec. 1873) p. 287.

This study will contribute to the historiographical debate over the popularity of imperialism in Victorian society. This debate has long revolved around the work of John Mackenzie, who emphasised the widespread influence that imperialism had on society and showed that developments in the colonies and on the periphery were received in Britain with popular interest. His impact on the field continues to be immense, both through his own research and his work as editor of the Manchester University Press *Studies in Imperialism* series.[89] In *The Absent-Minded Imperialists,* Bernard Porter disputed many of MacKenzie's claims and argued that the working classes and other major sections of British society were unaffected by and largely unconcerned with the empire.[90] The findings of this thesis support the concept of 'popular imperialism' and the assertion of many authors in the *Studies in Imperialism* series that empire was central to the construction of British identities.[91] The images of empire, in particular, and those of imperial 'heroes' generated cross-class appeal.[92]

Stanley claimed that, 'there was not the least enthusiasm shown by the people of England upon the announcement of [the Ashanti] war'.[93] Beckett nonetheless described it as, 'arguably the first Victorian colonial campaign to really catch the public's imagination' and Spiers noted the strong middle-class pressure from the press, public, and Parliament to intervene in both the Abyssinia and Ashanti crises.[94] In this study, it will be argued that these

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[89] MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*; John M. MacKenzie, ed., *Popular Imperialism and the Military 1850-1950* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1992).
[90] Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
[91] Manchester University Press, 'Studies in Imperialism', Accessed 5 Jul. 2015, http://www.manchesteruniversitypress.co.uk/cgi-bin/indexer?series=8/.
[92] Sèbe, *Heroic Imperialists in Africa*, p. 296.
[93] Henry M. Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala: The Story of Two British Campaigns in Africa* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low & Searle, 1874) p. 283.
[94] Ian F. W. Beckett, 'Manipulating the "Modern Curse of Armies": Wolseley, the Press, and the Ashanti War, 1873-1874,' in *Soldiers and Settlers in Africa, 1850-1918*, ed. Stephen M. Miller

campaigns received considerable popular attention, and that the manner in which they were discussed in the public narrative enhanced the subsequent popularity and popular comfort with the idea of imperial small wars. This thesis will tie the popularity of empire to that of technological innovation and imperialism, and argue that the Abyssinia and Ashanti expeditions enhanced *perceptions* of military capability, technological superiority, and civilisational supremacy in the Victorian imagination. It in no way dismisses the effectiveness of European technology, but approaches it as a proximate cause of a shift in culture, termed 'the technologisation of imperial rhetoric'. The form that imperial culture would take through the scramble period to the late nineteenth-century owed much to the manner in which these early expeditions were presented, perceived, and remembered by the public and by the military. It will be argued, indeed, that the success of these early African expeditions built up a culture of British confidence in their ability to conquer and civilise Africa, its environment, and its inhabitants.

0.7 Source Material and Public Opinion

Chapter 1 will consider in detail the degree to which the official and civilian source material examined in this thesis was representative of British official and public opinion. Beckett suggested that, while the army was one of the largest institutions in Victorian Britain, 'neither its officers nor rank and file were representative of Victorian society as a whole'.[95] The same was certainly true of newspaper correspondents, explorers, and the members of scientific societies. Yet, it was upon these military, professional, and civilian reports that the public image of Africa was based.

(Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 2009) p. 221; Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army 1868-1902,* p. 273.

[95] Ian F. W. Beckett, *The Victorians at War* (London: Hambledon and London, 2003) p. xiv.

The majority of published veteran accounts came from among the officers. That said, many subalterns wrote letters home, a few published books, and several contributed articles to the periodical press. Emery estimated that by the 1870s, nearly half of NCOs and private soldiers were capable of writing letters from active service.[96] If so, that figure remained fairly constant until the end of the century, when, Spiers concluded, forty per-cent of the ranks were functionally literate.[97] Spiers stressed the value of army letters as 'impressionistic commentaries', providing 'rare insights into the feelings, opinions and priorities of Victorian officers and the rank-and-file'.[98] Letters home were often circulated among family members, impacting a number of readers. In a letter to his mother, Lieutenant Scott suggested that, 'you might send this to anybody you think would care to read it'.[99] It was also fairly common for friends and relatives to send letters (or excerpts from them) on to newspapers, where they would be published for public consumption.

The major newspapers employed in this study reached a wide tranche of society. By the time of the Ashanti expedition, the *Daily News* and *Daily Telegraph* each sold more than 150,000 daily.[100] Bolt concluded that these journals, along with *The Times* and *The Saturday Review,* exerted the largest influence on public opinion.[101] The *Standard* was not far behind.[102] Circulation and readership numbers, as Wiener noted, must be a matter of some

[96] Frank Emery, *Marching Over Africa: Letters from Victorian Soldiers* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1986) p. 18.
[97] Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army 1868-1902*, p. 145.
[98] Edward M. Spiers, 'Military Correspondence in the Late Nineteenth-Century Press,' *Archives* 32, no. 116 (Apr. 2007) p. 33.
[99] 'A Staff Officer' [Scott], *Letters from Abyssinia during the Campaign of 1868*, p. 12.
[100] Joel Wiener, 'How New was the New Journalism?' in *Papers for the Millions: The New Journalism in Britain, 1850s to 1914*, ed. Joel Wiener (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1988) p. 62; Andrew Hobbs, 'The Deleterious Dominance of *The Times* in Nineteenth-Century Scholarship,' *Journal of Victorian Culture* 18, no. 4 (2013) p. 475.
[101] Christine Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971) p. xv.
[102] Roger T. Stearn, 'War Correspondents and Colonial War, *c.* 1870-1900,' in *Popular Imperialism and the Military 1850-1950*, ed. John M. MacKenzie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992) pp. 139-40.

conjecture in this period. The repeal of the Stamp Act in 1855 removed one possible source of distribution monitoring. Newspapers were required to report the number of copies sold, but these figures were not audited until the 1890s and owners had reasons to exaggerate. While this might suggest a rounding down of circulation numbers, each copy might in fact reach many readers, circulating in coffee houses, reading rooms, and military barracks.[103] On campaign, in particular, an only slightly out-of-date newspaper might be read by the entire literate half of the men and read-aloud or summarised to the other half.[104]

A reasonable portion of the public thus had access to the special correspondents' despatches from Abyssinia and Ashanti. Hobbs has argued that *The Times* and a select few major London papers have dominated historical study out of proportion to their actual contemporary impact, and are not in fact representative of the diverse array of Victorian periodical publications.[105] That dominance poses less of a problem, however, when studying the coverage of imperial expeditions. Despite the fact that it was mostly London-based papers that sent correspondents with the army, their words reached a much wider readership across the country due to the centralised nature of the British press. 'In its main features,' Charles Peabody claimed in 1882, 'the Provincial Press is of necessity a reproduction of the Press of the Metropolis'.[106] Local context was certainly important, as Peabody went on to explain, and editorial opinions were not simply parroted. When it

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[103] Joel Wiener, 'Sources for the Study of Newspapers,' in *Investigating Victorian Journalism*, eds. Laurel Brake, Aled Jones, and Lionel Madden (London: Macmillan, 1990) pp. 158-63.
[104] Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army 1868-1902*, p. 145.
[105] Hobbs, *The Deleterious Dominance of The Times*, p. 481, 494.
[106] Charles Peabody, *English Journalism and the Men Who Have Made It* (London: Cassell, Petter, Graplin, & Co., 1882) p. 157; Manning, *Foreign News Gathering and Reporting in the London and Devon Press*, p. 52.

came to stories of foreign conflicts, however, the source material on which articles were based was largely drawn from the capital city. Potter noted that:

> coverage of empire was characterised by a striking degree of homogeneity. The raw news that reached the press was often the same all around England…This partly reflected the mechanics of supply in England. Provincial papers relied on London papers for much of their news, a dependency that was reinforced by the advent of syndicated news reports provided by agencies such as Reuters.[107]

It is significant to the kind of discourse analysis employed in this thesis that these articles were usually printed and re-printed *verbatim*. Reuters and the other major news agencies monopolised telegraph communication in an arrangement whereby each covered a different sphere of influence. To maintain this arrangement, all agencies diligently forwarded news reports from any correspondent across the globe without distortion.[108] Once messages reached England, it was the accepted convention to reproduce them exactly. It was considered improper to alter the work of correspondents, and telegrams were thus printed in their totality as they arrived.[109] This practice was the observable norm among the London dailies until at least the early 1890s.[110] When officers and journalists sent messages from Abyssinia and Ashanti, their exact wording would appear in the London papers, which would then be copied and re-printed in newspapers across the country. The historian can, therefore, glean a good impression of the British press through an examination of the major London papers. The small number of military and civilian correspondents on campaign exerted a substantial influence on the public image of the expeditions and of Africa.

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[107] Simon J. Potter, 'Empire and the English Press, *c.* 1857-1914,' in *Newspapers and Empire in Ireland and Britain: Reporting the British Empire, c. 1857-1921*, ed. Simon J. Potter (Portland OR: Four Courts Press, 2004) p. 60.
[108] Alex Nalbach, '"The Software of Empire": Telegraphic News Agencies and Imperial Publicity, 1865-1914,' in *Imperial Co-Histories: National Identities and the British and Colonial Press*, ed. Julie F. Codell (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2003) p. 88.
[109] Lucy Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985) p. 234.
[110] Manning, *Foreign News Gathering and Reporting in the London and Devon Press*, p. 194.

The *New York Herald* was a somewhat different case. Although writing for an American paper, Stanley nonetheless influenced campaign narratives in Britain. Many of his despatches were indeed quoted and reprinted in London papers in precisely the same manner as the London papers quoted each other. *Coomassie and Magdala,* an edited collection of his newspaper articles, was sold in Britain.[111] Stanley was an absolute celebrity after his 1871-2 expedition to find David Livingstone, followed by a very popular book and a busy lecture circuit.[112]

These influential newspapers and individual correspondents all had their own political and social inclinations. According to *May's Press Guide* for 1879, 33% of the 1015 newspapers in England professed allegiance to the Liberal party and 22% to the Conservative party.[113] These rates were higher among metropolitan papers, where the vast majority were indebted or dependent in some way on political groups. *The Times* and *Daily Telegraph* were exceptions, charging higher fees and advertising the fact that they took no political money.[114]

Party allegiance was not, however, necessarily a determining factor when it came to coverage of imperial expeditions. Only the most successful and prosperous papers could afford to send correspondents to overseas conflicts. It was not simply an issue of salary (some correspondents covered or at least fronted their own expenses) but also of very expensive inter-continental telegraph fees. Such large and wealthy papers tended towards political conservatism, which was associated with pro-imperialism, albeit a more

[111] Review of 'Coomassie And Magdala,' *The Times*, 25 Apr. 1874, p 12
[112] Henry M. Stanley, *How I Found Livingstone* (London: Sampson Low, Marston Low, and Searle, 1872); Sèbe, *Heroic Imperialists in Africa*, p. 319.
[113] F. L. May, *May's British & Irish Press Guide 1879* (London, F. L. May, 1879) p. 6; Also discussed in Manning, *Foreign News Gathering and Reporting in the London and Devon Press*, p. 34.
[114] Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers*, p. 61.

nuanced association than would be the case in later decades, as will be discussed in Chapter 1. *The Times, Standard,* and *Morning Post* could usually be relied upon to support the causes of empire and imperial prestige, if not always the commanders themselves.[115] The *Telegraph* catered to the less-educated reader and, while a strong supporter of Gladstone, always touted the empire. The *Daily News* was an explicitly Liberal journal, but the Conservative vs. Liberal split over 'jingoism' (itself only clearly delineated in the late 1870s) was complicated at this time by the fact that Gladstone was in office from December 1868 to February 1874. It might go without saying that the *Times of India* was in favour of empire and particularly pro-Napier.[116] The *New York Herald*, again, was a different case. The largest and most successful stateside newspaper, it appealed to all social levels and ran articles on a wide range of subjects. British expeditions were not standard fare for the *Herald,* but the editor agreed to print Stanley's reports if they proved sufficiently interesting, which Stanley ensured.[117]

Perspectives on race were in some ways more important that those on politics in the coverage of African conflicts, and both influenced perspectives on empire. In her seminal study *Victorian Attitudes to Race*, Bolt concluded that the *Daily News* and *The Spectator* took a sympathetic approach to race questions, while *The Times*, *Morning Post*, and *Daily Telegraph* (despite its Gladstonian political viewpoint) were fairly conservative on race issues.[118] Lorimer warned that newspapers courted sensationalism to attract interest and that the 'experts' in ethnological debates appealed to a select and like-minded readership. He thus found that, 'opinion, and press reports in particular, exaggerate and distort

[115] Sèbe, *Heroic Imperialists in Africa*, p. 56.
[116] Nora K. Hoover, *Victorian War Correspondents G. A. Henty and H. M. Stanley: The 'Abyssinian' Campaign 1867-1868* (PhD diss., Florida State University, 2005) pp. 29-31.
[117] Ibid., p. 32.
[118] Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race*, p. xv.

the degree of racial antipathy in mid-Victorian England', and that historians tend to over-estimate the popular appeal of particular vocal ethnographers.[119]

This thesis has been written with a mind to such potential for distortion. Public discourses are the primary subject of investigation, however, and it will be argued that published books and newspapers remain significant, even if they presented sensationalised versions of public attitudes, for the fact that they fed those perspectives back into the public consciousness. Published accounts need not accurately represent the moods of the moment to influence the narratives by which that moment is collectively remembered.

British perspectives on race, and their place in the ever-changing image of Africa and culture of imperialism, will be discussed throughout this dissertation and particularly in Chapters 3-6. The 'Africa's Sons Under Arms' project at the University of Warwick represents a current investigation into the changing notion of race in the British world as perceived through perceptions of African (or black) soldiers. A multifaceted examination of the West Indian Regiments, the project is premised on the claim that, 'the militarisation of the black subject is comparatively under-studied, yet is crucial to our perception of the plastic nature of race as a concept'.[120] This follows from Buckley's work, a pioneer in the social study of race in military social systems.[121] Reid also examined European interpretations of African military practices, linking changes in perceptions of 'savage' war to changes in those of race more broadly.[122]

[119] Douglas A. Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians: English Attitudes to the Negro in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1978) p. 201; Douglas Lorimer, *Science, Race Relations and Resistance: Britain. 1870-1914: A Study of Late Victorian and Edwardian Racism* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2013) pp. 111-4.
[120] University of Warwick, 'Africa's Sons Under Arms', Accessed 7 May 2015, http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/history/research/projects/asua/.
[121] Roger N. Buckley, *Slaves in Red Coats: The British West India Regiments, 1795-1815*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979).
[122] Richard J. Reid, 'Revisiting Primitive War: Perceptions of Violence and Race in History,' *War and Society* 26, no. 2 (Oct. 2007).

Bolt has discussed the link, perhaps prerequisite link, between the aggressive assertion of white superiority in the 1860s and the explosion of British expansion in Africa.[123] Abyssinia and Ashanti straddled a time when these assertions were beginning to influence imperial policy. Racial ideas also guided the ways the conflicts were interpreted and reported. Retellings of the expeditions in turn reinforced the shifts in British racial thought. The perceived ease of the military victories, coupled with evident advances in medicine and an imagined triumph over the natural world, it will be argued, precipitated a reassessment of the nature of racial dominance. The conquest of the idea of Africa was intertwined with the development of a new sense of racial superiority.

The source material employed in this thesis is thus 'representative' in that it reached a large audience and engaged the diverse and contested discourses that made up imperial culture. Thompson argued that since the empire and Britain itself were so diverse and pluralistic, 'there never was likely to be any single or monolithic "imperial culture" in Britain'.[124] He argued that Britons were neither ignorant of the empire nor staunchly imperialist. This thesis does not seek to suggest otherwise or imply a singular 'British idea' of Africa, technology, or imperialism. Rather, if there were always many strands in play, the chapters of this thesis attempt to grasp one or two at a time.

Questions of influence and impact of such individual threads are, like circulation figures, necessarily matters of conjecture. As Stearn and Bolt have claimed, periodicals and books targeted to middle-class readers may have largely confirmed and reinforced imperialist viewpoints rather than converted to

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[123] Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race*, p. xi.
[124] Andrew S. Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back?: The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Harlow, UK: Pearson Longman, 2005) p. 5.

them.[125] There was, nonetheless, an important difference between the political support of Conservative imperialism and what MacKenzie called the 'spectatorial fascination with colonial warfare'. The latter did not require the former, and the latter could cross class lines. In 1898, the editor of *Labour Leader* worried that the working class was more interested in Omdurman than in the Welsh coal strike.[126]

Moreover, sources that confirm and reinforce existing beliefs are still valuable to the historian. As Potter argued:

> in order to succeed, propaganda must "resonate" with the pre-existing attitudes of the target audience, and tap into shared ideologies and stereotypes. If we accept this, then we must assume that, if pro-imperial propaganda stimulated enthusiasm for empire among the British working classes, then there must have been at least some degree of pre-existing support.[127]

Throughout this study, it will be demonstrated that the multifarious Abyssinian and Ashanti narratives engaged a consistent set of tropes. Harcourt asserted that newspapers in the 1860s and '70s, 'reflected as well as formed opinion in a way that the restricted circulations of earlier decades and the mass circulations of later ones did not'.[128] Indeed, as Spiers argued, 'it would seem unreasonable to discount the influence of the press entirely. The campaign coverage almost certainly had *some* effect upon readers and their families, friends, and associates – anyone with whom the news was discussed'.[129]

0.8 Stereotyped Representations

Spiers elsewhere noted that 'certain racial stereotypes evolved' in the 1860s and '70s among the works of missionaries, explorers, novelists,

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[125] Roger T. Stearn, 'G. W. Steevens and the Message of Empire,' *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 17, no. 2 (1989) p. 226; Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race*, p. xiii.
[126] MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, pp. 6-7.
[127] Simon J. Potter, 'Introduction: Empire, Propaganda and Public Opinion,' in *Newspapers and Empire in Ireland and Britain: Reporting the British Empire, c. 1857-1921*, ed. Simon J. Potter (Portland, OR: Four Courts Press, 2004) p. 18.
[128] Harcourt, *Disraeli's Imperialism*, p. 87.
[129] Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army 1868-1902*, p. 197.

scientists, and anthropologists.[130] Adas similarly found that such generalised images, 'had been disseminated at all class levels by adventure novels, travel accounts, and the penny press'.[131] These diverse sources of information and authority, written with varied intents and to varied audiences, overlapped in key areas. New correspondents fell under the influence of earlier writings before arriving in Africa, Curtin explained, already steeped in, 'the reports of their predecessors and the theoretical conclusions already drawn from them'.[132] The images of the military maintained by such, 'varied mutually reinforcing media', argued Stearn, 'so dominated perceptions that the presentations of those with and without battle experience hardly differed'.[133] Many newspapermen also wrote journal articles, books, pamphlets, lectures on various military or ethnographic topics, and even fiction based on their experiences, all biased toward stereotyped norms through received knowledge and editorial practices.[134] 'How many volumes have already been written on this subject', asked a *Spectator* author in a review of Henty's Ashanti book, 'What a task lies before the historian of the future who will have to make use of all these "mémoires pour servir"!'[135]

Many of the special correspondents' books were in fact re-printings of their original newspaper despatches, bound together almost unaltered. In Shepherd's, they appeared chronologically as independent letters to the *Times of India*, subtitled with the original dates and locations.[136] Henty declared in the

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[130] Edward M. Spiers, 'British Military Perspectives on Africa in the Late Nineteenth Century,' in *Soldiers and Settlers in Africa, 1850-1918*, ed. Stephen M. Miller (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 2009) p. 149.
[131] Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989) p. 318.
[132] Curtin, *The Image of Africa*, p. 479.
[133] Stearn, *War Images and Image Makers in the Victorian Era*, p. 161, 1.
[134] Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army 1868-1902*, p. 198; Koivunen, *Visualizing Africa in Nineteenth-Century British Travel Accounts*, p. 206.
[135] Review of *The March to Coomassie*, by G. A. Henty, *The Spectator,* 25 Jul. 1874, p. 24.
[136] A. F. Shepherd, *The Campaign in Abyssinia* (Bombay: Times of India Office, 1868).

preface to his book that his letters were presented in, 'the same form and substance as when they appeared in the columns of the *Standard*', but added that he had updated some of his predictions, opinions, and conclusions that turned out to be erroneous.[137] Maurice's account of Ashanti contained his original reports from the *Daily News* annotated with his later commentary.[138] In *Coomassie and Magdala*, a book recounting both expeditions, Stanley re-wrote his time in Abyssinia as a narrative but kept his Ashanti reports to the *New York Herald* in their original form.[139] This practice of re-printing what had been written in the field was, along with the aforementioned newspaper policy of printing despatches in the exact form that they arrived, reflective of a general commitment to 'scientific' veracity in Victorian reporting. Thus, Henty and Stanley tended to provide later corrections and context to their letters in footnotes, rather than changes to the text.

The 'Wolseley Ring' of officers represented another prism through which the public perceived the British experience in Africa. Handpicked by Wolseley to accompany him to Ashanti, quite a few books and runs in the periodical press came from within this cadre. These men had an allegiance to their Commanding officer and, given his penchant for media manipulation, surely his direct input on their narratives.[140] Wolseley's inner circle (also known as the 'Ashanti ring') was famously self-promoting and jestingly referred to as the 'mutual admiration society'.[141] McCaskie claimed that these men had a profound and lasting effect on the public image of Africa because of their subsequent successes, going on to direct military policy through the height of imperial conquest and to the end of

[137] Henty, *The March to Magdala*, p. vii.
[138] 'Daily News' Special Correspondent (Sir John Frederick Maurice), *The Ashantee War: A Popular Narrative* (London: Henry S. King & Co., 1874).
[139] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala*.
[140] Beckett, *Manipulating the 'Modern Curse of Armies'*.
[141] Howard Bailes, *The Influence of Continental Examples and Colonial Warfare upon the Reform of the Late Victorian Army* (Doctor of Philosophy, King's College, University of London, 1980) p. 23.

the century. Ashanti had been their first success as a team, and, 'their views formed a powerful template for subsequent readings of other [African] polities during—and beyond—the conquest'.[142]

0.9 'Novelty', Innovation, and Determinism

Speaking after an 1888 lecture at the Royal United Service Institution on the military application of bicycles, Wolseley told the gathered officers: 'I confess, I am one of those who believes in novelties'.[143] While that position was not always popular in military circles (though usually at RUSI), it was central to the 'imperial school' of colonial-minded officers and to the idea of small wars.[144] The concept of 'novel', however, requires some unpacking. The serious methodological consideration of innovation in the history of technology impacts upon the study of military history.

The terms 'science' and 'technology' carry implicit and overlapping definitions. They are often conflated in common use, as was very much the case in the Victorian press.[145] Edgerton defined science as natural science and technology as machines, structures and processes.[146] Adas similarly defined 'the search for the understandings of fundamental entities as the essence of science, whereas technology seeks to solve more practical and immediate problems'.[147] Headrick defined the latter as, 'all the ways in which humans use materials and energy in the environment for their own ends, beyond what they

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[142] McCaskie, *Cultural Encounters,* pp. 676-7.
[143] Lieut.-Col. A. R. Savile, 'Military Cycling,' *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution*, Vol. 32, no. 145 (1888) p. 754
[144] Bailes, *Patterns of Thought in the Late Victorian Army*, p. 34.
[145] David Edgerton, *Science, Technology and the British Industrial 'Decline', 1870-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) p. 12; Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men*, p. 144.
[146] Edgerton, *Science, Technology and the British Industrial 'Decline'*, p. 12.
[147] Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men*, p. 5.

can do with their bodies'.[148] Simplified, then, science is the 'knowing', while technology is the 'doing'.

A Gatling gun is a piece of technology, a discrete item, and possessing one allows a soldier (assuming the gun is in working order and provided with ammunition) to fire bullets faster than he would with a rifle. If, however, the enemy were to steal the gun, they would gain that same ability (again, assuming a supply of ammunition). An item cannot be made to serve as evidence of 'civilisation' (itself an abstraction) or a civilisation's dominance over 'savagery' in a culturally satisfying way if it can simply be taken or bought.

In *War and Technology*, Black provided a possible solution to the treatment of technology when he presented it:

> as a relationship between materials and human ingenuity. As such, technology is the application of a process…By extension, it is the product of that process. The word tends to be used in the associated form rather than in the first sense, especially when the product is a device that does something when energy is supplied to it. Thus, 'technology' becomes such a device. This sort of definition applies equally well to swords as to tanks.[149]

An understanding of technology's simultaneous existence as both process and product was evident in the Victorian public sphere. The technologies of particular interest to war correspondents and military authors in Abyssinia and Ashanti were those of transport and combat present in the field. These discrete items were, nonetheless, *reflective* of (and, in the case of the more complicated and conspicuous Gatling gun, traction engine, and locomotive, directly reminiscent of) the industrial processes that created them and the scientific knowledge that those processes applied. This association was significant to the symbolic roles that these items were made to serve as manifest indicators of the superiority of British civilisation. Victorians had become convinced that it

[148] Headrick, *Power Over Peoples*, p. 3.
[149] Jeremy Black, *War and Technology* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013) p. x.

was their machines that marked them as the foremost nation, as will be explored in Chapter 1. Their campaign narratives reflected this identity.

Since the cultural turn of the 1980s, the notion of 'technological determinism' has been attacked for its association with a teleological approach to the history of technology, triumphalist military history, and an amateur fascination with artefacts.[150] Bijker, Hughes, and Pinch launched a field of social studies of technology with their 1987 book *The Social Construction of Technological Systems.* The resulting 'SCOTS' school of researchers focused on the nontechnical aspects of technical systems, asking, not just how things worked, but why they mattered to contemporary historical actors.[151] Social constructivist historians have tended to prefer microanalyses, where human and social influences are more readily apparent. Those adopting macro perspectives have been more likely to attribute causal roles to technology.[152]

Even studies with a narrow focus, Edgerton argued, often fall into what he termed 'innovation-determinism'. He noted that the study of innovation and invention is 'systematically biased by the future, in that we study innovations which succeed later; we study the pre-history of innovating organisations of types which came to dominate later'.[153] In military history, most notably the popular type, such bias often manifest in stories of 'war-winning-weapons'. If such weapons are implicitly accepted as having been inevitable, the narrative tends to revolve around the lionised inventors who seemingly understood the future of war that their own devices brought about and the 'militarist' army brass

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150 Thomas J. Misa, 'How Machines Make History, and How Historians (and Others) Help Them to Do So,' *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 13, no. 3/4 (1998) pp. 317-8.
151 Wiebe Bijker, Thomas Hughes and Trevor Pinch, eds., *The Social Construction of Technological Systems* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012 [1987]).
152 Misa, *How Machines Make History*, p. 308.
153 David Edgerton, 'From Innovation to Use: Ten Eclectic Theses on the Historiography of Technology,' *History and Technology* 16, no. 2 (1999) p. 16; David Edgerton, 'Innovation, Technology, Or History: What is the Historiography of Technology about?' *Technology and Culture* 51, no. 3 (Jul. 2010) p. 869.

who in their traditionalism failed to predict that future.[154] Few historians go quite that far, but a lean toward innovation-determinism remains present in the field. One effect, as Black warned, is that 'the generally incremental character of technological advances and applications is underrated'.[155] A new weapon is presented as having been introduced in a moment, which obscures its earlier versions and analogues. Furthermore, it is the nature of technological development that many inventions are at least in part 'reinventions', which the search for war-winning weapons also obscures.[156] New technologies, Otter explained, do not abruptly replace older ones but, rather:

> become embedded and integrated into everyday practice, become superimposed over, and slightly displace, older artefacts…Technological change, then, is best described as a process of complex, uneven sedimentation in space, rather than abrupt, jarring rupture in time.[157]

In this thesis, 'novel military technology' will refer to the cultural representations of the imprecise and shifting list of technologies that were *seen to be new* from the British perspective and from British interpretations of the African perspective. This study is unquestionably focused on innovation, in that it will argue that the Victorian public sphere was fixated on innovation. It is not intended to imply that any of these technologies constituted 'magic-bullets', but that certain groups of historical actors were keen to *construct* them as such (while others were not).

0.10 Technology and Empire

Cannadine affirmed that 'the British Empire was held together functionally, and driven forward economically, by the most advanced technologies available' and that technology-centrism lay at the heart of 'this

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[154] David Edgerton, *The Shock of the Old* (London: Profile, 2008) p. 140.
[155] Black, *War and Technology*, p. xi.
[156] Ibid., pp. 6-7.
[157] Chris Otter, *The Victorian Eye: A Political History of Light and Vision in Britain, 1800-1910* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008) p. 261.

version and vision of empire'.[158] Many historians from a range of disciplines have studied the imperial roles of technology.[159] Headrick examined the diffusion and adoption of Western technology by European powers in colonial settings, arguing that weaponry, transportation, and medical technology constituted the 'tools of empire'.[160] He put forward that new imperialism could best be understood as the interaction between motives and means. McNeill focused on the reciprocal interplay between technological, social, and political developments in *The Pursuit of Power*, which Roland has suggested 'dominated the decade' of the 1980s.[161]

In the past two decades, approaches have increasingly reflected the cultural turn and fixated on the representations of weapons alongside the weapons themselves. Thus a 1999 volume of *Science, Technology, and Society* encouraged contributing authors, 'to look beyond colonial technologies as mere "tools" of empire and to avoid the vanity enterprises of European science such as positional astronomy and pure mathematics'.[162] The International Congress

[158] Cannadine, *Ornamentalism,* p. 149.
[159] Howard Bailes, 'Technology and Imperialism: A Case Study of the Victorian Army in Africa,' *Victorian Studies* 24, no. 1 (Autumn, 1980) pp. 83-104; Howard Bailes, 'Technology and Tactics in the British Army, 1866-1900,' in *Men Machines and War*, eds. Ronald Haycock and Keith Neilson (Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1988); Barton C. Hacker, 'Military Institutions, Weapons, and Social Change: Toward a New History of Military Technology,' *Technology and Culture* 35, no. 4 (Oct., 1994) pp. 768-834; Christine MacLeod, *Heroes of Invention: Technology, Liberalism and British Identity, 1750-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); David Omissi, *Air Power and Colonial Control: The Royal Air Force 1919-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990); Gervase Phillips, 'Military Morality Transformed: Weapons and Soldiers on the Nineteenth-Century Battlefield,' *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* XLI, no. 4 (Spring, 2011) pp. 565-90; William K. Storey, 'Guns, Race, and Skill in Nineteenth-Century Southern Africa,' *Technology and Culture* 45, no. 4 (Oct 2004), 687; T. H. E. Travers, 'Technology, Tactics, and Morale: Jean De Bloch, the Boer War, and British Military Theory, 1900-1914,' *The Journal of Modern History* 51, no. 2 (1979) pp. 264-86.
[160] Daniel R. Headrick, 'The Tools of Imperialism: Technology and the Expansion of European Colonial Empires in the Nineteenth Century,' *The Journal of Modern History* 51, no. 2 (Jun. 1979) pp. 231-63; Headrick, *The Tools of Empire*; Headrick, *Power Over Peoples*.
[161] William McNeill,. *The Pursuit of Power: Technology, Armed Force, and Society since A.D. 1000* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982); Alex Roland, 'Technology and War: The Historiographical Revolution of the 1980s,' *Technology and Culture* 34, no. 1 (Jan., 1993) p. 117.
[162] Michael A. Osborne, 'Introduction: The Social History of Science, Technoscience, and Imperialism,' *Science, Technology, and Society* 4, no. 2 (1999) p. 161.

of the History of Technology (ICOHTEC) recently issued a call for papers asking authors to consider:

> What are the contexts of social values, attitudes, and interests, non-military as well as military, that shape and support (or oppose) [military] technologies? What are the consequences of gender, race, class, and other aspects of the social order for the nature and use of military technology? Or, more generally: How do social and cultural environments within the military itself or in the larger society affect military technological change?[163]

In their focus on representations and culture, histories of military technology must increasingly engage with Western ideologies of modernity and dominance. In his comprehensive study *Machines as the Measure of Men,* Adas placed technology at the centre of Europe's success in colonisation, but drew attention primarily to the change in European perspective that such success engendered. He traced the development of an ideology of superiority (variously British, Western, European, white) based on perceived technological advancement. As the power differential between them grew, Adas argued:

> increasingly industrialized European (and North American) cultures as a whole were seen to be a separate class, distinct from all others. The polarities were numerous and obvious: metal versus wood; machine versus human or animal power; science versus superstition and myth; synthetic versus organic; progressive versus stagnant. All aspects of culture could be linked to these polarities, to the fundamental dichotomy between industrial and preindustrial societies.[164]

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 will explore the 'lessons' many British commentators drew from Abyssinia and Ashanti as significant contributions to this process.

Yet, in practice, such all-encompassing dichotomies were not always appropriate to small wars, in Africa or elsewhere. Both Abyssinians and Ashanti wielded muskets, and King Theodore possessed a much-treasured artillery train. Until these two expeditions, it will be argued, many of Britain's conflicts

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[163] International Congress of the History of Technology (ICOHTEC), 'Technology in Times of Transition: Call for Papers', Accessed 4 Feb. 2013, http://www.icohtec.org/brasov2014/. The author presented a paper at this conference based on Chapter 2 of this thesis and benefitted greatly from attendees' comments.
[164] Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men*, p. 144.

across the globe had been fought against comparably, or at least *analogously* armed fighters. Yet, machine guns, breach-loading rifles, and rockets appeared to be without analogue and thus provided a marker that allowed the imperial mind to separate who was 'civilised' and who was 'savage'. Those cases where opposing weapons were equally advanced, such as Egypt in 1882, also draw attention to the racial component of small wars, which will be examined throughout this thesis.

Moreover, both of these expeditions took place before machine guns were well-established in military circles or the public sphere; they were still quite novel.[165] Significantly, through this entire period the army had not officially accepted the Gatling gun.[166] The machine gun remained a naval monopoly until the 1890s, though even at the end of 1875 the navy had little experience with them.[167] They were, in short, experimental and the experiment was to take place in Africa.

Chapter 2 will examine the contemporary debates that were waged in military circles over mitrailleurs (machine guns) to better understand the lens through which the new technology was perceived. The investigation will speak to the social factors that go into decision making in technological systems. The historiography is replete with studies of the development of weapons and of tactical systems to incorporate them. Comparatively few consider in any depth the contested nature of debates over novel military technologies in martial culture or wider society. In his 1975 study *The Social History of the Machine Gun*, Ellis explored just such a cultural dynamic and gave considerable attention

[165] Frémeaux, *De Quoi Fut Fait L'empire*, pp. 206-7.
[166] Paul Wahl and Donald R. Toppel, *The Gatling Gun* (New York: Arco Publishing Company, Inc., 1965) p. 70.
[167] Richard Brooks, *The Long Arm of Empire: Naval Brigades from the Crimea to the Boxer Rebellion* (London: Constable and Company, 1999) p. 164.

to representations of early rapid-fire weapons.[168] More recently, Epstein traced the development of torpedo technologies and tactics in the American and British navies, countering the common perception that officers were slow to recognise their potential and demonstrating that various factions within military bureaucracies invested the new device with different hopes and expectations.[169]

0.11 Amalgamated Campaign Analysis

Examining these two campaigns together, almost interchangeably, as windows into Victorian culture may not seem an obvious choice, as they were undertaken at opposite sides of the African continent, in very different physical environments, against very different populations, and even by different armies (British and Anglo-Indian). In the contemporary public sphere, however, the practical dissimilarities between the two campaigns blurred together into a stereotyped 'idea' of Africa. Reporting on the Ashanti war, *The Lancet* medical journal saw, 'no reason for altering our opinion that the present undertaking is a miniature Abyssinian campaign…there is a certain parallelism between the two expeditions'.[170] A number of historians have since followed suit.[171]

Ensign Wynter served in Abyssinia, Ashanti, and Afghanistan, retiring afterwards in protest of the Cardwell reforms.[172] One of the steel 7-pounder cannons that Napier fired on Magdala, thereafter informally referred to as the 'Abyssinian pattern', was later hauled through the bush for Wolseley's attack on

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[168] John Ellis, *The Social History of the Machine Gun* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975) p. 18.
[169] Katherine Epstein, 'No One can Afford to Say "Damn the Torpedoes": Battle Tactics and U.S. Naval History before World War I,' *The Journal of Military History* 77 (Apr. 2013); Katherine Epstein, *Torpedo: Inventing the Military-Industrial Complex in the United States and Great Britain* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).
[170] 'The Ashantee War.' *The Lancet,* Vol. 102, no. 2613 (27 Sep. 1873) p. 458.
[171] Douglas Porch, 'Introduction', in Callwell, *Small Wars,* p. xi; Emery, *Marching Over Africa*, p. 42; Porch, *Wars of Empire*, p. 108; Curtin, *Disease and Empire,* p. 29.
[172] Brigadier B. W. Webb-Carter, 'A Subaltern in Abyssinia,' *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* 38 (1960) p. 149.

the Cape Coast town of Elmina.[173] Aside from those cases, very few soldiers or pieces of equipment appeared in both conflicts.

At the outset of the Ashanti operation, Abyssinia was looked to as its direct predecessor and apt analogue, still very relevant a mere four years later. Looking back with his particular operational lens, Callwell classed them together by name as examples of his third category of small war: 'campaigns undertaken to wipe out an insult, to avenge a wrong, or to overthrow a dangerous enemy'.[174]

'England has found another Abyssinia in Ashantee', *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* claimed, 'and in King Koffee Kalkalli another Theodorus'.[175] *The Spectator* declared, 'as Napier went to Magdala, Kaufman to Khiva…so Wolseley can go to Coomassie'.[176] The 1889 history of the Royal Engineers stressed with pride that 'they were both Engineer wars in their main characteristics…In both the Engineers were called on to fight against obstacles of no common character'.[177]

Henty, special correspondent for the *Standard* at both expeditions, noted that, 'in forming any critical opinion as to the Ashanti campaign, one is led irresistibly to a comparison with the sister expedition to Abyssinia. The resemblance between these campaigns is so close as to be almost singular'.[178] Despite the wide climatic and epidemiological difference between the West African jungle and East African tableland, he continued, 'it must be remembered that the prophecies and warnings against the climate were quite as great in one

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[173] G. A. Henty, *The March to Coomassie*, 2nd ed. (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1874) p. 100.
[174] Callwell, *Small Wars,* p. 25, 28.
[175] 'Ashantee and the Ashantees', *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 48, no. 283 (Dec. 1873) p. 286.
[176] *The Spectator,* 23 Aug. 1873, p. 6.
[177] Whitworth Porter, *History of the Corps of Royal Engineers*, Vol. 2 (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1889) p. 10.
[178] Henty, *The March to Coomassie*, p. 428.

campaign as in the other'.[179] Stanley, having bound both tales into a single volume, referred to King Theodore as King Karikari's 'illustrious prototype'.[180] At the beginning of the war he expressed his hope that Wolseley, 'will be as successful as Napier's march to Magdala' and reduce Kumase 'to a smoking ruin like Magdala in 1868'.[181]

Wolseley did little to invite the comparison, not least because Napier was a political enemy and rival for the spotlight, but he was certainly aware that his performance would be assessed alongside that of his own illustrious prototype.[182] He told Stanley that, 'as great a force will ultimately move upon Coomassie as Napier marched upon Magdala'.[183] His biographer, Charles Rathbone Low, attempted to refute the common comparison between the expeditions in Wolseley's 1878 memoirs, arguing that in every major criterion the Ashanti expedition had been more spectacular and the commanding officer's success more incredible.[184] Henty took the opposite position, arguing that due to the greater distance travelled, the difficulty of the terrain, the larger size of the force and weight of material, and the lack of protection from the sun, 'the labours' achieved by Napier's force 'were beyond all comparison greater and more arduous than those which the white troops performed in Ashanti'.[185] After the success of the Ashanti campaign, it joined Abyssinia as the predictive trope for African small wars, the joint standard to which future campaigns would be compared and the joint ideal to which future commanders would aspire.

[179] Ibid., p. 431.
[180] Review of 'Coomassie And Magdala,' *The Times*, 25 Apr. 1874, p 12; Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala*, p. 149.
[181] Ibid, p. 19, 38.
[182] On officer rivalries in this period, see Ian F. W. Beckett, 'Soldiers, the Frontier and the Politics of Command in British India', *Small Wars and Insurgencies,* Vol. 16, no. 3 (2005) pp. 280-92.
[183] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala*, p. 86.
[184] Charles Rathbone Low, *A Memoir of Lieutenant-General Sir Garnet J. Wolseley*, Vol. 2 (London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1878) pp. 207-12.
[185] Henty, *The March to Coomassie*, p. 430.

Thus, when a diplomatic issue flared up with the King of Dahomey in 1876, *The Spectator* recommended that 'the Abyssinian precedent will be followed, and not that of Ashantee', meaning that the king should be dethroned.[186] The idea of African conflict had become tied in the British imagination to the events of 1868-1874.

0.12 Conclusions

The expeditions to Abyssinia and Ashanti were significant moments in the development of the British idea of small wars, a concept intertwined with notions of scientific exploration and explorer heroes; industrial expositions and international prestige; martial prowess and military preparedness; race and the nature of racial superiority. Different groups in Britain each saw in small wars what they wanted to see, and made the idea of imperial conflict work for them. Small wars, in turn, became a site on which British culture was contested and remade.

This thesis will demonstrate that discourses of technological superiority and scientific violence were generated in response to particular anxieties of the perceived dangers of the African interior. Accounts of the Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions demonstrated a strong hope, desire to claim, and tendency to interpret that the mere presence of novel technology would beat back the wild climate and terrify Africans into submission. This inclination among British commentators tells us something about the imperial ideal, particularly as it did not accurately reflect the real potential of those technologies or the reactions of Africans to them.

[186] *The Spectator,* 13 May 1876, p. 2.

Chapter 1: Imperialism, Prestige, and the Public Sphere

1.1 Imperialism and the British Press

Stephen Manning noted that 'for the vast majority of the British public in the nineteenth century, their understanding of the campaigns in which their soldiers were engaged was obtained from newspapers'.[187] This was certainly true of the Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions, and it is therefore important to sketch a picture of the British press during 1868-74. It was a transformative period for the media, as well as for the empire. The abolition of the stamp and paper duties from 1855-61 opened up a very competitive newspaper market, forcing most titles to bring their cover price down to a penny and hold it there for decades.[188] *The Times* was unable to drop below three pence due to particularly high editorial costs but could rely on its established reputation to remain competitive.[189] Newspapers began to employ the rotary press in the late 1860s and early 1870s. This process used continuous rolls of newsprint and

[187] Stephen Manning, *Soldiers of the Queen: Victorian Colonial Conflict in the Words of those Who Fought* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Spellmount, 2009) p. 9.
[188] Berny Sèbe, *Heroic Imperialists in Africa: The Promotion of British and French Colonial Heroes, 1870-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013) p. 54.
[189] Andrew Hobbs, 'The Deleterious Dominance of *The Times* in Nineteenth-Century Scholarship,' *Journal of Victorian Culture* 18, no. 4 (2013) p. 474.

increased the number of copies that could be produced and the speed of their production.[190] Literacy rates were higher than ever and would continue to rise among the middle and lower-middle classes. Newspapers, in consequence, ratcheted up the established practice of using sensationalism to draw the attention of the reading public, providing crime news, scandals of all sorts, and a more jingoistic and bellicose presentation of the military and empire. Matthew Arnold famously characterised this turn toward sensationalism as the 'New Journalism' in 1887.[191] However, many of the characteristics associated with the New Journalism had already become prominent in the British press by the 1860s, when they rose further on the back of imperialism.[192] Thompson noted that 'New Imperialism' and the New Journalism had 'a symbiotic relationship'.[193]

'The army enjoyed unprecedented popular appeal and esteem during the last three decades of the nineteenth century', Spiers argued, 'it earned more popular adulation than ever before over a comparable period of time'.[194] Weapons tests undertaken by the Royal Artillery at Woolwich and Shoeburyness were considered worth reporting by many newspapers, the more ostentatious devices receiving substantial and often illustrated coverage.[195] Commemorative statues of imperial heroes had not been common until the

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[190] Robert A. Stafford, 'Scientific Exploration and Empire,' in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume III: The Nineteenth Century*, eds. Andrew Porter and Wm. Roger Louis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) p. 256.

[191] Joel Wiener, 'How New was the New Journalism?' in *Papers for the Millions: The New Journalism in Britain, 1850s to 1914*, ed. Joel Wiener (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1988) p. 48.

[192] Roger T. Stearn, 'G. W. Steevens and the Message of Empire,' *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 17, no. 2 (1989) pp. 210-31; Virginia Berridge, 'Content Analysis and Historical Research on Newspapers,' in *The Press in English Society from the Seventeenth to Nineteenth Centuries*, eds. Michael Harris and Alan Lee (London: Associated University Press, 1986) pp. 256-7.

[193] Andrew Thompson, *Imperial Britain: The Empire in British Politics c. 1880-1932* (Edinburgh Gate, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2000) p. 64.

[194] Edward M. Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army 1868-1902* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992) p. 180.

[195] 'The Gatling Battery Gun', *Illustrated London News*, 23 Mar. 1867, p. 300; 'Naval and Military', *Illustrated London News*, 24 Sep. 1870, p. 327; 'The Gatling Gun', *Illustrated London News*, 24 Aug. 1872, p. 174; 'Foreign Officers At Shoeburyness', *The Times*, 17 Sep. 1872, p. 5; 'Naval And Military Intelligence', *The Times*, 5 Sep. 1876, p. 6.

1870s, when they began to appear frequently on British streets, erected both through government expense and private subscription.[196] There was a dramatic increase in the number of battle paintings displayed at public exhibitions from 1874 to 1914.[197] The battle painting sensation Lady Butler displayed *Balaclava* at the Fine Art Society in 1876, attracting 50,000 visitors.[198]

Fiction and non-fiction books on military themes became extremely popular.[199] Captain George Chesney, formerly of the Bengal Engineers, spawned a popular fiction genre in 1871 with 'The Battle of Dorking: Reminiscences of a Volunteer', first published in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* and soon after as a novella.[200] Chesney's alarmist tale of a successful German invasion of England was an immediate success, Seed argued, 'because it played so directly to contemporary anxieties about national defence by projecting the weaknesses of the French on to Britain'.[201] After a second run of 80,000 copies, it became clear that the book had inaugurated a craze for invasion fantasy literature. From 1871 to the Great War, speculative tales of future-war would appear every year in Britain.[202] Sir Francis Butler, husband of Lady Butler, member of the 'Wolseley Ring', and veteran of Ashanti, Zulu, and Tel-el-Kebir, contributed his own invasion fantasy, *The Invasion of England,* in 1882.[203] By the end of the 1870s, juvenile literature wedded the

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[196] Sèbe, *Heroic Imperialists in Africa,* p. 37.
[197] J. W. M. Hichberger, *Images of the Army: The Military in British Art, 1815-1914* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1988) p. 75.
[198] I. F. Clarke, 'Future-War Fiction: The First Main Phase, 1871-1900,' *Science Fiction Studies* 24, no. 3 (Nov., 1997) p. 396; I. F. Clarke, 'Future-War Fiction: The First Main Phase, 1871-1900,' in *Future Wars: The Anticipations and the Fears*, ed. David Seed (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012) p. 9.
[199] Sèbe, *Heroic Imperialists in Africa,* p. 29.
[200] 'The Battle of Dorking: Reminiscences of a Volunteer', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine,* Vol. 109, no. 667 (May 1871) pp. 539-72; George Chesney, *The Battle of Dorking* (Edinburgh: Blackwood & Sons, 1871).
[201] David Seed, 'Introduction,' in *Future Wars: The anticipations and the fears,* ed. David Seed (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012) p. 2; Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army 1868-1902*, p. 198.
[202] Clarke, *Future-War Fiction* (2012) p. 9; Clarke, *Future-War Fiction* (1997) p. 387.
[203] Ibid., (2012) p. 19.

popular interest in warfare to the long-popular genre of exploration journals in 'boy's novels', or adventure fiction. The young heroes of these stories, such as those of G. A. Henty, overcame obstacles, realised their potential, and became men, significantly, out in the empire.[204]

Such literary genres reflected the increased popularity of imperial conflict. Steinbach argued that by 1868:

> the combination of the Indian Rebellion, the Maori Wars, and the [Jamaican] Morant Bay Rebellion had convinced the white British public and government that nonwhite natives were inherently violent, and that governing them with a firm hand was more important than protecting their political rights.[205]

Various interpretations of Darwinism further swayed the public perception of small wars, which were coming to be viewed as necessary enactments of national pre-eminence.[206] Thus, even relatively small skirmishes in the imperial sphere received substantial press coverage, further exaggerating their significance.[207] Such empire-focused media reports also shaped and gradually changed popular images of Africa and Africans.[208]

The Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions themselves straddled a significant, perhaps pivotal, period in the development of British public and press interest in African conflict. Beckett claimed that, 'the Crimean War had been effectively the first British campaign covered in the new more popular

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[204] John M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion 1880-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984) p. 7.
[205] Susie L. Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians: Politics, Culture, and Society in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (New York: Routledge, 2012) p. 69; See also Christine Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971) p. 76.
[206] MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, p. 6.
[207] Alex Nalbach, '"The Software of Empire": Telegraphic News Agencies and Imperial Publicity, 1865-1914,' in *Imperial Co-Histories: National Identities and the British and Colonial Press*, ed. Julie F. Codell (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2003) p. 77.
[208] Ulrich Pallua, *Eurocentrism, Racism, Colonialism in the Victorian and Edwardian Age: Changing Images of Africa(ns) in Scientific and Literary Texts* (Heidelberg, Germany: Universitatsverlag Winter, 2006) p. 133.

national press and had established the pattern'.[209] That pattern, characterised by special war correspondents and an increased tendency toward sensationalism, had remained relatively dormant since the Indian Mutiny. There had been a number of colonial conflicts in the interim but, until Abyssinia, wrote Henty, 'such little wars pass nearly unheeded at home'.[210] Sir Samuel Baker's 1869 expedition to the Sudan, during which the Prince of Wales joined him for a period, brought media attention back to African exploits.[211] Henry Morton Stanley's presumption of David Livingstone provided the papers with a thoroughly dramatic story in 1871. The Franco-Prussian War turned British minds to the military and, significantly, the Prussian victory left a gap in the public hunger for exciting war news. Lucy Brown noted that the more sensationalist evening and Sunday papers saw their sales drop after the declaration of peace.[212] The Cardwell reforms had been the subject of much public debate and criticism and many looked to Napier's and Wolseley's campaigns as field-tests of the new system. This convergence of factors meant that the Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions caught the British public's imagination in a way not seen since the Mutiny and were covered in the press to an extent not seen since the Crimea.[213] Badsey noted that the era of journalism thus sparked would become mythologised as the 'golden age' of war reporting.[214]

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[209] Ian F. W. Beckett, 'Manipulating the "Modern Curse of Armies": Wolseley, the Press, and the Ashanti War, 1873-1874,' in *Soldiers and Settlers in Africa, 1850-1918*, ed. Stephen M. Miller (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 2009) p. 224.

[210] G. A. Henty, *The March to Coomassie*, 2nd ed. (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1874) p. 14.

[211] Ronald Hyam, *Understanding the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) p. 98.

[212] Lucy Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985) p. 98.

[213] Ian F. W. Beckett, ed., *Wolseley and Ashanti: The Asante War Journal and Correspondence of Major General Sir Garnet Wolseley 1873-1874* (Stroud, Gloucestershire, UK: The History Press for the Army Records Society, 2009) p. 1; Beckett, *Manipulating the 'Modern Curse of Armies',* p. 224.

[214] Stephen Badsey, 'The Impact of Communications and the Media on the Art of War since 1815,' in *War in the Age of Technology: Myriad Faces of Modern Armed Conflict*, eds. Geoffrey Jensen and Andrew Wiest (New York: New York University Press, 2001) p. 80.

The Abyssinian campaign received saturation coverage by the standards of the time. Over just under a year, the *Illustrated London News* published 100 illustrations on the subject.[215] Marching with the army along different points of the advance were Dr. C. Austin for *The Times,* G. A. Henty for both the *Standard* and the *Pioneer*, Viscount Adare for the *Daily Telegraph*, William Simpson as the correspondent and artist for the *Illustrated London News*, and H. M. Stanley for the *New York Herald*. Among the Indian Army officers, Lieutenant F. A. Shepherd took a side job as a military correspondent for the *Daily News* and the *Times of India*, and Lieutenant W. O. Whiteside for the *Morning Post*. Clements Markham, secretary of the Royal Geographical Society and the expedition's geographer, sent articles to *Macmillan's Magazine.*[216] Stanley, Henty, Shepherd, and Markham all went on to publish books of their campaign experiences. The journalists' books were very popular, as was Markham's among the more limited circles of those interested in geography.[217]

The Ashanti Expedition was the subject of similar, indeed greater, press saturation in Britain. In the preface to his narrative of the Gold Coast campaign, Maurice dubiously stated that, 'only one *history* of the Ashantee War has appeared or is likely to appear – that of Major Brackenbury'.[218] Brackenbury had indeed worked at a fevered pace and with several assistants to ensure that his, Wolseley approved, account of the expedition would be the first to reach the

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[215] Frederic Sharf, David Northrup and Richard Pankhurst, *Abyssinia, 1867-1868: Artists on Campaign: Watercolours and Drawings from the British Expedition Under Sir Robert Napier* (Hollywood: Tsehai, 2003) p. 34.

[216] Trevenen J. Holland and Henry Hozier, *The Expedition to Abyssinia Compiled by Order of the Secretary of State for War* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO), 1870) p. 430; Clements R. Markham, 'The Abyssinian Expedition,' *Macmillan's Magazine* 17 (Nov. 1867-Apr. 1868) pp. 435-46.

[217] Henry M. Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala: The Story of Two British Campaigns in Africa* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low & Searle, 1874); G. A. Henty, *The March to Magdala* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1868); Clements R. Markham, *A History of the Abyssinian Expedition* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1869).

[218] 'Daily News' Special Correspondent (Sir John Frederick Maurice), *The Ashantee War: A Popular Narrative* (London: Henry S. King & Co., 1874).

British public. Nonetheless, in his projection of what was 'likely', Maurice made a blatant attempt to discredit the cadre of press correspondents who would, in the months after Brackenbury, all publish their own versions of events. Maurice had been Wolseley's private secretary and an inaugural member of the 'Wolseley Ring'.

Winwood Reade began his book with the self-deprecating but more accurate claim that, 'as five other books on the Ashantee War have been announced or have already appeared, the preface to a work on that subject ought to be apologetic…for writing on an over-written subject'.[219] In terms of eyewitness press coverage, he was justified in asserting that, 'never perhaps has there been a war so fully reported for the press'.[220] Reade was the special correspondent for *The Times* in Ashanti. He was joined by Frederick Boyle for the *Daily Telegraph*, Henty again for the *Standard,* and Stanley again for the *New York Herald*. All four correspondents went on to publish books about the campaign.[221] Melton Prior was 'Special War Artist' for the *Illustrated London News*; he would not publish a book about his experience in Ashanti until his 1912 memoirs.[222] Among the officers in Ashanti, Frederick Maurice wrote for the *Daily News* (as did another unnamed officer, most likely Lieutenant W. Dooner), Captain Ebenezer Rogers and Percy P. Luxmore for *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, and Major Robert Home for the *Pall Mall Gazette.* Brackenbury and Maurice released their aforementioned books, as did Dooner and Major William Butler.[223] *The Lancet* ran field reports on the all-important medical

[219] Winwood Reade, *The Story of the Ashantee Campaign* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1874) p. v.
[220] Ibid., p. 134.
[221] Beckett, *Wolseley and Ashanti*, p. 29.
[222] Melton Prior, *Campaigns of a War Correspondent*, ed. S. L. Bensusan (London: Edward Arnold, 1912).
[223] W. T. Dooner, *Jottings En Route to Coomassie* (London: W. Mitchell & Co., 1874); W. F. Butler, *Akim-Foo: The History of a Failure*, 3rd ed. (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low, & Searle, 1875).

arrangements from their own correspondent stationed at Cape Coast Castle.[224] An illustrative example of the sheer volume of public coverage, *The Times* ran 209 articles on the Ashanti expedition in 1873 and 206 in 1874. Curtin found that *The Times* ran 300 pieces during the most intense and eventful six months of the campaign, more than one a day.[225]

The 1870s were ‘crucial’ to the prominence with which imperial events were reported, argued Mackenzie. The decade ‘opened with those celebrated markers of a new enthusiasm for imperial expansion and consolidation…by [1879] the empire was firmly established as a source of spectacular events worthy of prominent press treatment’.[226] By 1878, the War Office recognised that, ‘the presence of Newspaper Correspondents with an Army in the Field is an evil of modern warfare which cannot be avoided. The public will not consent to be shut out from all news of the theatre of war; nor is it wise that they should be’.[227] ‘Special correspondent’ was the most common term used to refer to journalists on assignment. Different editors might alternately call them ‘occasional correspondent’, ‘special commissioner’, or simply ‘specials’.[228] Serving soldiers who wrote for newspapers or journals were usually called ‘military correspondents’.[229] Until the Abyssinian expedition, special war correspondents were known in Britain almost solely in the context of the Crimean War. William Howard Russell of *The Times* had reported from the Crimea and established an image of the profession as ‘truthtellers’ to the public.

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[224] ‘The Ashantee War’, *The Lancet,* Vol. 103, no. 2632 (7 Feb 1874) p. 217.
[225] Philip D. Curtin, *Disease and Empire: The Health of European Troops in the Conquest of Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) p. 49.
[226] John M. MacKenzie, ‘The Press and the Dominant Ideology of Empire,’ in *Newspapers and Empire in Ireland and Britain: Reporting the British Empire, c. 1857-1921*, ed. Simon J. Potter (Portland, OR: Four Courts Press, 2004) pp. 29-30.
[227] Lt. John Ross of Bladensburg, TNA, WO 33/32, ‘Newspaper Correspondents with an Army in the Field, and Military Attaches of Foreign Powers at Head-Quarters’, Intelligence Branch, Quarter-Master-General’s Department, 28 Feb. 1878, p. 1.
[228] Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers*, p. 217.
[229] Edward M. Spiers, ‘Military Correspondence in the Late Nineteenth-Century Press,’ *Archives* 32, no. 116 (Apr. 2007) p. 28.

He was not the first journalist to report from a theatre of war but, Hoover argued, could be considered the first ‘modern’ war correspondent, ‘in the sense that he travelled with the troops and gave eyewitness reports of the war’.[230] The Crimea also firmly established the profession of ‘special war artist’ or ‘war illustrator’ who made realistic sketches of camp and battle scenes based on direct personal observation. The pioneer in this field was William Simpson of the *Illustrated London News*, who portrayed the Crimea, the Abyssinian expedition, the Franco-Prussian War, and the Afghan War.[231] He was succeeded at the *Illustrated London News* by Melton Prior, whose first campaign was the 1873 Ashanti war and who would go on to become the most famous special war artist of the imperial era.[232] These artists fired the public interest in imperial campaigns through the immediacy of their images and formed a well-paid elite among journalists.[233]

Henty covered both the Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions, having cut his teeth in the Crimea.[234] Stanley covered both expeditions as well and published the narratives together in a two-volume book.[235] Reade spent three years travelling in West Africa and, in 1863, published his extensive observations and impressions of the region.[236] In 1868, he applied unsuccessfully to serve as the special correspondent for *The Times* in Abyssinia and consequently set out on another two-year journey through the

[230] Nora K. Hoover, *Victorian War Correspondents G. A. Henty and H. M. Stanley: The ‘Abyssinian’ Campaign 1867-1868* (PhD diss., Florida State University, 2005) p. 1.
[231] Roger Thomas Stearn, *War Images and Image Makers in the Victorian Era: Aspects of the British Visual and Written Portrayal of War and Defense c. 1866-1906* (Doctor of Philosophy, King's College, University of London, 1987) p. 11.
[232] Prior, *Campaigns of a War Correspondent*.
[233] Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army 1868-1902*, p. 194; Sèbe, *Heroic Imperialists in Africa,* p. 113.
[234] R. J. Wilkinson-Latham, *From our Special Correspondent: Victorian War Correspondents and their Campaigns* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1979) p. 89.
[235] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala*.
[236] Winwood Reade, *Savage Africa: Being the Narrative of a Tour in Equatorial, South-Western, and North-Western Africa* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1863).

Gold Coast, Slave Coast, Sierra Leone, and Liberia.[237] He was again rejected when he applied to join the Livingstone Relief Expedition, but succeeded in landing *The Times* special correspondent assignment in Ashanti.[238]

The foundations of the New Journalism were being laid in the 1860s and '70s.[239] The British reading public was hungry for sensational news of exotic locales, military adventure and, if at all possible, violence. An established and rapidly expanding field of journalism responded with more inclusive war coverage and more column space devoted to African expeditions of all sorts. Imperial ventures were particularly marketable public commodities, providing adventure, novelty, and a locus for national military pride at a time when the army was little engaged on the continent. Special correspondents had become a public expectation, and integral mediators of the British experience of empire. Media engagements with the Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions were both responses to this dynamic and watersheds in its extension. Journalists were not, however, the only architects of the media presence on campaign in Africa.

1.2 Military Engagement with the Public Sphere

Kiernan has argued that, 'Empire soldiers as a race were highly sensitive to attitudes in Britain'.[240] In Chapter 2, it will be argued that those British officers and military thinkers concerned with imperial and colonial warfare comprised a military culture divergent from those officers focused on European great power conflicts. It was the imperial-focused soldiers who tended to show more concern for public opinion and more eagerness to manipulate the press. That did not necessarily mean that they enjoyed it. The overall feeling among military men of

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[237] Winwood Reade, *The African Sketch-Book*, (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1873) 1:v.
[238] Felix Driver, *Geography Militant: Cultures of Exploration and Empire* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001) p. 102.
[239] Sèbe, *Heroic Imperialists in Africa,* p. 11, 19.
[240] V. G. Kiernan, *From Conquest to Collapse: European Empires from 1815 to 1960* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982) p. 177.

all stripes was usually hostile toward the press, if not toward the journalists themselves. The war reporting profession was in its infancy and many officers believed that it represented a threat to operations. It was suggested that newspapers aided the enemy by revealing troop movements and morale to anyone with a penny to spend.[241] In his *Soldier's Pocket Book,* Wolseley iterated the importance of keeping one's intentions hidden from the enemy. Yet, 'an English general of the present day is in the most unfortunate position in this respect, being surrounded by newspaper correspondents, who, pandering to the public craze for "news," render concealment most difficult'.[242] He famously described them as, 'that race of drones…an encumbrance to an army; they eat the rations of fighting men, and do no work at all. Their numbers should be restricted as much as possible'.[243] Lucy Brown claimed that, 'Garnet Wolseley stands out from other people by the scale and assiduity of his cultivation of the press'.[244] Throughout his career, he sought to keep correspondents placated and deferential while restricting their access to real information as much as possible.[245]

When one of King Karikari's European hostages, a missionary, arrived in Wolseley's camp after five years of captivity in Kumase, Percy Luxmore wrote to his wife, and *Blackwood's,* that:

> the members of the Press are furious because the General will not allow them to interview the missionary. I don't know what information he has brought down, but I saw most of the correspondents yesterday, and that one of the 'Standard' [Henty] was beside himself with rage and prickly heat.[246]

Boyle railed against such restrictions in the *Daily Telegraph*:

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[241] Hoover, *Victorian War Correspondents*, p. 10.
[242] Sir Garnet Wolseley, *The Soldier's Pocket-Book for Field Service*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1871) p. 225.
[243] Ibid., p. 86.
[244] Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers*, p. 139.
[245] Ibid.. p. 159.
[246] Percy P. Luxmore, 'Ashantee: Extracts from the Journal of a Naval Officer Addressed to His Wife,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 115, no. 702 (Apr. 1874) pp. 523-4.

> It will be observed that in too many cases I am obliged to preface my story with the hateful words 'it IS said.' The fact is that no facilities at all are offered to correspondents in this war. We may pick up our information as we can, for the answer of the staff to any inquirer is invariably, 'I don't know anything!' Of personal courtesy there is abundance in most cases…A little less politeness, and a little more information, is an exchange which correspondents would welcome. At the same time, a civilian might think it within the resources of military art to give both. As a matter of system, however, Sir Garnet disapproves of correspondents. In this war he has an excellent opportunity of showing his abstract objection to them, for there never could be a case in which gossip would do so little harm.[247]

Napier was far more accommodating to correspondents, as there was indeed little chance that their dispatches would reach Magdala in the Abyssinian mountains. He provided each one with a letter granting unrestricted access to military activity. There is no evidence of official censorship of their reports. He did require the specials to pay for their provisions, the first month in advance, but also invited them to his tent for dinner many times and seemed to get on affably with them. The mood among other officers, nonetheless, reflected the usual military suspicion towards the press. Lieutenant Scott, one of Napier's ADCs, wrote to his mother that, 'we have swarms of special correspondents with us, and the general opinion seems to be we should be much better without them'.[248] Colonel Merewether refused to allow Henty to join the reconnoitering expedition on the basis that any additional mouths would strain food supplies, despite Henty's insistence that he would bring his own. The correspondent later learned that Merewether had, in fact, been offended by a number of articles criticising his leadership that had appeared in the *Standard*. Henty's portrayal of that officer would only get worse.[249]

This incident perhaps embodied the true nature of the official disquiet

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[247] Frederick Boyle, *Through Fanteeland to Coomassie: A Diary of the Ashantee Expedition* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1874) p. 279.
[248] 'A Staff Officer' [Lieut. W. W. Scott], *Letters from Abyssinia during the Campaign of 1868* ([n. pub.]: [n.p.], [1868?]) p. 44.
[249] Henty, *The March to Magdala*, pp. 95, 22-3, 288, 425; Hoover, *Victorian War Correspondents*, p. 103.

toward the press. As Boyle had pointed out, newspaper dispatches could not seriously threaten military secrecy. Callwell would later suggest that, 'in small wars, when the correspondent is restricted to the side of the regular troops, the mischief resulting from indiscreet disclosures is greatly diminished by the ignorance of the foe'.[250] The Crimean War had not been a public relations disaster for the Army because the press kept the enemy informed of troop movements, but because it kept the British public informed of troop suffering. A confidential 1878 War Office paper, *Newspaper Correspondents with an Army in the Field*, opened with an admonishment of such 'amateur' complaints: 'It is bad enough when correspondents, by giving their opinion on matters which they do not understand, excite the public against an officer in command, who, perhaps, is doing all that can be done, and who is supported by the confidence of the Government'.[251] By doing so, it was feared, correspondents would also undermine the public's confidence in that government.

This War Office paper represented an early attempt to codify and standardise, indeed legalise, military control of the press. Produced by the Intelligence Branch, it presented a series of recommended measures to minimise the risk that press correspondents could pose. It proposed that such civilians should be placed under the Mutiny Act and bound by the same censorship regulations as regular field conveyance. Journalists would, thus, be legally limited to approved modes of communication under military surveillance. Most importantly, the paper proposed, all correspondents wishing to stay with an army would require a license granted by the Commanding officer. Military authorities would, 'not grant licences to those whom they consider undesirable

[250] Lt C. E. Callwell, 'Notes on the Strategy of our Small Wars,' *Proceedings of the Royal Artillery Institution* 13 (1885) p. 416.
[251] Lt. John Ross of Bladensburg, TNA, WO 33/32, 'Newspaper Correspondents with an Army in the Field, and Military Attaches of Foreign Powers at Head-Quarters', Intelligence Branch, Quarter-Master-General's Department, 28 Feb. 1878, p. 1.

to have as correspondents in the field. Retired officers will be preferred'.[252] Significantly, newspaper editors would have to sign these agreements along with their correspondents and both would be subject to license rejection together, thus adding another incentivised filter for information. The 11th recommendation demonstrated the level of press control to which the military aspired: 'The Military Authorities will give as much information, as they may consider advisable and consistent with their duty, to correspondents; the latter are, therefore, invited to get their news from that source as much as possible'.[253] The recommendations were never adopted in full, nor released publicly, and provide a window into the institutional mindset of the War Office at this time.

Before any such attempts at standardisation, of course, officers had already been using their considerable authority to assert control over press coverage. In *The Soldier's Pocket Book,* Wolseley famously advocated directly lying to the press: 'the post and the telegraph will always be in the general's hands, so he can lay an embargo on the mails whenever he wishes it…or he can, by spreading false news among the gentlemen of the press, use them as a medium by which to deceive an enemy'.[254] In a related, though not strictly press, issue, Wolseley remarked that George Greaves, who succeeded him in Cyprus, 'had yet to learn that it does not do to insert the whole truth in official correspondence'.[255] Wolseley was by no means alone. Spiers claimed that:

> From the Indian Mutiny (1857-9) onwards a succession of military commanders and their staffs, including Sir Colin Campbell, Wolseley and his rival, Sir Frederick Roberts, sought to accommodate, co-opt and manipulate the media. They hoped thereby to utilise the correspondents

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[252] Ibid.
[253] Ibid.
[254] Wolseley, *The Soldier's Pocket-Book*, p. 225.
[255] Hove, W/P 3/17, Wolseley to his wife, 16 December 1873, Quoted in Ian F. W. Beckett, *The Victorians at War* (London: Hambledon and London, 2003) p. 6.

> to project a favourable image of the army in general and of their specific campaigns in particular.[256]

Many of the key players in this process were, notably, associated with empire.[257] An important distinction between the European-focused military establishment and imperial soldiers was that the former tended to avoid the press, while the latter, 'learned to further their objectives of their careers by taking advantage of the new channels of publicity, playing to the press gallery'.[258] Wolseley used the press to counterbalance and circumvent the Duke of Cambridge's enmity-driven attempts to block his career.[259] While traversing the Canadian wilderness in command of the Red River Expedition, sent to put an end to the Métis rebellion, he rephrased Shakespeare's *As You Like It* in a letter to his wife: 'the bubble reputation which I seek, not at the cannon's but at the mosquito's mouth, is the light that beckons me on'.[260] The wilderness could be the place to make one's name, but that of course hinged on the public perception of events and one's own place in them.

A commander could seek to control the text in the press through official letters and announcements, as these were sure to be reprinted in newspapers in full and verbatim. As Wolseley finalised his ultimatum to the Ashanti King, he told his wife that the letter was:

> only really meant for the English public, as it is not expected that even an answer will be sent to it. I have had to be very careful therefore in the words selected…I feel that if it does not meet with public favor, the Government will throw me over and say that I am to blame.[261]

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[256] Spiers, *Military Correspondence in the Late Nineteenth-Century Press*, p. 29.

[257] For an analysis of this dynamic in the South African War, see Ian F. W. Beckett, 'The Historiography of Small Wars: Early Historians and the South African War', *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, Vol. 2, no. 2 (Aug. 1991) p. 279.

[258] Kiernan, *From Conquest to Collapse*, p. 176.

[259] Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army 1868-1902*, p. 8.

[260] Sir George Arthur, ed., *The Letters of Lord and Lady Wolseley 1870-1911* (London: William Heinemann, 1922) p. 2.

[261] Wolseley Journal, Thursday 25 September 1873, TNA, WO 147/3, in Beckett, *Wolseley and Ashanti*, p. 85.

Wolseley's concern for public opinion could thus influence critical aspects of a campaign. That was less true of Napier, who, while sensitive to politics, did not concern himself with the popular mood. Wolseley's example would increasingly become the norm among officers in future colonial conflicts.

Military leaders could further seek to influence public perceptions by circumventing the newspapers and printing their own accounts. Halfway through the Ashanti campaign, just before the arrival of British reinforcements, J. J. Collett published a short news booklet titled *The Life of King Koffee; Or, Sir Garnet Wolseley, the Ashantees and the Fantees, their Mode of Warfare; Fighting in the Bush!* The front cover, an illustration of an Ashanti warrior holding a dripping severed head, was intended to draw the eye. Sold at newsagents for a penny, the booklet was composed of a series of Wolseley's official dispatches (and several of Captain Freemantle's) selected to maximise the impression that the war was going well and that Europeans could survive and thrive in the legendary tropical climate. *The Life of King Coffee* will be examined in detail in later chapters; suffice to say that Wolseley certainly had a hand in its production and thus managed to put his preferred version of events in direct competition with that of the periodical press.[262]

Whether through the direct efforts of Commanders-in-Chief or the honest temperaments of the newsmen themselves, special correspondents were largely supportive of and deferential to the army.[263] Spiers has written extensively on the relationship between journalists and the military in the late nineteenth-century. He found that in the vast majority of cases these men felt an affinity for and a shared set of values with the officers on whom they reported. While on campaign, they were continually reliant on the army; if not for

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[262] Viscount Garnet Wolseley, *The Life of King Koffee; Or, Sir Garnet Wolseley, the Ashantees and the Fantees, their Mode of Warfare; Fighting in the Bush!* (London: J. J. Collett, 1873).
[263] Sèbe, *Heroic Imperialists in Africa,* pp. 59-60.

transport, communication, information, and access, then at the very least for protection. This relationship of dependence presented incentives to temper any harsh words toward one's 'hosts', but also undoubtedly forged some sense of common plight and common cause against the enemy and the elements. The result, Spiers argued, was that, 'they generally lavished praise upon field commanders and never mocked them'.[264] He also found that special correspondents on campaign, 'were often intensely patriotic and imbued with a strong imperial ethos, supportive of military values, and sympathetic to the soldier'.[265] Reade provided an interesting glimpse of his partiality for the army soon after his return from Ashanti. He died in April 1875, and the epitaph he provided for his tombstone gave pride of place to his campaign experience: 'In the Ashantee campaign he was always in the front. He shared in the defence of 'Abrakrampa', fought in the ranks of the 42nd Highlanders at the great battle of 'Amoaful' and was the only civilian present at the capture of Coomassie'.[266]

As discussed in the introduction, most special correspondents also wrote for pro-imperial, or at least broadly pro-military, papers. *The Times, Standard, Morning Post, Telegraph,* and *Times of India* could all generally be expected to support the empire, national prestige, and the opening up of Africa. Their special correspondents reflected those dispositions.[267] Henty was often described as, 'the most Imperialist of Imperialists', a characterisation he would come to exemplify in his jingoist boys' novels.[268] In his account of the Ashanti Expedition, Henty expressed his 'sincere thanks to Sir Garnet Wolseley, for the

[264] Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army 1868-1902*, p. 195.
[265] Spiers, *Military Correspondence in the Late Nineteenth-Century Press*, p. 29.
[266] Driver, *Geography Militant*, p. 91.
[267] Hoover, *Victorian War Correspondents*, pp. 29-31.
[268] Wilkinson-Latham, *From our Special Correspondent*, p. 91.

very great kindness with which he uniformly treated us'.[269] Boyle similarly prefaced his book with a declaration of friendship and allegiance:

> If anywhere in this work or in my published letters, I have offended the feelings of a single officer of the expedition, I beg of him to believe that it is done unwittingly. A wilful hurt would be the most ungrateful return for unvaried courtesy on the part of all with whom I was brought into contact.[270]

These dedications were of course largely formulaic and conventional, but nonetheless emblematic of overall tone.

There was some scattered disapproval among the press coverage, Stanley and Reade being notable examples. Stanley was critical of the transport problems that hindered both campaigns, and always of the elitism he sensed from the British officers. That said, he also praised Napier and Wolseley as men and commanders, directing his criticisms toward some of their particular decisions.[271] Reade went a step farther in Ashanti, where he was quite disparaging of Wolseley's leadership. He usually argued against the emerging 'official' narrative of events, invariably downplaying Wolseley's effectiveness in his own version. Reade took the General severely to task over transport problems and for being too lenient with King Karikari. He claimed suggestively at the end of his book that: 'In this work I have applied to Sir Garnet Wolseley's brilliant success that searching kind of criticism which is usually reserved for undertakings that have failed. I have not glossed over or palliated a single error which he committed during the campaign'.[272] Reade was atypical in the amount of such criticism that he included in his final drafts.

When *The Spectator* reported on Wolseley's departure for the Gold Coast in September 1873, the editor expressed his hope that the General, 'may

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[269] Henty, *The March to Coomassie*, p. 453.
[270] Boyle, *Through Fanteeland to Coomassie*, p. vi.
[271] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala,* p. 106, 236, 336, 377.
[272] Reade, *Ashantee Campaign*, p. 391.

make a good war, a good peace, and a good book out of it'.[273] Wolseley did not publish a book about Ashanti (until his autobiography), nor did Napier of Abyssinia, but there was no shortage of officers who did. Any understanding of the dynamic between the army and the press in this period is complicated by the considerable number of men who were indeed both. When Stanley arrived at Cape Coast and took stock of his competition, he concluded that Brackenbury was 'an indefatigable caterer for the Press', and that Maurice 'writes for one if not two newspapers…I will take it for granted, that they [Wolseley's staff] are mostly all newspaper writers in military clothes'.[274] An overestimation, perhaps, but Stanley was right to suspect that a large number of the reports sent to publishers from Abyssinia and Ashanti came from within the officer corps.

In East Africa, Lieutenant Shepherd wrote for the *Daily News* and the *Times of India*. The latter published his letters in book form, unchanged but for the addition of a preface and some addenda in the footnotes.[275] Lieutenant Whiteside sent despatches to the *Morning Post*. Major Baigrie sent scores of unsolicited drawings and paintings to the *Illustrated London News*, which was then a common enough practice for artistically skilled officers abroad. Attributing them only to 'A Staff Officer' until after the campaign, the paper published 32 of Baigrie's drawings over 7 months, many of which were also included in the *ILN*'s published book.[276]

In West Africa, Maurice wrote for the *Daily News* and published a book primarily compiled from his articles. Lieutenant Dooner likely wrote for the same

[273] *The Spectator,* 13 Sep. 1873, p. 7.
[274] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala,* p. 4.
[275] A. F. Shepherd, *The Campaign in Abyssinia* (Bombay: Times of India Office, 1868).
[276] Sharf, Northrup and Pankhurst, *Abyssinia, 1867-1868,* p. 12, 34; Roger Acton, *The Abyssinian Expedition and the Life and Reign of King Theodore* (London: Office of the Illustrated London News, 1868).

paper anonymously (one of the officers did, at any rate) and he authored a book of his experience.[277] *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* printed letters from Captain Rogers and Commander Luxmore and the *Pall Mall Gazette* from Commanding Royal Engineer Robert Home. Major Butler published a rousing and thoroughly embittered tale of his unsuccessful mission to recruit the Akim nation to march on Kumase.[278]

Brackenbury knew something about the importance of army writers to the public perception of a conflict. His brother, Captain Charles Brackenbury, had been a military correspondent for *The Times* in the Austro-Prussian and Franco-Prussian Wars.[279] Henry presented his two-volume *The Ashanti War, A Narrative: Prepared from the Official Documents by Permission of Major-General Sir Garnet Wolseley* as the official and authoritative account of the expedition. Upon his return to England, he absolutely rushed, successfully, to get his book to publication first, before any of the other forthcoming accounts might taint public opinion. In fact, the War Office neither commissioned nor authorised Brackenbury's book. He approached the Blackwood and Sons publishers himself and signed a book contract before the expedition had launched. Upon the book's release, Brackenbury faced a War Office investigation asking whether he should have had *access* to all the military documents he used, much less publish them as appendixes. Nothing ever came of the investigation.

Brackenbury dedicated *The Ashanti War,* 'to my comrades of the head-quarter-staff mess in remembrance of our unbroken good-fellowship from the

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[277] Dooner, *Jottings En Route*.
[278] Butler, *Akim-Foo*.
[279] Wilkinson-Latham, *From our Special Correspondent*, p. 89.

first to the last day'.[280] The military correspondents were, as might be expected, very supportive of the campaigns, their commanding officers, and the British military in general. They sought to oppose any negative voices in the civilian press, taking the roles of advocate and apologist for their Commanders-in-Chief. Hoping to pre-empt the criticisms that might follow from the special correspondents, Brackenbury justified and defended the field transport arrangements and assigned all blame for supply difficulties to the unreliability of the Fante carriers. Maurice took an even more passionate tack in his book. In almost every chapter, he directly addressed one or more 'misunderstandings' in the press or public perception, invariably pushing for an interpretation more in the General's favour. Maurice also defended the officer corps' handling of the transport system and Wolseley's decision not to place guards on all the gates of the captured Kumase, both of which Stanley had criticised. Maurice ended his book with a lengthy rebuttal to T. J. Bowles, whose scathing article 'The Ashanti War, Unnecessary and Unjust' had appeared in *Fraser's Magazine*.[281] Maurice systematically countered the validity of Bowles' arguments and closed his book with the statement: 'If ever there was a war necessary and just it was that which ended in the destruction of Coomassie'.[282]

1.3 Prestige and the World Stage

In his analysis of the British empire, Hyam argued that from the 1870s:

> crucially and fundamentally, obsession with prestige assumed a primary significance for all expanding states…So pervasive is the determining influence of prestige on governments that it can also be shown to be intimately related to geopolitical assessments, and thus a root cause of the wars which they fight.[283]

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[280] Henry Brackenbury, *The Ashanti War, A Narrative: Prepared from the Official Documents by Permission of Major-General Sir Garnet Wolseley* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1874).

[281] T. J. Bowles, 'The Ashantee War Unnecessary and Unjust,' *Fraser's Magazine* IX, no. 49 (1874) pp. 124-34.

[282] Maurice, *The Ashantee War,* p. 405.

[283] Ronald Hyam, *Understanding the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) p. 130.

Disraeli was at the centre of that obsession in British politics. He was determined to reverse the isolationist trend of the mid-century and reassert Britain's influence as a European power, going so far as to threaten war with Russia during the 1875-8 Eastern Crisis.[284] Hurd and Young claimed that Disraeli considered prestige to be 'a solid asset. It conferred authority; it provided security; indeed it was the true currency of international relations'.[285] He thus made a real priority of accumulating and protecting this asset. The Earl of Derby, then foreign secretary, complained to Lord Salisbury in 1877 that Disraeli, 'believes thoroughly in "prestige" – as all foreigners do, and would think it (quite sincerely) in the interests of the country to spend 200 millions on a war if the result was to make foreign States think more highly of us as a military power'.[286]

Liberals, in general, did not put much stock in the benefits of prestige. It had been a Liberal article of faith in the mid-century that conflicts between nations were not strictly necessary. What mattered was unrestrained world trade, which was beneficial to all. War, territorial expansion (at least when coupled with exclusive exploitation), and competitive prestige would all lead to protectionism and hinder free trade.[287]

However, the political scene was fluctuating during this period and party perspectives on foreign affairs underwent realignment. By the end of the 1860s, the Chartist ideal of radical patriotism had fragmented and no longer appealed,

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[284] Bernard Porter, *Britain, Europe, and the World 1850-1986: Delusions of Grandeur*, 2nd ed. (London: Unwin Hyman Ltd., 1987) p. 38.
[285] Douglas Hurd and Edward Young, *Disraeli: or, The Two Lives* (London: Phoenix, 2014) p. 252.
[286] Lord Derby to Lord Salisbury, 23 Dec. 1877, in Gwendolen Cecil, *Life of Robert Marquis of Salisbury,* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1921), 2:171.
[287] Porter, *Britain, Europe, and the World*, p. 21.

or even seemed relevant, to the British electorate.[288] The 1867 Representation of the People Act, along with the corresponding Irish and Scottish acts in 1868, almost doubled the size of the electorate, and endowed public opinion with unprecedented importance.[289] As the franchise expansion took place during a move away from isolationism, foreign policy debates became wedge issues and major factors in working-class decisions to associate with one or the other party.[290] Over the course of the 1870s, Disraeli carved out a new ideal of patriotism, one firmly associated with royalism, militarism, and Conservatism.[291] Thus, the empire and imperialism, of little consideration to most Britons in earlier decades, became more popular.[292] While the term itself had not yet been coined, the Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions took place during the materialisation of this popular concern for national prestige that would soon be known as 'jingoism'.

There were critics, to be sure, who interpreted the concept of prestige in a different way and believed that imperial ventures sullied Britain's reputation. During the preparations for Wolseley's departure, the prominent philosopher Richard Congreve published *The Ashantee War*, a pamphlet in which he called for an immediate end to the British expedition.[293] Congreve cast British technological superiority as a source of shame, rather than of pride:

> Can anybody seriously maintain that a successful war with Ashantee, with all the appliances of modern destructive skill, and in sole reliance on our superiority in this respect, is calculated to give us prestige? Putting aside the climate, the disparity in every point except personal bravery is

[288] Hugh Cunningham, 'The Language of Patriotism, 1750-1914,' *History Workshop*, no. 12 (Autumn, 1981) p. 23.
[289] Hurd and Young, *Disraeli,* p. 209; Hoover, *Victorian War Correspondents*, p. 6.
[290] Cunningham, *The Language of Patriotism*, p. 22.
[291] Ibid., p. 24.
[292] Saul David, *Victoria's Wars: The Rise of Empire* (London: Viking, 2006) pp. 415-16; C. C. Eldridge, *England's Mission: The Imperial Idea in the Age of Gladstone and Disraeli 1869-1880* (London: Macmillan, 1973) pp. 120-1.
[293] He soon republished the essay in: Richard Congreve, *Essays Political, Social, and Religious* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1874).

> too great to make success a credit even on the ordinary standard of military judgments.[294]

Thomas Snape of the Liverpool Peace Society made a similar argument in *The Ashantee War: Its Causes and Results*, a strongly anti-war pamphlet that the Society published and sold for two pence, less than the cost of an issue of *The Times*.[295] In these tracts, Congreve and Snape claimed that prestige could only result from victory in a fair fight, which the Ashanti would not present. That was not quite how Disraeli and his supporters conceived of it. Imperialism in Africa, and the advanced weaponry employed there, was largely intended to influence the other great powers of Europe.

Why, then, did Britain need to boost her prestige on the world stage? By the late 1860s, Porter argued, the Balance of Power, 'was at an end, destroyed by its own contradictions, and Britain was left without even an illusion to cover her nakedness'.[296] Russia had made huge territorial gains, the battle of Königgrätz in 1866 made the spectre of a centralised Germany very real, France was riding a wave of industrial development and appeared increasingly expansionist, and the bulk of the British Army was scattered across the empire. The Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica, the Maori Wars and Poverty Bay Massacre in New Zealand, and the Indian Mutiny (still sharp in the collective memory) seemed to suggest that these forces were needed simply to keep rebellion in the colonies at bay and could not be easily recalled in a crisis.[297] With the illusion of balance somewhat dissipated, there was an, 'ominous gap in Britain's diplomatic defences'.[298] Throughout the 1860s, the other Great Powers

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[294] Richard Congreve, *The Ashantee War* (London: E. Truelove, 1873) p. 18.
[295] Thomas Snape, *The Ashantee War: Its Causes and Results* (Manchester: John Heywood, 1874).
[296] Porter, *Britain, Europe, and the World*, p. 28.
[297] Freda Harcourt, 'Disraeli's Imperialism, 1866-1868: A Question of Timing,' *The Historical Journal* 23, no. 1 (1980) pp. 87-109; James Belich, *The New Zealand Wars and the Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1986) p. 299, 328.
[298] Porter, *Britain, Europe, and the World*, p. 33.

had conspicuously ignored Britain's views in international affairs.[299] After the Prussian invasion of Schleswig-Holstein in 1864, Disraeli tabled a vote of censure against Palmerston's policies, arguing that:

> the just influence of England in the councils of Europe has been lowered. Within twelve months we have been twice repulsed at St. Petersburg. Twice we supplicated in vain at Paris. We have menaced Austria, and Austria has allowed our menaces to pass her like an idle wind. We have threatened Prussia, and Prussia has defied us. Our objurgations have rattled over the head of the German Diet, and the German Diet has treated them with contempt.[300]

Expanding the armed forces would not necessarily provide much of a solution. On the one hand, Britain could never hope to keep up with the armies of the major European powers; the population was insufficient and the constitution stood in the way of conscription. From the 1870s till the outbreak of war in 1915, the British army would consistently find it difficult even to recruit enough men to replace peacetime wastage.[301] On the other hand, the Tories and Liberals were both (in their own ways) very concerned about the *cost* of it all. While Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1866, Disraeli recommended to Lord Derby that:

> The moment the American elections are over, we should withdraw the great body of our troops [from Canada]…Leave the Canadians to defend themselves; recall the African squadron; give up the settlements on the West Coast of Africa; and we shall make a saving which will, at the same time, enable us to build ships and have a good Budget.[302]

Despite his support of imperialism, which in later decades would be firmly associated with territorial expansion, Disraeli was mindful of the financial burden of empire during the 1870s.

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[299] Eldridge, *England's Mission,* pp. 120-1.

[300] Benjamin Disraeli Kebbel, *Selected Speeches of the Late, Right Honourable: The Earl of Beaconsfield* (London: Forgotten Books, 2013 [1882]) 2:122.

[301] Stephen Badsey, 'New Wars, New Press, New Country? The British Army, the Expansion of the Empire, and the Mass Media, 1877-1918,' in *Victorians at War: New Perspectives*, ed. Ian F. W. Beckett, *The Society for Army Historical Research*, Special Publication No. 16 (2007) p. 37.

[302] Disraeli to Lord Derby, 30 September 1866, in George Earle Buckle, *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield* (London: John Murray, 1916) 4:476. Note: This was the 14th Earl of Derby, father of the aforementioned 15th.

Eldridge disagreed strongly with the common suggestion that Disraeli had been separatist in the 1850s and 60s and somehow morphed into an expansionist in the 1870s.[303] Disraeli, he argued, 'had never been, nor did he claim to be, interested in individual colonial problems, but he was interested in the potential value of the empire to British power and prestige'.[304] The reductions to colonial garrisons were based on the conviction that the Empire could be best defended by large reserves of troops stationed in the home islands and in India, capable of being dispatched when and where most needed. This expedition-centred strategy would make the best use of the Royal Navy and, advocates believed, give Britain a stronger profile in the eyes of the other major powers.[305] If Disraeli was primarily concerned with utilising British possessions to increase British influence in foreign affairs, then his swing toward 'imperialism' was more a change of method than of principle.[306] Hence, as Porter noted:

> what strikes one most immediately about his style of imperialism is the importance that was attached to that "style" itself: to the propaganda benefits, domestic and foreign, that were thought to accrue from the lesson he taught the Abyssinians in 1867, for example – without Britain taking an acre of territory.[307]

In short, an imperialist posture need not necessarily impose a larger empire on the country.

What was important was that Britain was *seen* to be militarily capable, and that might be accomplished by short, well-orchestrated, and well-reported small wars.[308] After the Abyssinian campaign, Disraeli suggested to the Queen that Napier should receive a peerage for, 'wiping out all the old stories of

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[303] C. C. Eldridge, *Victorian Imperialism* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1978) p. 82.
[304] Eldridge, *England's Mission,* p. 179.
[305] Eldridge, *Victorian Imperialism*, p. 83.
[306] Ibid., p. 105.
[307] Porter, *Britain, Europe, and the World*, p. 42.
[308] It was the 14th Earl of Derby's minority Conservative government, in which Disraeli was the Chancellor of the Exchequer, that actually ordered the Abyssinian expedition in August 1867.

Crimean blundering'.[309] In a recent article, Collins suggested that British small wars of the late nineteenth-century were undertaken as a means of 'creating victory'. Military objectives, he claimed, 'were often selected for their impact upon political or public opinion rather than for their material benefits. The overwhelming concern was to create a situation which could be regarded as a victory'.[310] Harcourt has similarly argued that Disraeli sought to warn Europe that Britain, if threatened, was able to mount a quick and efficient military response. The Suez Canal would open in November 1869, bringing the British Isles four thousand miles closer to India.[311] The army might be scattered across the empire, but it could still be brought into play where least expected.[312] This idea gave the expedition the potential to exert real influence on international relations, and the presence of foreign observers in the Abyssinian theatre ensured that any success there would be noticed.

'One remarkable feature of this Expedition', Simpson recalled, 'was that almost every Government in Europe sent officers with it to report upon its organisation'.[313] These foreign military personnel were granted permission to travel with the British army. In all, a brigadier-general and a lieutenant-colonel from Spain, a captain and a commandant from France, two captains from Austria, a major and a captain from Italy, two lieutenants from Prussia, and two from the Netherlands, were attached to Napier's force.[314] It was unusual to see

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[309] George Earle Buckle, ed., *The Letters of Queen Victoria, 2nd Series, A Selection from Her Majesty's Correspondence and Journal between the Years 1862 and 1878* (London: John Murray, 1926) p. 531.
[310] Bruce Collins, 'Defining Victory in Victorian Warfare, 1860-1882,' *The Journal of Military History* 77 (Jul. 2013) p. 927.
[311] Dominic Green, *Three Empires on the Nile: The Victorian Jihad, 1869-1899* (New York: Free Press, 2007) p. 1.
[312] Harcourt, *Disraeli's Imperialism, 1866-1868*, pp. 87-109; For an alternate interpretation opposed to Harcourt's, see Nini Rodgers, 'The Abyssinian Expedition of 1867-1868: Disraeli's Imperialism Or James Murray's War?' *The Historical Journal* 27, no. 1 (Mar. 1984) p. 149.
[313] William Simpson, *Diary of a Journey to Abyssinia, 1868 with the Expedition Under Sir Robert Napier: The Diary and Observations of William Simpson of the Illustrated London News*, ed. R. Pankhurst (Hollywood, CA: Tsehai Publishers and Distributors, 2002) p. 114.
[314] Holland and Hozier, *The Expedition to Abyssinia,* p. 430.

so many foreign observers in a far-off imperial conflict. Their interest, in fact, was not really in Abyssinia but in the state of British military preparedness viewed through the lens of the European power balance. Observers and intelligencers were expected to carefully assess an army's levels of organisation, professionalisation, and technological development and report on soldiers' tactical effectiveness and overall morale.[315] A British captain in the Second Opium War (1856-60) expressed the common belief that every European nation, 'is closely watching us, and marking how we are likely to come out of the great fight hereafter to be fought'.[316] Those watching in Abyssinia, it was generally believed, had reason to be impressed. Henty closed the final despatch to his special correspondent column in the *Standard* with the claim that, 'by our success under innumerable difficulties, England has gained a prestige…which is the more gratifying inasmuch as that England, although she has always risen under difficulties, and has come triumphantly out of great wars, has yet notoriously failed in her "little wars"'.[317] Since Britain only *had* little wars for such a long period, they were the only observable analogue for her military abilities as a whole, and such notoriety, Disraeli believed, had to be corrected. In the conclusion of his book about the campaign, Stanley drew a different analogue:

> Though a little war, it was a great campaign … the fame of it sounded with loud reverberations over wide Asia. Princes and potentates, scattered far apace, heard the noise of it and trembled; a peaceful epoch, they saw, had not vitiated England's strength; and *this last, this best, this greatest of victories*, seemingly made so little of, established her prestige on a firmer base than ever.[318]

[315] Mika Suonpää, 'Britain, Balkan Conflicts, and the Evolving Conceptions of Militarism, 1875-1913,' *History* 99, no. 337 (2014) p. 636.
[316] Captain Sherard Osborn, *The Past and Future of British Relations in China* (London: William Blackwell and Sons, 1860) p. 87.
[317] Henty, *The March to Magdala*, p. 431.
[318] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala*, pp. 492-3.

The British government was not particularly concerned with the nation's prestige among Asian 'potentates', but surely the victory had been heard elsewhere as well.

1.4 Foreign Media Reception of Abyssinia

In a congratulatory letter to Napier, Sir Stafford Northcote wrote that the expedition 'will have effected as great an alteration in our position in the eyes of Europe as the battle of Sadowa effected in the position of Prussia'.[319] That British officials intended to influence foreign opinion is itself important. It is also worth briefly considering what impact the Abyssinian campaign ultimately made in the foreign press. When the expedition had barely begun, the *New York Times* Russian correspondent reported that:

> Russian journals are already assuming that the English design is to permanently hold certain portions of Abyssinia and on the strength of the supposition they suggest in very plain language a *rapprochement* between England and Russia on the Eastern question as likely to recommend itself to the interests of both parties.[320]

If that sounding of the periodical press in Moscow was indeed accurate, it certainly gave some credence to Northcote's optimism.

In September 1867, *The Times* of London reported that, 'the topic of Abyssinia is decidedly a favourite one now in Paris'.[321] The French mood was cautious and somewhat dubious early on. The *Journal de Paris* suggested that King Theodore's army was fully capable of posing a serious threat, making the fanciful claim that 2,000 European deserters had joined and drilled the Abyssinian troops.[322]

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[319] Northcote to Napier, 1 May 1868, Iddesleigh papers, Add. MSS 50049, fos. 50-1, Quoted in Harcourt, *Disraeli's Imperialism, 1866-1868*, p. 103.
[320] 'British Difficulties in Abyssinia', *New York Times*, 6 Jan. 1868, p. 4.
[321] 'Foreign Intelligence. France', *The Times*, 13 Sep. 1867, p. 7.
[322] 'Foreign Intelligence. France', *The Times*, 12 Sep. 1867, p. 8.

A particular media rush sprang up around the Comte de Buisson, a French nobleman and military adventurer who had visited Theodore's court.[323] Buisson disparaged the British expedition in a series of editorial letters, displaying what *The Times* declared a 'manifest malevolence towards England'.[324] In the *Patrie,* a Conservative and pro-government Paris newspaper, Buisson gloomily predicted that 'neither 15,000 nor 20,000 soldiers, Indian or English will suffice to rescue the prisoners'. He claimed that Theodore possessed several thousand breech-loading rifles and a working cartridge manufacture.[325]

As months passed and the campaign advanced, French papers showed more concern for a potential spread of British influence. The *Finance* argued that the expedition was part of a British manoeuvre to gain control of the Red Sea. With Perim Island under occupation and the Suez Canal close to completion, warned the author, the English government would soon have 'the exclusive possession of the Red Sea and of Abyssinia, and the protectorate of the possession of Egypt'.[326] The *Siècle* similarly claimed that much of the French population believed Britain would annex Abyssinia after the expedition. *La France* also drew attention to Suez. The Abyssinian coast would soon border the new route to India, where lay, 'the true motive of the war which the English have carried on, and of which the deliverance of their countrymen was merely the pretext'.[327]

When news of Napier's success reached France in April 1868, *The Times* Paris correspondent claimed that:

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[323] HC Deb 07 December 1867 vol. 190 col. 678.
[324] 'Foreign Intelligence. France', *The Times*, 13 Sep. 1867, p. 7.
[325] Ibid.
[326] 'Foreign Intelligence. France', *The Times*, 31 Dec. 1867, p. 8.
[327] 'Foreign Intelligence. France', *The Times*, 30 Apr. 1868, p. 10.

> the result of the campaign in Abyssinia excites astonishment and admiration in Paris – in the Press and in society. It is the same sentiment among military men as among civilians, unqualified praise of the manner in which General Napier has done his work…With their lively imagination some writers look upon the whole affair as a 'magnificent epic'.[328]

The *Journal de Paris* marvelled at the speed with which the army had marched, and the *Temps* posited that news of Britain's success would have immense political implications around the Indian Sea.[329] *La France* took the opportunity to hold Abyssinia up as a positive example of political unity during war. The government-linked newspaper contrasted the British Parliament to the French Legislative Chamber, where the Opposition party had been critical of a recent French punitive expedition to punish the Mexican government for its supposed ill treatment of French citizens.[330]

May 1868 saw the Comte de Buisson make a brief return to the Paris press. Buisson had evidently been near Magdala at the time of the British victory. His account, as translated in the *New York Times,* was still critical of British motives but acknowledged their military competence. In what was likely meant as a slight against British honour, Buisson (misspelled Busson in the *NYT*) recounted that, 'seven hundred of [Theodore's] warriors fell before the terrible fire of the breech-loaders, while three times that number were wounded. The valor of Theodore's soldiers was of no avail against the appliances of modern warfare'.[331] The translated article itself demonstrates that there was enough international interest in Abyssinia for a New York paper to reprint a Paris paper on the subject.

The *New York Times* embraced the chance to print a vicarious tale of exotic adventure. Their London correspondent rousingly declared at the outset

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[328] Ibid.
[329] Ibid.
[330] Ibid.
[331] 'A French Account of the Abyssinian War', *New York Times*, 16 Jun. 1868.

that Theodore had taken his prisoners, ‘to the great disgust of England, the distress of the families of the prisoners, and the great disgrace of the *Civis Romanum* doctrine of Lord Palmerston. English *prestige* suffers in the East…war will be declared at once without any more drifting’.[332] Over 1867-8, the *NYT* featured 145 articles on the topic of the expedition. During the most intense period of conflict from December 1867 to June 1868, it ran a dozen articles per month.[333] The paper was overwhelmingly complimentary of the British forces. The fall of Magdala was described as ‘highly important and gratifying intelligence’.[334] Napier had ‘unquestionably manifested military capacity of a very high order’ and, with his victory, ‘the *prestige* so invaluable to England and India has been maintained intact’.[335]

There was no suggestion in the *NYT* of American concern for the spread of British influence. ‘We do not believe that the English Government will make any attempt to hold Abyssinia’, one author claimed, recognising that to do so, ‘would produce a commotion throughout Europe. It would be as offensive to France as to Russia’.[336] Notwithstanding the concerns of those countries, the *NYT* expressed confidence that, ‘England does not now wish any increase of her outlying or isolated possessions in Africa, Asia, or America’.[337]

Presented, as it was, through a glut of domestic and foreign media attention, the British imperial venture into Abyssinia was a veritable public spectacle and, as such, was consumed and interpreted in part as an exhibition.

1.5 Exhibitions and Public Spectacles

[332] ‘Foreign Correspondence: Affairs in England’, *New York Times*, 20 Jul. 1867, p. 2.
[333] *New York Times Article Archive*, accessed 2 Jan. 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/ref/membercenter/nytarchive.html.
[334] ‘Theodore Killed, Magdala Taken and the Captives Liberated’, *New York Times*, 27 Apr. 1868, p. 1.
[335] ‘The British Success in Abyssinia’, *New York Times*, 27 Apr. 1868, p. 4.
[336] ‘England in Abyssinia’, *New York Times*, 28 Apr. 1868, p. 4.
[337] Ibid.

The 1851 Crystal Palace Exhibition has long been recognised as a symbol of Britain's overwhelming self-confidence in its industrial and commercial supremacy, then at its peak.[338] The success and cultural impact of the event gave rise to an exhibition culture that continued to re-enact and reinforce this symbol of Britain's dominance, later organisers always looking back to 1851 as a model and ideal.[339] Exhibitions became a contested space in which nations competed for prestige. The basis of this competition, and the central focus of these events, was technology. The Crystal Palace came to represent 'technological confidence, even swagger'.[340] In his *A Guide to the Great Exhibition,* George Routledge claimed that, 'the collection of machinery excites far deeper interest than anything else exhibited'.[341] Robert Askrill used the identical phrase in his *Yorkshire visitor's guide to the Great Exhibition*.[342] At the 1862 London exhibition, the *Illustrated London News* singled out Machinery Hall and printed a double-page portrait of it.[343] Richards has described the technological performance that took place as, 'the elevation of a form of technology into a form of culture…The Victorian stage put machines on the stage, and after a time the machines *became* the stage'.[344]

In the decades that followed, the focus and fixation of British exhibition culture slowly shifted. As European nations increasingly looked to empire as another contested space in which to compete for prestige, so imperial imagery

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[338] MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire,* p. 97; Philip D. Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780-1850* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964) p. 294.
[339] Peter H. Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display: English, Indian, and Australian Exhibitions from the Crystal Palace to the Great War* (London: University of California Press, 2001) p. 6.
[340] Robert Friedel, *A Culture of Improvement: Technology and the Western Millennium* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2007) p. 321.
[341] George Routledge, *A Guide to the Great Exhibition; Containing a description of every principle object of interest…* (London: George Routledge and Co., 1851) p. 38.
[342] Robert Askrill, *The Yorkshire Visitors' Guide to the Great Exhibition* (Leeds: Joseph Buckton, 1851) p. 38.
[343] Ibid., p. 214.
[344] Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990) p. 57.

moved into the competitive realm of the exhibition.[345] Mackenzie claimed that, 'their theme was gradually transformed from the international industrial exposition, as in 1851 and 1862, to Imperial and colonial display. They came to have a predominantly imperial flavour from the 1880s, precisely the decade of the new aggressive imperialism'.[346] He went on to say that exhibitions, 'effectively chart the rise and fall of imperial sentiment'.[347] It was, therefore, fitting that Disraeli delivered his famous 1872 speech to the National Union of Conservative Associations at the Crystal Palace, during which he established the Tory party's position on empire and his desire that England, 'will be a great country, - an imperial country - a country where your sons, when they rise…obtain not merely the esteem of their countrymen, but command the respect of the world'.[348]

The 1851 exhibition had been cast as a tribute to commerce and to a future of peace through commerce, though there were certainly weapons among the displays. The number of weapons on display increased in subsequent events, as did the prominence with which they were presented. One of the most eye-catching exhibits at the 1867 Paris Exhibition was a Krupp steel cannon capable of firing thousand-pound shells.[349] The event as a whole showed how far Napoleon III's industrial and commercial stimulation had progressed since the 1850s, causing shock and envy in Britain. *The Times* submitted that, 'the real strength of France, depending on material prosperity and industry, had been illustrated by the Great Exhibition of Paris', and pointed

[345] Anne Maxwell, *Colonial Photography & Exhibitions: Representations of the 'Native' and the Making of European Identities* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1999) p. 1; Also see John McAleer and John MacKenzie, eds, *Exhibiting the Empire: Cultures of Display and the British Empire* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2015), forthcoming in October 2015.
[346] MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, p. 97.
[347] Ibid., p. 98.
[348] Thomas Edward Kebbel, ed., *Selected Speeches of the Late Earl of Beaconsfield*, Vol. 2 (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1882) p. 534.
[349] Friedel, *A Culture of Improvement*, p. 372.

out that the event had been witnessed by the monarchs of Prussia, Russia, Austria, and several other nations.[350]

Greenhalgh argued that power groups within British society sought to use the Great Exhibitions to encourage the idea of 'Greater Britain' among the population. If, he suggested, 'the population at home could be swayed into believing Africa was theirs, the problems of sending resources to defend it would be considerably reduced'.[351] Moreover, if the population could be enthralled by the power of British military technology at these events, then the endeavour of defending the empire would seem less daunting.

Indeed, the amplified focus on empire did not come at the expense of the machinery rooms. New technologies remained the foundation of the later Great Exhibitions, which were industrial fairs above all. What the increased concern for imperialism did was link the technological swagger of the fair directly to the prospect of dominating Africa and Asia. As Hoffenberg explained, 'machines were one measure of man for Victorians and Edwardians, a yardstick by which to determine the progress for each exhibiting nation. The technology displays offered an evolutionary lesson…The history of machines told the history of man'.[352]

By the 1870s, the history of machines was also believed to demonstrate the contemporary hierarchy of the races. This discourse within exhibitions reflected and perpetuated changes in wider society. In 1867 Frederick Farrar, then headmaster at Harrow, published his essay *Aptitudes of the Races*, in which he argued that invention and scientific discovery were the best markers of racial superiority and inferiority. He promulgated this idea among a generation

[350] 'News', *The Times*, 31 Dec. 1867, p. 6.
[351] Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000) p. 53.
[352] Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display,* p. 176.

of public school boys who went into English politics and imperial administration.[353] In his 1871 book *Primitive Culture*, which strongly influenced the new developing field of anthropology, Edward Tylor ranked the stages of human development and their contemporary representatives (savage, barbarian and modern) on the basis of their demonstrated capacity for 'adapting nature to man's own ends'.[354] In his comprehensive cultural history, *Machines as the Measure of Men*, Adas argued that during the mid-nineteenth century, 'European observers came to view science and especially technology as the most objective and unassailable measures of their own civilization's past achievement and present worth. In science and technology their superiority was readily demonstrable'.[355] Exhibitions were sites of that competitive demonstration. When the British public turned their attention outward to empire during 1868-74, therefore, exhibition culture had already established the criteria by which they would rank racial dominance and international prestige.

The result was an empire experienced at home through what Ryan termed 'spectacular view-making'.[356] In Manchester, the Belle Vue Park pyrodramas, themselves interesting performances of technology, were popular attractions for the middle and working classes. Elaborate stage performances engaged a wide variety of topical subject matter to appeal to a wide audience. In 1875 Belle Vue staged *The Capture of Coomassio,* ostensibly a re-enactment of Wolseley's final battle against the Ashanti. Actors dressed as the Black Watch Highland Regiment fought black-painted performers amongst camels

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[353] Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989) p. 148.
[354] Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the development of mythology, philosophy, religion, language, art, and custom* (London: John Murray, 1920 [1871]) 1:27.
[355] Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men*, p. 134.
[356] James R. Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997) p. 88.

and elephants from the park zoo, punctuated by loud and bright pyrotechnics.[357] In 1868, similarly, the Royal Polytechnic exhibited a large diorama of *The Death of Theodore* twice daily to enthusiastic audiences, while the Royal Geographical Society and the War Office Topographical and Statistical Department both exhibited panoramas of Abyssinian photographs.[358] A central claim of this study is that a similar sense of performance was present in the imperial setting as was present in such reproductions and emplotments of that setting at home. Cannadine characterised the spectacle of empire as driven by the domestication of the exotic under familiar hierarchical categories, a sentiment he termed *Ornamentalism*.[359] Ryan claimed that, 'in many respects, Britain's Empire, like much in the Victorian age, had the atmosphere and aesthetic charge of a grand spectacle'.[360] In one sense, exhibitions and pyrodramas brought this spectacle home to Britain. In another, the men who went on expedition brought a similar sense of technological spectacle out to the periphery.

1.6 Conclusions

By the 1870s, exhibitions had served as a primary outlet of the nation's desire for prestige for some twenty years. The emergent imperial ambition to which Disraeli catered built upon the existing ideals for the demonstration of national dominance that exhibitions had set. At some level, exhibitions had already demonstrated *how* European nations competed with each other; the popular excitement for imperial ventures transposed *where* that competition

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[357] David Mayer, 'The World on Fire...: Pyrodramas at Belle Vue Gardens, Manchester, *c.* 1850-1950,' in *Popular Imperialism and the Military 1850-1950*, ed. John M. MacKenzie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992) p. 187.
[358] Ryan, *Picturing Empire,* p. 88; These photographs can be seen at TNA, CO 1069/5, Ethiopia 1, Album of sketches and photographs taken by the 10th company, Royal Engineers of the Abyssinian military expedition 1868-1969.
[359] David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw their Empire* (London: Penguin Books, 2001) p. xix, 122.
[360] Ryan, *Picturing Empire,* p. 15.

might take place. As the coming chapters will demonstrate, the exhibition ideal of technological dominance was reflected in the manner in which the Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions were reported and the narratives cast. It even influenced some of the military performances that took place on campaign. Expeditions sent to exotic locations, witnessed and retold in popular press, and scrutinised by foreign powers, were emplotted in part as military enactments of an industrial fair: expeditions as exhibitions.

Chapter 2: Novel Military Technology and the British Army

2.1 The Professional Military Debate on Mitrailleurs

In 1873, Major Robert Home at the British War Office Topographical and Statistical Department prepared a summary of the prominent contemporary military debates taking place on the continent. On the subject of machine guns, he opined, 'a new weapon, the mitrailleuse, has been introduced recently, about the value of which opinions are divided'.[361] His research turned up enough credible opinion both for and against the device that he concluded there was no consensus among military thinkers to either the question of *whether* to employ mitrailleurs, or the matter of *how* to employ them.

[361] Major Robert Home, *A Precis of Modern Tactics: Compiled from the Works of Recent Continental Writers at the Topographical and Statistical Department of the War Office* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO), 1873) p. 135; As if to underscore the lack of consensus on the topic during this period, the gender of mitrailleur/mitrailleuse varied from author to author.

The implications of early machine guns were actively debated in British military circles during the 1860s and '70s in tactical treatises, the *Colburn's United Service Magazine and Navy and Military Journal,* and both the journal and the lectures of the Royal United Service Institution.[362] RUSI had opened in 1831 to establish a 'strictly scientific and professional society, and not a club'.[363] It became an important forum for new military thinking, tactics, administration, and technology among the professionalising officer class and the journal, *JRUSI*, was the most important military periodical in Victorian Britain.[364] This section will explore the machine gun debate as a window into the culture of the British military, its images of itself, and its images of empire during a pivotal period in the formation of British imperialism. It was by no means certain in this debate whether the Gatling gun or any mitrailleur would pass muster.

Many histories of the British military in this period characterise the officer class as having been 'resistant' to new weapon technology and particularly to the machine gun.[365] If such weapons are implicitly accepted as having been inevitable, the narrative tends to revolve around the inventors who seemingly understood the future of war that their own devices brought about and the (pejoratively) 'militarist' army brass who in their elite traditionalism failed to

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[362] Edward M. Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army 1868-1902* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992) p. 245.
[363] 'The Royal United Services Institute Through History', *RUSI* (http://www.rusi.org/history).
[364] Martin J. Bayly, *Imagining Afghanistan: British Foreign Policy and the Afghan Polity, 1808-1878* (PhD in International Relations, Department of War Studies, King's College London, 2013) p. 228; Howard Bailes, 'Patterns of Thought in the Late Victorian Army,' *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 4, no. 1 (1981) p. 34.
[365] Steve Attridge, *Nationalism, Imperialism and Identity in Late Victorian Culture: Civil and Military Worlds* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) p. 2; Antulio J. Echevarria II, *Imagining Future War: The West's Technological Revolution and Visions of Wars to Come, 1880-1914* (London: Praeger Security International, 2007) p. xiv; John Ellis, *The Social History of the Machine Gun* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975) p. 37, 62; Roger Ford, *The Grim Reaper: The Machine-Gun and Machine-Gunners* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1996) p. 96; Julia Keller, *Mr. Gatling's Terrible Marvel: The Gun that Changed Everything and the Misunderstood Genius Who Invented It* (New York: Viking: Penguin Group, 2008) p. 213; Michael S. Neiberg, *Soldiers' Lives through History: The Nineteenth Century* (London: Greenwood Press, 2006) p. 148; Anthony Smith, *Machine Gun: The Story of the Men and the Weapon that Changed the Face of War* (London: Judy Piatkus Limited, 2002) p. 114.

predict that future. Edgerton has argued for an approach to the history of invention in which one resists the tendency to characterise novel technologies as 'revolutionary' or inevitable. A pillar of his use-based approach to the history of invention is that alternatives exist for nearly all technologies.[366] 'To become widely used', he posited, 'a thing does not have to be massively better than what preceded it; it need only be *marginally* better than alternatives (assuming for the moment that better technologies will replace worse ones)'.[367] I would add that to become accepted a technology must be perceived as marginally better in *those specific categories* that the decision-makers in question believed to be most important. Thus, the British professional military debate on mitrailleurs reveals what the various groups of commentators felt was needed in a new weapon and, hence, where the army itself would be needed. Black has argued that, 'there has to be a desire to change, and technological change is therefore affected by cultural responses to innovation'.[368] This chapter will focus on those cultural responses.

Victorian military thinkers were generally divided between those focused on predicting and preparing for European conflict and those focused on colonial and imperial conflict.[369] The machine gun appealed primarily to those officers who devoted their attention to African and Indian 'small wars', as they were then conceived. This debate thus lends itself to Pinch and Bijker's mode of analysis, 'focused on the various meanings attributed by different social groups to an artefact', and demonstrates that such factions often differ in the criteria by which

[366] David Edgerton, *The Shock of the Old* (London: Profile, 2008) p. xii.
[367] Ibid., p. 8.
[368] Jeremy Black, 'Determinisms and Other Issues,' *The Journal of Military History* 68, no. 4 (Oct., 2004) p. 1222.
[369] Bailes, *Patterns of Thought in the Late Victorian Army*, p. 30; Howard Bailes, *The Influence of Continental Examples and Colonial Warfare upon the Reform of the Late Victorian Army* (Doctor of Philosophy, King's College, University of London, 1980) p. 7.

they rank technological superiority.[370] In other words, the actors in the machine gun debate had more than one 'military' in mind.

First, a brief timeline of the pertinent events in which the debate was situated. '*Mitraille*' is French for 'grape shot', indicating a multitude of projectiles, so the name 'mitrailleur' marked the machine gun as 'being able to pour out a continuous stream of grape shot'.[371] In 1863, the Belgian engineer Joseph Montigny introduced a 37-barrel mitrailleuse. Montigny had advertised his design to Napoleon III, but the French Artillery Committee opted to produce a proprietary French version. Lieutenant-Colonel Verchère de Reffye developed a 25-barrel variant in collaboration with Montigny, based on the latter's original design but with some alterations to the loading mechanism and ammunition plates. The French Army adopted the resulting Reffye mitrailleuse in secret in 1866.[372] The Bollée mitrailleuse, a further French variant, was introduced in 1870 but only adopted by the French Army of the Loire during the Franco-Prussian War. It was similar in principle to the Montigny and Reffye, but featured 30 barrels arranged in two circular rings.[373]

English-speaking commentators tended to use the word 'mitrailleuse' generally to refer to any machine gun models, as the French have continued to do to this day.[374] This generalised use has led to an identification error in many military histories, whereby any French machine gun is referred to as a 'Montigny mitrailleuse'. Willbanks, as one illustrative example, described the Montigny as a 37-barrel machine gun, later reduced to 25, but the latter of these would in

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[370] Wiebe Bijker, Thomas Hughes and Trevor Pinch, eds., *The Social Construction of Technological Systems* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012 [1987]) p. 155.
[371] 'France (From our Own Correspondent)', *The Sunday Times*, 29 Mar. 1868, p. 7.
[372] Paul Wahl and Donald R. Toppel, *The Gatling Gun* (New York: Arco Publishing Company, Inc., 1965) p. 43.
[373] Stephen Shann, *The French Army 1870-71, Franco-Prussian War: Republican Troops* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 1991) p. 39.
[374] James H. Willbanks, *Machine Guns: An Illustrated History of their Impact* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2004) p. 37.

fact have been the Reffye. He rightly claimed that the French mitrailleuse factory was under the joint direction of Montigny and Reffye, but consistently referred to the French machine gun used in the Franco-Prussian war incorrectly as the 'Montigny'.[375] It is true that the Reffye and Bollée were classed as falling under 'the Montigny type' to differentiate them from the 'Gatling type'. They were, nonetheless, three distinct models registered under three different patents. To be clear, the only machine guns under consideration by British authorities at this time were the American Gatling and the Belgian Montigny. The Reffye was proprietary to the French Army and thus not available on the international market.

The first substantial test of a Gatling machine gun by a British officer took place in 1869 in Belgium. The Royal Artillery purchased its first Gatlings in September 1870 to undergo testing and the army incorporated it in a limited capacity as an auxiliary weapon in 1871.[376] Some authors have erroneously claimed that the British government adopted it in September 1870.[377] In fact, the Royal Artillery purchased its first Gatlings in September 1870 for examination by a Special Committee on Mitrailleurs, which only recommended incorporation in November 1871.[378] When the Kingdom of Ashanti invaded the British Gold Coast protectorate in 1873, military equipment was sent to Cape Coast Castle for 150 Marines who would soon follow to reinforce the garrison. According to the War Office confidential summary of the conflict, two Gatling guns with 10,000 rounds per gun, the first ever sent to a British Army conflict, were included, 'in consequence of various representations from officers and others

[375] Ibid., pp. 35-6.
[376] Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army 1868-1902,* p. 244; TNA, WO 33/24, Second Report of the Special Committee on Mitrailleurs, November 1871, War Office, 1872.
[377] David A. Armstrong, *Bullets and Bureaucrats: The Machine Gun and the United States Army, 1861-1916* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982) p. 62.
[378] TNA, WO 33/24, Second Report of the Special Committee on Mitrailleurs, November 1871, War Office, 1872.

well acquainted with the Coast'.[379] A full army expedition was soon sent under General Garnet Wolseley, by which time British forces in the area possessed four Gatling guns and 3.3 million rounds of ammunition.[380] The presence of these guns is noteworthy because they had not yet been adopted as a regular arm of the British Army. The Royal Navy, it is worth noting, had 36 Gatlings in service by 1873, though none had been used in combat and none were present in the Gold Coast theatre.[381] The Gatling Gun Company at that time had sold fewer than one thousand guns worldwide.[382] Ashanti was the first time the Army had taken one into the field and the arrangements had to be specially made.[383] The inaugural British use of a machine gun thus came in response to what amounted to individual lobbying.

Chapters 4 and 5 of this study will focus on the Gatling gun's reception among soldiers of the Ashanti Expedition, its portrayal in the British media, and its display as spectacle to Africans. To understand the cultural dimension involved with taking a Gatling into the field, we must have an idea of its status as practical military technology among British military thinkers during a time when the device was considered to be very much experimental.

2.1.1 Mitrailleur Show Business

Individual enthusiasm and bureaucratic scepticism: these two threads ran through much of the British debate on mitrailleurs. Both were natural consequences of the prominence of the weapon show business and its importance to technological development. 'Before the 1880s', McNeill argued,

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[379] TNA, WO 147/27, Precis of the Ashanti Expedition, Intelligence Department, Horse Guards, War Office, 13th April 1874, p. 6.

[380] TNA, WO 33/26, 'Confidential Report', Correspondence dealing with the problems of Ashanti, [1874?] p. 4; TNA, WO 147/27, Precis of the Ashanti Expedition, Intelligence Department, Horse Guards, War Office, 13th April 1874, p. 82.

[381] TNA, WO 33/26, Annual Report of the Director of Artillery Stores, War Office, February 1874, p. 2.

[382] C. J. Chivers, *The Gun* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 2010) p. 54.

[383] Wahl and Toppel, *The Gatling Gun,* p. 70; 'Mitrailleurs for the Ashantee War', *Newcastle Courant,* 5 Dec. 1873, p. 2.

‘initiative for technical change nearly always rested with private investors who hoped to make money by persuading the authorities to change some aspect of existing weaponry or production methods’.[384] The Enfield and Martini-Henry rifles, for example, were selected through Royal Artillery competitions in which inventors submitted their prototypes for experimental trials.[385] The US Army Ordinance Department in the 1870s managed the adaptation and incorporation of new technologies through a comparable system of *ad hoc* committees and informal connections between officers and civilian suppliers.[386]

This was, critically, a very different arrangement to the ‘military-industrial complex’ that would emerge in the late 1880s. Epstein characterised the late-century paradigm for weapon development as follows:

> Industrial naval technology was so sophisticated and expensive that traditional methods of building weapons in public-owned factories or purchasing them as finished products from private contractors did not suffice. Instead, governments had to invest in private-sector technology during the experimental phase. Collaboration on research and development made it difficult to determine whether the public or private sector owned the resulting intellectual property rights and led to numerous legal disputes.[387]

McNeill termed these products of big-science ‘command technologies’, meaning those technologies requested or demanded by a government from the private sector, rather than those initiated by the private sector and marketed to (multiple) governments.[388] At the time of the Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions, the first signs of a proto-military-industrial complex may, at most, have been discernable in the production of large ships.

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[384] William McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power: Technology, Armed Force, and Society since A.D. 1000* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982) p. 224.
[385] Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army 1868-1902,* p. 239.
[386] Daniel Beaver, ‘The U.S. War Department in the Gaslight Era: Stephen Vincent Benét at the Ordnance Department, 1870–91’, *Journal of Military History,* Vol. 68, no. 1 (2004) pp. 105-32.
[387] Katherine Epstein, *Torpedo: Inventing the Military-Industrial Complex in the United States and Great Britain* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014) p. 2.
[388] McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power,* pp. 278-9; Alex Roland, ‘Technology and War: The Historiographical Revolution of the 1980s,’ *Technology and Culture* 34, no. 1 (Jan., 1993) p. 118.

This was not the case, however, for army equipment. The development, testing, and purchase of mitrailleurs, Sniders, Armstrongs, and Hales followed a different paradigm. Neither the British nor American governments funded or claimed any right to these weapons. During the explosion of military technology in the 1860s and '70s, the bulk of advanced weaponry design and funding for said design came from private sector enterprise, rather than from government-directed development.[389] This was an industry of individuals, and of marketing. Thus, after the Prussian Artillery Test Commission snubbed Krupp's steel cannon:

> Krupp the showman took up the slack – exhibiting his polished cannon at a string of international exhibitions, courting royalty and officialdom whenever and wherever he could, and peddling his guns on an endless series of business trips back and forth across Europe. In his relentless salesmanship Krupp perfected and epitomized the role of the modern industrialist'.[390]

The producers of new military technology relied on publicity, at least in some circles, and hoped that getting their products noticed would lead to their being considered by and incorporated into armed forces. They tended toward showmanship. Samuel Colt displayed his new repeating pistol at the 1851 London Crystal Palace Exhibition, where it caused quite a stir.[391] Colt distributors in the UK later printed advertisements in the *Hart's Annual Army List*, thereby using a military-linked publication to make officers across the empire aware of their products.[392] Other companies hired space in the opening and end leaves of *Hart's*, offering Sniders, Chassepots, and centre-fire breech-loading revolvers for private sale.[393] Gatling launched his new machine gun at a

[389] Clive Trebilcock, *The Vickers Brothers: Armaments and Enterprise 1854-1914* (London: Europa Publications Limited, 1977) p. 3.
[390] Robert O'Connell, *Of Arms and Men: A History of War, Weapons, and Aggression* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) p. 205.
[391] Keller, *Mr. Gatling's Terrible Marvel,* p. 26.
[392] H. G. Hart, *The New Annual Army Lists* (London: John Murray, 1874) p. iv.
[393] Hart, *The New Annual Army Lists,* 1868, 1869, 1870, 1871, 1873, 1874.

well-organised and well-advertised public demonstration in Indianapolis to which he invited notables, the press, military brass, and the Governor of Indiana.[394] Gatling was the subject of numerous articles in *Scientific American* in the 1870s and '80s. Newspapers and magazines went beyond reviews of his device and presented flattering profiles of the man and inventor himself.[395] Such visibility could indeed lead to the right people. In 1867, Gatling brought a demonstration piece to the Paris *Exposition Universalle*, where it attracted the attention of Emperor Napoleon III. The French government ordered the gun to be removed from the public display and brought to Versailles, where the Emperor personally attended a series of firing trials.[396]

Such interest among foreign nations was itself a matter of interest for the British armed forces. Many officers were aware that by 1869 France and Belgium were manufacturing machine guns in considerable numbers, the United States had ordered 100 Gatlings, and several European states had ordered one or two Montignys for trial.[397] Advertising and the momentum of popularity could gain the attention of interested officers and well-connected private enthusiasts. The downside to this mode of distribution was that, as McNeill explained:

> plenty of cranks and crackpots competed with those who did have a technically sound innovation to peddle; and until the 1880s the prevailing attitude among officers charged with deciding whether to approve

[394] 'Tests new gun for public and Governor Morton', *Indianapolis Daily Journal*, 30 May 1862, p. 3.
[395] Keller, *Mr. Gatling's Terrible Marvel,* p. 236; 'The Gatling Battery Gun', *Illustrated London News*, 23 Mar. 1867, p. 300; 'A New Gun', *The Sunday Times*, 14 Aug. 1870, p. 3; 'The Gatling Gun', *Illustrated London News*, 24 Aug. 1872, p. 174; 'Naval and Military Items', *The Sunday Times*, 31 Mar. 1872, p. 7; 'The Gatling System of Firearms', *Scientific American*, Vol. 26, No. 10 (2 Mar. 1872); 'Improved Gatling Gun', *Scientific American*, 7 Feb. 1874.
[396] J. F. Owen, *Compound Guns, Many-Barrelled Rifle Batteries, Machine Guns, Or Mitrailleurs* (London: Mitchell & Co., 1874) p. 5; Also published verbatim as J. F. Owen, 'Compound Guns, Many-Barrelled Rifle Batteries, Machine Guns, Or Mitrailleurs,' *Proceedings of the Royal Artillery Institution* 13 (1874) pp. 419-53. All future references are to the book version.
[397] Ibid., pp. 1, 3-4.

technical change was one of extreme scepticism toward the claims that eager salesmen made for their new gadgets.[398]

Thus, while there was considerable interest in the Gatling gun among some clusters of officers, official cynicism was the established, and perhaps understandable, norm.

2.1.2 Fosbery

The first British officer to come out strongly in support of machine guns was Major Fosbery, V.C., an officer in the Bengal Staff Corps. In 1869, Fosbery conducted a trial of the Montigny mitrailleur at the Tir National in Brussels. Fosbery's report to the Director General of Ordinance strongly recommended adopting the machine gun as a general arm in the artillery, specifying that it should be added to the normal complement and not in substitution for any existing guns.[399] He described the various defensive rolls to which the gun was well-suited, and in particular that it would be perfect for, 'dealing with an enemy unprovided with Artillery'. As such, he felt that, 'it would be especially useful in India'.[400] That last point received some attention from the Government of India, which expressed, 'the opinion that if after further trial the weapon be found to possess the advantages which [Fosbery] attributed to it, it [would] be a most valuable adjunct to the armament of the army in India'.[401] That request for further trials, along with a growing interest among a selection of Royal Artillery officers, led the War Office to establish a Special Committee on Mitrailleurs. The Committee report began with a summary of the few machine gun trials that the Artillery had hitherto conducted. All had recommended against acceptance until the India Office forwarded Fosbery's report. From its inception, therefore, the

[398] McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power,* p. 224.
[399] TNA, WO 33/20, Abstracts of Proceedings of the Department of the Director General of Ordinance for the Quarter ending 31st March 1869, p. 4; Owen, *Compound Guns,* p. 1.
[400] Ibid. (TNA), p. 4.
[401] Ibid., p. 391.

Special Committee conducted tests with due consideration of, 'India, where small detachments of European troops [we]re frequently compelled to hold defensive positions'.[402]

As the Committee began its investigation, Fosbery continued his encouragement with an article in *JRUSI* tellingly titled 'On Mitrailleurs, and their Place in the Wars of the Future'.[403] The article read as coming from a defensive posture by a man who at least felt that his was an uphill fight against established norms. Thus, Fosbery opened insisting that he, 'shall not commence this paper by any apology for such attention as I have paid to a class of weapons which are called infernal or inhuman, only by superficial reasoners, or by those who fail to comprehend the lessons conveyed by military statistics'.[404] He strongly endorsed mitrailleurs, in which he now included the Gatling along with the Montigny. He had, in fact, personally examined every rapid-fire gun then under consideration.[405] Fosbery was quite optimistic that machine guns could directly oppose enemy artillery, an issue that would snarl the debate over the next decade. He closed with the challenging claim that little attention had been paid to mitrailleurs in England, despite the looming fact that every other European power was then experimenting with them.[406] On that point he was certainly correct. The fact that it was a colonial officer who forced open the British debate on mitrailleurs is instructive. Considering them from his Anglo-Indian perspective, he pushed for their suitability to the colonial setting.

2.1.3 Royal Artillery Special Committee on Mitrailleurs

[402] TNA, WO 33/22, Minute by the Director of Artillery, upon the Report of the Special Committee on Mitrailleurs, 28 October 1870, p. 2.
[403] Major G. V. Fosbery, 'On Mitrailleurs, and their Place in the Wars of the Future,' *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute* 13 (1870) pp. 539-63.
[404] Ibid., p. 539.
[405] Chivers, *The Gun,* p. 55.
[406] Fosbery, *On Mitrailleurs, and their Place in the Wars of the Future*, p. 563.

The Special Committee on Mitrailleurs under Colonel Wray, Royal Artillery, conducted two sets of trials of both Gatling and Montigny guns at the Department of Artillery Studies School of Gunnery at Shoeburyness. The Director of Artillery, Brigadier-General John Miller Adye, submitted the final reports in October 1870 and November 1871 with his own commentary, though was not directly involved with the testing. Adye was a mixed character on the subject of technological innovation. A third-generation R.A. officer, he served in Crimea and the Indian Mutiny. He was a distinguished artillerist and central to the establishment of an Ordinance committee to investigate advances in gunnery. Yet, he also fought for the reversion to muzzle-loading guns in the 1860s, which removed from service the seemingly successful breach-loading Armstrong cannon, and argued that the commissariat department should be organised for European conflict and not for small wars.[407] Adye was knighted in 1873, appointed governor of the Woolwich Academy in 1875, and then Surveyor-General of the Ordnance in 1880.[408]

Interestingly, Adye's son, also in the Royal Artillery and also named Sir John Adye, briefly found himself in command of a Gatling gun battery in 1879. Then a Lieutenant, Adye had been sent to India to instruct Kurram Valley Field Force personnel on their new 'screw gun' cannons. The new guns had not yet arrived, and he was asked to take command of a new Gatling battery. Two days later, before Adye had any chance to practice with the guns, his new command was instructed to conduct a firing demonstration for Major-General Frederick Roberts, his staff, and most of the Kurram garrison. In Adye's words, 'the result was a complete fiasco…the bullets went everywhere except where they should

[407] Bailes, *The Influence of Continental Examples and Colonial Warfare upon the Reform of the Late Victorian Army*, pp. 52-3.
[408] E. M. Lloyd, 'Adye, Sir John Miller (1819–1900)', rev. James Lunt, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <www.oxforddnb.com>.

have gone'. Roberts was outwardly polite, but there were no further Gatling demonstrations. Adye came down with typhoid fever several months later and was invalided to England without ever seeing his erstwhile unit in action.[409]

Returning to the October 1871 Special Committee on Mitrailleurs, the committee cited a number of technical weaknesses needing improvement, but nonetheless recommended that the Gatling be introduced into land and sea service. Director Adye, however, had the final word and was, 'of the opinion that the Mitrailleur has little or no future use for field operations; furthermore, I am of the opinion that the French committed an error in hastily adopting them in large numbers'.[410]

The second Special Committee report was considerably more focused on the gun's positive attributes, again recommending it for naval and defensive land operations and for any cases where the enemy could be expected to pass through a narrow space. The committee systematically refuted many of the criticisms that had been levied against the mitrailleur by French and Prussian officers in the then-current Franco-Prussian War (1870-71), attributing many of these problems to the fact that the French had not recognised the importance of concealing the gun behind cover.[411] The committee particularly recommended the mitrailleur for situations suggestive of small wars, concluding that it could, 'prove very effective when employed against a half-disciplined enemy inadequately supplied with field artillery'.[412] There was, however, again a split in opinion between Colonel Wray and Director Adye, who was, 'still unable to agree with the Committee in their general views as to the uses and supposed

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[409] Major-General Sir John Adye, *Soldiers & Others I have Known* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1925) pp. 7, 29-34.
[410] TNA, WO 33/22, Minute by the Director of Artillery, upon the Report of the Special Committee on Mitrailleurs, 28 October 1870, p. 4.
[411] TNA, WO 33/24, Abstracts of Proceedings of the Department of the Director of Artillery for the Quarter ending 31st December 1871.
[412] TNA, WO 33/24, Second Report of the Special Committee on Mitrailleurs, November 1871, War Office, 1872, p. 9.

advantages of this weapon'. 'On the whole', he closed his comments on the Special Committee report, 'it appears to me that the tendency of modern warfare is to the development of far-reaching powerful field guns, and that the introduction of mitrailleurs for field purposes would, therefore, be a retrograde step'.[413] Each report thus closed with Adye undermining it.

The Special Committee reports were read with interest as the situation in Ashanti deteriorated. The Earl of Kimberley at the Colonial Office asked Edward Cardwell, Secretary of State for War, for his opinion of the Gatling and its potential use for the defence of the protectorate. Citing the committee reports and Director Adye's comments, Cardwell told him that, 'it would not be desirable to send mitrailleurs to the Coast of Africa', as, 'they are comparatively feeble weapons, of exceptional use'. They were also, he noted, much more expensive than field guns.[414] Admiral Thomas Maitland, Earl of Lauderdale, interpreted the committee reports more positively. He had been Captain of the Gunnery School at Portsmouth from 1854 to 1857. In a RUSI lecture subsequently published in *JRUSI*, he described the measures he believed should be taken in response to the then-active Ashanti invasion of the Gold Coast. Citing the reports, Lauderdale argued that the Cape Coast garrison, 'should have mitrailleuses or Gatlings (I believe this is by far the best description of weapon for the country, and I am supported in this opinion by all Officers to whom I have spoken on the subject)'.[415]

Despite the Special Committee's quite positive conclusions, the general opinion among British officers and policy-makers still leaned against the

[413] TNA, WO 33/24, Report of the Director of Artillery and Stores, War Office, February 1872, pp. 10-11.
[414] TNA, CO 879/4, Papers Relating to the Ashantee Invasion (Gold Coast), &c., No. 50: War Office to Colonial Office, 19 May 1873, pp. 71-2.
[415] Earl of Lauderdale, 'On the Best Mode of Defence of the Protected Territories on the Gold Coast of Africa, and the Organization of a Force Sufficient for that Purpose,' *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute* 17 (1873) p. 681.

mitrailleur as a weapon for the army. Their dismissal of mitrailleurs was not based on any particular technical point, but rather on their focus toward Europe and their general perception that the gun had performed poorly in the 1870-71 Franco-Prussian War. This was itself rooted in a strong tendency among British military thinkers to follow the German example.

2.1.4 *Nachahmung* – The imitation of an example

Writing, in 1887, a retrospective of the preceding 50 years, Wolseley claimed that:

> Since the Crimean war it has been our practice to hold up some foreign army as the pattern of military excellence. When any new idea is started it is pooh-poohed unless it finds favour in the army most admired at the moment…For years past many have striven in vain to introduce machine-guns into our army; they were always met with the argument, "The Germans don't think anything of them".[416]

There was indeed a certain fixation on German military opinion.[417] This was not, however, quite as flippant as Wolseley would later characterise it. France and Prussia had both previously conducted trials on several machine gun models. The French army deployed them in much larger numbers and in more combat situations than did any of the German armies, and the Germans won the war. It was understandable that Prussian opinion would be so highly regarded in British military debates. Moreover, most British commentators did not simply accept the opinions of German officers, but critically considered the German experience as witnessed by British observers. That said, the German example, and the prisms through which it was perceived, did have a significant effect on the professional debate on mitrailleurs in Britain.

When the French adopted their mitrailleuse in 1865, the Prussian army conducted its own investigation of several machine gun types and concluded,

[416] Sir Garnet Wolseley, 'The Army,' in *The Reign of Queen Victoria: A Survey of Fifty Years of Progress*, ed. Thomas Humphrey Ward, Vol. 1 (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1887) p. 218.
[417] Bailes, *The Influence of Continental Examples and Colonial Warfare upon the Reform of the Late Victorian Army*, p. 1.

as later reported in the United States, that, ‘the very narrow sphere within which their effect was restricted did not at all compensate for the *personnel* and materiel required in serving them’.[418] The Franco-Prussian war actually strengthened that perspective among German military thinkers. Jackman has argued that the Germans largely misinterpreted the main tactical lesson that the war would seem to have provided – that modern firepower demanded greater dispersion of soldiers in battle and independence of units. Instead, the German army continued for a considerable time to prize ‘old Prussian drill’ and combat discipline through automatic response to orders.[419] A series of tactical mistakes ensured that the French mitrailleuse did not shake this doctrine. In one of the first engagements of the war, a French machine gun battery moved to attack Prussian artillery from an exposed position. The Prussian guns quickly forced them to withdraw and mortally wounded General Charles A. Douay.[420] News of such mishandlings hardened the already official German military opinion of the device, which was duly reported by British attachés. Captain Hozier wrote to the War Office that:

> the opinion of Prince Frederick Charles and of all the officers with whom I have spoken on the subject of the mitrailleuse are averse to the employment of that weapon for field service…As to the moral effect of the noise of the mitrailleuse they say that it excited laughter rather than terror, among their men.[421]

Adye repeated Hozier’s findings almost verbatim at the end of his commentary on a report from the Special Committee and, in doing so, concluded a

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[418] *Army and Navy Journal and Gazette of the Regular and Volunteer Forces,* Vol. 9 (1 Jun. 1872) p. 605, Also discussed in Armstrong, *Bullets and Bureaucrats,* p. 61
[419] Steven D. Jackman, ‘Shoulder to Shoulder: Close Control and “Old Prussian Drill” in German Offensive Infantry Tactics, 1871-1914,’ *The Journal of Military History* 68, no. 1 (2004) p. 76.
[420] Armstrong, *Bullets and Bureaucrats*, p. 61
[421] TNA, WO 33/24, Extracts from the Reports of the Military Attachés who Accompanied the French and Prussian Armies During the Campaign of 1870-71, War Office Topographical and Statistical Department, 1871, pp. 26-7.

fundamentally technical British document with the opinions and sentiments of German officers.[422]

2.1.5 Fletcher

There were, nonetheless, vocal counterpoints from officers who supported continued experimentation. Lieutenant-Colonel Fletcher of the Scots Fusilier Guards had witnessed and written about the American Civil War, had long advocated military educational reform, and had been a member of Colonel Wray's Special Committee.[423] He delivered a lecture at RUSI in 1872 where he outlined and expanded on the committee's conclusions.[424] Fletcher argued that the Gatling could be very useful on the defensive.[425] Moreover, he stressed that their comparatively small size, less space taken on the march, and fewer required personnel than field guns should be considered advantages, as Gatlings could move across ground not suitable for artillery.[426] Hinting that these characteristics fit well with colonial warfare, he pointed out that Gatlings were used to protect US Army forts in the American Far West and were on hand in Salt Lake City in case of, 'any trouble with the Mormons'.[427] The Mormon rebellion of 1857-8, America's first civil war, had largely taken the form of Mormon guerrilla raids on US military supply lines. The experience of the US army column in this conflict was very much characteristic of colonial small wars.[428]

2.1.6 Henry Brackenbury

[422] TNA, WO 33/22, Minute by the Director of Artillery, upon the Report of the Special Committee on Mitrailleurs, 28 October 1870, p. 4.
[423] H. C. Fletcher, *History of the American War* (London: Richard Bentley, 1865); Richard A. Preston, 'Fletcher, Henry Charles,' in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 10, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, <www.biographi.ca/en/bio/fletcher_henry_charles_10E.html>.
[424] Fletcher, *The Employment of Mitrailleurs,* p. 29.
[425] Ibid., pp. 32-3.
[426] Ibid., p. 43.
[427] Ibid., pp. 41-2.
[428] David L. Bigler and Will Bagley, *The Mormon Rebellion: America's First Civil War, 1857-1858* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011).

Captain Henry Brackenbury was in the audience at Fletcher's talk and participated in the discussion afterwards.[429] Brackenbury had been a British observer in the Franco-Prussian War and published a book on it.[430] In his reports from the war, and later as a witness to the Special Committee on Mitrailleurs, he took particular notice of the several cases in which the French had put their Reffyes to good use. During the battle of Rezonville, Marshal Bazaine had used two batteries of mitrailleuses to defend the head of a ravine. 'Any one who has seen that battle-field', Brackenbury reported, 'who has seen the way in which the graves are at this point piled almost one upon another, will see how awful the slaughter must have been; and it was due, practically, entirely to these mitrailleuses'.[431] He also described a 'peculiar case' from the battle of Sedan in which Prussian infantry columns attempted to move out of a wood into an area covered by French machine guns. Brackenbury reported that, as they emerged, 'they were swept down by these mitrailleuses, and they did not succeed. They could not make any progress, but were obliged to go back again…checked by the mitrailleuse'.[432] At Bazeilles, he further described, Bavarian columns attempted to cross a railway bridge where, 'two mitrailleuses only…were placed behind a garden wall, and they simply swept the bridge, so that the Bavarians could not pass it'.[433] The Special Committee consulted Brackenbury's reports and summarised that he 'consider[ed] the mitrailleur a really valuable weapon in certain positions'.[434] Recall that a large portion of German officers did not think highly of the French mitrailleuses even after these incidents and underplayed their impact on the war. Brackenbury was

[429] Fletcher, *The Employment of Mitrailleurs,* p. 48.
[430] Henry Brackenbury, *Les Maréchaux de France: Etude leur Conduite de la Guerre en 1870* (Paris: E. Lachaud, 1872).
[431] Owen, *Compound Guns,* p. 9.
[432] Ibid., pp. 9-10.
[433] Ibid., p. 10.
[434] TNA, WO 33/24, Second Report of the Special Committee on Mitrailleurs, November 1871, War Office, 1872, p. 8.

noteworthy for the amount of credit he gave to the French machine guns. He would, soon after, serve as Wolseley's private secretary in the Ashanti War and write the General's 'approved' history of the expedition. As a member of Wolseley's 'Ashanti Ring' of officers, Brackenbury went on to become a major player in British imperial warfare and, through his writing, contribute significantly to the public perception of small wars.[435]

His brother, Captain Charles Booth Brackenbury, had observed the Franco-Prussian war as a military correspondent for *The Times* and was also in attendance at Fletcher's RUSI lecture.[436] In an article reviewing the 1872 autumn manoeuvres for *JRUSI*, he suggested that the army should, 'try a battery or two of them in the field at the manoeuvres and we shall soon see the use of them'.[437]

2.1.7 Wolseley

General Garnet Wolseley largely stayed out of the professional debate on mitrailleurs, though he surrounded himself with many men who were central to it. The guns do feature in a positive light his 1872 Wellington Prize essay submission '"Ubique" - 7.777.777'. Wolseley proposed that large armies moving along European roads should be preceded and covered by an advanced guard featuring horse artillery, cavalry, infantry, engineers, and a mitrailleur.[438] A similar body should protect the rear of the army and, 'one mitrailleur should be with all such rear-guards'.[439] Wolseley intended these advanced and rear-guards to be stripped down, quick, and very efficient so it is noteworthy that he

[435] Henry Brackenbury, *The Ashanti War, A Narrative: Prepared from the Official Documents by Permission of Major-General Sir Garnet Wolseley* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1874).
[436] Fletcher, *The Employment of Mitrailleurs,* p. 37.
[437] C. B. Brackenbury, 'The Autumn Manoeuvres of England,' *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute* 16 (1872) p. 231.
[438] Sir Garnet Wolseley, '"Ubique" - 7.777.777,' in *Essays Written for the Wellington Prize and Selected for Publication by His Grace's Desire from those Specially Mentioned by the Arbiter.* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1872) p. 193, 196, 210.
[439] Ibid., p. 200.

attached machine guns to them. He argued that they increased flexibility in the defensive by, 'enabling certain portions of a position to be thinly occupied by troops, whilst the important points are strongly held'.[440] He went so far as to say that, 'the presence of mitrailleurs with advanced and rear guards will, I believe, be henceforth looked upon as a necessity…its fire for defensive purposes (until the arrival of the main body) would enable the advanced-guard to hold its own against long odds'.[441] That was fairly strong support for the mainstream British army of the time, and no doubt contributed to his reputation just before the Ashanti War as a radical.

2.1.8 Rogers

Fletcher, Wolseley, and Brackenbury saw real potential for the mitrailleur in the European arena, in which opinion they were certainly a minority among British military thinkers. There were others, like Fosbery, who saw far more potential for these machines elsewhere. Before, during, and after his service in Ashanti, Captain Ebenezer Rogers argued that Gatling guns were perfectly, specifically, *the* weapon for imperial small wars. Rogers was the most enthusiastic of the attending officers who spoke in the discussion following Fletcher's 1872 RUSI speech. He argued that, 'apart from its deadly effects, there would be with the Gatling…an awe-inspiring moral effect…upon untutored minds'.[442] Rogers made a direct comparison with his experience in the 1867 'little war' in British Honduras, in which rockets had been fired at hostile Mayans. The effects of these terror weapons, he said, 'would have been ludicrous had they not been so serious. Scarcely had two or three rounds been sent over a village, that the enemy in utter consternation took flight, betaking themselves with frightful yells into the bush'. Rockets had been used to burn the

[440] Ibid., p. 246.
[441] Ibid., p. 204.
[442] Fletcher, *The Employment of Mitrailleurs,* p. 47.

rebel town of San Pedro and had indeed caused a retreat, though no known casualties, at their final stand at Marajal.[443] He believed that, in the next 'little war', Gatling guns 'would, no doubt, have produced the same amount of abject terror: but how many also would it not have placed *hors de combat!*'[444] He was pushing the Gatling as a psychological weapon. The Victorian meaning of 'moral' was effectively synonymous with the modern meaning of 'morale'. A short note in the 1885 *Proceedings of the Royal Artillery Institute* addressed, 'so much wrangling recently about these two words', and set out to, 'settle the question once and for all'.[445] Quoting from General Foy's 1827 *Histoire de la Guerre de la Péninsule sous Napoléon* as an exemplar, the author concluded that, '*Moral*, then, not *morale*, is the word an Officer would use with regard to his men, when dealing with the military side of their moral nature. *Morale* is the word a Chaplain would use to the same men, when exhorting their temperance, soberness, and chastity.'[446]

In the discussion following Lauderdale's RUSI lecture several months later, Rogers dwarfed the speaker's already strong recommendation by asserting that, 'there is no gun so admirably and essentially adapted for the purposes of either attack or defence in savage warfare, as the Gatling'. He again suggested that it would terrify Britain's 'savage' opponents pointed out that the machine was not, 'subject to endemics of pestilential Africa'. He was so convinced, he told them, that, 'when the first news of any serious danger to our

[443] Frank Winter, *The First Golden Age of Rocketry: Congreve and Hale Rockets of the Nineteenth Century* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990) p. 31.
[444] Fletcher, *The Employment of Mitrailleurs,* p. 47.
[445] 'The Secretary' [Gen. W. J. Smythe], '*Moral* or *Morale?,' Proceedings of the Royal Artillery Institution* (1885) p. 366.
[446] Ibid.

settlement at Cape Coast arrived, I volunteered to go there in charge of a battery of Gatlings. The government did not accede to my proposition.'[447]

Rogers got his wish two months later, as he had likely hoped his comments in front of Lauderdale (soon to be Admiral of the Fleet) would precipitate, when he was sent with the force of Royal Marines to reinforce the Cape Coast protectorate. More accurately, he got part of his wish, as he had not been given command of a battery of Gatlings. During his time at Cape Coast, Rogers wrote regular articles for the *United Service Magazine,* in which he continued to lobby for machine guns to be sent to the region.[448] In September 1873, he was thrilled to report that, 'best news of all, the Gatling gun has been despatched to try conclusions under extremely urgent circumstances'.[449] In his articles over the remainder of the campaign, Rogers described the gun's movements toward the front, offered his opinions as to how it might be better employed, and recommended the term 'Gatlingeer' as the machine gun equivalent for 'gunner'.[450]

A Gatling appeared embossed in gold on the cover of Rogers' 1876 published memoir of the Ashanti campaign (dedicated to Lauderdale).[451] Setting out to 'recount the manifest advantages I claim for this piece', he argued that the Ashantee War exhibited all the characteristics for which Gatlings were best suited, 'namely, an unhealthy climate, a dangerous coast-line, timid allies and no interior roads, few European troops, and a savage foe on every side'.[452]

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[447] Lauderdale, *On the Best Mode of Defence,* p. 683.
[448] Capt. E. Rogers, 'The Ashantee War,' *United Service Magazine*, no. 537 (Aug. 1873) pp. 497-509; Capt. E. Rogers, 'The Ashantee War,' *United Service Magazine*, no. 538 (Sept. 1873) pp. 56-67; Capt. E. Rogers, 'The Ashantee War,' *United Service Magazine*, no. 539 (Oct. 1873) pp. 219-31; Capt. E. Rogers, 'The Ashantee War,' *United Service Magazine*, no. 541 (Dec. 1873) pp. 535-48.
[449] Rogers, *The Ashantee War* (Sept. 1873) p. 57.
[450] Rogers, *The Ashantee War* (Dec. 1873) p. 543.
[451] Capt E. Rogers, *Campaigning in Western Africa and the Ashantee Invasion* (London: W. Mutchell & Co., 1874).
[452] Ibid., pp. 77-8, 81.

These were, of course also the conditions likely to be expected in many future small wars. In a rather convoluted argument, Rogers drew attention to what he claimed was a tendency in media and official sources to exaggerate the effectiveness of British weaponry. Despite the power granted by modern arms, he claimed:

> Disease, which ever accompanies the march of ill-fed and unclean native hordes, has hitherto done the work of death more effectively than any number of Sniders, Hale's rockets, or Abyssinian field-guns - and why? Because the excitement of a first encounter, and the disposition to fire carelessly at a despised because a savage foe, have combined to affect the aim of our troops. Now the Gatling gun has no nerves to disturb, and is not influenced by the character of those whom it is directed to kill.[453]

In effect, he argued that a man with a Snider became cocky, but the Gatling was immune even to hubris.

Shortly before his departure for Ashanti, it has recently been discovered, Rogers began corresponding with Richard Gatling. In the summer of 1873, Rogers sent a letter and an enclosed picture of himself to inform Gatling of his efforts to have the gun sent to the Ashanti War.[454] Gatling received another letter the following November, in which Rogers urged him to lobby the War Office to purchase six or eight of his mitrailleurs to send to the Gold Coast. As, however, the Gatling Gun Company had entered into a five-year licencing agreement with the G. W. Armstrong Company in 1869, the latter were responsible for sales of the gun in Great Britain.[455] Thus, Gatling could not take Rogers' advice, but he had taken notice of the man, telling his associate that, 'Capt. E is doing us a good service in England [and] his efforts should be encouraged'.[456] To that end, the Gatling Gun Company began to send him

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[453] Ibid., p. 145.
[454] Chivers, *The Gun*, p. 54.
[455] Ibid., p. 54; TNA, WO 33/22, Minute by the Director of Artillery, upon the Report of the Special Committee on Mitrailleurs, 28 October 1870, p. 4.
[456] R. J. Gatling to General John Love, August 28, 1873, Indiana Historical Society Collection, Quoted in Chivers, *The Gun*, p. 54.

money. Having decided that Rogers was 'a man that can do us much good', Gatling arranged to have twenty British pounds drawn for him from the Colt company.[457] He followed this with a personal letter containing five pounds more.[458] In January 1875, Rogers sent Gatling a note of thanks for his letter, 'with its unexpected enclosure which however I regard as a substantial recognition of my devotion to the subject at hand'.[459]

Having received an unknown number of such gifts from his favourite inventor, Rogers delivered another RUSI lecture decisively titled, 'The Gatling Gun; its Place in Tactics'. The machine guns in Ashanti had never actually been used in combat, his presentation explained, a fact that he insisted should not be held against their future utility for 'the ever-recurring "little wars"', but which prevented the submission of any new hard evidence.[460] That was not a great start. He nonetheless went on to repeat his now standard list of praises and continued to portray the Gatling as a tool for, 'offensive bush and hill warfare'.[461] It could not be doubted, he said, 'that as an auxiliary arm Gatlings are peculiarly adapted to colonial defensive operations, as well as for retaliating demonstrations against troublesome neighbours, in countries where our enemies are numerous but ill-armed'.[462] Rogers thus continuously attempted to link the machine gun to the very definition of small wars and the experience and identity of the imperial soldier.

He was also emblematic of the manner by which new technologies made their way into the British army of the 1870s. Rogers was an individual enthusiast, avidly engaged with the professional societies, and also a paid

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[457] R. J. Gatling to General John Love, April 27, 1874, Indiana Historical Society Collection, Quoted in Ibid., p. 56.
[458] Ibid., pp. 56-7.
[459] Quoted in Ibid., p. 56.
[460] Ebenezer Rogers, *The Gatling Gun; its Place in Tactics: A Lecture Delivered at the Royal United Services Institute* (London: Royal United Services Institute, 1875) p. 11.
[461] Ibid., pp. 10-11.
[462] Ibid., p. 9.

lobbyist for a private company in the midst of a sales push. It should be noted that he was indeed both, and that his passion for Gatling guns not only predated any payments but precipitated them. These matters largely came down to individuals.

2.1.9 Callwell

The debate on mitrailleurs in Britain was particularly open-ended and diverse in the early-to-mid 1870s, when the public image of the gun was quite new. It would not reach a consensus after Ashanti, Zulu, or even South Africa. In an 1884 essay, 'Notes on the Tactics of our Small Wars', his first published work and first foray into the discussion of small wars tactics, Callwell claimed that, 'the true tactical application of machine guns is a subject of controversy…Of the true use of the machine gun, we have learnt nothing in our small wars'.[463] His 1901 book *Tactics of To-day* focused more evenly on both European and colonial conflict than did his usual specialist work. In the chapter titled 'Defence', his discussion of the importance of preparing defensive positions made no mention at all of machine guns.[464] He published the book in an attempt to address the deficiencies in British army tactics made so apparent by the South African war and consequently took a fairly critical approach. Yet, he asserted that, 'it does not appear probable that machine guns will ever play a very great part in battle'.[465] It is striking, in retrospect, that he considered this controversy to be active over ten years after the Maxim gun, far more effective than the Gatling, had been introduced into imperial conflict. Callwell's perspective demonstrates that the debate on mitrailleurs was long in the British army and perhaps not truly settled until the Great War.

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[463] Charles Callwell, 'Notes on the Tactics of our Small Wars,' *Proceedings of the Royal Artillery Institution* 12 (1884) pp. 551-2.
[464] Major C. E. Callwell, *The Tactics of to-Day* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1901) pp. 31-51.
[465] Ibid., p. 84.

2.2 Other Novel Technologies in the Imperial Sphere

Lieutenant Porter argued that, in small wars, 'so long as fire tactics can be used, superior arms and superior discipline must tell, but when it comes to cold steel, the enemy, *if he wait to receive*, must have the advantage'.[466] British military personnel recognised that their advantage over non-industrial foes relied on their comparatively more advanced weapons. Through their attempt to maximise that edge, the imperial sphere saw the most radical use of novel military technology. Put simply, the Gatling gun was only one of many. The tendency would later be institutionalised in the 1899 Hague Convention. During the drafting negotiations, the British War Office and Admiralty protested against the banning of dum-dum bullets (hollow tipped bullets that caused terrible wounds) on the premise that such a ban, 'would favour the interests of savage nations and be against those of the more highly civilized. It would be a retrograde step'.[467] The final text thus banned the dum-dum in 'civilised' warfare, but allowed it to be used against 'savage' peoples.[468] The Hague Convention was the legal culmination of a dynamic that had been in play for at least 80 years, whereby colonial armies tended to employ new, advanced, and atypical weaponry in Africa and Asia long before their military counterparts in Europe.[469] Shrapnel was first used in Surinam, percussion muskets in China, and Minié bullets against the Bantu.[470] Dum-dums, rockets, a diverse succession of prototype rifle designs, and even steam-ship bombardment were

[466] Porter, Lt. R. da Costa, 'Warfare Against Uncivilised Races; Or, how to Fight Greatly Superior Forces of an Uncivilised and Badly-Armed Enemy,' *Professional Papers of the Corps of Royal Engineers*, no. 6 (1881) p. 340.
[467] Admiralty to Foreign Office, 16 May 1899, in G. P. Gooch and Harold Temperley, eds., *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1814* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO), 1926-1938) Vol. 1, no. 274.
[468] Ibid., p. 157.
[469] Daniel R. Headrick, *The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981) p. 101.
[470] O'Connell, *Of Arms and Men,* p. 232.

tested in African small wars before being adopted by any European power.[471] It might, of course, be noted that Britain was not at war in Europe, and that small wars provided the only opportunities for combat use. As the mitrailleur debates reveal, however, many of these weapons were considered inappropriate for European war for a considerable time after their introduction to the wider empire. This was an effect of perception and interpretation, not simply of where the opportunity of battle had presented itself.

In 1860, Napier had commanded the Second Division of the British China Force, which featured the first deployment of Armstrong rifled breech-loading cannon.[472] He recalled the attack on the Sen-ho entrenchments where his four, 'Armstrong guns opened on the enemy. They were the first shots fired by that weapon in war, and the range and accuracy of their fire excited the admiration of the force.'[473] Soon after, the British used Armstrongs in the 1863 Maori War in New Zealand. They were effective against regular Maori villages, but far less so against their *pa* fortifications, which featured underground tunnels and artillery-proof bunkers.[474] When Napier invaded Abyssinia, his artillery prominently featured a new steel gun that the ordinance department at Woolwich had developed specifically with colonial conflict in mind. Not thigh-high and weighing only 148 pounds, it was well-suited to difficult landscapes.[475]

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[471] V. G. Kiernan, *From Conquest to Collapse: European Empires from 1815 to 1960* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982) p. 97.
[472] Saul David, *Victoria's Wars: The Rise of Empire* (London: Viking, 2006) p. 369.
[473] Sir Robert Napier, *Despatches of Major-General Sir R. Napier, Reporting on the Operations of the Second Division of the China Force, in the Expedition of 1860* (Hertford: Stephen Austin (privately printed), 1873) pp. 4-5.
[474] Major-General Sir James Alexander, *Bush Fighting: Illustrated by Remarkable Actions and Incidents of the Maori War in New Zealand* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low and Searle, 1873); James Belich, *The New Zealand Wars and the Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1986) p. 182, 322.
[475] Allen Andrews, *Wonders of Victorian Engineering* (London: Jupiter Books, 1978) p. 119; Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army 1868-1902,* p. 241; Jaques Frémeaux, *De Quoi Fut Fait L'empire: Les Guerres Coloniales Au XIXe Siècle* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2010) p. 208.

Wolseley's 1873 Ashanti Expedition used several of them to great effect as well, by which time they were referred to as the, '7-pounder Abyssinian gun'.[476]

The Abyssinian campaign was the British Army's first practical field experiment with breech-loading rifles. The white infantry units of Napier's force were armed with the Snider-Enfield conversion rifle, made by lathing out the breech of an Enfield muzzle-loader and adding a breech-loading mechanism. They fired the new brass cartridge invented at Woolwich.[477] The arrangement was not quite top-of-the-line by contemporary civilian standards, but the army had never sent a large force of breech-loaders into combat.[478] 'The "Snider" converted arm proved itself a most efficient weapon the first time of asking', in the words of one War Office report, 'and the only time it has ever been tried against a "human target"'.[479] Markham went as far as to say that the culminating battle of the Abyssinian campaign would, 'be remembered in military history as the first in which the Snider rifle was used'.[480] Wolseley's Ashanti expedition force carried the Martini-Henry rifle, which was indeed top-of-the-line. Designed from inception to fire brass cartridges, it had been provisionally approved in 1871 but would not be issued to regular soldiers till 1874.[481]

Rockets also saw proportionately much more service in small wars than in European ones. British forces used the Congreve rocket in the 1824 Burmese War, the 1837 First Afghan War and Canadian rebellion, the 1839 Opium War in China, the 1856 Anglo-Chinese War, the 1864 bombardment of the Japanese

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[476] Winwood Reade, *The Story of the Ashantee Campaign* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1874) p. 173.
[477] Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army 1868-1902,* p. 239.
[478] Andrews, *Wonders of Victorian Engineering* p. 119.
[479] TNA, WO 33/20, Abyssinia, 1867-68, 'Extracts from Reports on Field Equipments in use with the forces under command of Lord Napier of Magdala', London, 1869, p. 51.
[480] Clements R. Markham, *A History of the Abyssinian Expedition* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1869) p. 323.
[481] Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army 1868-1902,* p. 239.

Shimonoseki seaport, and many conflicts in India.[482] At the 1845 battle of Puketutu, during the New Zealand Wars, a naval rocket brigade attempted to force Maori warriors from their *pa* fortification, albeit with scant success.[483] It was first fired in Africa in 1826 against the Ashanti, successfully precipitating their retreat, and later in the 1831 'Barra War'.[484]

Britain purchased William Hale's rocket patents in 1867, and the Hale rocket officially succeeded the Congreve for the British forces.[485] It saw its first use by British troops on Napier's Abyssinia campaign.[486] During the preparations for the expedition, Napier sent two officers, several NCOs, and a detachment of artillery soldiers all the way to the Arsenal at Woolwich for Hale rocket training.[487] The resulting Rocket Brigade consisted of 2 batteries of 6 rocket tubes each.[488] The British would go on to employ them against the Xhosa in South Africa (1877-81), the Naga on the Indian Northwestern Frontier (1879-80), the Egyptians in Alexandria (1882), slave traders in Sudan (1884-85), Arabs in Zanzibar (1894), and the Sofa in Gambia (1894).[489]

2.3 Military Traditionalism and 'Resistance' to Technology

In 1945, Roger French, managing director of the cartridge belt manufacturing company Thomas French & Sons Ltd., wrote the introduction to a British history of rifles and machine guns. Despite the historical importance of small arms to British armies, he claimed, 'there has always been a certain conservatism among our higher Army Authorities against the adoption of new

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[482] Winter, *The First Golden Age of Rocketry,* pp. 34-5, 42.
[483] Belich, *The New Zealand Wars,* p. 41.
[484] Sir John Dalrymple Hay, *Ashanti and the Gold Coast, and what we Know of it: A Sketch* (London: Edward Stanford, 1874) p. 54; Winter, *The First Golden Age of Rocketry,* p. 41.
[485] Winter, *The First Golden Age of Rocketry,* p. 42, 91.
[486] Ian Knight, *Go to Your God Like a Soldier: The British Soldier Fighting for Empire, 1837-1902* (London: Greenhill Books, 1996) p. 167; Winter, *The First Golden Age of Rocketry,* p. 216.
[487] Trevenen J. Holland and Henry Hozier, *The Expedition to Abyssinia Compiled by Order of the Secretary of State for War* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO), 1870) p. 60.
[488] Ibid., p. 371.
[489] Winter, *The First Golden Age of Rocketry,* p. 222.

arms, and this applied particularly to the machine-gun, which was almost forced into our army against inclination and judgement during the last war'.[490] French, though laden with vested interest and speaking with hindsight, was hardly alone in his claim that British officers were hopelessly traditionalist. The author of a review of Robert Home's 1873 *A Précis of Modern Tactics* in *The Saturday Review* bemoaned the scarcity of good critical writing on 'the tactical science'. If work like Home's was so rare, he asked:

> Is there, in truth, some fatal necessity that prevents those able men who cluster round the War Office from turning the full strength of modern daylight on our own shortcomings? We ask this question because it seems to be generally felt that there must be some impenetrable obstacle hidden from the public, some personal prejudice, or some tradition born of the Peninsular veteranship and hardened in the Crimean blunders, which stands in the way of the progress of our army.[491]

The Saturday Review writer further claimed that, through Home's frank and realistic weighing of the arguments for and against breech-loaders:

> his work becomes a prolonged satire on the backwardness of our own tactical system, if that is to be called a system which is in truth no better than a bundle of relics, made up of scraps of old Frederick's drill-book, mixed with bits of pedantry from the Dundas school of 1800, and here and there a fragment or two of the Algerian rags which the French army is discarding under the stern teaching of defeat.[492]

Such criticisms of a perceived traditionalism among the officer corps have been reflected and reproduced by many historians of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century British history.

In *The Shock of the Old*, Edgerton criticised the tendency of many historians to view the acceptance of new technologies as inevitable. Histories of technology, he contended, are largely premised on the assumption that new devices are substantially and obviously superior to existing ones, which become

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[490] Major C. Pridham, *Superiority of Fire: A Short History of Rifles and Machine-Guns* (London: Hutchinson's Scientific and Technical Publications, 1945) p. ix.
[491] 'The War Office Guide to Tactics', *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art* 36, no. 942 (15 Nov. 1873) p. 640.
[492] Ibid.

'old' the moment that new alternatives arise. Thus, 'resistance to new technology' is cast by many historians as a sign of 'conservatism' and devotion to an outmoded doctrine.[493] Such 'cultural lag' is usually assumed to be very strong in the military and particularly among officers, who are often portrayed in histories of technology as dogmatically dismissive of any new developments.[494] Thus, 'before the First World War, it is claimed, admirals thought submarines ungentlemanly, and generals irrationally defended cold steel and horses against machine guns'.[495] These discourses of 'resistance' are rooted in a teleological view of the history of invention. To understand the historical debates surrounding novel technologies, one cannot work toward a foregone conclusion that was not necessarily apparent even to the well informed of the time. In her recent book, Epstein similarly reflected that:

> Too often, the history of the decades before the war is examined as the prehistory to the war. This teleological approach tends to efface the contingency and complexity of the prewar period, which should be engaged on its own terms rather than as the prelude to another: after all, the people living through it may have guessed but did not know what was coming.[496]

In her history of the development of torpedo technologies and tactics in the American and British navies, she countered the common perception that officers were slow to recognise their potential. Torpedoes (and there were different competing types), she argued, 'were highly sophisticated industrial products which required expert care and handling in order to achieve their full tactical potential, along with accessory technologies such as fire control and tubes. Their best use was by no means obvious.'[497]

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[493] Edgerton, *The Shock of the Old*, p. 9.
[494] Ibid., p. 141.
[495] Ibid.
[496] Epstein, *Torpedo,* p. 17.
[497] Katherine Epstein, 'No One can Afford to Say "Damn the Torpedoes": Battle Tactics and U.S. Naval History before World War I,' *The Journal of Military History* 77 (Apr. 2013) p. 495.

Histories of the machine gun, however, have largely been written from the standpoint that their efficacy and inevitable dominance was indeed obvious. Phillips observed that, 'twentieth-century military historians showed a marked tendency to dismiss those officers who, trained in the age of Victoria, stressed the continuing significance of the "moral factor in war" as ideologically reactionary and blind to the new technologies in battle'.[498] This chapter has argued for a more complicated picture of British military opinion. The divisions between 'resistant' and 'innovative' (or perhaps between 'stable' and 'radical') hinged, in part, on the perceived distinction between imperial and European conflicts. The men who debated British tactical theory effectively had more than one 'military' in mind.

Bailes submitted that three main schools of thought existed within the Victorian home army. The 'continentalists' asserted that the army should prepare for a grand-scale European war, base these preparations on German and French army developments, and ignore imperial warfare almost altogether. The 'traditionalists' firmly opposed the Cardwell reforms and, attempting to retrench, tended to reject the more disruptive tactical innovations. Finally, the 'imperial school' believed in the importance of imperial warfare, tended to downplay European developments and examples, and strongly adhered to the Cardwellian system. The imperial school included Wolseley and most of his 'Ashanti ring' officers, though this association developed only during and after the Ashanti War.[499] Spiers further complicated the model by establishing that the reform-minded imperial school was itself split between Wolseley's camp, experienced in Africa, and Roberts' camp, shaped by their experiences in India

[498] Gervase Phillips, 'Military Morality Transformed: Weapons and Soldiers on the Nineteenth-Century Battlefield,' *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* XLI, no. 4 (Spring, 2011) p. 568.
[499] Bailes, *Patterns of Thought in the Late Victorian Army*, p. 30.

(Roberts also participated in the Abyssinian Expedition).[500] This split between Rogers and Wolseley developed later in the century but reflected cultural leanings that were present in earlier decades. Spiers' distinction between African and Indian officers remains pertinent and quite correct. Throughout this study, the African- and Indian-focused British soldiers will be considered together under the broad 'imperial school' heading. There was considerable diversity between and within these groups. This study contends, nonetheless, that the British soldiers of these interconnected camps demonstrated similar interpretive relationships with technology in small war settings.

That the continentalist and imperial schools coexisted among British officers may help to explain why two seemingly polar perspectives have continued to exist in the historiography of Victorian military technology. 'When faced with the machine gun and the attendant necessity to rethink all the old orthodoxies', Ellis argued, typifying the more common historical perspective, 'soldiers either did not understand the significance of the new weapon at all, or tried to ignore it, dimly aware that it spelled the end of their own conception of war'.[501] O'Connell made a similar argument, stressing a lack of technical understanding among British officers.[502] Orme suggested that, 'complacency, intuition and conservatism were the hallmarks of the officer corps, not intellect, energy or expertise'.[503] Pearton argued that the value systems of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century European military establishments were rooted in land and privilege, which prevented their embracing mechanisation before the

[500] Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army 1868-1902,* p. 157.
[501] Ellis, *The Social History of the Machine Gun,* p. 17.
[502] O'Connell, *Of Arms and Men,* pp. 233-5.
[503] Edward B. Orme, *Victorian Attitudes Toward 'Small Wars': The Anglo-Zulu War (1879), a Case Study* (Master's Thesis, University of York, 1984) p. 59.

experience of the Great War.[504] These characterisations are often convincing, though border on cultural essentialism.

The other, less common, and comparatively newer perspective among historians rejects the 'resistance' argument in light of Britain's substantial use of novel technology and modern weapons in wars of imperial conquest. Vandervort disagreed with the claim that machine gun development was neglected since, he argued, 'the British would appear to have been in the forefront in introducing machine guns in African land warfare'.[505] In his study of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century British cavalry doctrine, Stephen Badsey challenged the prevalent view that the equine arm of the army was obviously obsolete, and that officers clung to it out of sentimentalism and stupidity.[506] This viewpoint is intimately tied to the common historical interpretation of machine guns, as the belief that cavalry should have been abandoned presupposes that mitrailleurs should have been (and would have been) embraced. Badsy demonstrated that the debate over how cavalry should adjust its tactics in the face of modern firepower was active from the mid-nineteenth-century. He argued that a belief in some continued role for cavalry was not, in itself, evidence of military incompetence. The same might be said of those officers who were slow to accept early machine guns.

Tactical systems, moreover, are concerned with far more than the deployment of individual technologies. Nicholas Murray recently argued that the great power militaries were neither ignorant of nor unprepared for 'trench

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[504] Maurice Pearton, *Diplomacy, War and technology since 1830* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1984) pp. 27-36, 253-9; Also discussed in Roland, *Technology and War*, p. 127.
[505] Bruce Vandervort, *Wars of Imperial Conquest in Africa, 1830-1914* (London: UCL Press, 1998) p. 49.
[506] Stephen Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry 1880-1918* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

warfare' operations before the Great War.[507] Defensive doctrine was well-developed among the continentalists, even if it proved inadequate for the realities of the Western Front. Examining this link between doctrine and equipment, Black argued that the limited availability of machine guns in 1914, 'reflected the widespread assumption that a conflict would be mobile and that heavy guns would be an encumbrance as their value was in supporting the defensive, not the offensive'.[508] This assumption was incorrect, but it had not been made flippantly.

Beckett argued that Britain did not lag behind the other major powers in technological or tactical development.[509] If, he asked, 'the army used and appreciated the value of technology in colonial campaigning…why has the conservative image persisted?'[510] As this chapter has argued, both images of Victorian British military culture have persisted because these schools of thought may have coexisted in the officer class. In the Cardwellian period, British military thinkers were divided between those focused on current European conflict and those focused on colonial, imperial, and small wars. The critical concern distinguishing those two schools of thought may have centred on the presence or absence of enemy artillery. To unpack that concern, this section will close with a look back to the first time RUSI hosted a talk on the subject of a battery gun, and consider how the attendant officers engaged the idea at a purely theoretical stage.

In 1862, General Vandenburgh of the New York Militia gave a presentation titled 'A New System of Artillery for Projecting a Group Or Cluster

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[507] Nicholas Murray, *The Rocky Road to the Great War: The Evolution of Trench Warfare to 1914* (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, 2013).
[508] Jeremy Black, *War and Technology* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013) p. 8.
[509] Ian F. W. Beckett, 'Victorians at War – War, Technology, and Change,' *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* 81, no. 328 (2003) pp. 330-8.
[510] Beckett, *The Victorians at War* (London: Hambledon and London, 2003) pp. 182-3.

of Shot' at RUSI in London. He argued that the primary purpose of regular artillery was to kill soldiers behind fort defences and ship hulls, yet there remained, in all conflicts, a need to kill the enemy when he was out in the open. 'Whatever may be the conditions of naval warfare, or of coast defense', he reasoned, 'armies are not likely to march with iron plates before them'.[511] In such circumstances, a machine that could deliver the largest number of deadly projectiles would presumably have the greatest effect. His 'Gen. Vandenburgh's System', was a *proposed* gun type, which he admitted might never be made.[512] He described a cluster of rifled barrels loaded from the breech by a round plate full of holes containing powder and shot for each barrel.[513] It was, in essence, a ball and powder version of the Montigny mitrailleur, somewhere between a Reffye and a 'Ribauldequin'. In the discussion that followed, Vandenburgh was pressed with several questions about the proposed gun's ability to withstand a direct hit from cannon roundshot. He conceded, hesitantly, that such an impact would render his gun inoperable. The officers at RUSI, or at least those asking questions, imagined the cluster shot gun to be competing directly with artillery. Vandenburgh's admirably detailed calculations of the number of infantry casualties it would inflict were not seriously challenged at all.

The torpedo provides a useful comparison. Epstein argued that the torpedo delivered a shock to existing naval doctrine and stimulated both technological and strategic/tactical development because it threatened to topple the primacy of the large capital ship firing heavy guns, upon which all great power navies were based.[514] The machine gun, in contrast, was not perceived as a 'game-changer' for the existing field army. Critics of the mitrailleur focused,

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511 Gen O. Vandenburgh, 'A New System of Artillery for Projecting a Group Or Cluster of Shot,' *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution* 6, no. 21 (1862) p. 379.
512 Ibid., p. 381, 390.
513 Ibid., p. 384.
514 Epstein, *Torpedo,* pp. 10-11.

above all, on comparing and contrasting it to field guns, the presumed competing piece of ordinance. While opinion was divided on their potential advantages against infantry and cavalry, few believed that mitrailleurs posed a direct threat to guns themselves. Even smaller rifled cannons outranged and seemingly outclassed machine gun crews, a conclusion bolstered by reports from the Franco-Prussian war. As the machine gun did not threaten the primacy of artillery, it did not capsize the organisational foundation of the army. Those conclusions, limited as they were, were *not* actually shattered by the experience of the Great War. Artillery killed more soldiers than did machine guns on the Western Front, and few cannons fell to machine gun fire.

2.4 The Imperial Military Sphere

A key characteristic that set the culture, or ideal, of imperial soldiers apart from that of the continentalists was a comparative openness to novel technologies. This tendency was particularly marked in the 1860s and '70s, when British technological advantages were increasingly tipping the balance in small wars and further distinguishing the imperial sphere.[515]

Daniel Headrick claimed that, 'at no point has the distinction between tourists and conquerors been so blurred as it was in late nineteenth-century Africa'.[516] The contemporary perception that imperial warfare presented very distinct conditions demanded that soldiers adapt in ways outside the martial norm. Callwell defined 'small wars' by this very dissimilarity: 'whenever a regular army finds itself engaged upon hostilities against irregular forces, or forces which in their armament, their organisation, and their discipline are palpably

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[515] Philip D. Curtin, *The World & the West: The European Challenge and the Overseas Response in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000) p. 27; Douglas Porch, 'Introduction' in Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1996 [1896]) p. xi.

[516] Daniel R. Headrick, 'The Tools of Imperialism: Technology and the Expansion of European Colonial Empires in the Nineteenth Century,' *The Journal of Modern History* 51, no. 2 (Jun., 1979) p. 258.

inferior to it, the conditions of the campaign become distinct from the conditions of modern regular warfare'.[517] It followed that, 'a system adapted to La Vendée is out of place among fanatics and savages'.[518] La Vendée was a region of France where Republican forces fought a substantial and intractable counterrevolutionary peasant's revolt from 1793 to 1796. In this comment, therefore, Callwell also revealed his impression that the continental model of asymmetrical warfare was itself still mired in late-eighteenth-century principles.

In 1888 Wolseley claimed, partly for his own aggrandisement, that Britain was, 'the only European army that [was] thoroughly experienced in what we may properly call savage warfare. This warfare is an art in itself.'[519] What made Callwell and the imperial military thinkers significant was their belief that small wars were not necessarily *easier* than continental wars, but divergent, and requiring a largely different set of skills and guiding doctrine. The imperial-minded soldiers of the British army saw their craft as existing in parallel opposition to that concerned with European conflict. Thus, Callwell claimed early in his writing career that, 'many of the maxims laid down for the guidance of [the army] in European warfare, are either altogether inapplicable to combats against irregular warriors, or else required considerable modification to meet altered circumstances'.[520] Callwell wrote during the height of the imperial era, but several writers developed this theme decades earlier. Bailes argued that that signs of a general understanding of the divergence of spheres began after

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[517] Callwell, *Small Wars,* p. 22.
[518] Ibid., p. 148.
[519] Sir Garnet Wolseley, 'The Negro as a Soldier,' *Fortnightly Review*, no. 264 (Dec. 1888) p. 703.
[520] Callwell, *Notes on the Tactics of our Small Wars* pp. 545-6; Captain C. E. Callwell, 'Lessons to be Learnt from the Campaigns in which British Forces have been Employed since the Year 1865,' *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute* 31 (1887) p. 392.

the Ashanti Expedition and the wave of publications that followed it.[521] As Wolseley pushed through preparations for the expedition, which differed markedly from those to which the Duke of Cambridge was accustomed, he reasoned (slightly sarcastically) with him that, 'this Expedition being of a peculiar and novel nature, I thought that perhaps its requirements might be better met in a special manner'.[522]

Colonel George Furse, the army's chief expert on logistics, argued that, 'our wars differ so essentially from the wars carried out by Continental armies, that we should not adhere to a servile imitation of their systems, but we should originate one of our own which may be in concordance with our requirements'.[523] Furse's language is quite significant in revealing a possession of 'our' identity apart from the 'Continental'. His comments referred not only to foreign officers, but those British army officers who mimicked them. The condemnation went both ways. Moreman has argued that many British observers attributed the French loss in 1870-71 to their Algerian military experience.[524] In his 1872 Wellington Prize submission, the anonymous 'Adjutant', warned:

> The service which our soldiers have seen in India, or China, or New Zealand, will not stand them in much stead [against a Great Power]; the lessons gathered in such warfare, unless read with great intelligence, might prove rather the reverse of useful, just as the Algerian experience, there is reason to believe, was positively injurious to the French army.[525]

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[521] Howard Bailes, 'Technology and Tactics in the British Army, 1866-1900,' in *Men Machines and War*, eds. Ronald Haycock and Keith Neilson (Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1988) p. 35.

[522] Wolseley to Field Marshal HRH George, Duke of Cambridge, 3 September 1873, MSS, RA VIC/ADD E/1/7191 in Ian F. W. Beckett, ed., *Wolseley and Ashanti: The Asante War Journal and Correspondence of Major General Sir Garnet Wolseley 1873-1874* (Stroud, Gloucestershire, UK: The History Press for the Army Records Society, 2009) p. 61.

[523] 'Observations upon the Proposed Regulations for the Organization of the Line of Communications' (15 Jan. 1886), 5, W.O. 33/45, Quoted in Bailes, *Patterns of Thought in the Late Victorian Army,* p. 37.

[524] T. R. Moreman, *The Army in India and the Development of Frontier Warfare, 1849-1947* (London: Macmillan Press, 1998) p. 44.

[525] 'By an Adjutant', [James F. Macpherson] *An Essay on Tactics* (London: William Mitchell & Co., 1872) p. 4, Quoted in Ibid., p. 44.

'An officer who has seen [colonial] service must sweep from his mind all recollections of that service', Colonel Lonsdale Hale later told members of the *Royal Artillery Institution*, 'for between Afghan, Egyptian, or Zulu warfare and that of Europe, there is no similarity whatever'.[526] The Egyptian army of the time was, in fact, well armed by European standards, but perceptions of climate and race implicitly and explicitly influenced images of peripheral conflict.

Small wars were fought in very diverse conditions but imperial school thinkers believed that, taken together, they constituted a discrete craft. Porter claimed that, 'certain main principles run through them all, which may serve as guides in future cases'.[527] Major-General Alexander thought that it would be, 'highly useful to practice [bush fighting] as a part of the army manoeuvres', which would require the development of a new set of exercises, rules, and referees.[528] Such advocates were not simply calling for the development of new tactics, but also for the recognition, dissemination, and systemisation of those already in use in some colonies. The Punjab Irregular Force employed a tactical system distinctive to the Indian North-West Frontier.[529] Imperial troops and settler-frontiersmen in New Zealand developed the 'bush-scouring' system to combat the Maori, and Belich has argued that most of the operations from the 1864-8 Maori wars can be understood as applications of bush-scouring theory.[530] Though well developed, such peculiarly colonial ways of war were not recognised by the War Office, nor taught in military colleges. Officers arriving in these regions would be taught by their fellow officers, using notes or guidebooks that were never published.

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[526] Col. Lonsdale Hale, 'The Spirit of Tactical Operations of To-day', *Proceedings of the RAI,* Vol. 16 (1889) p. 459, Quoted in, Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army 1868-1902,* p. 246.
[527] Porter, *Warfare Against Uncivilised Races,* p. 306.
[528] Alexander, *Bush Fighting,* p. 1.
[529] Moreman, *The Army in India and the Development of Frontier Warfare,* p. xxiii.
[530] Belich, *The New Zealand Wars,* p. 213.

The press also drew attention to the distinct conditions of imperial warfare. Of the Ashanti War, *The Times* claimed, ‘history teaches us that warfare with a semi-savage nation is marked by certain peculiar characteristics, which require to be fully recognized and provided for. The savage does not fight by the rules of modern tactics’.[531] After consulting Sir Samuel Baker as an expert in the field, *The Sunday Times* reported his insistence that, ‘it would be impossible to fight them on any plan practiced by civilized nations. Savage warfare is exactly the antipodes of civilized warfare’.[532] When Lord Napier of Magdala died in 1890, *The Saturday Review* printed a memorial retrospective of his career. The tone was predictably flattering, but the article also demonstrated a belief that Napier was expert in a discrete and separate field of soldiering:

> Campaigns against barbarians…have difficulties of their own which are not met with in European warfare, and which require on the part of generals and soldiers the display of qualities not inferior to those demanded in regular warfare...if the whole Abyssinian compaign (*sic*) is compared with any section of [the Franco-Prussian War], it will not appear inferior as an operation of war…It is certain that, if the European portion at least of Lord Napier’s army had there and then been called upon to serve on the Moselle or the Loire, it would have held it (*sic*) own with or against Germans or Frenchmen. It is by no means equally certain that, if the pick of Marshal Moltke’s army had been suddenly required to march from Annesley Bay to Magdala, it would have extricated itself from the task with as much success as the British expeditionary force did.[533]

2.5 Images of the Imperial Soldier

If small wars comprised a separate specialty, then the imperial sphere was seemingly suited to a particular, and different, type of commander. The men who participated in small wars were praised foremost for their innovation and adaptability. The imperial school of British military thought - which was more specific than the characterisation of the ‘imperial soldier’ - would come to

[531] ‘Preparations for the Ashantee War’, *The Times*, 6 Oct. 1873, p. 7.
[532] *The Sunday Times*, 21 Dec. 1873, p. 4.
[533] *The Saturday Review*, 18 Jan. 1890, reprinted in *In Memoriam: Field-Marshal Lord Napier of Magdala, G.C.B., G,C.S.I., &c. &c., Constable of the Tower: A Reprint of a Few Biographical Notices* (London: Harrison, 1890) p. 21.

be associated with the 'Wolseley ring' of officers. In Beckett's words, this group 'emphasised flexibility and practicality over the slavish imitation of continental practice'.[534] Thompson claimed that, 'the Indian army thought of itself as attracting (and retaining) more able men than the home army', and called the former more 'meritocratic' than the latter.[535] The culture of the Indian army was well established by the mid-nineteenth century and the broader culture of imperial soldiers developed out of the Indian ideal.

The Saturday Review claimed that Napier's 'matured experience…influenced the whole undertaking, the lowest rank feeling faith in a general who not only had power to order, but capacity to direct, and ability to control under the novel circumstances of a march into the interior of Africa'.[536] This managerial characterisation was singled out over the usual martial ones. Wolseley attributed much of the blame for the disastrous Afghan campaign to the considerably advanced age of the commander in charge. He claimed that in small wars of empire, youth:

> and the inventive genius that is one of its characteristics, is far more essential for all ranks than for the ordinary cut-and-dry campaigns where vast bodies of about equally well-trained and well-armed regular troops meet in almost equal numbers. A great readiness of resource and immense powers of endurance are especially necessary for the leader who has to penetrate far into a little known country with a force that will be outnumbered ten to one.[537]

Wolseley had, of course, himself been the youngest man promoted to lieutenant-colonel in the British army, and was just forty when he left for the Ashanti campaign.[538]

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[534] Beckett, *Wolseley and Ashanti,* p. 249.
[535] Andrew S. Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back?: The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Harlow, UK: Pearson Longman, 2005) pp. 21-2.
[536] Times of India, *Lord Napier of Magdala: Reprinted from the Times of India* (Bombay: Times of India Steam Press, 1876) p. 15.
[537] Wolseley, *The Army* p. 188.
[538] Ford, *The Grim Reaper,* p. 19.

Over the last quarter of the century, Porch argued, 'imperial conquest came to be regarded as hardly more than a technical problem to be solved'.[539] Appropriately, successful small war commanders tended to be praised for their organisation and intelligence more than for their nobility or bravery. The Royal Geographic Society made Napier an Honorary Fellow in 1868 after his success in Abyssinia. Sir Roderick Murchison, the head of the Society, proudly expressed his, 'delight that the distinguished General who has accomplished these glorious results is a man of science, and is particularly well versed in Geography'.[540] Napier received several honorary degrees after the campaign, seen as an appropriate form of reward for that endeavour.[541] Abyssinia was the first campaign to be placed under the supreme command of a member of the Royal Engineers. The official history of the R.E. expressed with pride that, 'until that moment it had been held as an axiom at the Horse Guards that an officer of the scientific branch of the service was…incompetent to fill such a post…Since that date, and probably owing largely to that experiment, the veto has been withdrawn'.[542]

Gilbert and Sullivan used Wolseley as the model, well understood to audiences at the time, for their very model of the modern Major-General.[543] The Major-General Stanley character and his introductory song satirised the ideal of the intelligent officer with the notion that a commander need not have combat experience but must know the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* from cover to cover.

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[539] Callwell, *Small Wars,* p. vii.
[540] 'Address by Sir Roderick I. Murchison', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, XII (1868) p. 275, in James R. Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997) p. 95.
[541] Henry Dundas Napier, ed., *Field-Marshal Lord Napier of Magdala G.C.B., G.C.S.I., A Memoir by His Son Lieut.-Colonel Hon. H. D. Napier C.M.G.*, (London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1927) p. 253.
[542] Whitworth Porter, *History of the Corps of Royal Engineers*, Vol. 2 (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1889) p. 9.
[543] Ford, *The Grim Reaper,* p. 19; Arthur Sullivan and William Gilbert, *The Pirates of Penzance: Or, The Slave of Duty,* (London: Chappell & Co., 1911 [1879]).

For decades after the Ashanti war, a well-organised and well-executed job in England was said to be 'All Sir Garnet'.[544] This focus on intelligence set the imperial soldier apart from the traditional officer ideal. Napier recalled an illustrative case from his first campaign in India. The Commanding officer needed a unit for a particularly important night guard duty and Napier recommended Colonel Taylor as, 'an excellent and clear-headed soldier'. The commander replied, 'I want the *hearts* of the army, not their heads, Captain Napier', who claimed he 'was not politician enough to make any reply'.[545]

Wolseley liked to think that he was seen as a radical. In his second-place Wellington Prize essay on British continental tactics, he challenged traditionalists with the claim that, 'the more one studies the battles lately fought in France, the more one is convinced that the…days of grand imposing charges of horsemen in masses are past, and only to be remembered amongst the spirit-stirring deeds of a bygone era'.[546] He asserted, more directly than many were willing to, that 'as a rule, it may be accepted that general actions will henceforth be fought along lines of railway communication', and proposed that fully armoured trains equipped with heavy artillery should be developed to push into enemy territory.[547] Incidentally, the first armoured train in British warfare would make its appearance ten years later in Wolseley's 1882 Egyptian campaign.[548] His advocacy of Cardwell's reforms, connections with radical politicians, and public condemnation of mainstream officers made him much disliked among sections of the military establishment. From at least the early 1880s, Cambridge and a group of senior officers (including Lord Napier of

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[544] Ibid., p. 19.
[545] Robert Cornelis Napier, *Personal Narrative Written Shortly After the Actions of the Moodkee and Feroze-Shuhur by Captain R. Napier, Bengal Engineers* (Hertford: Stephen Austin, c. 1845) p. 15.
[546] Wolseley, *'Ubique' - 7.777.777,* p. 219.
[547] Ibid., p. 251.
[548] Bailes, *The Influence of Continental Examples and Colonial Warfare upon the Reform of the Late Victorian Army*, p. 241.

Magdala) considered him to be insubordinate and tried to stymie his career.[549] Wolseley claimed that the Duke and his staff were ignorant of modern warfare and that their reactionary sentimentalism held the army back from achieving efficiency.[550] Some of his suggestions can be read as including insults toward this 'old guard' to which he felt opposed. 'The attempt to carry about a table or chair during the active work of a campaign is ridiculous', he claimed in the 'Field equipment for officers' section of his *Soldier's Pocket Book*.[551] Though published for public consumption, the *Pocket Book* was also a practical general military manual. Captain Glover found that some of his officers were 'not provided with this work, which I consider essentially necessary', and ordered twelve copies to be delivered to his base in West Africa, paid for out of his expedition fund.[552]

Myatt argued that, by the time of the Abyssinian expedition, 'the beau ideal of a soldier…had become a bronzed, bearded individual, preferably in a funny hat and tattered drill stained with coffee'.[553] That ideal had developed in the colonial Indian context and existed in parallel with a strictly regimented martial ideal in the metropole. Alexander believed that the conditions of New Zealand warfare did not fit with parade ground discipline. 'The attitude of a bush fighter', he argued, 'is not a dignified one, neither is that in deer-stalking…he must stoop, and creep, and take advantage of whatever cover presents itself'.[554] Wolseley challenged regimental tradition when he ordered all his soldiers to wear a loose uniform of grey homespun, designed for jungle

[549] Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army 1868-1902,* p. 70.
[550] Ibid., p. 70.
[551] Sir Garnet Wolseley, *The Soldier's Pocket-Book for Field Service*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1871) p. 12.
[552] John Glover to Crown Agents for the Colonies, TNA, CO 879/5, No. 360, 9 Oct. 1873, p. 264; Colonial Office to Crown Agents for the Colonies, TNA, CO 879/5, No. 388, p. 287.
[553] Frederick Myatt, *The March to Magdala: The Abyssinian War of 1868* (London: Leo Cooper Ltd., 1970) p. 110.
[554] Alexander, *Bush Fighting,* p. 2.

conditions.[555] He even forced the 42nd Highlanders to abandon their kilts for the new trousers.[556] To imperial-focused soldiers, such actions were justified by the difficult conditions of colonial conflict. To many continentalists, they smacked of lax discipline and radical reform.

2.6 Conclusions: Officer and a Gentleman and a Scholar

In 1884, Callwell claimed that, 'the revolution in Tactics – the natural result of the experiences of the breech-loader in 1866 and 1870 – has given birth to a whole library of works', of new tactical theory. Yet, within this growing corpus of professional military science, he found that 'the lessons to be drawn from these works are of no great value to us in our frequent contests with the savage tribes that in all parts of the globe border the British empire'.[557] Callwell believed that most of the military theory in Britain revolved around a few narrow issues copied from almost identical German principles and that none of it applied to imperial conflicts against non-European foes. Alexander likewise found when he returned from the Maori wars that, 'I could find no good manual on bush fighting'.[558] Indeed, despite the increased call for more 'scientific' officers for imperial service, many of them still felt ignored and peripheral to the military as a whole. After a lecture at RUSI, Captain Colomb spoke to the assembled officers as if they were a club of outcasts:

> it is worthy of note that this Institution has supplied a want which must be acknowledged by all who consider the present state of the organization of our forces and the administrative power. England embraces in the folds of her Empire more square miles of bush territory, and more savage people, than any other civilized power. It is reasonable to suppose, and past history shows it to be the case, that for one war we have with a civilised power, we have about ten with savages; yet with all our boasted reorganization, that fact appears to be totally passed over; and I doubt

[555] TNA, WO 147/27, Precis of the Ashanti Expedition, Intelligence Department, Horse Guards, War Office, 13th April 1874, p. 15.
[556] Ibid., p. 15; Alan Lloyd, *The Drums of Kumasi: The Story of the Ashanti Wars* (London: Longmans Green and Co., 1964) p. 106.
[557] Callwell, *Notes on the Tactics of our Small Wars,* p. 531.
[558] Alexander, *Bush Fighting,* p. 7.

> whether, if we had rumours of disturbances within our territory in New Zealand, or in Honduras or at the Cape, when the administrators of our war forces wished for information as regards those countries, they would find the information anywhere but in the records of this Institution.[559]

It is, perhaps, not surprising that imperial-focused soldiers played a significant role in the mounting professionalisation of the British officer corps. RUSI was central to that process. Tucker argued that 'Britain's aristocratic respect for the gentleman amateur as regimental officer would gradually have to yield to a more demanding and more pervasive military education. The *JRUSI* reflected this change'.[560] The journal published on a wide scope of topics, but the content was suggestive of the imperial school above all else. Bailes concluded that the *JRUSI* of this period, 'gave little room to criticism of the Cardwell system, and much space to the latest technological and organizational ideas'.[561] The Royal United Services Institution of India (RUSII) formed in 1870 and also published a journal of proceedings.[562] While certainly conservative on some subjects, it devoted considerable attention to small and frontier warfare.

Callwell was a later contributor to the variegated discourse on small wars, and benefited from it greatly. His major achievement was not the creation of this school of military theory, but the bringing together and systematising of many colonial military practices that had already been in use, clearly evidenced by his relentless reference to case studies. The result, Beckett claimed, 'represents the only original and distinctive contribution to the development of military thought by any British soldier in the nineteenth century'.[563] *Small Wars*

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559 Col J. C. Gawler, 'British Troops and Savage Warfare, with Special Reference to the Kaffir Wars,' *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute* 17 (1873) p. 938.
560 Albert Tucker, 'Military,' in *Victorian Periodicals and Victorian Society*, eds. J. Don Vann and Rosemary T. Van Arsdel (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994) p. 69.
561 Bailes, *Patterns of Thought in the Late Victorian Army,* p. 34.
562 'USI History', *RUSII* (http://www.usiofindia.org/About/History/).
563 Ian F. W. Beckett, 'Another British Way in Warfare: Charles Callwell and Small Wars,' in *Victorians at War: New Perspectives*, ed. Ian F. W. Beckett, *The Society for Army Historical Research*, Special Publication No. 16, 2007) p. 95; Ian F. W. Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and*

was sanctioned by the War Office Intelligence Department and made required reading at the Staff College until 1934, when it was succeeded by Sir Charles Gwynn's *Imperial Policing*.[564]

Robert Home, commanding Royal Engineer of the Ashanti expedition, in many ways epitomised the professional idea of an imperial officer. One of the first officers to emerge from the new Staff College at Sandhurst, he showed a proclivity for analysis throughout his career. After working on the new Portland defences, he was sent to Canada to prepare a report on defending the western frontier from invasion. His able recommendations led to his appointment to the staff at Aldershot. He also served in the War Office Topographical and Statistical Department and its successor, the Intelligence Branch. From 1870, Home was the secretary of the Royal Engineers committee, a standing scientific committee frequently called on to evaluate technological developments.[565]

After his work on Wolseley's expedition, where he oversaw the cutting, bridging, and housing of the army's entire march to Coomassie, Home returned to the Intelligence Branch and various War Office think tanks. He was perhaps the most substantial contributor to the 1875 Army mobilisation plan and the 'Regulations for the organization of the line of communications of an army in the field'.[566] His *Précis of Modern Tactics,* already discussed, became an official textbook. He translated and annotated several other French and German military works and contributed to *Macmillan's,* the *Quarterly Review,* the *Pall*

Counter-Insurgencies: Guerrillas and their opponents since 1750 (London: Routledge, 2001) p. 35.

[564] Ibid (2007).

[565] R. H. Vetch, 'Home, Robert (1837-1879)', rev. Roger T. Stearn, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <www.oxforddnb.com>.

[566] 'Naval and Military Intelligence', *The Times,* 11 Jun. 1878, p. 5; 'The New Etappen System for the English Army', *The Times,* 27 Dec. 1878, p. 9; 'Colonel Home, R.E., C.B.', *The Times*, 31 Jan. 1879, p. 2.

Mall Gazette, The Academy, and the *Cornhill Magazine*.[567] He was, of course, also a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. 'He belonged to a class', as a colleague posthumously described him:

> a well-known one among English officers who have done individual work among half-civilized races, the class of which Gordon was the supreme type – who combine great practical ability in administration and fighting with a strongly imaginative idealism…Such men are very often strongly convinced imperialists, England having in their eyes a special mission to bring light to the dark corners of the earth.[568]

Had his career continued, it is entirely likely that Home would have left an indelible mark on British military thought and doctrine, but he contracted typhoid while surveying the border of Bulgaria and died in January 1879.[569] Robert Home was a thoroughly professional and intellectual officer and a prominent member of the 'Wolseley Ring'. His obituary in *The Times* reflected that Home's influence, 'was known to a comparatively limited circle; but that circle comprised most of those to whose hands the destinies of the Empire have been intrusted during the last two Administrations'.[570] The same could be said of many imperial officers in the Victorian army.

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[567] Robert Home (all), 'London Fortified', *Macmillan's*, Vol. 23, no. 136 (Feb. 1871) pp. 273-85; 'Are We Ready?', *Macmillan's*, Vol. 22, no. 132 (Oct. 1870) pp. 401-9; 'Army Organization', *Macmillan's*, Vol. 23, no. 133 (Nov. 1870) pp. 73-9; 'The Army Regulation Bill', *Quarterly Review*, Vol. 130, no. 260 (Apr. 1871) pp. 556-76; 'The Annals of a Fortress', *The Academy*, 22 May 1875, pp. 522-3; 'Recollections of Colonel de Gonneville', *The Academy*, 23 Oct. 1875, pp. 422-3; 'The Franco-German War', *The Academy*, 21 Aug. 1875, pp. 184-5; 'The Invasion of England', *Cornhill Magazine*, Vol. 26, no. 151 (Jul. 1872) pp. 21-32.
[568] Quoted in Dwight Lee, *Great Britain and the Cyprus Convention Policy of 1878* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934).
[569] Vetch, *Robert Home (1837-1879)*.
[570] 'Colonel Home, R.E., C.B.', *The Times*, 31 Jan. 1879, p. 2.

Chapter 3: The British 'Idea' of Africa the Enemy

> The fact that small wars are, generally speaking, campaigns rather against nature than against hostile armies…constitutes one of the most distinctive characteristics of this class of warfare. It affects the course of operations…so vitally at times as to govern the whole course of the campaign from start to finish.[571]

Such was Colonel C. E. Callwell's characterisation in *Small Wars*. When *The Times* announced Wolseley's appointment as supreme civil and military commander of the British Gold Coast possessions, it justified his (somewhat controversial) suitability for the position by the fact that he had, 'seen how small bodies of disciplined soldiers, led by English officers, can crush large masses of semi-civilized men; he has learnt how to subdue the obstacles interposed by Nature to his purpose, and to do so without wasting the lives of those placed under his command'. The article proposed that, 'the difficulty of penetrating inland to the seat of the Ashantee Power is not greater than that of forcing a way from Lake Superior to Fort Garry'.[572]

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[571] Colonel C. E. Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1996 [1896]) p. 57.

[572] *The Times*, 19 Aug. 1873; A similar rationale was put forward in 'The Ashantee War', *The Lancet,* Vol. 102, no. 2608 (23 Aug. 1873) p. 268.

Wolseley had seen action in the Indian Mutiny and the 1860 Anglo-French expedition to China, but none in Africa. Metis Separatists in Manitoba fought in a reasonably modern fashion by British standards and, in any case, Wolseley had never actually fought them. What really qualified, or seemed to qualify, Wolseley to lead the Ashanti expedition was the fact that he had managed to get his force across the Canadian wilderness and back again. That the commanders of the Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions were chosen for their believed ability to 'subdue the obstacles interposed by nature' was indicative of the underlying British image of Africa. Press and military accounts of the expeditions were framed by discourses emplotting a battle against the natural world, and portraying the people of Abyssinia and Ashanti as reflecting that natural world.

The 15th Earl of Derby termed the Ashanti war, 'to a great extent, a battle between Science and Nature', and a *Lancet* article declared that 'this will be a war with climate'.[573] Such framing made the conflict a source of considerable anxiety to military authorities, the government, and the general public. As *The Lancet* continued, 'this is the fourth war in which we have been engaged in this [West Coast] climate; and the results of the former wars have not been very encouraging'.[574] Put simply, Britain in 1868-74 had precious few examples from its history in which African nature had been successfully overcome.[575] When the 33rd Regiment landed at Zoulla, they were the first European army to stand on that beach since Cristóvão De Gama's five hundred men over three hundred

[573] 'The Ashantee Expedition', *The Lancet,* Vol. 102, no. 2618 (1 Nov. 1873) p. 635; 'The Medical Aspects of the Ashantee Expedition', *The Lancet,* Vol. 102, no. 2603 (19 Jul. 1873) p. 87.
[574] Ibid. (no. 2603), p. 88.
[575] Philip D. Curtin, *Disease and Empire: The Health of European Troops in the Conquest of Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) p. 21.

years earlier.[576] There were plenty of gaps in the popular understanding of these places for imaginations to fill in. Captain Rogers claimed of the Gold Coast: 'the most opposite theories meet on neutral ground out there; for all is fog and smoke and cimerian (*sic*) darkness...who would not believe the wildest stories, the most fabulous inventions concerning such a country and such a people? Absolutely anything!'[577]

Victorian society drew on a resulting pervasive 'idea' of Africa that was absolutely deadly. Received knowledge, common knowledge, and the tone of the press all made up an overlapping and fairly consistent image of the Africa that would await the expeditions. This chapter will explore that image, and sketch an impression of the spectre of African nature as it appeared in the British imagination.

3.1 The Land

When Wolseley returned to London with the bulk of his (white) troops, Cambridge issued congratulatory general orders, which appeared in the newspapers. The British troops, he stressed, had to face, 'not only organised savage tribes in their own impenetrable bush and paths, hitherto unexplored and known only to themselves, but also to contend against a climate proverbial for sickness and fevers so dangerous to European constitutions'.[578] This prepared statement ramped up the subject of the climate and placed the greatest emphasis upon it. Cambridge knew that the British people saw the African climate as particularly threatening and the surmounting of that climate as the particularly impressive feature of the expedition's success.

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[576] Dr. Beke to Lord Stanley, TNA, FO 881/1600, Received 15 Apr. 1867; Frederick Myatt, *The March to Magdala: The Abyssinian War of 1868* (London: Leo Cooper Ltd., 1970) p. 75.
[577] Capt. E. Rogers, 'The Ashantee War,' *United Service Magazine*, no. 537 (Aug. 1873), 497.
[578] John Joseph Crooks, ed., *Records Relating to the Gold Coast Settlements from 1750 to 1874* (London: Frank Cass, 1973) p. 533; Also included in TNA, WO 211/71, 'The Ashanti expedition of 1873-1874: news cuttings, correspondence and extracts from letters from Hart's son, Lieut. A. Fitzroy Hart'.

Government policy had strictly opposed using British troops in tropical Africa since 1863-4, the last time a campaign had been attempted against the Ashanti. In what Brackenbury would later describe as the 'the abortive effort of 1864', a British force marched inland to the Prah River, the border of Ashanti territory, just in time for the onset of the rainy season.[579] Sickness spread quickly, the commander ordered the cannons to be buried and abandoned, and everyone withdrew back to Cape Coast Castle.[580] Disease killed so many soldiers that General Peel compared the disaster to the Crimea.

Sir John Hay, a Conservative MP whose brother was among the casualties, brought a motion of censure against Palmerston's government:

> I appeal to this House to do justice to its soldiers…I entreat you to lay the blood of our brethren…at the door of Her Majesty's Ministers. I move, Sir, that Her Majesty's Government, in landing forces on the Gold Coast for the purpose of waging war against the King of Ashantee without making any sufficient provision for preserving the health of the troops to be employed there, have incurred a grave responsibility, and that this House laments the want of foresight which has caused so large a loss of life.[581]

Bitter criticism was heaped on the Liberals, Palmerston narrowly evaded defeat, and Cardwell, then Colonial Secretary, instructed that British troops would never again be deployed to such deadly climates.[582] 'Such is the irony of fate', *The Lancet* later noted in 1873, 'that Mr. CARDWELL has now to adopt a policy which he opposed ten years ago, when Lord PALMERSTON was in power'.[583]

During the preparations for the 1873 Ashanti expedition, therefore, Wolseley attempted to reassure Cambridge that, 'if I possibly can attain the

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[579] Henry Brackenbury and G. L. Huyshe, *Fanti and Ashanti: Three Papers Read on Board the S.S. Ambriz on the Voyage to the Gold Coast* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1873) p. 34.
[580] Brackenbury and Huyshe, *Fanti and Ashanti,* pp. 32-3; Henry M. Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala: The Story of Two British Campaigns in Africa* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low & Searle, 1874) pp. 18-19.
[581] HC Deb 17 June 1864 vol. 175 col. 1962-3.
[582] Cardwell to Gov. Pine, 23 Jun. 1864, Parliamentary Papers: 'Accounts and Papers' (1873), XLIX, pp. 864-5, discussed in W. D. McIntyre, 'British Policy in West Africa: The Ashanti Expedition of 1873-4,' *The Historical Journal* 5, no. 1 (1962) pp. 22-3; John D. Hargreaves, *Prelude to the Partition of West Africa* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1963) p. 65.
[583] 'The Ashantee War', *The Lancet*, Vol. 102, no. 2625 (20 Dec., 1873) p. 884.

objects in view without landing European soldiers, I shall certainly endeavor to do so, as I am most anxious to avoid exposing the lives of more than are absolutely necessary, to the baneful influences of such a climate'.[584] Cambridge's general instructions to Wolseley made clear that the policy toward the Gold Coast had not changed. The majority of the document focused directly on the issue of exposure. In one of many examples, Cardwell instructed Wolseley to bear in mind:

1. That European soldiers ought never to be exposed to the influence of that climate, when the service required can be performed by Houssas, or by Native Auxiliaries, or by any other Force indigenous to the country.
2. Nor unless the service is of paramount importance to the main object of your mission.
3. Nor unless it can be accomplished with a rapidity of execution which may render the exposure to the climate very short. [585]

Cardwell warned him that, 'nothing but conviction of necessity would induce Her Majesty's Government to engage in any operation involving the possibility of its requiring the service of Europeans at the Gold Coast'.[586] If sheer space is taken as proportional to importance, then the African climate was the most important single element of the government's orders.

After assessing the situation in the Gold Coast protectorate, Wolseley did indeed send a request for British troops, claiming that the Fante army were unwilling and unable to fight. Kimberley granted that request, on the condition that, 'you will not employ this force, especially in the interior, a day longer than the paramount objects of your mission may require. The limit of their employment is fixed by the continuance of the more healthy season.'[587] From the initial planning stage of the Abyssinian expedition, similarly, it was 'made

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[584] Wolseley to Field Marshal HRH George, Duke of Cambridge**,** 3 September 1873, MSS, RA VIC/ADD E/1/7191, in Ian F. W. Beckett, ed., *Wolseley and Ashanti: The Asante War Journal and Correspondence of Major General Sir Garnet Wolseley 1873-1874* (Stroud, Gloucestershire, UK: The History Press for the Army Records Society, 2009) p. 62.

[585] Edward Cardwell to Wolseley**,** 8 September 1873, TNA, WO 106/285; WO 147/27; CO 879/6; CO 96/107; BPP, Cmd. 1891, in Ibid., pp. 63-4.

[586] Ibid., p. 65.

[587] Kimberley to Wolseley**,** 24 November 1873, TNA, CO 879/6. in Ibid., p. 224.

generally known that Her Majesty's Government would greatly deprecate any necessity for a British force remaining in Abyssinia longer than might be absolutely requisite for the accomplishment of [the desired] objects'.[588] The Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions were soon praised for the efficiency and speed with which they had been conducted, the leaders admired for their ability to rush their men in and out. It was quickly forgotten that this focus on speed was born in part out of anxiety. Indeed, Napier and Wolseley had their economy of schedule imposed upon them.

Wolseley wrote to Captain Glover that, 'the English Govt. look to me to get the British Regts. away from this Coast with the least possible delay: next to beating the Ashantees or at least humbling them, this early withdrawal of the English troops from the Coast is I believe the object most desired at home'.[589] Wolseley knew that he might have to make an exit before properly defeating King Karikari. He mused to his wife that, 'I seem always to be condemned to command in Expeditions which must be accomplished before a certain season of the year begins.' The Red River expedition had to be completed before the Canadian frost set in and his mission in Ashanti required that he 'only keep the British Regts. on shore for about six weeks'.[590] One of Wolseley's major qualifications for command, claimed *The Lancet*, was his proven ability to evade the Manitoba winter, as 'to waste time is to waste both money and lives'.[591]

By the end of the expedition, most were eager to heed Kimberley's advice and clear out. Wolseley had been made administrator of the Gold Coast for the course operation but, with his embarkation for England, someone had to

[588] Trevenen J. Holland and Henry Hozier, *The Expedition to Abyssinia Compiled by Order of the Secretary of State for War* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO), 1870) p. 35.
[589] Wolseley to Glover, 24 December 1873, Govt House, Cape Coast CUL, RCMS 131/6, Glover MSS, in Beckett, *Wolseley and Ashanti,* p. 288.
[590] Wolseley to Louisa Wolseley, 16 December 1873, Hove, Wolseley MSS, W/P 3/17, in Ibid., pp. 274-5.
[591] 'The Ashantee War', *The Lancet,* Vol. 102, no. 2608 (23 Aug. 1873) p. 268.

take his place. Four officers were each offered the position at an annual salary of £4,000 yet, Kimberley later recalled, 'one & all replied – "not if we receive £4000 a day!" The climate is our real enemy.'[592] If the Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions were to be campaigns against nature then, in the public discourse, nature was emplotted as a rival combatant.

In the preface to his history of the expedition, Captain Hozier declared that, 'in the Abyssinian campaign the enemies to be feared more than the open foe were natural obstacles and starvation'.[593] In their description of Abyssinia and Ashanti, commentators repeatedly employed language that characterised the landscape as a barrier to Europeans, to civilisation, and to technology.[594] These discourses marked the land as something that had to be penetrated and that would be difficult to penetrate. Lieutenant Borrett wrote to his wife that, 'the Commander-in-Chief and other Officers who have been through the Crimean and all the numerous Indian wars, say, that no English army ever had to endure such hardships or go through such an amount of fatigue as the army in Abyssinia'.[595] *The Sheffield Daily Telegraph* similarly quoted an unnamed officer who reported that, 'Old campaigners of the Crimea, Indian Mutiny, and China say nothing ever came up to the fatigue and privations of this.'[596] The *Illustrated London News* described the campaigns as, 'heat and cold…wearisome ascents, perilous descents, high mountain passes, deep gorges…these were

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[592] John Wodehouse, *The Journal of John Wodehouse, First Earl of Kimberley, 1862-1902*, eds. Angus Hawkins and John Powell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997 [1912]) p. 287.
[593] Henry Hozier, *The British Expedition to Abyssinia: Compiled from Authentic Documents* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1869) p. v.
[594] Clements R. Markham, *A History of the Abyssinian Expedition* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1869) p. 270; 'A Staff-Officer' [William Tweedie], 'Letters from a Staff-Officer with the Abyssinian Expedition. - Part III,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 106, no. 634 (Aug. 1868) p. 219.
[595] Herbert Charles Borrett, *My Dear Annie: The Letters of Lieutenant Herbert Charles Borrett, the King's Own Royal Regiment, Written to His Wife, Annie, during the Abyssinian Campaign of 1868*, ed. R. White (Lancaster, UK: Kings Own Royal Regiment Museum, 2003) p. 32.
[596] *The Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 30 Apr. 1868; Also included in Frank Emery, *Marching Over Africa: Letters from Victorian Soldiers* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1986) p. 40.

the foes with which our brave soldiers had to maintain a daily warfare'.[597] In a book-length history published by the same newspaper, Roger Acton characterised the Takazze canyon as, 'a stupendous mountain wall, running from east to west, having a straight and even top without any visible break. It might have been fancied to be a Titanic rampart erected by some freak of the Earth-Spirit, on purpose to bar any farther advance.'[598]

After the Ashanti expedition, Brackenbury described the hardships of living, 'always shut in by this dense wall of foliage on either side…always enclosed by these walls, which none the less imprison because they are of leaves and not of stone'.[599] During his keynote speech at a reception held in the expedition's honour, Wolseley mocked a particular 'distinguished gentleman', who:

> when applied to officially for information as to the feasibility of using English troops in the interior…was pleased to state that it was impossible for English soldiers to march in such a climate, and that to take a thousand white men into the bush would require 6,000 black men to carry them.[600]

Sir William Muir, Director-General of the Army Medical Department, quoted an officer who had been part of the Red River Expedition having said in Ashanti, 'we lived on the climate then, but here the climate lives on us'.[601] Muir and the

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[597] *Illustrated London News,* 2 May 1868, p. 422; Also discussed in James R. Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997) p. 94.

[598] Roger Acton, *The Abyssinian Expedition and the Life and Reign of King Theodore* (London: Office of the Illustrated London News, 1868) p. 57.

[599] Henry Brackenbury, *The Ashanti War, A Narrative: Prepared from the Official Documents by Permission of Major-General Sir Garnet Wolseley* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1874) 2:4.

[600] Wolseley's Speech at the Mansion House**,** 31 March 1874, *The Times,* 1 Apr. 1874, in Beckett, *Wolseley and Ashanti,* pp. 420-1

[601] E. A. Parkes, *On the Issue of a Spirit Ration during the Ashanti Campaign of 1874* (London: J. & A. Churchill, 1875) pp. 9-10; E. A. Parkes, 'Report on the issue of a spirit ration during the march to Coomassie', *The Lancet*, Vol. 104, no. 2660 (22 Aug., 1874) pp. 263-7.

expedition's medical officer, Captain Huyshe, recommended that drinking cold tea might provide some resistance to the tropical fevers.[602]

As had long been the popular phrasing, most soldiers and journalists still referred to the West Coast of Africa as, 'the so-called white man's grave'.[603] Wolseley further specified Sierra Leone as the 'Grave of the Englishman'.[604] Cambridge told the House of Lords that, 'it was impossible for Europeans to remain on the coast except for a few hours at a time'.[605] Much has been written on the medical perils of West Africa and it need only be noted here that during the Ashanti expedition it remained common knowledge and official policy that white men could not survive there.[606]

Abyssinia had not been expected to prove much better, at least in the public sphere. In both reality and accepted medical thought of the time, the climate of East Africa was considerably less dangerous than that of the Gold Coast. That fact, however, had not filtered into the dominant cultural impression of Africa. Holland and Hozier wrote that the daily journals:

> drew ghastly pictures of the malaria of the coast and the insalubrity of the country…The climate was hastily laid down as similar to that of the West Coast of Africa. Insurance offices raised their rates mercilessly to the officers volunteering for the service, who were regarded as rushing blindfold into suicide.[607]

'The medical department in the Abyssinian campaign, were, happily, but lightly taxed', reported Henty, 'nevertheless, it must be remembered that the prophecies and warnings against the climate were quite as great in one

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[602] Ibid; C. A. Gordon, 'Remarks in Reference to Service on the Gold Coast', *The Lancet,* Vol. 102, no. 2617 (25 Oct. 1873) p. 587.
[603] W. T. Dooner, *Jottings En Route to Coomassie* (London: W. Mitchell & Co., 1874) p. 2.
[604] Field-Marshal Viscount Wolseley, *The Story of a Soldier's Life* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903) 2:285.
[605] *The Times*, 31 Mar. 1874.
[606] Alfred W. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) p. 138.
[607] Holland and Hozier, *Expedition to Abyssinia,* p. 59.

campaign as in the other'.[608] Abyssinia and Ashanti were at least seen to pose comparable threats.

Vice-Admiral Sir John Dalrymple Hay admitted that, 'the Gold Coast is less unhealthy than Sierra Leone, the Gambia, or Lagos, but, nevertheless, it is a climate most injurious to European life'.[609] 'It is not pleasant seeing one's friend knocked over', wrote Lieutenant Dooner, 'undoubtedly the West Coast of Africa is a vile climate'.[610] Whatever the actual dangers, more important to the present discussion is how bad the Victorians *expected* them to be when the expeditions were launched. Surgeon-Major Albert Gore described Western Africa, 'as embracing the whole range of the most important of the tropical diseases'.[611] During the preparation for the Ashanti invasion, Dr. Home, the principal medical officer on the Coast, 'had been specially sent out on account of his great experience in sanitary duties'. The fact that a disease specialist was selected to precede even the first arrival of officers is indicative of the War Office's focus. He recommended that any expedition would require hospital accommodation for not less than 45% of the European force, with an additional 7% in reserve. The Director-General of the Army Medical Department ordered Home's recommendations to be carried out.[612] Expedition planners were anticipating a large proportion of the European troops would be incapacitated, and worse.

Such was believed to be the case in Abyssinia as well. During the proposal stage, Napier informed Cambridge that, 'the expedition would be very expensive and troublesome, and if not a hostile shot is fired the casualties from

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[608] G. A. Henty, *The March to Coomassie*, 2nd ed. (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1874) p. 431.
[609] Sir John Dalrymple Hay, *Ashanti and the Gold Coast, and what we Know of it: A Sketch* (London: Edward Stanford, 1874) p. 21.
[610] Dooner, *Jottings En Route,* p. 22.
[611] Surgeon-Major Albert Gore, *A Contribution to the Medical History of our West African Campaigns* (London: Baillière, Tindall and Cox, 1876) p. 1.
[612] TNA, WO 147/27, Precis of the Ashanti Expedition, Intelligence Department, Horse Guards, War Office, 13th April 1874, pp. 6-7.

climate and accident will amount to ten times the number of captives'.[613] The Army's research dossier on the area quoted Mansfield Parkyns' 1853 travel account *Life in Abyssinia*, which stated that the lowland valleys through which the army would have to pass, 'are much to be feared from the malaria which prevails and which brings on, in persons exposed to its influence, most terrible inflammatory fevers, of which four cases out of five are fatal'.[614] Parkyns and Bruce had visited the areas in question, but these were dated and rather narrative sources upon which to base a military expedition. Hozier concluded that, 'the climate of the lowland on the African coast was believed to be more dangerous to European constitutions than that of the most unhealthy stations of India'.[615] A dire comparison indeed, even for Napier's Anglo-Indian army.

In his own published contribution to the media buzz, John Camden Hotten claimed that:

> It is understood that the Government has received more unsolicited advice upon what is commonly known as the 'Abyssinian Difficulty' than upon any other question of politics which has engaged public attention for some time. During many months past the newspaper press has teemed with editorial articles and letters from correspondents, making comments and offering suggestions of every conceivable character.[616]

Newspapers declared that, 'fever, dysentery, ague, and a long train of diseases besides, were to meet the army at every turn; ugly flies with ugly names were to annoy the men, and kill the animals; scorpions and snakes were to be the scourge of all and sundry; water was always to be scarce, and often poisonous'.[617] Colonel Robert Phayre, head of the Abyssinian reconnoitring expedition, had been sent well ahead to plot out the route for the main

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[613] Henry Dundas Napier, *Field-Marshal Lord Napier of Magdala G.C.B., G.C.S.I., A Memoir by His Son Lieut.-Colonel Hon. H. D. Napier C.M.G.*, (London: Edward Arnold & Co, 1927) p. 203.
[614] Mansfield Parkyns, *Life in Abyssinia: Being notes collected during three years' residence and travel in that country*, (London: John Murray, 1853) 1:9-10; Holland and Hozier, *Expedition to Abyssinia,* p. xiv.
[615] Hozier, *British Expedition to Abyssinia,* p. 69.
[616] John Camden Hotten, ed., *Abyssinia and its People; Or, Life in the Land of Prester John* (London: John Camden Hotten, 1868) p. 306.
[617] A. F. Shepherd, *The Campaign in Abyssinia* (Bombay: Times of India Office, 1868) p. xi.

expedition, and was thus one of the first to get a first-hand look at the landscape. He reported to Napier, still making preparations in Bombay, that, 'though there are difficulties, yet they are magnified a good deal by persons who do not and will not, see their way out of them, but are so impressed with the miserable and untruthful tone of the Press, that they view everything through that medium'.[618] That same week, Cambridge complained to Napier that, 'the English papers have, I think, been writing very foolishly as regards this War…I should hope that the fears expressed as regards the badness of the climate are much exaggerated'.[619] The real and imaginary dangers, the prudent and paranoid precautions, all combined with a dearth of solid information and a sensationalist press to create something terrifying. As Stanley summarised, 'in short, there was no known horror, danger, or disease, which was not prophesized would befall the Expedition'.[620] 'One thing is clear', an anonymous *Lancet* writer similarly reported of Ashanti, 'the expedition can scarcely prove a greater failure than it has been prophesised that it will be'.[621]

3.1.1 There Be Dragons

Abyssinia was cast as a lifeless wasteland. Stanley described an expanse, 'undulating as far as vision of man can reach, in nude dunes, bereft of the least signs of shrub, rolling like a vitrified sea – such was the Wadela plateau rising above the nether world: strangest freak of nature this!'[622] Phayre warned Napier that he, 'should not like to detain European Troops for one hour longer than requisite on this alluvial soil…[which] must be feverish from its very

[618] TNA, WO 107/08, 'Robert Phayre of the Reconnoitring Expedition to Robert Napier', 13th Nov. 1867, p. 2.
[619] Robert Cornelis Napier, *Letters of Field-Marshal Lord Napier of Magdala*, ed. Henry Dundas Napier (Norwich, UK: Jarrold and Sons Ltd, 1936) p. 13.
[620] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala,* p. 284.
[621] 'The Sanitary Aspects of the Ashantee Expedition', *The Lancet,* Vol. 102, no. 2616 (18 Oct. 1873) p. 564.
[622] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala,* p. 384.

character'.[623] Hozier explained that the expedition had to navigate, 'the unhealthy lowland of the Soudan, which teems with fever and malaria'.[624] Shepherd even claimed that, 'often one steps from solid ground into a perfect bog…it is said that a body of three-hundred Galla horsemen, having been repulsed near Ashangi a few weeks before had fled precipitately towards the lake, and having rushed unawares upon one of these treacherous quagmires, disappeared at once and for ever'.[625]

The War Office dossier on the region also quoted the explorer James Bruce, who reported in his 1790 *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile* that, for much of the year, 'it is death to sleep in the [lowland] country…the whole inhabitants retire and live in villages on the top of the neighbouring mountains'.[626] Tweedie similarly wrote that, in the mountain passes to the Tigrean highlands, 'no sign of human habitation meets the eye, excepting where, far away on the summit of some almost inaccessible mountain, wheeling kites indicate to us that a village is probably posted there'.[627] The British public was thus presented with an image of a desolate plain. Humans could only live on the peaks, besieged in their tiny fortresses by the lethal country around them.

Major Butler provided some of the more evocative descriptions of the Gold Coast. During the rainy season, he wrote, 'the giant foliage of the forest

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[623] TNA, WO 107/08, 'Robert Phayre of the Reconnoitring Expedition to Robert Napier', 9th Oct. 1867, p. 3.
[624] Hozier, *British Expedition to Abyssinia,* p. 37.
[625] Shepherd, *The Campaign in Abyssinia,* p. 174.
[626] James Bruce, *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile, In the Years 1768, 1769, 1770, 1771, 1772, and 1773* (London: C. G. J. and J. Robinson, 1790) 3:160; Holland and Hozier, *Expedition to Abyssinia,* p. xiv; The fact that expedition planners consulted this century-old work is illustrative of their difficulty in obtaining reliable intelligence on the region.
[627] 'A Staff-Officer' [William Tweedie], 'Letters from a Staff-Officer with the Abyssinian Expedition. - Part II,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 103, no. 632 (Jun. 1868) p. 729; Also reprinted in Acton, *Life and Reign,* p. 33.

exhaled disease and death from its myriad nostrils'.[628] He described the tropical forests as harbouring, 'rivers teeming with monstrous reptiles…forests filled with uncouth beasts; malaria and poisonous vapour ever rising from its myriad marshes;…fanned by withering breezes which carry death and destruction on their noxious wings'.[629] A veteran of the region told *The Lancet* that the atmosphere poisoned those exposed to it, 'like so much mephitic gas'.[630]

'So vast is this vegetable kingdom', claimed Butler, 'that the animal world sickens and dies out before it – this immense forest holds scarcely a living creature'.[631] Wolseley, likewise, recalled that he, 'never saw an animal during our march to Koomassee, not even a rat or a snake'.[632] Captain Freemantle told an audience at the Royal Geographical Society, 'that animal life, like human life, was exceedingly scarce where the bush or forest is exceedingly thick….and what was there consisted, at any rate as far as he could see, of ants'.[633] It was well known that draft animals could not survive on the coast. Ashanti sat squarely in the West African tsetse fly belt, its armies completely without cavalry.[634] The absence even of domesticated animals added to the impression that the area was, while lush, also somehow lifeless. Winwood Reade reported to *The Times* that:

> all the pictures of the Forest that came back to my mind were somber and sad. Great gloomy trees shedding darkness; creepers coiled round them like serpents; fungi feeding on their flesh; pools of green water; sloughs of black mud, yielding, when stirred with the foot, a sickening stench.[635]

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[628] W. F. Butler, *Akim-Foo: The History of a Failure*, 3rd ed. (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low, & Searle, 1875) p. 47.
[629] Ibid., p. 19.
[630] Gordon, *Remarks in Reference to Service on the Gold Coast*, p. 587.
[631] Butler, *Akim-Foo,* pp. 192-3.
[632] Wolseley, *Soldier's Life,* 2:334.
[633] Capt Sir John Glover, 'Geographical Notes on the Country Traversed between the River Volta and the Niger,' *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society* 18, no. 4 (1874) p. 296.
[634] William Beinart and Lotte Hughes, *Environment and Empire*, ed. Roger Louis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) p. 188.
[635] Winwood Reade, *The Story of the Ashantee Campaign* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1874) p. 401.

On the east bank of the Volta, Stanley described the plant life as a direct threat:

> The black vegetable mould of the morass is still in a state of chaos…Even while we hurry by we feel the influence of the forbidden region…we are conscious that a veil of death hangs over us, and sensible that for breathing that noxious air we shall suffer…below is the rich, deep alluvial deposit of the river, fermenting in the fervid sun and adding still more to the disease which has begun to permeate through our frames.[636]

Henty claimed to fear only 'the death which was lurking unperceived among those palm trees, which hung in the thin, light mists which were rising from the valleys, which was to assail us in the water we drank and in their air we breathed'.[637] In the dominant British image of the Gold Coast, disease seemed to emanate from the water; the soil; the living plants; everything.

Published explorer journals and tales of military daring-do played up such challenges and revelled in the idea that plucky British men could trudge into the harshest environments and succeed. Bravado is so often a reaction to anxiety, however, and the popular imagination still saw African exploration on the scale of the Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions as simply impossible. Indeed, it could seem to have been statistically proven. Butler suggested that the era of African exploration opened with Mungo Park and closed with Livingstone. Inspirational examples, to be sure, but, 'between these men what a host of brave names are links and rivets in a long chain of death. Denham, Clapperton, Landon, Oudeny, Billon, Laing, Toole; all sleep out somewhere in that pitiless land'.[638] Park himself had drowned trying to escape hostile West African natives. What hope could the expedition have? There was a strong and quite vocal thread in the public sphere that it had none. Henty recalled that, during the preparation for the Abyssinian expedition, all African travellers who

[636] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala,* p. 124.
[637] Henty, *The March to Coomassie*, pp. 46-7.
[638] Butler, *Akim-Foo,* p. 20.

offered their opinions, 'had united only in prophesying evil things…freely uttered, and it really appeared as if our expedition was to partake strongly of the nature of a forlorn-hope'.[639] The expedition, claimed Markham, 'was looked upon as hazardous and almost impossible by the guides of public opinion'.[640]

Even after Wolseley's success in Ashanti, Boyle of the *Daily Telegraph* did not believe that Africa had been made any safer. He argued that even the most modern and expensive drainage system, bush clearing, and sanitary measures would not lower the death rate below 25% a year.[641] He cautioned his readers not to be swayed by the example of popular explorers. Livingstone notwithstanding, 'it is proved by a thousand melancholy instances that we *cannot* live in the country', and the odd exceptional cases were 'men of a constitution most unusual in England. To send an official to West Africa is to send him to death'.[642] He repeatedly suggested that Britain leave the Gold Coast entirely. *The Sunday Times* seemed to agree, asserting that:

> Public opinion has been from the first adverse to the war. It is not so much a national affair as a Government whim. It is one of those little wars which cause considerable vexation and involves an expenditure disproportionate to the practical objects and military glory to be attained.[643]

Even the *New York Times* argued that, 'of all the hopeless, futile, foolish expeditions on which troops were ever sent this seems the most hopeless, the most foolish'.[644]

Lieutenant Dooner was irritated that, 'the Press did nothing but abuse the Government of the day for thinking of sending British officers to such a climate; it seemed to be looked on as a quiet process of ridding the earth of our

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[639] G. A. Henty, *The March to Magdala* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1868) p. 2.
[640] Markham, *A History of the Abyssinian Expedition*, p. 1.
[641] Frederick Boyle, *Through Fanteeland to Coomassie: A Diary of the Ashantee Expedition* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1874) pp. 241-2.
[642] Ibid., p. 242.
[643] *The Sunday Times*, 21 Dec. 1873, p. 4.
[644] 'The Abyssinian Expedition', *New York Times*, 1 Nov. 1867, p. 2.

presence'.[645] As he assembled his personal equipment for the expedition, a 'friend' advised him not to bother, 'as it would be quite sufficient to go to an undertakers and order a coffin, which was all the kit I would probably ever need'.[646] Wolseley gestured to Dooner and mocked his friend, 'one of the worst of these alarmists', in his Mansion House speech.[647]

As Reade wrote of the proposal to invade Ashanti, 'it is not therefore surprising that the Imperial Government should have been reluctant to cast two of its noble regiments into that dark and dismal forest out of which, perhaps, none might live to return'.[648] That was an important part of the government and public reluctance to launch military expeditions into tropical zones. Intrepid explorers inspired and amazed the British public for the very reason that their dashes into the wild were seen to be against all possible odds. Those were individual men of enterprise, however. It was something quite different for the army to order soldiers into the 'white man's grave'.

Butler cast the forest itself as stubborn and implacable, 'the only forest I have ever seen which defies man; you could not clear it, for the reason that long before you could cut it down, a new forest would have arisen'. He described several supposed 'wise men' in the newspapers that had recommended burning the forest with petroleum oil.[649] Acklom, a contributor to the *United Service Magazine*, also argued that Wolseley use 'that great extirpator "fire," to clear the forest and the river jungle from the skulking, cruel, man-eater, whether biped or quadruped, to scare and destroy moreover the venomous crawling world, to

[645] Dooner, *Jottings En Route,* p. 2.
[646] Ibid., p. 1.
[647] Wolseley's Speech at the Mansion House, 31 March 1874, *The Times,* 1 Apr. 1874, in Beckett, *Wolseley and Ashanti,* p. 420.
[648] Reade, *Ashantee Campaign,* p. 136.
[649] Butler, *Akim-Foo,* p. 192.

suck up the foul death-dealing miasma'.[650] As a communications officer explained in a letter home, however, the Gold Coast bush simply 'will not burn'.[651] Butler similarly countered, 'alas! the African forest is always green, always wet, always fire-proof'.[652] In its defiance of the expedition, Butler's bush thus rejected even that most original and blunt of humanity's tools to alter the environment.

At the outset of the Ashanti campaign, an anonymous artillery officer with fifteen years of experience in the region claimed in the London magazine *Belgravia* that, 'to the general public, until lately, little was known about the West Coast beyond the two facts that it was very unhealthy, and that gold dust came from there'.[653] Such a dichotomy of great riches and certain death had long been the popular image of the African interior, where many maps still showed blank patches.[654] 'The interior of the African continent has been…for the most part a sealed book to the outer world', claimed *Harper's*.[655] 'To live there', wrote Stanley, 'would be like eating of the forbidden fruit'.[656] In North Africa, Butler argued, men had to climb precipitous mountains or dig deep shafts to find gold and consequently risk their bodies to attain it. He contrasted this to the Gold Coast, where:

> Nature had seemingly guarded her treasures by a process more completely effective than that of great distances and giant mountains encompassing them. The grim figure of Fever stood sentry over the mine of wealth, ready to wither with his burning touch the adventurous white man who would dare to seek this gold lying close beneath the red surface of the earth.[657]

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[650] J. E. Acklom, 'The Ashantees,' *United Service Magazine*, no. 540 (Nov. 1873) p. 366.
[651] 'The Ashantee War', *The Dundee Courier & Argus and Northern Warder*, 9 Sep. 1873, p. 6.
[652] Butler, *Akim-Foo,* pp. 192-3.
[653] 'The Ashantee Country', *Belgravia* 22 (Feb., 1874 [Nov. 1873]) p. 68.
[654] Philip D. Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780-1850* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964).
[655] 'Ashantee and the Ashantees', *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 48, no. 283 (Dec. 1873) p. 286.
[656] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala*, p. 98.
[657] Butler, *Akim-Foo,* pp. 228-9.

Consequently, 'for four hundred years Ashanti has sent its gold to the sea. For hundreds of years again there will be gold in that land of death'.[658] Butler notably believed that nature and fever allowed the Ashanti to pass, which gave them exclusive access to the gold from which the coast took its name. In his memoir, Wolseley described the forest with a quote from John Milton's 1645 poem *L'Allegro*: 'it seemed, indeed, that "brooding darkness spread his jealous wings" to protect those "ebon shades" from the invader. If there be gnomes on earth who guard the dark recesses of nature, surely they must haunt these fever-breeding forests of Ashantee'.[659] He told an audience at the Royal Geographical Society that he 'could not, therefore, hold out much hopes of pleasurable excitement to the gold-seekers who might intend to visit that coast'.[660] *The Lancet* agreed that, despite 'the amount of gold existing in that country…the possession of wealth is no recompense for the loss of health which a residence on the West Coast of Africa will almost certainly entail'.[661]

3.1.2 Allied Opposition

In his 1905 military treatise, *West African Warfare*, C. Braithwaite Wallis, former District Commissioner for Sierra Leone and veteran of the Protectorate Frontier Force, described 'the cunning savages of West Africa, who fight amid, and are protected by, their dense and impenetrable forests'.[662] The notion of this special relationship was prominent in 1873 as well. In a lecture at the Royal United Services Institute, Colonel Wood told the gathered officers that 'malaria fought in the van of the Ashantis…who had defied us so long by their weapons

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[658] Ibid., p. 228.
[659] Wolseley, *The Story of a Soldier's Life*, 2:340.
[660] Sir John Glover, 'Geographical Notes on the Country Traversed between the River Volta and the Niger,' *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society* 18, no. 4 (1874) p. 294.
[661] 'The Future of the Gold Coast', *The Lancet,* Vol. 104, no. 2653 (4 Jul. 1874) p. 26.
[662] C. Braithwaite Wallis, *West African Warfare* (London: Harrison & Sons, 1905) p. 2.

of Distance, Disease, and Treachery'.[663] Disease posed such a threat to British soldiers, claimed *The Lancet,* that, 'the expedition may…be likened to the march of a force under fire'.[664] Brackenbury argued that, 'there never was a European population at Cape Coast until the expedition arrived, and yellow fever only attacks Europeans'.[665] The War Office had likewise believed before launching the Abyssinian expedition that the, 'climate of the lowlands was known to be extremely prejudicial to European constitutions'.[666] It was true that African diseases were usually more deadly to Europeans with no previous exposure, but that differential was overblown to the point that, in the public discourse, Africa seemed to hunt white men.

As a reaction to this anxiety, Butler took some solace in the idea that 'African fever finds in British pluck its most obstinate opponent…the staggering limb and wandering brain are kept to their work by the spirit which will not declare itself vanquished'.[667] The British had long valued pluck, fortitude, and phlegmatic perseverance as their core martial qualities. Stanley described Elmina as a nice town built in a European style. Looking down on it from the top of a nearby hill, he saw 'the wide prospect of bush which seems to threaten to bury the town itself in its wide-spreading arms'.[668] Stanley thus presented an image of an isolated beacon of European 'civilised' architecture at risk of being consumed by the African wild.

British commentators in Abyssinia and Ashanti tended to describe the African wildlife as possessing malicious intent, as conspiring against the men of

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[663] Colonel Evelyn Wood, '"The Ashanti Expedition of 1873-4": A Royal United Service Institution Lecture,' *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute,* Vol. 18, no. 2 (1875) pp. 356-7.
[664] 'The Ashantee War', *The Lancet,* Vol. 102, no. 2609 (30 Aug. 1873) p. 307.
[665] Brackenbury, *The Ashanti War, A Narrative,* p. 332.
[666] Hozier, *British Expedition to Abyssinia,* p. xi.
[667] Butler, *Akim-Foo,* p. 238.
[668] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala*, p. 25.

the expeditions. Shepherd in the *Times of India* reported that the swarms of baboons populating Abyssinia:

> insisted upon having a 'constitutional' upon the [telegraph] wire every morning and evening, performing their gymnastic capers with such vigour as to pull it down altogether. *Punch* accounted for the breaking of the Trans-Atlantic cable by suggesting that the playful mermaids made a swinging rope of it; but the exhibitions of these hoards of baboons upon the Abyssinian cable completely eclipsed the Charivari's cartoon, inasmuch as they were not only equally ludicrous and destructive, but perfectly real.[669]

Shepherd introduced the implication that these baboons were acting against modern technology. Butler described a swarm of ants ravaging his provision box as, 'a *corps d'armée* engaged on the highly-disciplined and scientifically-conducted loot of some defenceless French city'.[670] Boyle told of a large tarantula 'slain…in single combat' with Dr. Samuel in 'one of the briskest actions of the war'.[671] The detailed rendition was published both in his book and in the *Telegraph*. The tarantula was described as cruel, planning its attacks, and seeking to strike the Doctor's weakest points. The African servant in Boyle's story fled at the first sight of the arachnid. The tale closely matched tropes associated with colonial tiger hunting, according to which the British were the only ones able to protect the natives from the local fauna. Sramek and others have argued that this trope was presented as proof of the coloniser's fitness to rule over the weaker natives.[672] Critical to the tiger-hunting ideal was that the hunted animal was in fact a dangerous foe, as Boyle presented his spider.

3.1.3 Sporting Pursuits

Appropriately, the officers of the British army, in the popular ideal as much as in their real-world enactment of it, were hunters. Looking back on 50

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[669] Shepherd, *The Campaign in Abyssinia,* p. 158.
[670] Butler, *Akim-Foo,* pp. 94-5.
[671] Boyle, *Fanteeland to Coomassie,* p. 141.
[672] Joseph Sramek, '"Face Him Like a Briton": Tiger Hunting, Imperialism, and British Masculinity in Colonial India, 1800-1875,' *Victorian Studies* 48, no. 4 (Summer, 2006) p. 659.

years of military progress in 1887, Wolseley proposed that, 'no army has officers of such varied experience in all parts of the world as ours; they are to be found in the remotest regions of the earth, relentlessly bent on "sport." They hunt lions in Equatorial Africa, tigers in Bengal, elephants in Ceylon, and other big game in the snows of Thibet'.[673] Such pursuits marked army officers as members of the leisured class, but were also believed to demonstrate and hone their military effectiveness on campaign. Colonel Gawler, former military magistrate to the Kaffir tribes, argued at RUSI, '(at any rate in savage warfare) that the best sportsman makes the best soldier'.[674] In 1901, Callwell questioned why the British army in the Transvaal had fallen into so many Boer traps. He was surprised by this because, 'officers are mostly sportsmen. The favourite pursuits of many of them amount in reality to the pitting of their wits against the marvellous instinct of animals in their natural state'.[675] Callwell was faced with the damning evidence of the British performance in the Boer War and lamented the failure of an idea that for well over a century had been the ideal. This ideal was quite apparent in the Abyssinian war, which seemed like a fine opportunity for a hunting expedition.

Always eager to embrace romantic stereotypes from his affected 'outsider' perspective, Stanley made his way from the British beachhead in pursuit of Napier's advancing army with a certain Captain Smelfungus (Stanley removed or altered most names). Riding at night, they heard the roar of a nearby animal, whereupon the Captain spurred his horse forward, 'like a man bound to clear the way for the troop behind, couching a large boar spear in true

[673] Sir Garnet Wolseley, 'The Army,' in *The Reign of Queen Victoria: A Survey of Fifty Years of Progress*, ed. Thomas Humphrey Ward, Vol. 1 (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1887) p. 219.
[674] Col J. C. Gawler, 'British Troops and Savage Warfare, with Special Reference to the Kaffir Wars,' *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute* 17 (1873) p. 922.
[675] Major C. E. Callwell, *The Tactics of to-Day* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1901) pp. 133-4.

knightly style'.[676] The animal turned out to be a hyena and Smelfungus, returning to the road, told Stanley that it was, 'not worthy of my steel. I mean to reserve this spear for gorillas and wild boars, or lions and hippopotami'.[677] Over the rest of their journey, he shot an absolute legion of birds and small mammals. He claimed to have shot boars, though Stanley never saw any.[678]

Upon hearing a commotion further up the road, Henty emerged from his tent to see a troop of 'very large monkeys' pursued by stone-throwing soldiers. 'Visions of monkey-skins flashed across my mind', he reported, 'snatching up revolvers and sun-helmets, three or four of us joined the chase'.[679] The Abyssinian expedition involved very little military action until the final stretch and these brief instances of hunting in campaign accounts comprised some of the only references to violence between long descriptions of travel. Big-game hunting was an important symbol in the construction of British imperial identity, representing 'the striving and victory of civilized men over the darker primeval and untamed forces still at work in the world'.[680] Tiger hunting in India was a particularly potent representation of, 'the struggle with a fearsome nature that needed to be resolutely faced', an ideal which extended to Africa as well.[681] Ritvo argued that in the early and less confident period of expansion into a new area, big game hunting served as, 'the emblem of armed European conquest of territories that seemed particularly threatening and alien'.[682] Thus, 'the arrival of big game hunters in regions previously untrodden by Europeans was seen as

[676] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala,* p. 299, 303.
[677] Ibid., p. 304.
[678] Ibid., p. 322.
[679] Henty, *The March to Magdala,* p. 62.
[680] John M. MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988) p. 47.
[681] Sramek, *Face Him Like a Briton*, p. 659.
[682] Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (London: Penguin Books, 1987) p. 287.

the harbinger of civilization'.[683] In Abyssinia, the hunters and the dominating army had simply arrived together and the two activities were presented as acting in harmony. The military flavour of this domination was easily apparent. Dead wild animals symbolised the British suppression of the human inhabitants: 'rows of horns and hides, mounted heads and stuffed bodies, clearly alluded to the violent, heroic underside of imperialism'.[684]

The collection of specimens for scientific study was another sort of hunting the Abyssinian expedition fostered. A cadre of scientists and naturalists accompanied the army and Napier was instructed to 'afford these officers every assistance'.[685] William Jesse, the expedition zoologist, collected 24 mammal skins, an elephant skull, a rhinoceros skeleton, 3 antelope heads, 8 other mammal skeletons, 750 bird skins, 6 tortoises and lizards, 30 fish, 50 crustaceans, 350 insects, 26 jars of birds, mammals, and reptiles in formaldehyde, and an aboriginal Abyssinian skull for a grand total of 1,250 specimens. He also live shipped 2 wild cats, 2 large rats, and 2 guinea fowl to the Zoological Society in London; only the cats survived the trip.[686] The expanding spheres of knowledge created by collecting such specimens and displaying them in museum settings played an important part in European imperialism.[687] Hunting and collecting had been of central importance to earlier explorer expeditions to Abyssinia.[688] These specimen collections were powerful signs that Africa had been penetrated, tamed, and analysed.

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[683] Ibid., p. 254.
[684] Ibid., p. 248.
[685] Holland and Hozier, *Expedition to Abyssinia,* 1:69.
[686] Ibid., 2:376-7.
[687] John McAleer, *Representing Africa: Landscape, Exploration and Empire in Southern Africa, 1780-1870* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010) p. 109.
[688] Parkyns, *Life in Abyssinia,* 1:111; W. T. Blanford, *Observations on the Geology and Zoology of Abyssinia, made during the Progress of the British Expedition to that Country in 1867-68* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1870) p. 67, 100, 101, 116, 139, 213, 233; Sir Samuel W. Baker, *The Nile Tributaries of Abyssinia and the Sword Hunters of the Hameam Arabs* (London:

As Jesse's aboriginal skull had been listed along with his animal specimens, so other commentators blurred the line between human and animal targets. On the way to the battle of Essaman in Ashanti, before they had made enemy contact, Reade noted a marine saying, 'we had seen no game'.[689] After the ensuring battle, his Hausa servant told him that the fight, 'was just like "shooting meat" – by which he meant to say that it resembled the pleasures of the chase'.[690] Captain Hutton, 60th Rifles, told his father in a letter from Abyssinia that 'It is to me like a shooting expedition, with just a spice of danger thrown in to make it really interesting'.[691] Colonel Penn was happy to tell Scott that 'he made a splendid bag' in one battle.[692] Beinart described a similar dynamic at play in Southern Africa, where, 'so pervasive were the language and symbols of the hunt that they were used to describe contact with people'.[693]

3.1.4 Elephants on Parade

In Abyssinia, it quickly became apparent that the locals were very impressed by Napier's 44 domesticated elephants. British commentators seized on this fact as an opportunity to project and exhibit dominance over the natural world. Holland and Hozier stated that:

> elephants are considered untameable by the natives, who refused to believe that is was possible to reduce them to a state of subordination to man. The passage of the elephants through the country was, therefore, followed by crowds of wondering and awe-struck Abyssinians, who formerly thought that anyone who told them that an elephant could be tamed was dealing in the most flowery romance.[694]

Macmillan and Co., 1867); Robert O. Collins, *Introduction to The Nile Basin, by Richard Burton* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1967) p. x.

689 Reade, *Ashantee Campaign,* p. 175.

690 Ibid., p. 181.

691 Stephen Manning, *Soldiers of the Queen: Victorian Colonial Conflict in the Words of those Who Fought* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Spellmount, 2009) p. 202.

692 'A Staff Officer' [Lieut. W. W. Scott], *Letters from Abyssinia during the Campaign of 1868* ([n. pub.]: [n.p.], [1868?]) p. 112.

693 William Beinart, 'Empire, Hunting and Ecological Change in Southern and Central Africa,' *Past and Present*, no. 128 (Aug., 1990) p. 165.

694 Holland and Hozier, *Expedition to Abyssinia,* p. 400.

Henty was likewise intrigued to find that, 'the natives never tired of watching the huge beasts at their work, and wondering at their obedience to us. This astonishes them, indeed, more than anything they have seen of us, with the exception of our condensing water from the sea.'[695] Hozier also compared local reactions to elephants with those to novel technology, describing, 'a sensation, second only to that caused by the elephants was created by the arrival of Murray's battery of Armstrong guns'.[696] In this case, the elephants elicited an even greater reaction than the newest weapons.

Shepherd was interested in the 'moral effect produced upon the minds of the Abyssinians' by the animals.[697] He witnessed several Abyssinian chiefs visiting the British camp at Ad Abaga. They were shown and reported to be impressed with the Armstrong guns and Snider rifles. However, 'the elephants, of which two gigantic specimens were attached to Head-quarters, were another cause of extreme wonderment'. Shepherd attributed the chiefs' reactions to their lack of technical understanding:

> The mysteries of the bursting shell and the graduated fuse may not have been fully comprehended by them; but they knew how wild and untameable was the elephant, that *monstrum, ingens, horrendum,* which roams among their own hills and mountains. When the exploits of the great Sabagadis are depicted on the walls of their churches, his slaughter of an elephant is always placed in a good light; and how much greater than Sabagadis must the least of that nation be, which can not only kill the elephant, but catch him alive, tame him, and render him the most gentle and docile of creatures.[698]

In an 1864 anniversary address to the RGS, Murchinson argued that, 'the most remarkable proof of the inferiority of the negro, when compared with the Asiatic, is that whilst the latter has domesticated the elephant for ages and rendered it highly useful to man, the negro has only slaughtered the animal to

[695] Henty, *The March to Magdala,* pp. 148-9.
[696] Hozier, *British Expedition to Abyssinia,* p. 115.
[697] Shepherd, *The Campaign in Abyssinia,* p. 110.
[698] Ibid.

obtain food or ivory'.[699] On the premise that the animals demonstrated a civilisation's level of development, it was hoped that they might be employed as performance. Since the Abyssinians 'have up till now steadily refused to believe' that the British possessed elephants in a tamed state, Scott anticipated that, 'they would believe anything of us now, I fancy'.[700]

Napier chose to ride up to his parlay with the Ras of Tigre on the back of an elephant. Acton explained that, 'this was done for the sake of effect, as the Abyssinians have no idea of taming or mounting the elephant'.[701] The elephant elected not to cross a small river separating the two delegations and Napier had to dismount and proceed by horse. Henty expressed his 'hope that our elephants and cannon will open his Majesty's eyes to the fact that we are a people whom it would be vastly safer to leave alone'.[702] It was particularly appropriate in light of this dynamic that the elephants were primarily employed in the task of carrying the Armstrong guns and mortars. Abyssinians thus often witnessed the two together, the cannons strapped to the animals' backs.[703] Napier exhibited his elephants alongside his cannons to other local leaders as well.[704] In a sense, elephants achieved some of the same symbolic function in Africa as did novel British military technology, that of demonstrating British mastery over nature.[705]

These presentations were seen as being so effective that some suggested bringing elephants to Ashanti. Reade recalled that, 'it was suggested

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[699] Sir Robert Murchinson, 'Address by Sir Robert I. Murchinson', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, Vol. VIII, no. 5 (1864) p. 249.
[700] 'A Staff Officer' [Scott], *Letters from Abyssinia during the Campaign of 1868*, p. 36.
[701] Acton, *Life and Reign,* p. 42.
[702] Henty, *The March to Magdala,* p. 241.
[703] E. F. Chapman, 'Notes on the Elephant Carriage and Steel Mountain Batteries Employed in Abyssinia,' *Minutes of Proceedings of the Royal Artillery Institution* VI (1870) pp. 191-202; Acton, *Life and Reign,* pp. 50-1.
[704] 'A Staff-Officer' [William Tweedie], 'Letters from a Staff-Officer with the Abyssinian Expedition. - Part II,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 103, no. 632 (Jun. 1868) p. 732; Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala,* p. 371.
[705] *The Sunday Times,* 8 Sep. 1867, p. 2.

by members of the Press, and by members of the Profession, that elephants should be employed'. 'Is it impossible', asked *The Spectator,* 'to add a few elephants? They do not die in malarious jungle, they can go where nothing else can, and they can carry half-a dozen guns larger than can be carried either on mules or horses'.[706] Wolseley had refused to apply for any, which Reade criticised on the basis that, 'we had to fight a superstitious people, and I believe that the sight of tame elephants would have had no slight effect upon the enemy'.[707] Stanley agreed that, had Wolseley brought elephants to the Gold Coast, 'a certain lasting awe would be created in the Ashantees' mind at the fact that the white man could compel the service of so many lords of the forest'.[708]

3.2 The People

Abyssinia and the Gold Coast were described in British public discourses as lacking real civilisation, and the lifestyles of the Africans living there as not meriting that term. This was a well-established trope.[709] In 1860, the explorer Richard Burton wrote that, 'Eastern and inter-tropical Africa also lacks antiquarian and historic interest, it has few traditions, no annals, and no ruins…It contains not a single useful ornamental work of art, a canal or dam'.[710] Acton similarly claimed that the Abyssinians, 'have no arts; they have no manufactures; they have no trade…There are fairs and markets in Abyssinia, but nowhere a shop…No one can build a wall of mortared stone or brick. No

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706 *The Spectator,* 30 Aug. 1873, p. 1.
707 Reade, *Ashantee Campaign,* p. 234.
708 Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala,* p. 26.
709 Anne Maxwell, *Colonial Photography & Exhibitions: Representations of the 'Native' and the Making of European Identities* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1999) p. 2; Patrick Brantlinger, *Taming Cannibals: Race and the Victorians* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011).
710 Richard F. Burton, *The Lake Regions of Central Africa: A Picture of Exploration*, Vol. 1 (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1860) pp. 106-7.

one can make a cart or a boat; there is no such thing in Abyssinia'.[711] Taking pride in being a citizen of a nation of shopkeepers, he further 'reported' that, 'the arts of brickwork, masonry, and cementing stones with mortar, are unknown in this country; though several tolerably good buildings are to be seen, which were probably erected by the Portuguese about three hundred years ago'.[712] The only structures of note were thus presumed to be traceable to Europeans. Describing an Abyssinian market, Stanley noted that, 'there were no books, no lamps, no newspapers, no post-office – people never perceived the want of them'.[713] Stanley found this wonderful summary of his own hallmarks of Victorian civilisation to be lacking. Brackenbury claimed that the Fante, 'have no arts, and no manufactures except an imitative workmanship in gold, a very small amount of weaving, a little rough basket-work, and a very coarse description of pottery'.[714] Butler similarly described the people of the entire continent as, 'without law, art, honour, truth, or justice…the African race stands to-day as it stood 3000 years ago; hopeless to man, and cursed by heaven'.[715]

Reade compared the West African inland bush tribes to the seaside villages of the Kroos, with whom he had previous experience. He described the Kroos as existing in a state of pre-civilisation, whereby, 'every village was a kingdom; at every thirty miles another dialect was spoken – that surest sign of barbarism: prisoners of war were eaten, but not women "because they were tough."'.[716] He contrasted the Kroos with the Ashanti and Fante somewhat to the latter's benefit, claiming that, 'in the forest of the Kroos iron is in use, but gold is unknown; and it is doubtless the knowledge of gold which by means of

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[711] Acton, *Life and Reign,* p. 3.
[712] Ibid., p. 8.
[713] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala,* p. 294.
[714] Brackenbury, *The Ashanti War, A Narrative,* 2:326.
[715] Butler, *Akim-Foo,* p. 19.
[716] Reade, *Ashantee Campaign,* p. 8; He made the same claim of tribes living 'in the backwoods of Liberia' in Winwood Reade, *The African Sketch-Book* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1873) p. 116.

commerce has raised the people of the Gold Coast from that early and rude condition by which their neighbours still remains'.[717] His compliment only went so far, and Reade was quite atypical in having travelled widely in Africa and having had significant experience with different African nations. For much of the British reading public, and indeed many of the troops and officers on the campaign, the image of the Kroos would have been generalised to incorporate all Gold Coast Africans.

Wolseley took an interesting approach in his judgement of civilisational development in his journal. He tied Africans' supposed lack of industriousness to the presence of decay and thus to the prevalence of disease. Looking at Sierra Leone, he felt it:

> monstrous to think that such naturally productive localities should be given over to waste and consequently as become breeding beds for the propagation of malaria, because the people who are supposed to own the soil are too lazy and worthless to till the soil, and I cannot believe that the Creator intended there should be races left on the face of the earth to vegetate in sensual idleness.[718]

According to Wolseley's logic, if someone had brought Sierra Leone under proper cultivation, such improvement of the land would have made it healthier for Europeans. He thus imagined that the Gold Coast was kept deadly by the lack of sufficiently advanced civilisation, and for this he blamed Africans. The term 'vegetate' is also worth noting. To Wolseley, if the people vegetated, the wild vegetation took over.

His thinking paralleled a change of perspective on disease then taking place in British India. In the tropical colonies, Curtin argued:

> Fear of the native inhabitants was still another hygienic concern reinforced in the second half of the nineteenth century. Early in the century, European death rates were so much higher than those of the 'natives' it was hard to blame them as a secondary source of infection.

[717] Reade, *Ashantee Campaign,* p. 8.
[718] Wolseley Journal, Saturday 27 September 1873, TNA, WO 147/3, in Beckett, *Wolseley and Ashanti,* p. 88.

> The usual explanation was the claim they had some inborn source of immunity. By the 1870s, however, European health in the tropics had improved so much that death rates of Indian and European troops were nearly equal. It then became possible to switch sides and to blame 'native filth and disease' for European illness.[719]

The perception of native populations as sources of infection led to an increasing physical separation of Indian quarters and the construction of walls to separate them from European military and civilian areas.[720]

Though Wolseley's thinking was aligned with the contemporary view of natives as disease vectors in India, he was pre-emptive in applying such a shift of blame to West Africa, given the much higher rates of European morbidity in that setting. The natives around him seemed to have both an inborn immunity to disease and a perceived civilisational stagnation that promoted it, which made them a special threat to Europeans. Lieutenant Edward Woodgate, similarly, wrote in his diary that Magdala was, 'a fearful place for fleas which grow to an enormous size…the worse places for them are the huts into which I will not venture'.[721] When on the return march they reached the town of Bashilo, he 'was anything but glad to find most of the natives out of Magdala there, especially as they had brought their fleas with them'.[722]

The Queen's forces thus represented the coming of modernity to a place wholly without it. *The Spectator* described Napier's force as, 'this army of Bruces, half explorers, half soldiers…It is civilization at war which that

[719] Philip D. Curtin, *Death by Migration: Europe's Encounter with the Tropical World in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989) p. 108.
[720] Radhika Ramasubban, 'Imperial Health in British India, 1857-1900,' in *Disease, Medicine, and Empire: Perspectives on Western Medicine and the Experience of European Expansion*, eds. Roy MacLeod and Milton Lewis (London: Routledge, 1988) p. 42; See also, Michael Osborne and Richard Fogarty, 'Views from the Periphery: Discourses of Race and Place in French Military Medicine,' *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences* 25, no. 3 (2003) p. 363.
[721] Edward Woodgate, 4th Regiment (The King's Own, Lancaster), 14-17 Apr. 1868, Diary in the possession of Dr. G. K. Woodgate, St. Peter's College, Oxford, in Emery, *Marching Over Africa: Letters from Victorian Soldiers,* p. 37.
[722] Ibid., p. 38.

expedition represents'.[723] James has argued that, 'Imperial wars in Africa were therefore being undertaken to overcome backwardness and savagery and were waged by a nation which saw itself as the banner-bearer of civilization'.[724] This was seen to involve a forcing back of the dangerous natural world that African societies had failed to keep at bay. If nature was the enemy to be opposed, then Africans were subsumed under that larger category.

Apropos, British officers and correspondents commonly described Africans in language likening them to animals.[725] Reade described, 'a crowd of Ashantees: they ran down the hill like mad, and, with their naked black bodies, resembled a herd of wild animals'.[726] Maurice believed that his guides displayed, 'just the look of the wild creatures one might expect to meet amid such a mad luxuriance of nature'.[727] Tweedie described the Shoho people as, 'a man and brother verging not very remotely on the animal or even vegetable world'.[728] The chief of Aleggie, in Stanley's characterisation, 'sat on his knoll of strength like a caged tiger', and his soldiers looked down, 'wrathy and eager for prey and plunder…like crafty wolves'.[729] Henty likewise compared the Ashanti army to a stalking tiger pitted against a British hunter.[730] 'A savage is exactly like a wild beast', Rogers told the *United Service Magazine*.[731] Butler described Africans the continent over as, 'eaters of human flesh, full of cowardice, and of cruelty; half tiger, half monkey'.[732] Seeking a more substantiated allusion,

[723] 'Sir Robert Napier', *The Spectator,* 18 Apr. 1868, p. 4.
[724] Lawrence James, *The Savage Wars: British Campaigns in Africa, 1870-1920* (London: Robert Hale Ltd., 1985) p. 13.
[725] Wolseley to Louisa Wolseley, 27 September 1873, Sierra Leone, Hove, Wolseley MSS, W/P 3/4, in Beckett, *Wolseley and Ashanti,* p. 90; Boyle, *Fanteeland to Coomassie,* p. 141; Reade, *Ashantee Campaign,* p. 271.
[726] Reade, *Ashantee Campaign,* p. 214.
[727] Maurice, *The Ashantee War,* p. 77.
[728] 'A Staff-Officer' [William Tweedie], 'Letters from a Staff-Officer with the Abyssinian Expedition. - Part I,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 103, no. 629 (Mar. 1868) p. 364.
[729] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala,* p. 368.
[730] Henty, *The March to Coomassie*, 28.
[731] Capt. E. Rogers, 'The Ashantee War,' *United Service Magazine*, no. 539 (Oct. 1873) p. 229.
[732] Butler, *Akim-Foo,* p. 19.

Reade joked that since the usual beasts of burden could not survive, 'hammock-men on the Gold Coast are the substitute for horses…Two men form a perfect animal, with four black legs, the hammock-pole serving as the spine, and the hammock itself as a saddle.'[733]

When King Theodore decided to make a last stand at Magdala, he first allowed the civilian population to evacuate. William Simpson of the *Illustrated London News* passed the refugees and, sometime later, 'passed a very large flock of baboons…they seemed not unlike the vast human herd we had so lately seen. The one seemed a sort of caricature of the other…but which was really the caricature it might be hard to say. I might suggest that both were caricatures of humanity.'[734] Shepherd told his readers that if one attempted to describe a group of Galla chiefs in formal regalia:

> truth could not be told, without remarking upon the wonderful likeness between Gallas so arrayed and demure-looking monkeys which mischievous boys have rendered inexpressively uncomfortable and ridiculous by muffling them up in red nightcaps and comforters.[735]

Henty heard a report from the front that an allied Abyssinian chief and his army were monitoring Theodore's progress to Magdala and chided that he did 'not think that the news that he was watching Theodore was of any more importance than if it had been "a troop of baboons are watching Theodore"'.[736] Reade claimed that among the West African Kroo people, 'it was forbidden by the fetish to kill the chimpanzee because he was "too near;" considered in fact as a man and a brother'.[737]

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[733] Reade, *Ashantee Campaign,* p. 197.
[734] William Simpson, *Diary of a Journey to Abyssinia, 1868 with the Expedition Under Sir Robert Napier: The Diary and Observations of William Simpson of the Illustrated London News*, ed. Richard Pankhurst (Hollywood, CA: Tsehai Publishers and Distributors, 2002) p. 85.
[735] Shepherd, *The Campaign in Abyssinia,* p. 183.
[736] Henty, *The March to Magdala,* p. 159.
[737] Reade, *Ashantee Campaign,* p. 8.

In the battle outside Magdala, wrote Stanley, Theodore's soldiers 'bore down the hill, reached the plateau, and inundated it with their dusky bodies. A clear open plain was before them, over which they rolled like a huge wave.'[738] After the battle, he described, '[stumbling] over the thickened dead, who, lying stripped, were of the colour of the soil. Among the thickets the slain warriors, enrobed in their cotton togas, appeared like white splotches upon the dim and indistinct ground'.[739] Stanley here presented dead African soldiers as merging back into the landscape from which he had described them as emerging. In Ashanti, after the battle of Amoaful, he described, 'the dead Ashantees…thickly lying, with the most frightful wounds, proving that Snider rifles have terrible force and penetration. If other evidences were needed to establish this fact, the wreck of the bush, and the deep rugged rents of great trees, seen all around, did so.'[740] Stanley thus presented both the damage to the bush and the death of Ashanti soldiers as evidence of the destructive power of British military technology. *The Lancet* similarly noted that, 'the wounds caused by the hollow snider bullets…resembled in severity those caused by small explosive shells when fired into large animals'.[741] Prior described a sergeant of the 42nd shooting an Ashanti soldier out of a tree, 'like a pheasant in a battue'.[742] MacKenzie defined a *battue*, as 'the often competitive, apparently compulsive, and hugely destructive shooting of birds as stationary butts' and 'the large-scale slaughter of carefully reared birds'.[743] The term was used as a battle analogy on several occasions in Abyssinia and Ashanti.

[738] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala,* p. 415.
[739] Ibid., p. 424.
[740] Ibid., p. 202.
[741] 'The Ashantee War', *The Lancet,* Vol. 103, no. 2632 (7 Feb. 1874) p. 217.
[742] Melton Prior, *Campaigns of a War Correspondent*, ed. S. L. Bensusan (London: Edward Arnold, 1912) p. 18.
[743] MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature,* p. 22, 27.

British commentators at times spoke of fallen African foes as having been 'mowed down', thus likening them to fields of grass. Austin reported in *The Times* that at Magdala, 'to describe the fight after the Snider came into play would be only to describe a battue…The unfortunate foe had no longer even the shadow of a chance, but went down like grass before the sithe *(sic)*.[744] Acton likewise described the repeated volleys fired at Theodore's soldiers, 'mowing them down as with the swiftly repeated strokes of a mighty scythe'.[745] Henty wrote of the same battle that, 'the breech-loader [did] wonders…it literally mowed them down'.[746] From Markham's column and book, similarly: 'the Snider rifles kept up a fire against which no Abyssinian troops could stand. They were mown down in lines.'[747] In Ashanti, Lieutenant-Colonel Festing reported that, 'our advance continued to the edge of a thick bush…Here the Ashantees made one more stand as a final attempt, but it was no use, they were mown down.'[748] In a reflective article after Abyssinia, the editor of *The Times* stated his disquiet at the prospect of British soldiers being send to, 'mow down…miserably-armed ranks with the deadliest weapons of modern art'.[749]

3.2.1 Home Field Advantages

Lieutenant Dooner had gone to bed after posting his native Opobo soldiers on picket duty outside Dompoassie. An officer who had come down the road and not seen any guards later woke him. Believing they had deserted, Dooner rushed out to check and was, 'amazed to see them perched up in the trees like so many monkeys. It was a moonlit night, and they could see anyone coming along the track much better than if posted in the ordinary fashion. I

[744] 'The Abyssinian Expedition', *The Times*, 18 May 1868, p. 9.
[745] Acton, *Life and Reign,* pp. 64-5.
[746] Henty, *The March to Magdala*, p. 384.
[747] Markham, *A History of the Abyssinian Expedition*, pp. 320-1.
[748] 'F.W. Festing, Lieutenant-Colonel, R.M.A., Commanding the Troops, West Coast of Africa, to the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for War', TNA, CO 879/5, Further Correspondence Respecting the Ashantee Invasion, No 4, enclosure 10, p. 21.
[749] 'The closing exploit of the Abyssinian War has', *The Times,* 19 May 1868, p. 9.

thought this very clever.'[750] Dooner was pleased to see innovative bush tactics among his irregulars and allies, but that was exactly the sort of behaviour that British officers feared from the enemy. During the planning for the Ashanti expedition, the War Office interviewed any merchants or military men with experience on the Gold Coast, which Brackenbury summarised as: 'the bush, a home to the enemy, would be impenetrable to English soldiers…Surrounded on all sides, they would be shot down in the narrow paths…Every tree within reach would be full of armed men...Such were the opinions expressed by the majority of the witnesses.'[751]

A memorandum on bush fighting distributed to officers in Ashanti instructed that the men were to be, 'specially warned to beware of clearings & never to form in them, but always when they have to cross them to do so with a rush and to plunge at once into the bush beyond. To halt in a clearing is to expose yourself as a target to enemies *(sic)* shot from the bush'.[752] Maurice stressed in the *Daily News* that the soldiers, 'had to contend against an enemy whose especial skill lay in ingeniously contrived ambushes, and in creeping along the flanks of an advancing force, to attack at unexpected points'.[753] He characterised such ambushes as, 'that strangest, most weird, and most confused of all things, a bush fight with invisible enemies'.[754] Wolseley recalled that, 'it was a curious sensation that of being fired into upon four faces…by a howling mass of many, many thousands of savages…and yet to be unable to see them in the dense bush beneath that awe-inspiring forest'.[755] During the

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[750] Dooner, *Jottings En Route,* p. 48.
[751] Brackenbury, *The Ashanti War, A Narrative*, pp. 114-15.
[752] Draft of Memorandum on Bush Fighting by Brigadier-General Sir Archibald Alison, Bt, [n.d.] [December 1873], Bodleian, Alison MSS, MS. Eng. lett. c. 450, in Beckett, *Wolseley and Ashanti,* p. 280.
[753] 'Daily News' Special Correspondent (Sir John Frederick Maurice), *The Ashantee War: A Popular Narrative* (London: Henry S. King & Co., 1874) p. 343.
[754] Ibid., p. 78.
[755] Wolseley, *Soldier's Life,* 2:341.

battle of Amoaful, claimed Wood, a number of Ashanti soldiers, 'penetrated into the angle of uncut bush…Lying flat on the ground, they were as invisible as a hare on her form, till they fired.'[756] Later in the battle, 'a few [Ashanti were] killed within four yards of us, whose presence we never detected till they fired, so easily were their dusky bodies concealed'.[757]

Faced as they were with such invisible enemies, it was impossible, according to Henty:

> to give a picturesque account of an affair in which there was nothing picturesque; in which scarcely a man saw an enemy from the commencement to the end of the fight; in which there was no manoeuvring, no brilliant charges, no general concentration of troops ; but what consisted simply of lying down, of creeping through the bush, of gaining ground foot by foot, and of pouring a ceaseless fire into every bush which might conceal an invisible foe.[758]

The Times (reprinted in *The Broad Arrow* and elsewhere) described that:

> in bush-fighting great waste, or apparent waste, of ammunition is unavoidable, and tends to save the expenditure of life on our side. If soldiers withhold their fire too long the Ashantees creep up and fire in at close range. The bush should be cleared by volleys whenever there is reason to suspect the enemy is there.

As for defence, furthermore, 'it was proved on the other side of the Prah that a clearing [of the bush] is the best fortification, and the wider the clearing the stronger the position'.[759] If the bush *contained* armed opponents and made it impossible to *see* those armed opponents, then the bush itself had to be treated as a potentially armed opponent at all times. It was a real tactical problem, which developed out of the Ashanti way of fighting. The British technological

[756] Wood, *The Ashanti Expedition of 1873-4*, p. 353.
[757] Ibid., p. 355.
[758] Henty, *The March to Coomassie*, 385.
[759] 'Bush-Fighting', *The Broad Arrow*, [n.d.], TNA, WO 211/71, 'The Ashanti expedition of 1873-1874: news cuttings, correspondence and extracts from letters from Hart's son, Lieut. A. Fitzroy Hart', No. 17.

advantage further required Ashanti soldiers to stay even more tightly to cover. This practical reality of bush warfare reinforced the already existing threatening image of the African landscape. The *Newcastle Courant* erroneously reported that the Black Watch was able to advance only through 'clearing every forward step with the Gatling and the rifle'.[760]

The Abyssinian and Ashanti enemies were thus made to represent not only an opposing military force, but also opponents in the campaign against nature. *In that capacity* they posed a serious threat. In 1905 C. Braithwaite Wallis, formerly the District Commissioner of Sierra Leone, described his long experience of the 'savage enemy':

> Like the wild animals of his own forests, he is alert. Nature has given him first-rate sight and hearing, which have not been impaired by civilization, and he is cunning and suspicious. Nature has further come to his aid, as she does to every one who lives according to her laws. The human inhabitant of the forest, naked as he is, harmonises closely with his surroundings, and is extremely difficult to detect. Like the tiger in the jungle, the deer in the mountains, and the snake in the grass, this wonderful provision of Nature for ensuring invisibility is strikingly illustrated in her inalterable laws, which extend even to savage man.[761]

From a strictly military perspective (and it was a military manual) this was actually intended to be a sort of compliment. Wallis described the tactical advantages that the 'savage' enemy gained from his close connection with the forest, especially when within the forest. Wallis' enemy was in fact a dangerous foe *because* he was 'savage', not in spite of it. This idea was quite old when Wallis wrote his guide and formed the foundation of the perceived enemy at the time of the Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions. If Africa was indeed a wild place and if Africans were indeed wild themselves, then they were presumed to possess a distinct advantage in that setting. Racial dominance, as it applied to military conflict, might be said to have been context-sensitive.

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[760] 'Is the Ashantee Kingdom Destroyed?' *Newcastle Courant,* 13 Mar. 1874, p. 1; 'Sir Garnet Wolseley's Position in Ashantee', *Newcastle Courant,* 6 Mar. 1874, p. 5.
[761] Wallis, *West African Warfare*, pp. 8-9.

3.2.2 The West Indian Background to British Racial Environmentalism

In this thesis, the term 'racial environmentalism' will be used broadly to refer to the popular theories of race and climate in early nineteenth-century Britain. Racial environmentalism stressed *difference* between races without necessarily arranging those races in a clear or linear hierarchy. There was a lingering belief in polygenesis, which hypothesised separate creations for each of the races.[762] There was also a strong belief in scientific circles of the plasticity of species and the influence of environment and climate.[763] The implication was that each race was best suited to a particular climate and no single race could thrive everywhere.[764] Since racial difference was due either to environmental influence or to separate creations, the 'best' race need not necessarily be the best at everything.

In 1818, William Wells, an American physician living in London, developed a theory of racial origins through natural selection. He proposed that the most significant variation between Africans and Europeans lay in their differing reactions to region-specific diseases, and that skin colour was a mere accidental trait co-incident with this climatic adaptation.[765] Aside from that particular presupposition, his theory appeared remarkably Darwinian. As individuals always varied in nature, some of the accidental varieties of man would be born:

> better fitted than others to bear the diseases of the country. This race would consequently multiply, while the others would decrease, not only from their inability to sustain the attacks of disease, but from their incapacity of contending with their more vigorous neighbours. The colour of this vigorous race I take for granted…would be dark.[766]

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[762] Seymour Drescher, 'The Ending of the Slave Trade and the Evolution of European Scientific Racism,' *Social Science History* 14, no. 3 (1990) p. 428.
[763] Ibid., p. 429.
[764] Curtin, *The Image of Africa,* p. 384.
[765] Ibid., p. 237.
[766] William C. Wells, *An Account of a Female of the White Race of Mankind, Part of Whose Skin Resembles that of a Negro; with some Observations on the Causes of the Differences in Color and Form Between the White and Negro Races of Men Appended to Two Essays: One Upon*

The lighter variations, being less able to bear the region's diseases, would have moved north or died out, thus generating the differentiation between African and European lineages.[767] Wells' theory and the contemporary ideas that underlay it not only argued for context-sensitive racial dominance but also made it the mechanism by which the different races had arisen *in the first place.* It suggested, Curtin argued, that 'whatever Europeans might think about of their own racial superiority, in the conditions of tropical Africa, the Africans themselves were the more "vigorous" race'.[768]

According to this worldview, therefore, those races that British officials believed to be 'martial' did not need to resemble the British in their fighting habits or perceived physiological makeup. Such interpretations of race differed markedly from those of the later-nineteenth-century, which tended toward a more universalised racial hierarchy with white Europeans at the top. Racial environmentalism was dominant in Britain at the end of the eighteenth-century and through to the mid-nineteenth-century. It lost ground to scientific racism and Darwinian ideas of hierarchy through the 1860s and '70s, during which time martial race theory became more firmly established.[769] In *Traces on the Rhodian Shore,* Glacken discussed such a transition from eighteenth-century climatic causality to late-nineteenth-century racial determinism.[770]

The West Indian Regiments provide an illustrative case from the late-eighteenth-century in which the British military decided that the Anglo-Saxon

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Single Vision with Two Eyes and the Other on Dew… (London: A. Constable and Co., 1818) pp. 435-46; Also included in Ibid p. 237.
[767] Curtin, *The Image of Africa*, p. 237.
[768] Ibid., p. 238.
[769] Drescher, *Ending of the Slave Trade,* p. 429; Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).
[770] Clarence J. Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967) p. 620.

race was *not* superior. Bush warfare in the West Indian colonies required skills very different from the European norm. The French Revolution had a profound extended effect on the French Caribbean.[771] During 1794-98, Buckley argued:

> a revolution in West Indian warfare occurred. With the abolition of slavery in the French possessions and the successful efforts of [French] agents to foment rebellion among the slave populations of certain British islands, the fighting took on the character of large-scale guerrilla warfare…Protracted operations against insurgent slaves and Carib Indians were conducted for the first time in the mountainous, almost inaccessible, and largely uncharted interiors of the embattled sugar islands.[772]

As was the case in Europe, the vast majority of British soldiers in the West Indies were trained and equipped as traditional line infantry. Guerrilla warfare, or bush warfare, lay completely outside their training and experience. Writing in 1738 of the hardships of fighting Maroons in the interior, Jamaican Governor Trelawney stressed that, 'in short, nothing can be done in strict conformity to the usual military preparations and according to a regular manner, bush fighting as they call it being a thing peculiar to itself'.[773] British soldiers trained in the 'regular manner' did not perform well in the bush. While fighting Maroons in St. Domingue, Lieutenant Thomas Phipps Howard of the York Hussars claimed that 500 European cavalry, 'would destroy five thousand of them in [the] Plain, but the Case is much altered when they fight in their own Woods &

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[771] David P. Geggus, 'Jamaica and the Saint Domingue Slave Revolt, 1791-1793', *The Americas,* Vol. 38, no. 2 (Oct. 1981) p. 222; Geggus, *Slavery, War, and Revolution: The British Occupation of Saint Domingue 1793-1798* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982) p. 102; Geggus, 'The Enigma of Jamaica in the 1790s: New Light on the Causes of Slave Rebellions', *The William and Mary Quarterly,* Vol. 44, no. 2 (Apr. 1987) p. 298; Geggus, 'Slave Society in the Sugar Plantation Zones of Saint Domingue and the Revolution of 1791-93', *Slavery & Abolition,* Vol. 20, no. 2 (Aug. 1999) p. 41; Geggus, 'The Arming of Slaves in the Haitian Revolution', in *Arming Slaves: From Classical Times to the Modern Age,* eds. Christopher Brown and Philip Morgan (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006) p. 228.

[772] Roger N. Buckley, *Slaves in Red Coats: The British West India Regiments, 1795-1815* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979) p. 82.

[773] Quoted in Peter M. Voelz, *Slave and Soldier: The Military Impact of Blacks in the Colonial Americas* (New York: Garland, 1993) p. 296; Also in Michael Craton, *Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009) p. 83.

Mountain'.[774] Faced with a tactical novelty that did not fit with their existing military system, many concluded that it had a racial basis. It was not believed that Anglo-Saxons were well-suited to this, as it was called, 'unnatural war'.[775]

One solution that the Army came to was to employ African or black soldiers for these atypical duties. These units took different forms and will be treated in generalised terms here, but all initially involved forming groups of slaves into infantry regiments. The Island Rangers, the Royal Rangers, and Malcom's Rangers were formed in Martinique and St. Lucia of plantation slaves who were given their freedom after a term of service.[776] After some initial success with these units, the Army began to purchase its own slaves direct from Africa and, in 1795, the British Army created the West Indian Regiments, officially listed and uniformed regiments composed entirely of black slaves commanded by white officers.[777] In just over a decade, thirteen thousand Africans were imported for the West India Regiments, comprising a very significant portion of the British forces in the Caribbean.[778] From 1796 till the abolition of the slave trade in 1807, the British Army was the largest single buyer of slaves in the West Indies.[779]

These African soldiers in British service were not simply used as cannon fodder for the dangerous bush warfare, but were sought out because they were perceived as possessing skills and abilities that European troops did not. Brigadier-General John Moore wrote to Abercromby in 1796 that, 'in this country

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[774] Thomas Phipps Howard, *The Haitian Journal of Lieutenant Howard, York Hussairs, 1796-1798,* ed. Roger Norman Buckley (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1985).
[775] Buckley, *Slaves in Red Coats,* p. 91.
[776] Voelz, *Slave and Soldier,* p. 138; Philip D. Morgan and Andrew Jackson O'Shaughnessy, 'Arming Slaves in the American Revolution,' in *Arming Slaves: From Classical Times to the Modern Age*, eds. Christopher Leslie Brown and Philip D. Morgan (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006) p. 196.
[777] Brown and Morgan, *Arming Slaves,* p. 345; Buckley, *Slaves in Red Coats,* p. 12.
[778] Brian Dyde, *The Empty Sleeve: The Story of the West India Regiments of the British Army* (St. John's, Antigua, WI: Hansib Caribbean, 1997) p. 123.
[779] Morgan and O'Shaughnessy, *Arming Slaves in the American Revolution,* p. 23.

[mountainous jungle conditions] much may be made of Black Corps….They possess, I think, many excellent qualities as Soldiers…for the W. Indies they are invaluable'.[780] More to the point, the black soldiers were thought to be *better* than the white ones in the jungle. Months after taking command in The Second Carib War, Moore found 'from experience' that his European troops were incapable of fighting insurgents in the 'prodigious' terrain of the island interior.[781] Major-General Williamson wrote to War Secretary Henry Dundas in 1794:

> I have had the honour to mention to you the great utility the British [Black Ranger] Legions have been to us. Indeed, I may in a great measure attribute our success to them. It is impossible that regular troops can ever follow the Brigands into the mountains: they must have people somewhat of their own description to engage them.[782]

'It is amazing to observe', wrote Captain Stedman, 'with what skill one negro discovers the haunts of another: while an European discerns not the smallest vestige of a man's foot in the forest the roving eye of the negro-ranger catches the broken sprig, and faded leaf trod flat, without ever missing it'.[783] Moore told his father that, 'the Black troops are the only troops equal to scour the woods – the British are unequal to such service'.[784] According to the commander of the Second West Indian Regiment in Grenada, the officers of his corps had to be assisted personally, carried at times, by their black soldiers in order to negotiate the rugged terrain.[785] In a striking assertion of European inferiority in bush warfare, Stedman stated that, 'it will ever be my opinion, that one of these free

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[780] Dyde, *The Empty Sleeve,* p. 40.
[781] Moore, MS, no. 57321, Moore to Brownrigg, 4 Sep. 1796, Quoted in Buckley, *Slaves in Red Coats,* p. 89.
[782] WO 1/60, Williamson to Dundas, 1 Aug. 1794, Quoted in David Gates, *The British Light Infantry Arm C. 1790-1815: Its Creation, Training and Operation Role.* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1987) p. 69.
[783] John Gabriel Stedman, *Narrative of an Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam*…, 2nd ed. (London: J. Johnson, 1806), 1:261-2.
[784] BL MSS. 57320 (Moore Papers), Moore to his father, 10 Jan. 1797, Quoted in Gates, *The British Light Infantry Arm,* p. 68.
[785] Buckley, *Slaves in Red Coats,* p. 91.

negroes is preferable to half a dozen white men in the forest of Guiana; it indeed seems their natural element, whilst it is the bane of the Europeans'.[786]

This aptitude was, critically, seen as primarily a result of race, and not of training; of nature, rather than nurture. After observing the performance of Black Rangers and European regulars, Dr. George Pinckard reported that 'the exertion and fatigue required in [bush warfare] cannot well be conceived by those who are accustomed only to regular and systematic warfare' and concluded that such military service could not 'have been supported in this climate by European soldiers'.[787] After decades as the commander of a West Indian Regiment, Brigadier-General Thomas Hislop wrote a treatise on the units in which he stressed that, 'it has always been evident to me…that they are also from their constitution & natural Habits, better calculated for that species of Warfare in this Climate than Europeans'.[788] Officers concluded from their West Indian experience that all the black races of Africa were better suited to bush warfare than all the white races of Europe.

The 2nd West Indian Regiment first sailed for Africa in 1819. The regiments formed the backbone of the British military presence in tropical regions on both sides of the Atlantic until the Great War.[789] British West Africa relied particularly heavily on them from 1840 to 1870, supported by local units of African armed police such as the Hausa.[790] The area would have been nearly impossible to defend without them. Rogers even suggested that, 'had the 3rd

[786] Stedman, *Narrative of an Expedition*, p. 99.
[787] George Pinckard, *Notes on the West Indies* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, 1806) 2:244.
[788] Thomas Hislop, WO 1/95, 'Remarks on the Establishment of the West India Regiments – Written in the Year 1801', in Roger N. Buckley, 'Brigadier-General Thomas Hislop's Remarks on the Establishment of the West India Regiments: 1801', *Journal for the Society for Army Historical Research,* Vol. 58, no. 236 (1980) p. 221.
[789] W. D. Cribbs, 'Campaign Dress of the West India Regiments,' *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* 70, no. 283 (1992) pp. 174-5.
[790] S. C. Ukpabi, 'West Indian Troops and the Defense of British West Africa in the Nineteenth Century,' *African Studies Review* 17, no. 1 (Apr. 1974) p. 133.

West India Regiment been in existence in 1872 and stationed in full strength along our West African settlements, it is extremely probable that no Ashantee War would have taken place'.[791]

3.2.3 The 'Vigorous' Race in Abyssinia and Ashanti

MacKenzie has argued that, 'although medical scientists began to discern and control microbiological causes of tropical ills after the mid-nineteenth century, the claims for climatic causation did not undergo a corresponding decline'.[792] Cultural lag in this area meant that many of the tenants of racial environmentalism were still very much present in the 1860s. The Scottish anatomist Robert Knox proclaimed that Europeans could only thrive in Europe and would never break into equatorial climates.[793] Of Africans, he claimed that, 'the tropical regions of the earth seem peculiarly to belong to him; his energy is considerable: aided by the sun, he repels the white invader'.[794]

James Hunt founded the Anthropological Society of London in 1863 and contended that each race degenerated when it migrated from its home region.[795] In a lecture, *On the Negro's Place in Nature*, delivered at the Anthropological (with Winwood Reade in attendance), he put forward his 'general deductions' that, 'there is as good a reason for classifying the Negro as a distinct species from the European, as there is for making the ass a distinct species from the zebra', and that, 'the Negro is inferior intellectually to the

[791] Capt. E. Rogers, *Campaigning in Western Africa and the Ashantee Invasion* (London: W. Mutchell & Co., 1874) p. 35.
[792] John M. MacKenzie, *Imperialism and the Natural World* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990) p. 118.
[793] Christine Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971) pp. 21-2.
[794] Robert Knox, *Races of Men: A Fragment*, (Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard, 1850) p. 456.
[795] Douglas A. Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians: English Attitudes to the Negro in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1978) p. 138; See also Douglas Lorimer, *Science, Race Relations and Resistance: Britain. 1870-1914: A Study of Late Victorian and Edwardian Racism* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2013).

European'.[796] He concluded that 'man' could not be defined as a 'cosmopolitan' creature, because 'it is as difficult to plant a race out of its own centre, as it is to extinguish any race without driving it from its natural centre'. He believed that this applied to Europeans as well, claiming that European children could not reliably be raised in India.[797]

Concern over the limitations of climate can also explain the prominence of what Osborne has called, 'the essential science of colonization – acclimatization'.[798] By tackling the problem of shifting plant and animal species across the globe, acclimatisation societies were 'intimately entwined with the rise of modern imperialism and with the marginalization and alteration of indigenous ecosystems and peoples'.[799] Kuklick described Darwin's era as, 'an age obsessed with the problem of acclimatization'.[800]

In Chapter 6, it will be argued that the British successes in Abyssinia and Ashanti eventually led to a marked reassessment of the West Indian Regiments and of the wider nature of racial aptitude in tropical settings. Going in, however, military planners were still very much concerned with questions of race, respective climatic centres, and the troubles of acclimatisation.

3.3 Redressing the Imbalance

During the Abyssinian and Ashanti campaigns, British commentators often described Africans as immune to the dangers of nature and actually protected *by* the dangers of nature. They were, so to speak, in their element.

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[796] James Hunt, 'On the Negro's Place in Nature,' *Memoirs of the Anthropological Society of London* 1 (1863-4) pp. xv-lvi , 51-2.
[797] James Hunt, 'On Ethno-Climatology; Or the Acclimatisation of Man,' *Transactions of the Ethnographical Society of London (TESL)* II (1861-2) p. 70, 79.
[798] Michael A. Osborne, *Nature, the Exotic, and the Science of French Colonialsim* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994) p. xiv.
[799] Michael A. Osborne, 'Acclimatizing the World: A History of the Paradigmatic Colonial Science,' *Osiris* 2nd Series, Vol. 15, Nature and Empire: Science and the Colonial Enterprise (2000) p. 135.
[800] Henrika Kuklick, 'Islands in the Pacific: Darwinian Biogeography and British Anthropology', *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 23, no. 3 (1996) p. 628.

'No wall or rampart defended this city', Butler said of Kumase, 'but fifty leagues of fever circled it.'[801] Baker told a session at the Royal United Services Institute that, 'the jungle, which to troops in uniform is almost impregnable, is to the native warrior a retreat that shields him from all danger'.[802] Henty claimed that 'there was no possibility of attacking the enemy in their stronghold, the bush'.[803] 'The wily chief of Ashantees has determined on playing the waiting game', Rogers reasoned, 'depending on King Fever and his attendant demons of the Marsh to decimate our unfortunate troops'.[804]

As he disembarked at Cape Coast, Dooner observed that, 'some native kings were on the beach to receive [Wolseley], surrounded by their slaves, supporting huge umbrellas over them, a most unnecessary duty, as the African's head will stand the hottest sun without any difficulty'.[805] Brackenbury reported that the Ashanti king held a similar opinion, quoting from the journal of Mr. Plange, who had presented the British demands to Karikari. The King told Plange that, 'for fight affairs I am not afraid…So far I know that the white man never agree with raining and sunshine as we can bear.'[806] Ramseyer and Kuhne wrote of the same meeting in their collective account of their time as captives in Kumase. When Plange made an abstract threat of British reprisals, the Ashanti king retorted that, 'We are ready! Your governor cannot leave his fort without an umbrella, so afraid is he of the sun and rain. Let him try to come to us.'[807] Medical science, much less the popular interpretation of medical science in this period, did not understand what made the Gold Coast so

[801] Butler, *Akim-Foo,* p. 250.
[802] Samuel Baker, 'Experience in Savage Warfare,' *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute* 17 (1873) p. 904.
[803] Henty, *The March to Coomassie*, 153.
[804] Capt. E. Rogers, 'The Ashantee War,' *United Service Magazine*, no. 538 (Sept. 1873) p. 56.
[805] Dooner, *Jottings En Route,* p. 15.
[806] Brackenbury, *The Ashanti War, A Narrative,* p. 47.
[807] Friedrich Ramseyer and Johannes Kuhne, *Four Years in Ashantee* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1875) p. 180.

deadly.[808] The sun and heat were as likely candidates as were miasmas or poor nutrition.[809] The idea that Africans were largely exempt from deadly tropical diseases was, Curtin claimed, 'the one unquestioned "fact" about race difference'.[810] He further explained that this assumption 'remained dominant in the popular mind and even in official British thought', even when the better medical investigations began to raise professional doubts.[811]

During the sea voyage to Cape Coast Castle, Captain Huyshe delivered a crash course in Ashanti warfare to his fellow officers. In one lecture he said that the Ashanti, 'love the bush, and dislike fighting in the open'.[812] The Fante believed that Ashanti soldiers could not be defeated in the thick inland undergrowth and the Ashanti of course promoted that impression. Butler recounted a translation of an Ashanti proverb: 'the Prah rolls to the sea. Its waters do not come back again; neither can the white man come hither from the sea.'[813] Butler was pleased to point out that British soldiers had come hither, but the image of the protective bush endured in Ashanti culture.

When he arrived at the Coast, Wolseley sent for the chiefs of a number of hostile Elmina cities that had sided with the Ashanti, demanding that they appear and account for their conduct. He wrote to Cambridge that these chiefs, 'flew to the Ashantee Camp for advice…They were told that although we were brave, the Ashantees were still braver and that we would never dare to attack them in the bush.'[814] Maurice likewise reported in the *Daily News* that the

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[808] J. R. McNeill, *Mosquito Empires: Ecology and War in the Greater Caribbean, 1620-1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Andrew McIlwaine Bell, '"Gallnippers" & Glory: The Links between Mosquito-Borne Disease and the U.S. Civil War Operations and Strategy, 1862,' *The Journal of Military History* 74 (Apr. 2010) p. 379.
[809] Curtin, *The Image of Africa,* p. 359.
[810] Ibid.
[811] Ibid.
[812] Brackenbury and Huyshe, *Fanti and Ashanti,* p. 127.
[813] Butler, *Akim-Foo,* p. 202.
[814] Wolseley to Cambridge, [15-]19 October 1873, Cape Coast, in Beckett, *Wolseley and Ashanti,* p. 155.

Ashanti claimed, 'White man very brave in the open. White man dare not touch you in the bush.'[815] This notion was an important part of Ashanti diplomacy and morale, central to their myth of invincibility in the region.

A belief that the British army could not operate in the African setting was still a fixation in pre-scramble Britain and held on in popular culture for at least another decade.[816] It is worth stating directly that this chapter is not intended to revive or advocate environmental determinism, as has been suggested of some historians of environment and empire.[817] The subjects of focus here, rather, have been the discourses associated with the historic environmental determinist (and later racial determinist) perspectives as windows into the prevailing 'idea' of Africa at the time of the Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions. Belief in climatic causation, it will continue to be argued, influenced press opinion, government policy, and even government planning.

British victories, or perceived victories, in Abyssinia and Ashanti were cast as having been over nature. Stanley described the 4th Foot in Abyssinia, 'having, like heroic souls, surmounted fairly the Wadela plateau, Colonel Cameron requested of his regiment…to give three cheers, saying it was a worthier feat to have marched up this height of 3,000 feet than to have conquered Theodore'.[818] King Theodore thought he was safe in his elevated fortress of Magdala. It is likely that Cameron honestly believed that the long uphill march would prove to have been a greater challenge than any forthcoming battle.

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[815] Maurice, *The Ashantee War,* p. 69.

[816] G. A. Henty, *By Sheer Pluck: A Tale of the Ashanti War* (London: Blackie and Son, 1884) p. 119; Gawler, *British Troops and Savage Warfare*, p. 938; Mika Suonpää, 'Britain, Balkan Conflicts, and the Evolving Conceptions of Militarism, 1875-1913,' *History* 99, no. 337 (2014) p. 632; Antoinette Burton, 'Introduction: The Anglo-Afghan Wars in Historical Perspective', in Antoinette Burton, ed., *The First Anglo-Afghan Wars: A Reader* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2014) p. 7.

[817] Coates claimed as much of Crosby's *Ecological Imperialism* in Peter Coates, *Nature: Western Attitudes Since Ancient Times* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998) pp. 101-102.

[818] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala*, p. 384.

In Ashanti, Maurice reiterated that:

> it has been the boast of the Ashantees that though the white man could beat them in the open, where his *arms* gave him the advantage, in the bush they would always have the best of it. That was the thing that was preached to us *ad nauseam* before we left England by those who have lived on this coast before. It makes all the difference with what idea on this subject the troops who fight on our side, and the Ashantees respectively, go into the coming contest.[819]

The conflict before Wolseley's arrival in the Gold Coast had not undermined the jungle's status. Colonel Festing had bombarded the town of Elmina and landed a force of marines under fire. Brackenbury later explained that, although the British had done very well in the fight, 'as the enemy had not been pursued into the bush, the Ashantis retained the opinion, which they were known previously to possess, that the European troops dare not advance after them into the bush'.[820]

In the early days of the expedition, Wolseley was concerned with the psychological place the bush occupied in the minds of the Ashanti, his Fante allies, and his own troops. He was confident that properly-led British soldiers could defeat the Ashanti, even in the forest. In this belief he went against the grain of common knowledge. He had read the newspapers, knew how hesitant Kimberley and the War Office were, and could not be sure how many of his white troops doubted their own abilities. He needed to take some of the threat out of the bush and that would require a victory. Thus, Wolseley launched the battle of Essaman to prove his point. It was actually more of a raid; he spread the false information that he was heading to help Captain Glover on the Volta river and, having secured the element of surprise, 'pounced down upon some villages occupied by the Ashantees – fought them in the bush, where they

[819] Maurice, *The Ashantee War*, p. 68.
[820] Brackenbury, *The Ashanti War, A Narrative*, pp. 76-7.

always boasted white men would never dare to go, gave them a good thrashing and returned to Elmina that night'.[821]

Wolseley's message was soon circulated through a pamphlet, *The Life of King Koffee*, sold at British newsstands for a penny. The cover illustration presented a crazed-looking Ashanti soldier, holding a dripping severed head among a dark and tangled bush. The booklet itself was made up of selections from Wolseley's and Freemantle's official despatches, describing several small engagements fought by the British marines stationed at Cape Coast Castle. It was repeatedly stressed that the Ashanti did not believe white men could fight in the bush and that the British had proven that, indeed, they could. Wolseley wrote that, 'the result of yesterday's operations cannot fail to have a very good effect. Last week…The chiefs [had] declined to come, and relied on the Ashantees' promise of aid, and our supposed inability to reach them'.[822]

The publisher's choice of excerpts for the pamphlet focused so strongly on the bush as a barrier to Europeans that it suggests the presence of an anxiety in the British public imagination. The pamphlet was printed just before the European battalions arrived at the Gold Coast and was in part intended to sell British citizens on the controversial decision to send them there. In Wolseley's official memoir, Charles Rathbone Low explained that:

> it had been Wolseley's earnest desire, since he landed on the Gold Coast, to prove to the people that the Ashantees were not invincible in the bush, a proposition which had come to be regarded as an article of faith in West Africa, and was even held by some people in England, who, while they allowed the superiority of European soldiers in the open …would shake their heads when anyone argued that even British

[821] Wolseley to Colonel William Earle, 25 November 1873, Govt. House: Cape Coast, Hove, Wolseley MSS, Autobiographical Collection, in Beckett, *Wolseley and Ashanti,* p. 230.
[822] Viscount Garnet Wolseley, *The Life of King Koffee; Or, Sir Garnet Wolseley, the Ashantees and the Fantees, their Mode of Warfare; Fighting in the Bush!* (London: J. J. Collett, 1873) pp. 5-6.

> soldiers could fight and overcome, in the recesses of their own forests, the most dreaded of all the tribes of African warriors.[823]

In another excerpt from *The Life of King Koffee*, Wolseley stated confidently that he had, 'wished for an opportunity to strike a blow against the Ashantees…which should inspire confidence in the friendly, and remove from the hostile the impression that our men cannot act in the bush'. The printing of this excerpt, of course, also worked to remove that impression among the British public. He claimed that 'the fight of yesterday was solely in the bush, and they never once held their own against us. The effect, as encouraging the Fantees and discouraging their enemies, will be, I am assured, very considerable.'[824] Wolseley expressed his hope in the pamphlet that he had, 'taught the Ashantees a great lesson'.[825] A dispatch from Freemantle was also included, claiming that, 'the effect of this operation…the impression it must make on the natives, both hostile and friendly, is incalculable. We have shown that we are capable of carrying all before us in the densest bush.'[826] Wolseley hoped the point had been made, as his European battalions were soon to arrive on the Gold Coast. The expedition's newspaper correspondents described the victory in the same terms.[827] Stanley claimed that it had 'dissipated the illusion' of Ashanti military dominance in tropical settings.[828] The focus directed on the victory at Essaman reflects how novel such a victory was then seen to be.

3.4 Conclusions

Stanley described the scene he found upon arriving at the shore of the Prah River, the border between the British protectorate and Ashanti territory.

[823] Charles Rathbone Low, *A Memoir of Lieutenant-General Sir Garnet J. Wolseley* (London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1878) 2:101.
[824] Wolseley, *The Life of King Koffee,* p. 6.
[825] Ibid., p. 4.
[826] Ibid., p. 8.
[827] Maurice, *The Ashantee War*, p. 85; Reade, *Ashantee Campaign*, p. 182.
[828] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala*, p. 43.

Construction had begun on a major British camp from which the invasion of Karikari's country would soon be launched. Stanley told his readers with confidence that, 'in a few days the scene will be that of an orderly, well-conducted camp, under rigid discipline, for so quick do ready hands and skilled minds change and subdue the virgin forest'.[829] As this chapter has explored, it was very important to British commentators that the landscape of their imagined Africa be changed and subdued. The next chapter will explore the ways that the men of the expeditions attempted to employ their most advanced technology to that same end.

[829] Ibid., p. 159.

Chapter 4: A Reassuring Presence

'Modern warfare may in many respects be considered as so many applications of science', claimed the author of a *Nature* article on military photography:

> Not only is war *matériel* designed and manufactured nowadays upon the most approved data, and according to theories worked out with mathematical accuracy, but a large section of our soldiers are educated in such a manner as fully to appreciate the value of their resources, and so to overcome difficulties which years ago would have been regarded as impossibilities…No instance demonstrates this more satisfactorily than the recent Abyssinian expedition.[830]

Kiernan has argued that, in the mid-nineteenth-century, Europeans began to refer less to 'civilized warfare' and more to 'scientific warfare'.[831] The Abyssinian expedition was a milestone in that cultural shift; it was emplotted in the public sphere as a victory for science and, in a sense, a victory of science. Markham reported that the British were 'armed and provided with all that modern science could suggest'.[832] A Staff Officer wrote to *Blackwood's* that, 'this was to be expected in operations directed by so scientific a soldier as Sir Robert Napier'.[833] The *Illustrated London News* hailed the victory as, 'a triumph of which science may well be proud; and it shows how large a part science will hereafter bear in military administration'.[834]

In this 'technologised' rhetoric of empire ('science' and 'technology' being largely conflated), science was presented as an ally of the British expeditions. The African wild was seen to protect Africans and to threaten, even attack, Europeans. In response, it was hoped and claimed that technology would shield

[830] 'The Application of Photography to Military Purposes,' *Nature* 2, no. 38 (Jul. 1870) pp. 236-7.
[831] V. G. Kiernan, *From Conquest to Collapse: European Empires from 1815 to 1960* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982) p. 154.
[832] Clements R. Markham, *A History of the Abyssinian Expedition* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1869) p. 315.
[833] 'A Staff-Officer' [William Tweedie], 'Letters from a Staff-Officer with the Abyssinian Expedition. - Part I,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 103, no. 629 (Mar. 1868) p. 361.
[834] 'End of the Abyssinian Expedition', *Illustrated London News*, 27 Jun. 1868, p. 622.

the Europeans and subdue Africa the enemy. In the first section, 'A Sphere of Civilisation', it will be argued that the expeditionary forces sought to fashion a conceptual bubble of modern civilisation around them. The presence of novel technology provided reassurance that they might pass over the white man's grave without getting stuck within it. In the second section, 'Competition Between Spheres', it will be argued that discourses of technological superiority and scientific violence were generated in response to particular anxieties of the perceived dangers of the African interior.

4.1 A Sphere of Civilisation

4.1.1 Health Nuts

As Wolseley began his preparations to reinforce the Gold Coast, the Earl of Derby remarked in a banquet speech that, 'improved artillery won't help us when the chief enemy we have to fight is fever. (Hear, hear) It is a doctor's war and an engineer's war, quite as much as a soldier's war.'[835] There were, it was nonetheless hoped, a number of other improvements that might protect the expedition from its chief enemy. *The Lancet* echoed Derby's phrase and declared that, 'doctors seem determined to spare no pains to bring it to a successful issue'.[836] In another article, the journal stressed, 'we must be prepared to apply the achievements of modern science to the task'.[837] En route to Cape Coast, Wolseley indicated his 'determin[ation] to give myself every possible chance that science can dictate to keep my health'.[838]

[835] Lord Derby, Speech, Liverpool, UK, October 1873; Richard Congreve, *The Ashantee War* (London: E. Truelove, 1873) p. 22; Joseph Irving, *Supplement to the annals of our time: a diurnal of events, social and political, home and foreign: from February 28, 1871 to March 19, 1874* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1875) p. 136.
[836] 'The Ashantee War', *The Lancet*, Vol. 102, no. 2621 (22 Sep. 1873) p. 745.
[837] 'The Ashantee War', *The Lancet,* Vol. 102, no. 2610 (6 Sep. 1873) p. 344.
[838] Wolseley Journal, TNA, WO 147/3, 1 October 1873, in Ian F. W. Beckett, ed., *Wolseley and Ashanti: The Asante War Journal and Correspondence of Major General Sir Garnet Wolseley 1873-1874* (Stroud, Gloucestershire, UK: The History Press for the Army Records Society, 2009) p. 110.

Every effort did indeed appear to have been made. Alan Lloyd and Robert Edgerton have both claimed that the preparations devoted to maintaining the health of the Ashanti expedition may have been the most elaborate hitherto in the history of the British Army, and must have been driven by a good deal of apprehension.[839] 'In no campaign has the British soldier ever had such comforts and luxuries on the march', Reade claimed in his account, 'Each camp was like an hotel, and some were almost as elegant.'[840]

Accounts tended to focus on the technological components of health and safety preparations. Holland and Hozier described the three hospital ships off the coast of Abyssinia as being, 'fitted with such appliances as science could suggest or experience dictate for the restoration of the sick and the comfort of the suffering'.[841] *The Lancet* sent a commission to review the hospital ship H.M.S. *Victor Emmanuel* in harbour before it left for Ashanti. The glowing and detailed illustrated review articles strike one as having been generous both with compliments and with sheer column space.[842] The commission called the *Emmanuel*, 'the most complete specimen of a floating hospital that has ever left our shores'.[843]

It is important to stress that this level of interest in health science was then unprecedented. Britain's 'new' imperial era would become characterised by what Porch termed, 'the marriage of technology and organization', and a focus

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[839] Alan Lloyd, *The Drums of Kumasi: The Story of the Ashanti Wars* (London: Longmans Green and Co., 1964) p. 88; Robert B. Edgerton, *The Fall of the Asante Empire: The Hundred-Year War for Africa's Gold Coast* (London: The Free Press, 1995) p. 105.
[840] Winwood Reade, *The Story of the Ashantee Campaign* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1874) p. 268.
[841] Trevenen J. Holland and Henry Hozier, *The Expedition to Abyssinia Compiled by Order of the Secretary of State for War* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO), 1870) p. 58.
[842] 'Report of The Lancet Sanitary Commission on H.M.S. "Victor Emmanuel"', *The Lancet,* Vol. 102, no. 2623 (6 Dec. 1873) p. 824.
[843] 'The Gold Coast Hospital Ship', *The Lancet*, Vol. 102, no. 2623 (6 Dec. 1873) p. 819.

on health (particularly quinine) and transport above all other considerations.[844] A notable early example was the 1863-64 Waikato War in New Zealand, a small war also characterised by challenges of transport and supply. Most requisites had to be imported from England and Australia and transported 100 miles inland. Belich claimed that these problems, 'were tackled by the British with complete success'. No one ever starved, and the sick rate never exceeded five per cent. Careful preparations and the organisational talents of Lieutenant General Cameron, 'ensured that as far as natural obstacles were concerned the British invasion ran like a well-oiled machine. The campaign was one of the best-organized ever undertaken by the British army.'[845]

The development of the new imperial norm can also be largely attributed to the success and subsequent emulation of the Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions. These first two successful military forays into the African interior were remembered as successful experiments and, indeed, were undertaken as unpredictable field trials. The deep sense of uncertainty with which the government, military, and general population approached the expeditions has been established in preceding chapters. A valorisation of science and technology were reactions to that uncertainty. Before the decision was made to send European battalions, Brackenbury described Wolseley's original staff as having been sent, 'that the experiment might be made upon the bodies of officers only, whether while men could stand a campaign in the West African bush'.[846] Once Wolseley convinced the War Office that the initial results had been encouraging, a larger population of test subjects were sent.

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844 Colonel C. E. Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1996 [1896]) p. xi.
845 James Belich, *The New Zealand Wars and the Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1986) p. 127.
846 Henry Brackenbury, *The Ashanti War, A Narrative: Prepared from the Official Documents by Permission of Major-General Sir Garnet Wolseley* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1874) p. 306.

4.1.2 A Sense of Industry in Africa

In Chapter 3, it was argued that the image of Africa was characterised by a lack of civilisation, tied directly and indirectly to the presence of disease. To combat that threat, British commentators stressed that the army had brought industrialised civilisation along with it. The particular image of civilisation at play was conceived as not only supplanting that of the primitive Africans, but also forcing back the dangerous natural world that those societies had failed to keep at bay.

In 1856, the Governor-General of India lauded the progress that his own tenure had ushered in, singling out, 'the first introduction into the Indian Empire of three great engines of social improvement, which sagacity and science of recent times had previously given to Western nations – I mean Railways, Uniform Postage, and the Electric Telegraph'.[847] The post services in Abyssinia and Ashanti were actually commendable, but most commentaries focused upon the technological engines of social improvement. Such fixation on the spectacle of imperialism served to justify aggression, but also to alleviate the fears that loomed large in the British imagination. It was not necessarily a matter of making Africa feel like home, but of making it feel like civilisation, as Europeans would recognise it.

Commentators in Abyssinia painted an image of modernity dropped into a desert wasteland. Holland and Hozier described:

> stores of coal…to provide the motive power for the transport of troops, and the means of condensing from the sea fresh water …The power of steam was not to be limited to the sea alone. Preparations were made for sending out a railway to connect the landing-place with the

[847] Minute report to the Court of Directors of 28 February 1856 by the Governor-General of India, the Marquis of Dalhousie in Ramsay Muir ed. *The making of British India, 1756-1858. Described in a series of dispatches, treaties, statutes, and other documents* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1923) p. 365; Also in Michael A. Osborne, 'Introduction: The Social History of Science, Technoscience, and Imperialism,' *Science, Technology, and Society* 4, no. 2 (1999) p. 167.

> interior…Condensers, such as the latest experiments of science had proved to be the most efficacious, were supplied for use on shore…Means were obtained for finding water in inland positions, and powerful pumps for forcing it to the surface.[848]

The two officers focused on coal and steam power; the fuel that had powered Britain's rise to industrial and commercial supremacy would power its drive into the African interior. Stanley similarly took comfort in the sounds of a contrived urbanism:

> the shrill shriek of two anomalous locomotives, the noisy roll of ricketty (*sic*) cars as they thundered to and fro, caused the scene to appear at the first impression as if a whole nation had immigrated here, and were about to plant a great city on the fervid beach of Annesley Bay.[849]

Markham marvelled at the speed with which, 'a desert shore, utterly devoid of resources, had been converted into a very convenient port'.[850]

Simpson of the *Illustrated London News* described the Royal Engineers levelling hills for the construction of 'on the whole a fair road' over the original Abyssinian track. 'War is not supposed to be a civiliser', he argued, 'but in this case the making of this road will certainly convert the present war…into an agent of progress and a great benefit to the inhabitants of the country'.[851] In his vision of progress, Simpson echoed the concept of land 'improvement' employed by British agents in India, Canada, and the Antipodes.

In Ashanti, Boyle of the *Daily Telegraph* evoked an image of a city carved out of the jungle. On 21 December 1873, Wolseley's force had only recently reached the Prah River, which divided Fante and Ashanti territory, and had begun the construction of a substantial camp on the south bank. Boyle took

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[848] Holland and Hozier, *The Expedition to Abyssinia*, pp. 58-9; Henry Hozier, *The British Expedition to Abyssinia: Compiled from Authentic Documents* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1869) p. 59.
[849] Henry M. Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala: The Story of Two British Campaigns in Africa* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low & Searle, 1874) p. 265.
[850] Markham, *A History of the Abyssinian Expedition*, pp. 167-8.
[851] William Simpson, *Diary of a Journey to Abyssinia, 1868 with the Expedition Under Sir Robert Napier: The Diary and Observations of William Simpson of the Illustrated London News*, ed. Richard Pankhurst (Hollywood, CA: Tsehai Publishers and Distributors, 2002) p. 68.

a canoe across to the north bank, the second European of the force to do so. In his description of what he found there, Boyle employed the Prah as the literal border of a European sphere of influence: 'Every one asks what the other bank is like. I can only say it is exactly like this bank, except the clearing. But though nature's work be identical, there is all the contrast between civilization and barbarism, life and death'. That contrast was established, in his description, through 'the clang of axe and cutlass, the shout of busy men, the thump of mallet… cutting bush, collecting thatch, burning rubbish, digging holes, planting stakes'. Boyle took comfort in the idea that nature was being tamed through labour, and that a camp for 5,000 men could 'be made in the midst of a dense jungle'. He also implied that nature was tamed through scientific quantification:

> Lieutenant Saunders, R.A., is taking sights across the river with mysterious implements of science. Captain Buckle, B.E., meanwhile draws a plan at the entrance to his tent, wherein our muddy river is depicted of cerulean blue, and dabs of green represent the forest…The Prah has been measured, and found to be sixty-five yards broad at the point selected for the bridge.

In contrast to Simpson in Abyssinia, Boyle did not suggest that these improvements would serve the population after a British withdrawal. Industry arrived with the army, having 'not been seen on the Prah since 1863, when the 4th W.I. were posted here'.[852] Later, as the expedition left Coomassie for the coast, Boyle saw it as, 'fad[ing] again from civilized view, behind the mist of negro barbarism'.[853] The zone of civilisation was conditional upon the presence of Europeans and their implements of science.

4.1.3 Novel Technology and a Sphere of Civilisation

As Stanley advanced through the Fante protectorate toward Ashanti territory, he described the laying of the telegraph line, 'a very novel institution in

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[852] Frederick Boyle, *Through Fanteeland to Coomassie: A Diary of the Ashantee Expedition* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1874) pp. 212-13.
[853] Ibid. p. 350.

Fantee land – a long Fetich (*sic*) charm, as some of the natives believed it to be', atop bamboo poles along the road. Having mocked the natives for falsely attributing supernatural power to the line, he nonetheless took heart that, 'as we looked at it the barbarity of the country was somewhat relieved'.[854] The members of the Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions repeatedly described articles of modern technology as sources of comfort and security. Novel (or relatively advanced) technology was used by British soldiers and newspaper correspondents to evoke the idea of a bubble of civilisation, a sphere of influence within which Europeans could thrive, if only for a time.[855] Thus, whatever their practical purposes, novel technologies also served a conceptual purpose as phantasmagorical charms, protecting the expeditions from the threatening natural world.

4.1.4 Railway and Traction Engines

In his 1871 *Soldier's Pocket Book for Field Service*, Wolseley declared that all future wars would undoubtedly take place along railroads. This was a common enough opinion among contemporary military thinkers.[856] The continental school knew that railways would be critical in any Great Power conflicts, and their significance was actively discussed at RUSI.[857] Wolseley, however, was particularly interested in railways from an imperial school perspective and envisioned using them in small wars. When operating in countries not furnished with existing tracks, he suggested, 'it will often be advisable to lay down a railway temporarily, as we did in the Crimea and

[854] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala*, p. 111.
[855] The Royal Engineers had only formed the first telegraph company in 1870 and Ashanti was their first field deployment. Ian F. W. Beckett, *The Victorians at War* (London: Hambledon and London, 2003) p. 181.
[856] See also Edward M. Spiers, *Engines for Empire: The Victorian Army and its use of railways* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2015).
[857] Capt. C.E. Luard, 'Field Railways, and their General Application in War', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute* 17 (1873) pp. 693-724; Lieut.-Col. Robert Home, 'On the Organization of the Communications of an Army, Including Railways', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute* 19 (1875) pp. 382-98.

Abyssinia. We were the first nation that demonstrated how feasible and useful it was to do so.'[858] It would soon become clear that Wolseley had been greatly impressed by Napier's railway in Abyssinia and was inclined to over-estimate the uses to which such technology could be put. His focus on future imperial ventures was evident in his recommendation that:

> all staff officers should carefully study the construction of railways as practiced in America. The English system is more applicable to permanent constructions…whereas in America, where lines are run through wilderness, economy of construction is the first great object aimed at.[859]

When, two years later, he set off for the Gold Coast, Wolseley intended to build a railway to carry his army through the jungle.

It did seem like a good idea at the time. It was argued in earlier chapters that, despite Britain's long presence on the coasts of sub-Saharan Africa, the interior was still seen as largely unknown. This general ignorance led to a near professional consensus that the Ashanti bush was suitable for railroad construction. Sir Charles Wilson at the War Office put together a summary of what was known about Ashanti territory in preparation for the expedition. Drawing on the few explorer accounts available, he admitted that it was, 'difficult to reconcile the itineraries of the earlier travellers'. He nonetheless concluded that, 'from the coast to the Prah the country is either flat or slightly undulating', and that became the official line.[860] Wolseley, Kimberley, and a wide array of commentators thus agreed with *The Lancet* that, 'by all accounts, the country offers peculiar facilities for constructing a railroad; and we venture to reiterate

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[858] Sir Garnet Wolseley, *The Soldier's Pocket-Book for Field Service*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1871) p. 299.
[859] Ibid.
[860] Charles Wilson, *Notes to Accompany Itinerary from Cape Coast Castle to Coomassie* (London: Topographical and Statistical Department, War Office, 1873) p. 1.

an opinion, which is gaining ground more and more every day, that this will probably prove the best as well as the cheapest method of procedure'.[861]

Captain Knapp Barrow, an officer who had, 'seen a good deal of the Gold Coast', disagreed in a letter to the Colonial Office. Formerly of the 27th Foot, he had served with the Gold Coast Artillery and as an ADC during the ill-fated 1863 campaign.[862] Having learned from the newspapers that thirty miles of railway were to be sent with Wolseley, Barrow was 'confident that when at Cape Coast Castle it will be useless. The "bush" will not allow of the construction of railways'.[863] *The Times* printed a letter from 'A Civilian Who Has Seen War', who asked 'Is there no possibility of stopping this mad railway scheme?'. Insisting that the Crimean example was completely inapplicable to the Gold Coast, the anonymous author explained, in detail, the difficulty of landing heavy material in the shallow surf, the impossibility of levelling the terrain, and the danger of disturbing the malarial soil.[864] Joseph Conrad conveyed a similar sense of impossibility in his 1899 novel *Heart of Darkness*:

> I came upon a boiler wallowing in the grass…an undersized railway-truck lying on its back with its wheels in the air. One was off. The thing looked as dead as the carcass of some animal. I came upon more pieces of decaying machinery, a stack of rusty rails…They were building a railway.[865]

Their warnings went unheeded and the equipment was shipped.

On 13 October 1873, Wolseley sent the following telegram to Her Majesty's Consul at Madeira for transmission to Cardwell at the War Office: 'Country unsuitable for railroad and traction engines. Do not send them out.'[866] The bulk of the equipment had already arrived. 'I find from the nature of the

[861] 'The Ashantee War', *The Lancet,* Vol. 102, no. 2613 (27 Sep. 1873) p. 458.
[862] Beckett, *Wolseley and Ashanti*, p. 26.
[863] TNA, CO 879/5 'Further Correspondence Respecting the Ashantee Invasion', No. 352: Captain Barrow to Colonial Office, September 20, 1873, p. 305.
[864] 'A Civilian Who Has Seen War', 'To the Editor of the Times', *The Times*, 16 Oct. 1873, p. 8.
[865] Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999 [1899]) p. 24.
[866] TNA, WO 147/27 'Papers Relating to the Ashanti Invasion (Gold Coast) &c', Intelligence Department, Horse Guards, War Office, No. 27, 13th October 1873, p. 64.

country that to be of any use a Rl. Rd. is out of the question', he wrote in his journal, and 'the gradients on the road are so steep that traction Engines cannot be used'.[867] Frustrated by the wasted effort and considerable expense, he defended himself:

> both the Rl. Rd. and the traction engines were pressed upon me by Major Home & Sir L. Simmons, both belonging to that theoretical but very unpractical corps, the Rl. Engineers. I asked for them after my original requisition for stores had been submitted, and against my better judgement.[868]

Wolseley sent his campaign journal in sections to his wife, who then passed them among his family members, and thus wrote with a small audience in mind.[869] He made his case more publicly to Boyle, who quoted Wolseley saying that:

> Of the scores of people I questioned…there was not one who represented the interior of the country to be other than a level, over which a railway could be laid with ease. I find it to be so broken and hilly that nobody besides Major Home will believe it possible to take even the traction engine one stage toward Coomassie.[870]

Boyle reported that the 'unpractical' Royal Engineer actually managed to get the traction engine to Akroful, the second camp along the road, but only, 'at a fearful risk of explosion'. Home took it back to Cape Coast Castle, where, 'it gave up further travel, and passed the remainder of its sojourn in West Africa peacefully employed in sawing boards'.[871] Stanley described the engine as, 'totally inadequate to the requirements. After a feeble attempt of about two miles, and twice tumbling into a ditch, it returned to the neighbourhood of the

[867] Wolseley Journal, TNA, WO 147/3, 10 October 1873, in Beckett, *Wolseley and Ashanti,* p. 132.
[868] Ibid.
[869] Ian F. W. Beckett, 'Manipulating the "Modern Curse of Armies": Wolseley, the Press, and the Ashanti War, 1873-1874,' in *Soldiers and Settlers in Africa, 1850-1918*, ed. Stephen M. Miller (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 2009) p. 228; Sir George Arthur, ed., *The Letters of Lord and Lady Wolseley 1870-1911* (London: William Heinemann, 1922) p. 17.
[870] Boyle, *Fanteeland to Coomassie*, p. 49.
[871] Ibid. p. 51.

castle, where it is now employed in the more undignified labour of cutting planks for the Control Department.'[872]

The railroad and traction engines in Ashanti turned out to be a debacle. Wolseley took serious criticism for the incident, as well for his inability to establish an adequate supply system for the expedition without the aid of steam power. One scathing article in *The Sunday Times* tarred the expedition as reckless:

> How the railway scheme was abandoned as impossible is well known to every newspaper reader…The railway sent out to the Gold Coast was found useless, and sent home again. It would have been more economical on the part of our excessively economical Government if the question of the practicability of railways in such country had been inquired into before so expensive an experiment was made.[873]

It bears some consideration why Wolseley decided to invest so much faith in trains and sappers in the first place. Incorrect intelligence was a factor, to be sure. There was, however, a psychological reason that Wolseley and the engineers advising him were so attracted to Napier's Abyssinian example and were able to gloss over those intelligence gaps in their attempt to recreate it.

Steam technology presented an appealing potential remedy for the perceived dangers of the African bush. The War Office plans for the expedition described the railway as a protection against nature: 'supposing the railway is laid to Mansu, it will carry the troops over the worst (most unhealthy) districts, obviate the necessity of their encamping in the Mangrove Swamp, and make the distance between Cape Coast Castle and Prahsu only four days'.[874]

Steam Sappers offered similar promise. In 1858, an Ordinance Select Committee had conducted a trial of the Burrell-Boydell engine at the Arsenal.

[872] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala*, pp. 27-8.
[873] 'Blundering and jobbery are the principal characteristics of the present', *The Sunday Times*, 7 Dec. 1873, p. 4.
[874] TNA, WO 33/25, 'Ashantee War. – Notes [confidential]', W. Armstrong, Deputy Adjutant-General, Horse Guards, War Office, 30th September, 1873 p. 9.

The East India Company expressed interest, and sent Colonel Sir Proby Cantley to attend the trial. After a favourable report, Colonel Sir Frederick Abbott of the Military College suggested that steam sappers could be used in India to move and concentrate troops more quickly, regardless of heat, and thus allow the Government to withdraw a full half of the military force from the colony (a suggestion made, mind you, while the Indian Mutiny was still on-going). The Committee recommended that two engines be sent to Calcutta and two to Bombay.[875]

It is not known what came of those plans, but Wolseley had similar hopes for the protective power of his sappers. Once the railway had been abandoned, Wolseley told Boyle that, 'if the [traction] engines can be got to Mansu…one half, and that the half most difficult, of our campaign will be achieved'.[876] When, in fact, the engines were first despatched to the Gold Coast, *The Times* considered them so readily able to plough through the African bush that, it argued, their very presence was evidence of Wolseley's intent to march all the way to Coomassie (before he had announced that plan).[877] *The Lancet* argued that a railroad was critical to preserve the health of any European troops hoping to make it that far north.[878]

Railways occupied an important place in Victorian British culture. In *Machines as the Measure of Men,* Adas claimed that, 'more than any other technological innovation, the railway embodied the great material advances associated with the first Industrial Revolution and dramatized the gap which that

[875] Col. John Nowers, *Steam Traction in the Royal Engineers* (Rochester, UK: North Kent Books, 1994) p. 4.
[876] Boyle, *Fanteeland to Coomassie*, p. 48.
[877] 'Sir GARNET WOLSELEY must very shortly reach', *The Times*, 22 Sep. 1873, p. 9.
[878] 'The Ashantee War', *The Lancet,* Vol. 102, no. 2610 (6 Sep. 1873) p. 344.

process had created between the Europeans and all non-Western peoples'.[879] Sinnema has argued that, through the mid-century, the *Illustrated London News* represented railways as advancing human dominance of natural obstacles. By transporting urban populations to the country for pleasure, they made nature more accessible to people and, thus, more domesticated.[880] It was therefore appropriate for British commentators to single out steam-powered engines as the solution to a dangerous landscape in dire need of domestication.

Wolseley and those interested in imperial ventures had been inspired by the Abyssinian war and the image of the Zoulla camp, an area of industry and civilisation set up in a desert. A Staff Officer had told *Blackwood's* that at Zoulla, 'even the locomotive seems to feel the influence of discipline…it keeps to its appointed place, and works steadily away, almost as noiselessly as its relation, the condensing engine, which is on duty at the edge of the pier'.[881] While the plans for a railway in Ashanti had come to nothing, the traction engines were able to fill a practical and symbolic role not unlike the condensing engines in Abyssinia. Unable to advance, they remained at the Cape Coast for the duration of the conflict, their drive belts rigged to saw blades.[882] By sawing wood into planks, the engines at least managed to contribute to the industrial flavour of the British presence in West Africa and engage African nature in a small way. Traction engines had become increasingly common in large-scale farming over the 1860s, pulling ploughs in place of horse teams and powering belt-driven machinery. By 1867, over 250 John Fowler ploughing engines were in private

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[879] Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989) p. 221.
[880] Peter W. Sinnema, *Dynamics of the Pictured Page: Representing the Nation in the Illustrated London News* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 1998) p. 131.
[881] 'A Staff-Officer' [William Tweedie], 'Letters from a Staff-Officer with the Abyssinian Expedition. - Part I,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 103, no. 629 (Mar. 1868) p. 362.
[882] Beckett, *Wolseley and Ashanti*, p. 38.

use.[883] In 1871, an Ordinance Select Committee recommended that two engines be purchased directly from the Aveling and Porter agricultural machine manufacturers according to Royal Engineer specifications. 'Seam Sapper Number 2', as it was named, was the engine sent to Ashanti.[884]

An additional potential influence was present in another example of the role that interested individuals could play in professional military debates on novel technology. Major Robert Home, Commanding Royal Engineer for Wolseley's Ashanti campaign, had previously served as the full-time paid secretary of the 1871 Committee. Home (then a Captain) had participated in and been responsible for recording and writing up the rigorous series of trials conducted on Steam Sapper Number 2.[885] He thus had considerable experience with, not only traction engines in general, but also the specific model on the Ashanti campaign.

Home's official appraisal of the steam sapper, as indicated in his journal of operations, was not as wildly optimistic as Wolseley would later claim.[886] It stands to reason, nonetheless, that his deep familiarity with the machines might have imparted a certain emotional investment in their performance. The Engineer might have felt compelled, as well, by a professional desire to repeat his previous tests in field settings. Moreover, while Home himself was aware of the engine's limitations, fellow officers with whom he conversed might have preferentially recalled the high points of his descriptions, thus disseminating an inflated image of the sappers' potential. In the final analysis of his report, Home hinted at the effects of his sense of disappointment:

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[883] Nowers, *Steam Traction in the Royal Engineers*, p. 3.
[884] Ibid. p. 8.
[885] Ibid. pp. 9-10.
[886] TNA, WO 147/27 'Journal of the Engineer Operations on the Gold Coast during the recent Expedition', Major Home, p. 3, 7.

> The traction engine did not come up to expectation. On good roads, with ordinary gradients, it would be valuable; but on the very narrow roads on the West Coast, where no attempt could be made to zig-zag up the road, and where the bridges were of a flimsy description, it was unsuitable as a traction engine. This conclusion was fought against for some time, but at last it became apparent that it could not be trusted to. As a stationary engine it worked very well. While such engines should form a portion of the Engineer's park, yet they should not, in their present state, be counted on as a means for transport.[887]

4.1.5 Artificial Light

Somewhere among the masses of equipment, munitions, and stores stacked under waterproof tarpaulins at Zoulla stood three sets of the 'Prosser's lime-light' apparatus. An ordinary limelight, itself nothing new, stood behind a large vertical lens on a geared swivel, allowing a user to adjust the focus and direction of a powerful beam of light.[888] Each Prosser cost £350, more than a Gatling gun and four times as much as a 9-pounder rifled steel cannon.[889] These devices demonstrate another case of the desire for novel technology to maintain a sphere of civilisation around the expedition. They were never actually brought to the front. Lieutenant St. John of the Royal Engineers had not been informed that the limelights were being sent and by the time he stumbled upon them it was too late to get them up the line. He conducted some trials at Zoulla and submitted a review to the India Office.[890]

British commentators wrote often of these limelights and attributed immense power to them, despite the fact that they had all remained in their boxes. In the lighting apparatus, wrote Holland and Hozier, 'the discoveries of chemists were combined with the skill of the mechanician'. With the Prosser, 'the whole of the country adjacent to a camp could be illumined by a light as

[887] Ibid. p. 42.
[888] A. F. Shepherd, *The Campaign in Abyssinia* (Bombay: Times of India Office, 1868) p. 137.
[889] TNA, CO 879/4, 'Papers Relating to the Ashantee Invasion (Gold Coast), &c', No. 50: War Office to Colonial Office, 19 May 1873, pp. 71-2.
[890] TNA, WO 107/8, Report on the Telegraphic Material used during the Expedition to Abyssinia, with Remarks on Subject of Military Telegraphy, August 14th, 1868, Military Secretary, India Office, p. 6.

powerful as that of the sun'.[891] Theodore was famous for conducting night attacks, and the light was thus presented as a serving practical, but highly overstated, purpose. Shepherd similarly felt that the limelight represented, 'a guarantee that all that experience, science, energy, and intelligence could do, would be effected in order to frustrate Theodore's knavish tricks by making the night light about him'.[892] By, 'discover[ing] at once the position and movements of an enemy within five or six hundred yards, and, at the same time, shroud[ing] those of the [British] Force in thickest darkness', the limelight was able to reverse the uncomfortable feeling of walking into the unknown.[893] Holland and Hozier described it as being, 'to a commanding officer much what his bull's-eye lantern is to a policeman', conjuring a sense of familiarity and order.[894]

In *The Victorian Eye,* Otter explored the emotional and political significance of artificial light to British towns and cities. Victorian writing on light, he argued, was infused with liberal ideals:

> Factory owners eulogized electric light's ability to generate states of productive attention, while the introduction of even modest illumination to public spaces was invariably promoted as an aid to public order. Electric light was also advanced as an agent of salubrity…its introduction increased health and, consequently, enhanced productivity'.[895]

Toward the end of the century, 'artificial light was routinely viewed as the supreme sign of "modernity" or "civilization"'.[896]

The French made the first military use of light machines in the 1853-56 Crimean War, but they were not used on a large scale until the 1870-71 Franco-Prussian War.[897] The British Army had not deployed any such devices in

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[891] Holland and Hozier, *The Expedition to Abyssinia,* pp. 58-9.
[892] Shepherd, *The Campaign in Abyssinia*, p. 210.
[893] Ibid. p. 210.
[894] Holland and Hozier, *The Expedition to Abyssinia,* p. 137.
[895] Chris Otter, *The Victorian Eye: A Political History of Light and Vision in Britain, 1800-1910* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008) p. 17.
[896] Ibid. p. 1.
[897] Ibid. p. 186.

colonial conflict until the Abyssinian expedition; they were considered quite novel to that setting.

Ryan uncovered a similar emotional relationship with light in the 1890 British occupation of Mashonaland, where a huge, steam-powered electric searchlight protected the expedition force at night. The light was most likely powered by a stationary traction engine equipped with a dynamo, an arrangement that had been successfully tested during the 1890 manoeuvres.[898] It may have served a practical purpose, Ryan argued, but it, 'does seem to be an elaborate solution, and suggests both a desire among the British for the comforting presence of technology and perhaps an assumption that the European contraption would frighten away the "savages". Light itself was being used as a weapon'.[899]

The Ashanti force did not carry a limelight into West Africa, though the howitzers were equipped with magnesium star shells to illuminate the bush.[900] Artificially generated light was retroactively cast as providing the men of the Abyssinian expedition with a sense of security against 'Darkest Africa'. The following section will explore the ways in which British commentators of both expeditions recruited novel weaponry to defend and maintain the critical, if intangible, line of demarcation.

4.2 Competition Between Spheres

In *Small Wars,* Callwell argued that, 'uncivilized races attribute leniency to timidity. A system adapted to La Vendée is out of place among fanatics and savages, who must be thoroughly brought to book and cowed or they will rise

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[898] Nowers, *Steam Traction in the Royal Engineers*, p. 22.
[899] James R. Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997) p. 97.
[900] Lloyd, *The Drums of Kumasi*, p. 83.

again'.[901] Callwell repeatedly advocated the use of overwhelming violence in small wars to convince one's enemy of the very idea that they were, by European standards, only a small threat. In the Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions, the British army sought to use novel military technology to affect a sense of awed defeat.

Black recently argued that success through comparative technological superiority is necessarily dependant upon the level of damage that a given enemy is able (or willing) to tolerate. However effective a novel weapon might be, perception, 'plays a major role in the consideration of the effects of weapons on targets, and this perception affects the use of the weapons, tactically and operationally'.[902] This section will focus on British perceptions of their novel weapons and, critically, their perceptions of the ability (or inability) of Africans to tolerate them. Bolt has argued that, in the 1860s and '70s:

> the nervousness aroused by the Indian Mutiny and the protracted New Zealand wars, and given a theoretical justification by the scientific exponents of the 'war of the races' doctrine, had strengthened a perhaps inevitable instinct of powerful minorities in a threatening environment to bolster their position and confidence with a massive display of force. Superior weapons were to demonstrate, if all else failed, the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon.[903]

The men in Abyssinia and Ashanti conducted their expeditions *as minorities*, based on a correct assessment of numbers but also upon the threatening image of Africa in the British imagination. In reaction, they sought to demonstrate Anglo-Saxon superiority with what *The Spectator* termed, 'the weapons of civilisation – the Snider [rifle], the rocket, and the shell'.[904]

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[901] Callwell, *Small Wars,* p. 148.
[902] Jeremy Black, *War and Technology* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013) p. 26.
[903] Christine Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971) p. 105.
[904] *The Spectator,* 3 January 1874, p. 13.

4.2.1 Criteria of Superiority

There was a palpable disparity in military technology between the British and their African enemies. British soldiers and commentators, anxious that those enemies might have an advantage in the African wild, overplayed that disparity, edging toward the claim that technology would provide them with an easy and safe victory. The British arsenal, and its novelty by contemporary British standards, has been discussed in Chapter 2 and in the Introduction. A degree of bravado is usually to be found among the soldiers of any military conflict. Nevertheless, the specific language used and concepts chosen by the British to denigrate their enemies and bolster their own confidence provide a glimpse into the concerns of their contemporary culture. Such rhetoric often involved belittling African weaponry.

The Abyssinian and Ashanti armies both used gunpowder weapons in considerable numbers. After securing his position on the throne in 1861, Theodore had pursued the manufacture of heavy guns with fervency. He maintained a staff of European artisans, mostly German, to build cannon and mortars and by 1868 had amassed an imposing collection. With a total of 37 artillery pieces at Magdala, his artillery train was certainly the most powerful ever seen in the country and ensured that, even when the bulk of his kingdom was in rebellion, no rival would attack him directly.[905]

Yet, British commentators cast Theodore's love of cannon as a sign of his comparative weakness, rather than strength. In his analysis of 'the Abyssinian captives question', Dufton argued that Theodore would quickly surrender if attacked by British forces:

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[905] E. F. Chapman, 'The Abyssinian Expedition,' *Minutes of Proceedings of the Royal Artillery Institution* VI (1870) pp. 99-100; R. A. Caulk, 'Firearms and Princely Power in Ethiopia in the Nineteenth Century,' *The Journal of African History* 13, no. 4 (1972) p. 610.

> The king knows as well as we do that to attempt to hold his mountain fortress against European war appliances would be hopeless, suicidal to him and his cause. Have not all the plans for the construction of mortars and cannon in his own country, which have engaged his attention for the last ten years, been based on his knowledge of the superiority of Europe in these matters?[906]

Stern described a scene in which Theodore spoke to his troops of the approaching British army, supposedly admitting to them that, 'the English, ever since the time of Noah, have cast cannons, and manufactured guns and powder, whilst we only commenced yesterday'.[907] A Staff Officer wrote to *Blackwood's* that Theodore, 'himself, indeed, fully understood the value of gunpowder and the superiority of modern weapons over the old shield and spear of the dark ages', with which he implied the Abyssinian army was chiefly armed.[908] Theodore's understanding was not, however, expected to extend to tactics or ballistics.

After the Abyssinian artillery performed poorly at the battle of Magdala, British commentators almost unanimously attributed that fact to an inability on the part of the Africans to comprehend or manage the tools that Europeans had manufactured for them. Markham, for example, mockingly described Theodore's 'thirty pieces of ordinance, which his people did not understand the use of, to oppose this enormous disciplined [British] army'.[909] Holland and Hozier claimed that the guns were manned by Abyssinians, not by the European craftsmen, and followed directly with the report that, 'Theodore's favourite cannon, which he had named after himself, burst on the first

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[906] Henry Dufton, *Narrative of a Journey through Abyssinia in 1862-3; with an Appendix on 'the Abyssinian Captives Question'* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1867) pp. 294-5.
[907] Henry A. Stern, *The Captive Missionary: Being an Account of the Country and People of Abyssinia, Embracing a Narrative of King Theodore's Life and His Treatment of Political and Religious Missions* (London: Cassell, Petter, and Galpin, 1868) p. 378.
[908] 'A Staff-Officer' [William Tweedie], 'Letters from a Staff-Officer with the Abyssinian Expedition. - Part IV,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 104, no. 635 (Sept. 1868) p. 358.
[909] Markham, *A History of the Abyssinian Expedition*, p. 206.

discharge'.[910] 'Theodore's famous guns - gave them no assistance whatever', Reade reported in *The Times*:

> on the contrary, killed, it is said, a few of them. The big gun burst at the first explosion, the rest…kept up a steady cannonade easily distinguishable by its dull, heavy sound, ascribed to the slow ignition of the bad powder, from the quick rattle of the mountain guns, but did not even touch one of our men.[911]

In their portrayal of Theodore, British commentators thus granted him the intelligence to recognise British superiority, but not the intelligence to successfully imitate British methods. When battle arrived, Stanley (alone) claimed, Theodore incredulously cried that, 'the English are not afraid of my chain shot; they march up in spite of my big balls'.[912]

Abyssinian infantry were also described as ineffective on account of their technological inferiority. In 1848, Plowden had reported that, 'though the gun [referring to Abyssinian matchlocks] is much feared by the warrior…yet from the want of skill which the Abyssinians almost invariably display…it is found that the battle is generally carried by the superiority of horse or spearmen over that of guns'.[913] Parkyns claimed in 1853 that, 'in the use of the gun the natives are in general exceedingly clumsy. They prefer large, heavy, matchlocks, to load which is a labour of some minutes.'[914]

In their account of Napier's later expedition, Holland and Hozier described the situation as relatively unchanged. Roughly half of the Abyssinian force that engaged the British, they reported, had been armed with muskets. The majority of these carried matchlocks, though about a thousand carried

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[910] Holland and Hozier, *The Expedition to Abyssinia,* 2:442.
[911] 'The Abyssinian Expedition.' *The Times*, 18 May 1868, p. 9.
[912] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala*, p. 423.
[913] Walter Chichele Plowden, *Travels in Abyssinia and the Galla Country; with an Account of a Mission to Ras Ali in 1848*, ed. Trevor Chichele Plowden (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1868) p. 64.
[914] Mansfield Parkyns, *Life in Abyssinia: Being Notes Collected during Three Years' Residence and Travel in that Country* (London: John Murray, 1853) 2:23.

percussion muskets.[915] Markham again exemplified the general dismissive tone of Western observers. He described Theodore's army as a 'helpless rabble of followers armed with spears and shields', a 'mob of spearmen', and only considered the 3,000 'gun-men' to be worth recognising as soldiers.[916] Choosing to focus on armament above all, he suggested that Magdala could not be defended by such troops, 'who in opposition to the English were virtually unarmed'.[917] He thus denied the Abyssinians their status as soldiers, arguing that 'the interminable wars of these Abyssinian chiefs are as little worthy of record as the skirmishes of crows and kites'.[918] After passing a group of allied African soldiers, Simpson reported that among the spears and shields, 'a few has musquets *(sic)*, or rather what was intended for such, for many of them reminded one of their youthful attempts with an old key tied to a stick by which most boys have at one time or another endeavoured to produce something like firearms'.[919]

Compared with the Abyssinian army, the Ashanti army was armed with a very high proportion of firearms. By the 1860s, Birmingham exported from 100,000 to 150,000 guns per year to Africa, a large amount of which went to the Gold Coast.[920] There was a thriving gun trade into Ashanti and the nation's substantial military power in the region was based entirely upon musket infantry. Winwood Reade, *The Times* correspondent to the Ashanti War, had from 1868 to 1870 travelled West Africa under the patronage of the prominent London-based merchant Andrew Swanzy. The F. & A. Swanzy firm was the leading

[915] Holland and Hozier, *The Expedition to Abyssinia*, 2:442.
[916] Markham, *A History of the Abyssinian Expedition*, p. 311, 206.
[917] Ibid. p. 314.
[918] Ibid. p. 52.
[919] Simpson, *Diary of a Journey to Abyssinia*, p. 75.
[920] Daniel R. Headrick, *The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981) p. 106.

British trading company on the Gold Coast.[921] *The African Sketch-Book*, Reade's account of his journey, is replete with signs of the importance of the gun trade to the area. At a palaver in the French-linked coastal city of Assinnie, Reade noted that King Amatifoo ordered a thousand muskets on behalf of the Ashanti from his travelling companion, the French trader M. Chatelain. Assinie held the monopoly on coastal trade in the area and acted as middleman between European companies and the inland Ashanti Empire.[922] Swanzy, a Fellow of the Geographical Society, 'was desirous to take part in the great work of laying open Inner Africa'.[923] He gave Reade *carte blanche* to spend as much as he wished, and provided him with goods with which to pay his travelling expenses.[924] As to his patron's reason for funding the expedition, Reade diplomatically reported that 'Mr. Swanzy had asked me to explore the River Assinie; and I proposed to him that I should endeavour to reach Coomassie, the capital of Ashanti. To this he agreed.'[925] He made little direct reference to Swanzy's dealings in arms and ammunition but, after the outbreak of hostilities with the Ashanti, the Colonial and Law Offices turned their attention to Reade's former patron.

Lord Kimberley and the Colonial Office wished to halt the sale of arms, ammunition, and gunpowder to Assinie, well aware that it traded on Ashanti's behalf.[926] Kimberley tried to apply the 'Customs and Consolidation Act' to that end, but the Law Office took the opinion that it would not stick except in cases

[921] Beckett, *Wolseley and Ashanti*, p. 36.
[922] Winwood Reade, *The African Sketch-Book* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1873) 2:35; Brackenbury, *The Ashanti War, A Narrative*, 2:306.
[923] Reade, *The African Sketch-Book*, 2:352.
[924] Ibid. 2:34.
[925] Ibid. 2:32.
[926] TNA, CO 879/4 'Papers Relating to the Ashanti Invasion (Gold Coast) &c', No. 31: Colonial Office to Law Office, 7 May 1873.

of completely banned articles of trade.[927] Frustrated that he could not even stop British traders from selling to an enemy belligerent under the standing colonial law, Kimberley contacted Colonel Harley, the governor of Cape Coast. 'An Ordinance to empower the Administrator to regulate or prohibit the importation and sale of munitions of war' passed the Gold Coast Legislative Council at Cape Coast Castle on 29 April 1873.[928] Harley finally imposed a blockade on 29 August and Freemantle deployed four of his seven ships to enforce it.

With so large a coast to patrol, it was only partially effective, made less so by the fact that it only applied to the stretch under British jurisdiction, thus excluding Assinie.[929] Moreover, following an appeal by F. & A. Swanzy and other merchants, the law office again declared it to be illegal in November. Freemantle did what he could to maintain the porous and legally awkward blockade until it was lifted for good in March 1874.[930] Several of the Swanzys' ships were detained.[931] The *Pall Mall Gazette* accused them of 'Blockade Running on the Gold Coast', to which the Swanzys responded in protest that the embargo did not technically apply to the French ports.[932] Even during the blockade, the *Newcastle Courant* reported, at Assinie the Ashanti could buy, 'whatever arms and ammunition they may choose to order…agents at Birmingham are collecting muskets for the Ashantees, the cost price being 9s 6d each'.[933] Kimberley's desire to close off the firearm shipments was, of course, strategically obvious, but also indicative of the scale and consistency of

[927] Ibid. No. 54: Law Officers' Opinion, 20 May 1873; Ibid. No. 61: Colonial Office to Commissioners of Customs, 22 May 1873.
[928] Ibid. No. 108: Colonel *Harley*, C.B., to the Earl of *Kimberley*, 3 May 1873.
[929] Brackenbury, *The Ashanti War, A Narrative*, 2:312.
[930] Sir E. R. Fremantle, *The Navy as I have Known it, 1849-1899* (London: Cassell and Company, 1904) p. 208; Ian F. W. Beckett, ed., *Wolseley and Ashanti: The Asante War Journal and Correspondence of Major General Sir Garnet Wolseley 1873-1874* (Stroud, Gloucestershire, UK: The History Press for the Army Records Society, 2009) p. 36.
[931] Brackenbury, *The Ashanti War, A Narrative*, 2:311.
[932] 'Blockade Running on the Gold Coast', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 3 Oct. 1873, p. 1167.
[933] 'The Ashantee Expedition', *Newcastle Courant,* 31 Oct. 1873, p. 2.

that trade. The Ashanti had not simply stockpiled a few muskets over time; they were large-scale importers.

While the Ashanti were, therefore, a fully gunpowder army, they were nonetheless described dismissively by British commentators for the comparative lower quality of their weapons. In the tactical memorandum distributed to incoming British troops, Brigadier-General Alison, in consultation with Wolseley, reassured the men that, 'Each soldier must remember that with his breech loader he is equal to at least twenty Ashantis, wretchedly armed as they are with old flint muskets, firing slugs or pieces of stone that do not hurt badly at more than 40 or 50 yards range.'[934] Most of the journalists and officer-writers made similar comparisons, and almost all based on weaponry rather than fighting ability or bravery. Stanley told his readers that the Ashanti warrior carried his ammunition in a pouch slung over the shoulder. He described the supposed contents of such pouches as:

> any miscellaneous a set of articles as may be seen in any Jacktar's box or bag. Bark thread, bark waste (probably for wadding), iron pins, queer-looking stones, an assortment of dark-coloured beans, a stale piece of yam or manioc, a piece of chew-stick, a handful or so of small snail shells and other extraordinary articles…One need not wonder, then, at the very few severe wounds inflicted upon the English, despite the very many splendid opportunities the ambushed Ashantees have had to inflict instantaneous death. The powder is thrown loosely into the barrel, and, being often without wadding material, the bullets or slugs of iron, or handfuls of snail shells, or a piece of unsmelted iron ore, are dropped on the loose powder, and the loose charge is thus fired when only a few feet from their foes.[935]

Again, Stanley mocked the equipment with which the Africans fought yet also attributed their ineffectiveness to their inability to use that equipment properly. The Ashanti, he argued, had every tactical opportunity but lacked the basic mechanical skill even to load a musket. Surgeon-Major Gore reported that the

[934] Memorandum by Colonel George Greaves, 20 December 1873, Head Quarters, Cape Coast Castle, in Beckett, *Wolseley and Ashanti,* p. 283.
[935] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala*, pp. 64-5.

abdominal bullet wounds sustained by British soldiers were so shallow, 'it really becomes a question of some practical interest whether it would not be of advantage to devise some kind of light, but tough leathern doublets for this peculiar bush warfare'.[936] Leather bulletproof vests, in effect.

Technological superiority was, and is always, a matter of degree. The special correspondents and officers of the Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions, however, described their own superiority as if it was fundamental rather than relative. In such discourses, Africans did not simply possess incrementally less advanced technology; they were relegated to the status of non-technological. Their inability to manage their own weapons, British commentators believed, was further reflected in their inability to withstand those of the fully industrial Europeans. Henty claimed, in fact, that he was, 'quite satisfied that the Snider is more than sufficient for the Ashantis, and that we might well dispense with other weapons'.[937]

It is, on that note, worth reconsidering why the Gatling appealed so strongly to the contemporary idea of small wars, which Callwell would later define as, 'expeditions against savages and semi-civilized races by disciplined soldiers'.[938] That was a statement of comparative technological dominance, rather than strictly of race. In practice, however, opposing forces were not always so diametrically split. Many of Britain's imperial conflicts across the globe had hitherto been fought against comparably, or at least *analogously* armed fighters. But the mitrailleur appeared to be without analogue and thus provided a marker that allowed the imperial mind to separate who was 'civilised' and who was 'savage'.

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[936] Surgeon-Major Albert Gore, *A Contribution to the Medical History of our West African Campaigns* (London: Baillière, Tindall and Cox, 1876) p. 184.
[937] G. A. Henty, *The March to Coomassie*, 2nd ed. (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1874) p. 453.
[938] Callwell, *Small Wars,* p. 21.

An 1881 popular history of science demonstrated the appeal of that distinction. In the chapter on firearms, the author stated that:

> the more costly and ingenious and complicated the instruments of war become, the more certain will be the extension and the permanence of civilization. The great cost of such appliances…the ingenuity needed for their contrivance, the elaborate machinery required for their construction, and the skill implied in their use, are such that these weapons can never be the arms of other than wealthy and intelligent nations.[939]

The *Daily News* took the same stance in an article announcing that the first two Gatlings had been sent to the Gold Coast: 'no misgivings need be entertained on account of the enemy capturing these Gatlings, for without a supply of ammunition, which necessarily requires great skill in its preparation, the guns would be perfectly useless'.[940] Claims that the mitrailleur was beyond the capacity of 'less-civilised' enemies, even if captured, in fact echoed Gatling's original sales pitch to the Union government during the American Civil War. In 1863, he published a brochure with a list of the advantages that his new weapon would offer, the eighth and final being that:

> If the government should adopt this fire-arm and the necessary metallic cartridge…it will not be in the power of the rebels, in case they should capture the same, to use them against us, as it is impossible for them to manufacture, or procure, the cartridges in any way, and would, therefore, render the guns utterly useless in their hands.[941]

Gatling described the Confederate South in the same strategic terms as British commentators would later describe the Ashanti. The bulk of military thinkers who expressed interest in early mitrailleurs seem to have envisioned and intended combat with technologically inferior enemies. In other words, rather than hoping that machine guns would, by their presence, create a state of

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[939] Robert Routledge, *Discoveries and Inventions of the Nineteenth Century* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1881) p. 118; The 1876 edition is also quoted in John Ellis, *The Social History of the Machine Gun* (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975) p. 81.

[940] 'The Ashantee War', *Daily News,* 9 Sept. 1873.

[941] Richard Gatling, 1863, quoted in Julia Keller, *Mr. Gatling's Terrible Marvel: The Gun that Changed Everything and the Misunderstood Genius Who Invented It* (New York: Viking: Penguin Group, 2008) p. 42.

comparative technological dominance, supporters planned to deploy them to arenas where such a state already existed to further extend the gap.

4.2.2 Presumptions of Inadequacy

'The importance of clearing away all cover from the immediate front cannot be exaggerated', wrote da Costa Porter in an article about small war tactics, 'On the efficacy of our fire must our safety in great measure depend. It is by shooting down the enemy fast enough that a moral impression will be made upon him strong enough to make him forget his superiority of numbers.'[942] The moral, or psychological, impact of European firepower upon 'primitive' foes was also a fixation in the first British expeditions to Africa. The simple fact that enemy morale was of interest is not itself significant; it always is. The fact that British military personnel desired to create a moral impression significant enough to rout a numerically superior 'savage' enemy does, however, provide a window into the British perception of the 'savage' mind. British commentators in the Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions gravitated toward the idea that their African enemies were inherently unable to withstand modern military technology.

Simpson of the *Illustrated London News* described the Abyssinian assault at the battle of Magdala as being, 'that of most barbarous nations. They rushed on with the bravery of ignorance…in the end the inevitable result of such a collision followed'.[943] *The Spectator* presumed that, 'neither their chief not the soldiers had the slightest idea of the power of the enemy upon whom they were charging'.[944] As Colonel Penn's Mountain Battery and the Naval Rocket Battery began to fire, Scott recorded, 'the enemy were evidently as ignorant as babes to

[942] Porter, Lt. R. da Costa, 'Warfare Against Uncivilised Races; Or, how to Fight Greatly Superior Forces of an Uncivilised and Badly-Armed Enemy,' *Professional Papers of the Corps of Royal Engineers*, no. 6 (1881) p. 358.
[943] 'The closing exploit of the Abyssinian War has.' *The Times*, 19 May 1868, p. 9.
[944] *The Spectator,* 23 May 1868, p. 8.

what was in store for them. They came on really in the most innocent kind of way. O! what a *slating* they got! It was quite a little holiday. They certainly did get it hot and strong'.[945] Once the Abyssinian obliviousness of British armament was dispelled, most commentators agreed, the result (retreat and rout) became inevitable. When the Snider rifles came into play, *The Times* reported, 'the unfortunate foe had no longer even the shadow of a chance, but went down like grass before the sithe *(sic)*…Sir Charles Staverley, as night was coming on and nothing more was to be gained by useless butchery, sounded the retreat'.[946] The language used evoked a pre-determined outcome, and also coloured the engagement with a non-martial tint.

It was important to the British sense of superiority that the Africans *believed* they had been thoroughly routed (or, rather, that the British believed that the Africans had believed it). Stanley thus reported that, 'a moment's consultation was enough to convince them that here there was no hope. Against shell-vomiting cannon, and against a very wall of fire, discharging bullets by the hundred to their one, what could matchlocks and spears effect?'[947] The Abyssinians had, in fact, held to their charge for a considerable time under fire. A Staff Officer contemplated that Theodore could not possibly, 'indulge the hope of standing up before us for an hour in battle array. One of our rockets would for ever disperse the few thousand followers that remain to him.'[948]

'I can scarcely believe that you do not know how unequal would be the struggle which you invite', Wolseley wrote in his first ultimatum to the Ashanti

[945] 'A Staff Officer' [Lieut. W. W. Scott], *Letters from Abyssinia during the Campaign of 1868* ([n. pub.]: [n.p.], [1868?]) p. 109.
[946] 'The Abyssinian Expedition.' *The Times*, 18 May 1868, p. 9.
[947] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala*, p. 419.
[948] 'A Staff-Officer' [William Tweedie], 'Letters from a Staff-Officer with the Abyssinian Expedition. - Part I,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 103, no. 629 (Mar. 1868) p. 366.

King.[949] Boyle reported in the *Daily Telegraph* that the Ashanti, 'were met…by a fire too crushing for savages to stand, and again they fell back, to sing, drum a little, and madly fire and advance once more'.[950] 'The Snider rifle was too much for imperfectly armed savages', claimed *The Sunday Times*.[951] The battle of Amoaful ended, wrote Stanley, when the enemy was 'convinced that he has been defeated, and is unable to withstand the strange weapons which the white men use in war'.[952] The implication was that European soldiers *would* have been able to withstand it. European infantry training focused above all on standing firm while under fire, an ideal (if a somewhat different tactical reality) held since the line infantry days of the Brown Bess musket. Since the British martial ideal prioritised 'holding the line', descriptions of African inability to do so against modern weapons brought an additional notion of racial superiority to that of technological advantage. Just as descriptions of primitive African weaponry were tied to the idea of technical incompetence, so descriptions of African inability to hold firm against novel military technology were couched in an assumption that British troops would somehow have held out longer.

Chapter 3 explored the images in British (and some African) discourses of a barrier of nature, which shielded Africans and opposed European advances. The first section of this chapter posited that the British sought to employ novel technology to maintain a competing sphere of influence, within which they would be protected from the African wild. These images came into play in some descriptions of one-sided combat. The Abyssinians at Magdala had not, 'understood in the least the impassable nature of that wall of leaden spray with which a civilized army protects itself against the rush of mere brute

[949] Wolseley to King Kofi Kakari, Cambridge MSS, RA VIC/ADD E/I/7208, 13 October 1873, in Beckett, *Wolseley and Ashanti,* p. 138.
[950] Boyle, *Fanteeland to Coomassie*, p. 74.
[951] *The Sunday Times*, 15 Mar. 1874, p. 4.
[952] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala*, p. 200.

courage', claimed *The Spectator,* 'the moment they felt it the Abyssinian soldiery became cowards, as incapable of further resistance as Europeans are of standing up to thunderbolts'.[953]

Years later, in its description of a repulsed Ashanti attack on the British fortified town of Abrakrampa, *The Spectator* asserted that, 'the fire of fifty Sniders is too much for them, even at night. The storm of bullets is like a shield which they cannot penetrate, and from which they incessantly recoil'.[954] The cartridge rifles thus succeeded in maintaining the desired border of British control.

The East African tableland and West African bush represented competing spheres of influence, and British correspondents were keen to highlight cases in which military technology had seemingly penetrated the natural partition. Henty asserted that the penetrative power of Snider bullets:

> could not but create a great impression upon [the Ashanti], as it would prove to them that their favourite shelter of the bush avails them nothing; and though not one single inch of black flesh might be visible among the foliage, yet that the Snider bullets could reach them almost as effectually as if they stood in the open.[955]

That was a very freighted statement, as it rejected the contextual element of military dominance. In his adventure novel published ten years later, Henty again claimed that the Ashanti had become convinced of the white man's superiority, whose 'heavy bullets, even at the distance of some hundred yards, crashed through the brush wood with deadly effect, while the slugs of the Ashantis would not penetrate at a distance much exceeding fifty yards'.[956]

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[953] *The Spectator,* 23 May 1868, p. 8; Alternately worded as: 'failed utterly to break through that withering spray of lead and iron with which a modern army protects itself' in 'The Moral of Magdala', *Birmingham Daily Post,* 4 May 1868.
[954] *The Spectator,* 6 Dec. 1873, p. 7.
[955] G. A. Henty, *The March to Coomassie*, 2nd ed. (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1874) p. 165.
[956] Henty, *By Sheer Pluck,* p. 118.

At an 1873 RUSI lecture, Sir Samuel Baker, British explorer and Major-General in the Ottoman army, told the assembled British officers that in bush warfare, 'rockets are invaluable, especially those known as Hale's three-pounders…In bush fighting, the object of the rocket would be to try the jungle before the troops advanced'.[957] The next year, in Ashanti, Lieutenant Bernard confirmed to *The London Gazette,* 'the splendid way in which the rockets cleared the bush'.[958]

4.2.3 Only as Good as His Tools

Harcourt claimed of the battle of Magdala: 'No more spectacular display could have been staged of the invincibility of modern weapons.'[959] That was, indeed, how many contemporaries interpreted the battle, and the conflict as a whole. Such interpretations, however, added a new and potentially uncomfortable spin to the British perception of victory in small wars. Victory in the Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions was often attributed to the military technology itself. Napier wrote to the Secretary of State for India that, 'our shells, and rockets, and Snider rifles taught the enemy a lesson which will long be remembered in this country'.[960] Brackenbury similarly opened his history of the Ashanti war with the providential claim that it had taught, 'this warlike savage people that they must once and for ever bow to that mysterious strength which the arts and sciences of civilization confer upon the nations of the Western world'.[961]

European civilisation may have thus bested African civilisation in the abstract, but that was quite a different thing to British soldiers having properly

[957] Samuel Baker, 'Experience in Savage Warfare,' *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute* 17 (1873) p. 904.
[958] *The London Gazette*, 23 Mar. 1874, p. 1819-1820, in TNA, ADM 201/39 'Royal Marines Ashanti Papers 1873-74'.
[959] Freda Harcourt, 'Disraeli's Imperialism, 1866-1868: A Question of Timing,' *The Historical Journal* 23, no. 1 (1980) p. 103.
[960] Holland and Hozier, *The Expedition to Abyssinia*, 2:441.
[961] Brackenbury, *The Ashanti War, A Narrative*, p. 1.

bested African ones. The rhetorical focus on mere pieces of hardware as the foundations of victory worked somewhat to the detriment of the individual soldier and his agency in battle. Lieutenant Borret removed jingoism entirely from the equation when he wrote to his wife that:

> Our great strength lay in our breach-loading Snider rifles…It was the same in the late war between Prussia and Austria, where the soldiers of the latter were completely demoralized by the rapid firing of the Prussians. The Snider is a fearful and most deadly weapon, and no army armed with muzzle loaders could expect to beat one armed with the snider.[962]

Borret represented an extreme end of cultural self-awareness in this letter. By comparing the small war in Abyssinia to a European conflict between Great (and white) Powers, he handed the credit for victory almost entirely to comparative armament. Captain Barker wrote to his father of an incident in which a group of Galla bandits tried to make off with some of the expedition's mules. Barker and six others faced, 'about 50 in all, but the old story of Europeans and sniders against niggers and muzzle loaders, made the odds well in my favour'.[963] The Abyssinians had charged bravely, Markham claimed, 'But it was like a man struggling against machinery – the most heroic courage could do nothing in the face of such vast inequality in arms.'[964]

The Ashanti were just as brave as the men of the expedition, Boyle told the *Daily Telegraph* readers, but 'individual courage avails little in bush fighting against guns, for close quarters and the use of steel are impossible. For these reasons it may be credited that Ashantee *deleta est.*'[965] One sailor agreed in a

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[962] Herbert Charles Borrett, *My Dear Annie: The Letters of Lieutenant Herbert Charles Borrett, the King's Own Royal Regiment, Written to His Wife, Annie, during the Abyssinian Campaign of 1868*, ed. R. White (Lancaster, UK: Kings Own Royal Regiment Museum, 2003) p. 64.
[963] Capt. Barker, letter to father, 17 April 1868, Royal Artillery Museum, Woolwich, MD / 1615. Quoted in Stephen Manning, *Soldiers of the Queen: Victorian Colonial Conflict in the Words of those Who Fought* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Spellmount, 2009) p. 145.
[964] Markham, *A History of the Abyssinian Expedition*, p. 321.
[965] Boyle, *Fanteeland to Coomassie*, p. 350.

letter home that such battles were, 'murder, not a fair fight'.[966]

The perceived central role that technology had played in victory thus posed a small but significant threat to the traditional martial ideal. The valorisation of the former and sincere desire to maintain the dignity of the latter may go a way to explaining the repeated allusions to soldiers as machines. 'Tommy Atkins reminds me of a steam engine', wrote Prior of the *Illustrated London News,* 'keep on plying the coal and you can always keep the steam up.'[967] Stanley described the first volley at the Battle of Magdala as, 'a clicking of triggers; and a roar of sharp musketry;- steady, deep-toned, like the thunder rush of an express train through a tunnel'.[968] In his later account of the Emin Pasha Relief Expedition, *In Darkest Africa*, he described the expedition's Remington and Winchester repeating rifles as 'our souls'.[969] Black has written that such themes continued to characterise cultural interpretations of industrialised warfare, where the ideal of manliness cannot relate solely to physical strength. Instead, ideals of soldiering have 'been linked to the glamour of the machine notably with movement'.[970] While this took a largely negative tone in the Crimea and certainly later in the Great War, mechanised allusions in Abyssinia and Ashanti were overwhelmingly positive.

As their military success had depended largely on their technology, many came to a sobering realisation that things could have been very different. 'Give the Ashantees the same weapon, the breech-loading Sniders, with the proper ammunition', Stanley considered, 'and even the white troops would find that the

[966] 'Letters from Welshmen Engaged in the Ashantee War', *Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald,* 14 Mar 1874, p. 6, quoted in Edward M. Spiers, *The Victorian Soldier in Africa* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004) p. 29.
[967] Melton Prior, *Campaigns of a War Correspondent*, ed. S. L. Bensusan (London: Edward Arnold, 1912) p. 27.
[968] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala*, p. 420
[969] Henry M. Stanley, *In Darkest Africa* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891) 1:212.
[970] Black, *War and Technology*, p. 270.

Ashantees are a foe worthy of their best efforts'.[971] In a review of his book, *The Times* considered that, 'of the fighting qualities of the Ashantees…the more we hear the more we congratulate ourselves that our enemies were so very wretchedly armed'.[972] 'Had [the Ashanti] been better armed', Private Ferguson told the press, 'more of us would have fallen'.[973] Wolseley conceded that, at the battle of Amoaful, 'the enemy fought well under the terrific fire we poured into them, and had they been armed with Snider rifles we must have been destroyed'.[974] Years later, in an odd article arguing against black soldiers in the modern industrialised army, he again granted that:

> the Afridi is a born warrior, and man for man is a far better soldier on his wild, roadless mountainside than John Hodge, the Dorsetshire hedger and ditcher, or than John Smith the street arab from Whitechapel. It is only by our superior arms and superior discipline that we can beat these fighting tribes.[975]

This article will be examined further in Chapter 6.

Henty warned his readers to consider what would happen if Britain should in the future have to fight a Dahomey or Ashanti army armed with modern weapons:

> if they had breech-loaders, rockets, and cannon, the advantages which the climate and country give them would more than balance our superiority in drill and discipline. In view of such a contingency, no time should be lost in making it a penal offence to import into Africa any weapons save the old flint-and-steel guns.[976]

Such a comprehensive embargo would not come into being until the Brussels Act of 1892, at least nominally supported by most imperial powers, which limited the sale of flintlocks and completely banned the sale of breech-loaders to

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[971] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala*, p. 66.
[972] 'Coomassie And Magdala.' *The Times*, 25 Apr. 1874, p. 12.
[973] 'A Stirlingshire Soldier's Account of the War', *Stirling Observer and Midland Counties Express,* 2 Apr. 1874, p. 6. Quoted in Spiers, *The Victorian Soldier in Africa*, p. 28.
[974] Field-Marshal Viscount Wolseley, *The Story of a Soldier's Life* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903) 2:343.
[975] Sir Garnet Wolseley, 'The Negro as a Soldier,' *Fortnightly Review*, no. 264 (Dec. 1888) p. 703.
[976] Henty, *The March to Coomassie*, p. 93.

central Africans.[977] The aforementioned Gold Coast colonial ordinance was only used to limit the sale of arms during war.

It was hoped that novel military, medical, and transport technology might help to penetrate the barrier of African nature, and protect the Europeans who passed beyond it. There remained, nonetheless, a certain anxiety that novel technology might itself prove irrelevant in the African wild; that the opposing African sphere of influence might affect British weapons and blunt the advantages that they bestowed.

Napier arranged a fairly elaborate meeting with the Abyssinian Ras of Tigre to secure his assistance against Theodore. At this meeting on 25 February, a selection of troops and artillery were shown off for the Ras as a demonstration of force to further solidify his goodwill. Stanley was in attendance and reported that, 'the opinion which [Kassa's] Abyssinian soldiers had of the English army was, that on an open field English troops would be perfectly unattackable, but that on the mountains they could do nothing'.[978] This performance will be examined in more detail in Chapter 5. Of interest here is the fact that these Abyssinians did not believe that Britain's technological superiority would prove relevant in the country's mountains and causeways. Most Abyssinian fortresses were built on top of rocky peaks, the natural barriers providing a large component of their defence. The Ras of Tigre's soldiers, and presumably Theodore when he stood against the British in his mountain fortress of Magdala, thought that such natural defences gave them the advantage, even against Armstrong cannons.

Kwaku Dua I, King of Ashanti 1834-67, was believed to have said that 'the white man brings his cannon to the bush but the bush is stronger than the

[977] Headrick, *The Tools of Empire*, p. 257.
[978] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala*, p. 331.

cannon', in reference to the failed British 1863-4 campaign.[979] Dua was thus remembered as rallying his people around the idea that the natural barrier of West Africa could withstand European weapons. At the departure of Wolseley's 1874 expedition, *The Lancet* expressed agreement with, 'the aversion which was entertained by the Government to our being embroiled in a little war…where the advantages to us resulting from the appliances of modern warfare are, to a great extent, neutralised by the nature of the country'.[980] *The Times* openly conjectured:

> What will become of the Gatling guns we cannot venture to predict. The damp heat of the climate added to inexperience in the care of such delicate weapons, may have already included them among those unserviceable stores which before long will inevitably pile the shores of the Gold Coast.[981]

In his fictionalised boys adventure novel, *With Wolseley to Kumasi*, Captain F. S. Brereton conveyed these initial anxieties through the character of Dick, an experienced officer at Cape Coast Castle. Notably taking the opposite position of Boyle's opinion of bush warfare against Sniders, Dick told a new arrival that their weapons might not have the desired effect:

> If King Koffee leads his troops against us and shows up in the open, he will be smashed to pieces. Our rifles would beat down his gun fire, while our shells and gatlings would send his men running. But it will be different…we shall have to take to the bush, and it will be difficult work. A man can creep close to one and stab, while rifles are almost useless.[982]

If racial dominance was context-sensitive, it might follow that technological superiority, itself a perceived advantage of Europeans over Africans, might

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[979] Quoted in Edgerton, *The Fall of the Asante Empire,* p. 93; David Killingray, 'Colonial Warfare in West Africa 1870-1914,' in *Imperialism and War: Essays on Colonial Wars in Asia and Africa*, eds. J. A. De Moor and H. L. Wesseling (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989) p. 150; John Keegan, 'The Ashanti Campaign 1873-4,' in *Victorian Military Campaigns*, ed. Brian Bond (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1967) p. 163; Friedrich Ramseyer and Johannes Kuhne, *Four Years in Ashantee* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1875) p. 14; The author has been unable to find a source older than Ramseyer and Kuhne for this quote.
[980] 'The Ashantee War', *The Lancet,* Vol. 103, no. 2627 (3 Jan. 1874) p. 17.
[981] 'Preparations For The Ashantee Expedition', *The Times*, 16 Oct. 1873, p. 8.
[982] F. S. Brereton, *With Wolseley to Kumasi: A Tale of the First Ashanti War* (London: Blackie and Son Limited, 1908) pp. 250-1.

respond to context as well. As Brereton conveyed through the character of Dick, the British were concerned that nature would make all the difference and present a caveat to their desired civilisational dominance. Certainly, it was accepted that Africans would never be able to withstand modern weapons in the open. In the bush, however, everything became unpredictable. The Gatling gun was thus employed to manage the border between the competing spheres of influence, within which Europeans would have the unequivocal edge.

4.2.4 The Mitrailleur and the Border

At the outbreak of the Ashanti conflict, a number of parties pushed the army to send Gatling guns to the Gold Coast on the premise that it was particularly well-suited to bush warfare. *The Huddersfield Chronicle and West Yorkshire Advertiser* condemned the supposed 'evidence of the failure of the Government to provide its officers with the means of warfare. Gatling guns and rockets are made for such service as this, and yet our troops are not provided with them.'[983] A letter to the *Daily News* claimed that the light Gatling, 'would prove invaluable' in the bush and 'infinitely superior' to the 7-pounder guns.[984]

When the first mitrailleur (and trained NCOs) was dispatched to Cape Coast Castle, *The Times* questioned if it would be enough: 'The Gatling is believed to be specially adapted to the requirements of the troops engaged in operations against the Ashantees, but only this one weapon has, as yet, been sent.'[985] *Reynolds' Newspaper* made the same claim and suggested that more of the machines would be needed.[986]

Captain Rogers, who, as discussed in Chapter 2, was a vocal champion of the Gatling gun, sent a series of articles to the *United Service Magazine* from

[983] 'The Ashantee War', *The Huddersfield Chronicle and West Yorkshire Advertiser,* 19 Jul. 1873, p. 2.
[984] S. O. P., 'The Ashantee War', *Daily News*, 23 Jul. 1873.
[985] 'Naval And Military Intelligence,' *The Times*, 7 Aug. 1873, p. 7.
[986] 'The Ashantee War,' *Reynolds' Newspaper,* 10 Aug. 1873, p. 26.

the Gold Coast, where he was stationed with the marines from the beginning of the conflict (well before Wolseley's arrival). He argued for the Gatling's ability to, 'supplement the painful disparity of numbers by mechanical means'.[987] Rogers quoted former Governor Maclean, who had attributed the British victory in the first (1831) Anglo-Ashanti war '"*especially to the terrible engine of warfare, Congreve rockets, which were then first made use of against the enemy*." (Will the same be able to be recorded of Gatling guns in the present hostilities?)' (Rogers' emphasis).[988] Explicitly marking the Gatling as a war-winning weapon, Rogers highlighted the importance of novel military technology to imperial small wars. He claimed that the, '"destruction due to the Sniders" was excellent in its way, but if we want to bring a despicable little war to a speedy termination, and teach these savages a lasting lesson, it will be well to employ the most thoroughly effective engines known to science'.[989]

Rogers and others argued that the Gatling would drive Africans out of their protective bush and simultaneously ensure that they would be unable to cross into the more civilised clearings of British camps. Having described one such area around Cape Coast, Rogers complained that, 'the vexatious reflection is that when the approaches are so cleared there is no Gatling Gun in the Castle to command them'. He recounted a recent engagement in which the Marines and West Indian Regiments had driven a group of Ashanti out of cover and directed rifle fire into the main body of them, '*which was then massed on the plain*. We fancy that another "0" would have been added by a Gatling gun to the 200 or 300 to represent the enemy's list of casualties, while the moral effect produced would have been inestimable' (original emphasis).[990]

[987] Capt E. Rogers, 'The Ashantee War,' *United Service Magazine*, no. 537 (Aug. 1873) p. 498.
[988] Ibid. pp. 497-509.
[989] Ibid. p. 509.
[990] Ibid.

The Times placed more importance on the setting in which the device was employed: 'For fighting in the bush a Gatling would be of as much use as a fire engine, but if by any lucky chance Sir Garnet Wolseley manages to catch a good mob of savages in the open, and at a moderate distance, he cannot do better than treat them to a little Gatling music.'[991]

Norman Macdonald, former Governor of Sierra Leone (1845-52), sent a letter of advice to Kimberley recommending that a battery of 'mitrailleuses' be sent to Cape Coast Castle, 'with a liberal supply of ammunition'. Macdonald made the popular suggestion that the gun would have a, 'lasting effect on the minds of the natives' and was, 'pre-eminently calculated', for colonial small wars. Tactically, moreover, he couched his suggestion in a perceived division between continental and imperial wars. While there were, he argued, 'differences of opinion as to the use of that weapon in European warfare, there can be but one as to its being *the* arm*, par excellence,* for driving savages out of the bush, when, of course, they can be speedily and effectually dealt with in the open' (original emphasis).[992] In light of the prevailing anxieties of a dark intimidating wild full of unseen enemies, it was tremendously reassuring to believe that this piece of technology might flush those enemies out. The requested arms were indeed sent. The Colonial Office replied to former Governor Macdonald that two Gatling guns with ammunition were already being prepared and would leave for the Gold Coast in days.[993] Wolseley and Glover were each equipped with two of them.[994]

[991] 'Preparations for the Ashantee War,' *The Times*, 6 Oct. 1873, p. 7; 'The Ashantee Expedition', *The Times*, 17 Oct. 1873, p. 3.
[992] TNA, CO 879/4 'Papers Relating to the Ashanti Invasion (Gold Coast) &c', No. 226: *Mr. Macdonald* to the Earl of *Kimberley*, 11th July 1873.
[993] TNA, CO 879/4 'Further Correspondence Respecting the Ashantee Invasion', No. 13: War Office to Colonial Office, War Office, July 19, 1873.
[994] TNA, WO 33/26, 'Confidential Report', [1874?], p. 4.

Once in the field, however, and in keeping with so many of the novel technologies in Wolseley's expedition, the Gatlings could not be used to great effect. Stanley relegated to a footnote that, 'the Gatling was not taken to Coomassie on account of its weight. Something lighter should be invented for such campaigns as that in Ashantee'.[995] The device was so specialised, reported Boyle, that only two of the officers and none of the privates understood how to load it properly. In the rough tracks of the Gold Coast, moreover, they would, 'bear no ill-usage or accident'.[996] The traversing mechanism of one permanently broke down, without which the gun could only ever fire in a single straight line. He concluded that, 'the Gatling guns, from which so much was expected, have proved a failure', and judged the decision to leave them behind, 'prudent'.[997] They were never used in combat.

All of these issues make the uses to which the surviving Gatling was put all the more interesting. Chapter 5 will explore in detail a test firing that was performed to intimidate a group of Ashanti envoys. Though the gun remained stationary aside from this one demonstration, its prominent placement at Prahsu camp, which Boyle evocatively described as dividing, 'all the contrast between civilization and barbarism', suggested a desire to employ the perceived special qualities of the mitrailleur to manage that division.[998] Stanley described a walk, 'through the vast camp, which echoed to the sound of axes and forges, and vocal commands', ending at the river bank, where the 'Gatling menacingly point[ed] across the river towards the enemy's land'.[999]

Appendix 1, 'Camp on the River Prah', and Appendix 2, 'Rough Sketch of the Tete-De-Pont at the Prah', are sketches drawn by Major Home from the

[995] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala*, p. 128.
[996] Boyle, *Fanteeland to Coomassie*, p. 100.
[997] Ibid.
[998] Ibid. p. 212.
[999] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala*, p. 123.

official *Journal of the Engineer Operations on the Gold Coast during the recent Expedition*.[1000] They illustrate the British camp on the southern side of the Prah River, the bridge spanning the river itself, and a fortified bridgehead on the north shore to protect the crossing. The most prominent feature of the *tête du pont* was a pentagonal fortification on a small hill at the far front, armed with a Gatling gun. From this vantage, the gun could theoretically cover the entire 60-yard wide arc of clearing from which the bush had been laboriously removed. It could also be easily seen by anyone looking in along the edge of the bush.

In the opinion of all involved, the Gatling was not in reliable working order. The expedition had never fired the contraption in combat, yet the decision was made to place it right out in the far front of the camp. The seeming disconnect between this prominent placement in spite of the perceived lack of functionality could be explained as appealing to the idea of the bubble of industrial civilisation. The Prahsu *tête du pont* lay at the border of that zone. Victorian preoccupations with vision, as explored by Otter, freighted the clearing with implications of health, order, and morality.[1001] Firmly held British assumptions that Africans would fear their technology also hint at a desire to portray the bridgehead as something reminiscent of the panopticon.

4.3 Conclusions

Recent work on the interplay between technology and space has argued that the contextual presence of technology can influence perceptions and constructions of space in highly technified arenas, from small laboratories to large cities.[1002] An examination of the Victorian 'idea' of imperial small wars, and that of their own place vis-à-vis an imagined Africa, further suggests the

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[1000] See Appendix, p. 348; TNA, WO 147/27 'Journal of the Engineer Operations on the Gold Coast during the recent Expedition', Major Robert Home, 13 Oct. 1873, p. 64.
[1001] Otter, *The Victorian Eye*, p. 17.
[1002] Technische Universität Darmstadt, Typology of Technology Research Group, 'Concept', Accessed 9 Feb. 2015, http://www.ifs.tu-darmstadt.de/index.php?id=tdt-konzept&L=2.

influence of technology on perceptions and experiences of (what were seen to be) utterly untechnified spaces. Novel military technology was integral to the British re-imagining of Africa as a colonial space, from the ‘white man’s grave’ to, simply put, something that *could* be conquered. This chapter has thus argued that the machine gun was employed foremost in a symbolic role and appealed to the British imperial imagination in a similar way to the limelight and steam engine. The following chapter will consider cases where the British forces exhibited their novel technology directly to Africans, hoping to awe them with the power of symbolism.

Chapter 5: A Fearsome Presence

As the Colonial Office prepared to take control of Elmina from the Dutch, Lord Kimberley considered it a matter, 'of special importance', that British gunboats make themselves generally seen on the Gold Coast as a, 'display of force…calculated to impress the natives with an idea of English power'.[1003] When the Ashanti invaded in response to the transfer, Colonel Festing argued that in any British retaliation, 'it is not only necessary to reach [Coomassie], but I hold it to be essential to arrive there with such a force that the native mind shall be fully impressed with the power and resources of England'.[1004] Wolseley would later raid Elmina in an attempt to, 'show them that a new era has begun in military operations'.[1005]

In these cases, and as standard policy in small wars, it was believed that the mere sight of industrial machines would shatter enemy morale and engender a feeling of submissive awe. This chapter will explore the efforts taken to employ the spectacle of technology to stimulate that sense of awe, and the British interpretations and subsequent representations of African responses. It will be shown that the accounts of the Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions demonstrated a strong hope, desire to claim, and tendency to interpret that novel military technology would terrify the African enemy. This inclination among British commentators tells us something about the imperial ideal, even if (particularly if) it did not accurately reflect Africans' actual reception.

[1003] TNA, CO 879/3 'Correspondence relative to the cession by the Netherlands government to the British government of the Dutch settlements of the West Coast of Africa', No. 3: Colonial Office to the Admiralty, 8th March 1871, p. 163.

[1004] *Ashantee War* (Parliamentary Paper, 1874), part ii, pp. 202-3, Quoted in W. Walton Claridge, *A History of the Gold Coast and Ashanti: From the Earliest Times to the Commencement of the Twentieth Century*, 2nd ed. (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., [1915] 1964) 2:43.

[1005] Wolseley Journal, TNA, WO 147/3, 12 October 1873, in Ian F. W. Beckett, ed., *Wolseley and Ashanti: The Asante War Journal and Correspondence of Major General Sir Garnet Wolseley 1873-1874* (Stroud, Gloucestershire, UK: The History Press for the Army Records Society, 2009) pp. 135-6.

In *Small Wars,* Callwell posited that one of, 'the main points of difference between small wars and regular campaigns…are that, in the former, the beating of hostile armies is not necessarily the main object', and that 'that moral effect is often far more important than material success'.[1006] He thus argued for the primacy of, 'the moral effect of the spectacle of a trained and organized army' in securing victory over 'barbarous' opponents.[1007] Believing that 'only a decisive defeat would lead savages to respect civilization and progress', Shepherd of the *Times of India* made the similar argument that, 'if the Force had to leave the country without a battle or two…only half the object of the expedition would have been accomplished. The captives would be safe; but the moral effect would be nowhere'.[1008] In a certain sense, the notion that modern technology would terrify Africans was as important to the British imperial imagination and sense of civilisational pride as was the notion that it would defeat them militarily. After the 1865 Jamaica revolt, *The Times* had tellingly argued for the importance of a stronger military presence among the 'barbarians' as 'signs and symbols of civilized authority'.[1009]

5.1 Presumption of Terror

Callwell also claimed that, while artillery, 'admittedly exercises great moral effect in every kind of warfare', the potential for that effect was much greater, 'when in conflict with uncivilized forces, owing to their tendency to exaggerate the potentialities of the arm'.[1010] There was, perhaps, also a tendency among British commentators to exaggerate the terror that modern weaponry would sow among their enemies. In Abyssinia, many accounts stated

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[1006] Colonel C. E. Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1996 [1896]) p. 42.
[1007] Lt C. E. Callwell, 'Notes on the Strategy of our Small Wars,' *Proceedings of the Royal Artillery Institution* 13 (1885) p. 420.
[1008] A. F. Shepherd, *The Campaign in Abyssinia* (Bombay: Times of India Office, 1868) pp. 150-1.
[1009] *The Times,* 13 Nov. 1865, p. 4.
[1010] Callwell, *Small Wars,* p. 152.

as fact that the Shohos, ‘have no firearms, and are much afraid of them’.[1011] Simpson had not been present for the battle of Magdala, but reported the news passed down the line of march that, ‘the Snider rifle seem[ed] by its rapid and terrible fire to have frightened them very much’.[1012] The Snider had certainly been effective, inflicting enormous casualties on the Abyssinian army. Simpson’s claim that it had frightened them, however, indicated his own interpretation of their reception.

Early in his career, Wolseley had spent time as an observer with the often-outgunned Confederate forces of the American Civil War. In an 1865 *Blackwood’s* article, he commented upon the psychological impact that artillery exerted upon, what he saw as, semi-disciplined soldiers.[1013] He described a scene at Harrison’s Landing, where McClellan’s Union army evaded being overrun by retreating to the protection of offshore gunboats:

> Confederate soldiers seem to have some superstitious dread of gun-boats…With soldiers lately raised, such as fill the ranks of both North and South, who possess no traditions of how their regiments in such and such former wars stormed batteries and performed other feats in action, it will always be found that an overweening confidence is placed in artillery fire, and an undue dread felt of its effects. As a rule, none but highly disciplined troops without guns will attack those supported by them; and a very heavy artillery fire brought to bear upon raw soldiers, although from the nature of the ground they may not suffer much from it, will disconcert them terribly. I believe that round shot frightens far more men than it kills. And if this is the case as regards field artillery, how much more so when the missiles are ten-inch shells, such as are thrown by gunboats.[1014]

[1011] Roger Acton, *The Abyssinian Expedition and the Life and Reign of King Theodore* (London: Office of the Illustrated London News, 1868) p. 33.
[1012] William Simpson, *Diary of a Journey to Abyssinia, 1868 with the Expedition Under Sir Robert Napier: The Diary and Observations of William Simpson of the Illustrated London News*, ed. Richard Pankhurst (Hollywood, CA: Tsehai Publishers and Distributors, 2002) p. 82.
[1013] He described Southern whites as ‘an indolent race’ in the article.
[1014] Lieut-Col. Garnet Wolseley, ‘A Month’s Visit to the Confederate Headquarters’, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine,* 93 (Jan. 1865) pp. 11-12; See also Viscount Garnet Wolseley, *The American Civil War: An English Perspective*, ed. James A. Rawley (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1964) p. 22; Reprinted as James A. Rawley (ed.) *The American Civil War: An English View: The Writings of Field Marshal Viscount Wolseley* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2002) p. 22.

Wolseley's experience in America had an impact upon his perspective on imperial and small wars. It is reflective of the complex relationship between Victorian views of race, training, and technological development that he would later describe the Ashanti in the same terms as he had previously described white Confederate soldiers. In his *Memorandum on Bush Fighting*, Wolseley assured the considerably outnumbered British soldiers on the Gold Coast that, 'our enemies have neither guns nor rockets, and have a superstitious dread of those used by us'.[1015] All his field guns, moreover, now fired shells. Lieutenant Dooner took Wolseley's claim to heart and dismissed rumours that the Ashanti would attack Cape Coast Castle. 'I don't think there is the smallest probability of the enemy coming near us', he wrote early in the campaign, before seeing any combat, 'believing they have a wholesome dread of white men in the open with a breach-loader'.[1016]

There were similar suggestions made of the Gatling gun. Captain Ebenezer Rogers had endless faith in, 'the immediate moral effect produced by this automatic manslayer', claiming that 'its very snarl hushed the war-cries of the savage foe'.[1017] Sir Percy Douglas went so far as to suggest at RUSI that the Gatling:

> would have this disadvantage, that it makes such a horrible row in going off that it would frighten the foe away; whereas you want them to stand up, so as to get hold of them. It would no doubt strike great terror into these people. The only thing I am afraid of is that none of them would stop.[1018]

[1015] Memorandum by Colonel George Greaves, 20 December 1873, Head Quarters, Cape Coast Castle, in Beckett, *Wolseley and Ashanti,* p. 283.
[1016] W. T. Dooner, *Jottings En Route to Coomassie* (London: W. Mitchell & Co., 1874) p. 20.
[1017] Ebenezer Rogers, *The Gatling Gun; its Place in Tactics: A Lecture Delivered at the Royal United Services Institute* (London: Royal United Services Institute, 1875) p. 20.
[1018] Ibid, pp. 25-6.

British assumptions as to how Africans were likely to react to mitrailleurs were central to interpretations of the Gatling gun demonstrations in Ashanti, which will be examined later in this chapter.

British discussions of rockets also featured a marked overestimation of their effectiveness and a consistent presupposition of their ability to frighten enemies into submission. 'In scientific warfare the absolute number of slain is a matter of secondary consideration', *The Times* explained as the Ashantee expedition prepared to depart:

> Modern battles are won more by moral than by physical effects. We employ engines that terrify as well as kill…Thus, a flight of rockets – a comparatively harmless warlike engine – might cause a regular 'skedaddle' among a set of savages without the loss of a single life.[1019]

Such skewed interpretations of African reception were particularly evident on the subject of rockets, which were seen to be terror weapons. There were historical precedents cited as proof. In the backstory to his account, Reade described an incident from the First Ashanti War (1825-26), where hard-pressed British troops fired Congreve rockets at their attackers, who, he claimed, 'supposed [them] to be real thunder and lightning'. Reade attributed the cascade of events that followed entirely to the effect of the rockets: 'these missiles caused havoc and confusion: the enemy retreated: the Ashantee captains blew themselves up'.[1020] After a RUSI lecture, discussed in Chapter 2, Rogers described an 1867 battle in Honduras where, he claimed, hostile 'Indians' immediately fled in panic when a few rockets whizzed past them.[1021]

[1019] 'Preparations for the Ashantee War', *The Times*, 6 Oct. 1873, p. 7.

[1020] Winwood Reade, *The Story of the Ashantee Campaign* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1874) p. 59.

[1021] H. C. Fletcher, 'The Employment of Mitrailleurs during the Recent War...' *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute* 16 (1872) p. 47; Frank Winter, *The First Golden Age of Rocketry: Congreve and Hale Rockets of the Nineteenth Century* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990) pp. 41-2.

Accounts from Abyssinia also demonstrated a considerable faith in rockets. Having watched the Naval Brigade carry out a test fire exercise, Henty assured his readers that there was, 'no doubt that this novel instrument of war will strike terror into the hearts of the garrison at Magdala'.[1022] When they were used in the battle, Stanley reported that the Abyssinian army charging the British lines, 'from very astonishment at the novel sound caused by the rockets, halted and cast inquiring glances at each other, as if to ask "What manner of things are these?"'.[1023] The *ILN* history of the campaign claimed that Chief Fetwarri Gabria, 'experienced in a hundred battles, knew not what to make of [them]'.[1024]

The rockets did indeed cause fear and confusion among the Abyssinian soldiers who had, after all, never previously encountered them.[1025] They did not, however, halt the Abyssinian advance for more than a moment, nor inflict the bulk of the casualties that they sustained. Snider rifles had by far the largest effect on the outcome of the battle. Thus, while British accounts were not incorrect to claim that rockets had shocked the Abyssinians, they tended to overstate the practical consequences. Holland and Hozier included in the official history a translated statement made by Theodore's servant, Welder Gabre, which was repeated in many British newspapers and books. According to Gabre, after a rocket narrowly missed Theodore, the King shouted, 'What a terrible weapon! Who can fight against it?', and soon after exclaimed, 'Who can fight people who use such missiles?'[1026] From this, Holland and Hozier

[1022] G. A. Henty, *The March to Magdala* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1868) p. 351.
[1023] Henry M. Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala: The Story of Two British Campaigns in Africa* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low & Searle, 1874) p. 416.
[1024] Acton, *Life and Reign*, p. 64.
[1025] Henry Blanc, *A Narrative of Captivity in Abyssinia; with some Account of the Late Emperor Theodore, His Country, and People* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1868) p. 399.
[1026] Trevenen J. Holland and Henry Hozier, *The Expedition to Abyssinia Compiled by Order of the Secretary of State for War* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO), 1870) 2:56, 58.

concluded that, 'the fire of the Rocket Battery had produced a powerful effect on the King's mind, and his impatience, after the battle was over, to avert the danger of a second attack by effecting a reconciliation with us, was great'.[1027] The majority of Theodore's army had died in the battle. It would thus seem to be an overstatement to give the rockets a direct causal role in his decision to come to terms with Napier.

'When the fight with the Awoonahs and Aquamoos begins', Stanley wrote from Ashanti, 'I am sure they will be as much surprised by the vigour of [the] English officer as they will be by the spiteful alarming hiss of Hale's rockets.'[1028] His choice of comparison for this compliment demonstrated his expectation that British rockets would provide the greatest shock to African soldiers. A similar interpretive filter was present throughout the conflict. Private George Gilham of the 2nd Rifle Brigade believed that the rockets fired against the Ashanti, 'no doubt astonished them'.[1029] The *Daily News* reported that the enemy, 'don't like fighting with the men with the schou-schou (the rocket)', and *The Times* printed that they, 'hav[e] a great dislike of those missiles'.[1030] 'Against the weapons of civilisation', *The Spectator* claimed of the rocket, 'the Ashantees, like the Abyssinians before them, are panic-struck and power-less'.[1031]

The British forces thus sought, where possible, to capitalise on the rocket's reputation in Africa, as will be explored in detail later in this chapter. Captain Butler, for example, had been sent to recruit, equip, and train the allied Akim nations to fight the Ashantee. Believing that Fuah, Chief of the West Akim,

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[1027] Ibid, 2:442.
[1028] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala*, p. 100.
[1029] George Gilham, 'With Wolseley in Ashanti,' in *Told from the Ranks: Recollections of Service during the Queen's Reign by Privates and Non-Commissioned Officers of the British Army*, ed. E. Milton Small (London: Andrew Melrose, 1897) p. 83.
[1030] 'Daily News' Special Correspondent (Sir John Frederick Maurice), *The Ashantee War: A Popular Narrative* (London: Henry S. King & Co., 1874) p. 195; Reade, *Ashantee Campaign,* pp. 209-10.
[1031] *The Spectator,* 6 Dec. 1873, p. 7.

was not doing enough to mobilise his forces, Butler warned him that Wolseley, 'expects you will keep moving, and moving quickly. On the one hand, he offers you his friendship and his rewards; on the other, if you fail he gives you rockets and ruin.' Butler claimed in his book that, 'Fuah funked a rocket as much perhaps as anything, save an Ashanti soldier', and that his threat thus had the desired effect.[1032]

5.2 Mutual Misunderstanding

In the preceding chapter, it was argued that the specific language the British used to denigrate their enemies and bolster their own confidence often centred on belittling African weaponry and ability to wield firearms. The notion that Africans were unable to manage modern weapons properly was also projected in the British view of their allies.

The majority of commentators in the Gold Coast made a point of declaring that the Hausa soldiers lacked fire control in their first engagement armed with Snider rifles. Henty suggested that, 'their wild excitability and ill-directed fire were calculated to confuse and bewilder the troops, and do more harm than good'.[1033] Maurice explained in the *Daily News* that when the 'wild' Hausa joined a battle, 'up goes the Snider, and that latest product of civilization in these most uncivilized hands is made to pour volley after volley as if in mere mad joy, high into the air'.[1034] The men were used to muskets that fired comparatively low-speed bullets along parabolic trajectories, and were thus accustomed to aiming above their targets. Maurice did not explain that fact and preferred to depict the Hausa soldiers as if they had been firing straight into the air. Only a few commentators would later explain that subsequent training

[1032] W. F. Butler, *Akim-Foo: The History of a Failure*, 3rd ed. (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low, & Searle, 1875) p. 212.
[1033] Henty, *The March to Coomassie*, 2nd ed. (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1874) p. 113.
[1034] Maurice, *The Ashantee War,* p. 78.

quickly corrected the problem. An article in *The Spectator,* and Captain Rogers in the *United Service Magazine,* in particular, noted the prejudice evident in Wolseley's portrayal of the Hausa, who had learned how to use their new weapons as quickly as would any European recruit.[1035]

Butler derisively recounted his efforts to convince his Akim soldiers that the Enfield rifle was superior to the flintlock 'Dam' guns with which they had previously been armed, describing 'the Akim cries of wonder' at his demonstration of the European import. When he gathered a small group for target practice, Butler explained:

> fully twenty out of the twenty-three Enfields declined to go off…the reason of this was soon apparent. Enfield cartridges rammed boldly into the rifle, bullet foremost, became even more harmless missiles than the iron stones of the Ashantis, and it was in this manner that my army had prepared their arms for war.[1036]

If this scene did take place as Butler described it, one is led to wonder if he had demonstrated how to load the new rifles when he distributed them.

This assumption that only Europeans could comprehend and manage military technology was particularly evident in the discussion of African artillerymen in the Gold Coast campaign. After his 1817 journey to establish British relations with Ashanti, Bowdich had recommended that an artillery company of freed slaves from Sierra Leone could be trained by European sergeants and stationed at Cape Coast Castle.[1037] This was never put into practice, though the West India Regiment soldiers certainly knew how to operate the Castle's defensive cannon.

[1035] Capt. E. Rogers, 'The Ashantee War,' *United Service Magazine*, no. 541 (Dec. 1873) pp. 544-5; *The Spectator,* 22 Nov. 1873, pp. 5-6.
[1036] Butler, *Akim-Foo,* pp. 155-6.
[1037] T. Edward Bowdich, *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee, with a Statistical Account of that Kingdom and Geographical Notices of Other Parts of the Interior of Africa* (London: John Murray, 1819) p. 460.

As part of the 1873 expedition, Captain Rait of the Royal Artillery did indeed train a battery of Hausa gunners. Some accounts indicated that these soldiers were very successful. 'Rait and his artillery…consist of Houssas', Luxmore wrote to his wife, 'and I dare say may do well'.[1038] Maurice reported that during an early engagement, 'at one time nothing kept back the attack of the enemy but the steady working of Captain Rait's seven Houssas with their 7-pounder gun and a rocket-tube. These men…worked the gun and rockets entirely themselves'.[1039] A rocket fired by Hausa gunners was reported to have hit a group of Ashanti chiefs, killing or wounding six of them, and precipitating a rout.[1040]

Despite the success of the Hausa battery, and their already established reputation among the British as a nation of brave and reliable soldiers, many of the accounts from the Gold Coast ridiculed the very idea that Africans could be taught to operate artillery. As Major Home prepared the equipment for Wolseley's small party of officers, Maurice reported that, 'unfortunately many of the things which would be most useful on the expedition, require the work of Europeans, and it has been therefore necessary to cut some of these down to a minimum'.[1041] In Brackenbury's book, written after the expedition and thus in light of the Hausa's full performance, he stressed that, 'the difficulty of teaching natives to act as gunners, when every word of command and every detail had to be explained and interpreted, can readily be imagined', and that Rait had expressed concern that they would need European gunners. Even from Brackenbury's choice of perspective, written with the aim of defending

[1038] Percy P. Luxmore, 'Ashantee: Extracts from the Journal of a Naval Officer Addressed to His Wife,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 115, no. 702 (Apr. 1874) p. 523.
[1039] Maurice, *The Ashantee War,* p. 113.
[1040] Henry Brackenbury, *The Ashanti War, A Narrative: Prepared from the Official Documents by Permission of Major-General Sir Garnet Wolseley* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1874) p. 255.
[1041] Maurice, *The Ashantee War,* p. 33.

Wolseley's decision to request artillery gunners from Britain, it would seem that the real issue had been a language barrier.[1042] Yet, he included the patronising claim that, 'their childish delight when practising with live shells and rockets was most amusing'.[1043] He notably conceded that they, 'had one great advantage over the European gunners…the Houssas could carry the guns…but it would have been impossible for Europeans to carry the guns'.[1044]

In his 1884 boy's novel, *By Sheer Pluck: A tale of the Ashanti War,* Henty placed his young lead character, Frank Hargate, as the prisoner of an Ashanti general. Frank served as an observer to his captors' supposed reactions after a British attack:

> 'These men march as well as my warriors. They have guns which shoot ten times as far as ours, and never stop firing. They carry cannon with them, and have things which fly through the air and scream, and set villages on fire and kill men. I have never heard of such things before. What do you call them?'
> 'They are called rockets,' Frank said. 'What are they made of?'
> 'They are made of coarse powder mixed with other things, and rammed into an iron case.'
> 'Could we not make some too?' the Ashanti general asked.
> 'No,' Frank replied. 'At least, not without a knowledge of the things you should mix with the powder, and of that I am ignorant. Besides, the rockets require great skill in firing, otherwise they will sometimes come back and kill the men who fire them.'[1045]

In this exchange, Henty called on both the practical and the racial explanations that Victorians had for their own technological dominance, and revealed the tension between those explanations. Hargate had as little knowledge of rocket ingredients as did his Ashanti captor, but nonetheless suggested that Africans with rockets would pose a threat only to themselves.

This discourse was even more patent on the subject of the Gatling guns.

[1042] The European artillerymen never actually landed, and Rait remained with the Hausa gunners. Beckett, *Wolseley and Ashanti,* p. 249.
[1043] Brackenbury, *The Ashanti War, A Narrative*, p. 206.
[1044] Ibid, 2:21-2.
[1045] G. A. Henty, *By Sheer Pluck: A Tale of the Ashanti War* (London: Blackie and Son, 1884) p. 118.

When Lieutenant F. H. Eardley-Wilmot was killed in action, his obituary in the *Illustrated London News* stated that at Cape Coast Castle, 'he was employed in the almost hopeless task of training a small body of natives in the use of the Gatling gun'.[1046] Boyle described a practice fire during which the Hausa 'worked' the Gatling. He made it quite clear, however, lest the reader mistake his meaning, that, 'Captain Rait stood beside and "served" the gun…its terrible machinery is delicate as that of a watch, and no negro that ever lived could be trusted to work it'.[1047] Having thus seen the men in action, Boyle later chose to depict the gunners during the less dignified task of hauling a Gatling along the road, 'in silence, breathing hard, and desperately impressed with the mysterious science of the whites'.[1048]

Telegraph cables provided another locus for the discourse that Africans were unable to comprehend modern technology. The signalling corps in Abyssinia had constant trouble with the ostensibly friendly Shoho tribes, who made off with sections of the wire and necessitated the posting of guards to patrol the entire line.[1049] Shepherd explained this problem in the *Times of India* with the theory that the Shohos, 'found Hooper's patent telegraph core exceedingly useful to bind their spear-heads with'.[1050]

A story appeared in most of the newspapers and books from the Gold Coast expedition regarding, 'the strange delusion' of the Ashanti interpretation of the wire:

> Some of their scouts having very probably seen the telegraph line, imagined doubtless that it was some powerful fetich, and imitated it by stretching along the path a cotton string extending from Quisah to Fomannah…But little recked Russell's Regiment while the men had

[1046] 'The Late Lieut. F.H. Eardley-Wilmot', *Illustrated London News*, 3 Jan. 1874, p. 4.
[1047] Frederick Boyle, *Through Fanteeland to Coomassie: A Diary of the Ashantee Expedition* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1874) p. 100.
[1048] Ibid, p. 219.
[1049] A. F. Shepherd, *The Campaign in Abyssinia* (Bombay: Times of India Office, 1868) p. 16.
[1050] Ibid, p. 41.

> Sniders in their hands for the false fetiches of Ashantees, and no doubt before this campaign is over the Ashantees themselves will have lost much of their former faith in their abominations and frivolities.[1051]

Prior likewise mused that he was, 'afraid this fetish had not much effect upon the fortunes of the campaign'.[1052] Henty's claim that King Karikari and his priests, 'would come to see that the white man's firearms are greatly more effective than the black man's fetish', engaged a similar concept.[1053] By placing European technology in parallel with his conception of Ashanti religion, Henty implied that Africans were only capable of interpreting the world in supernatural terms.

Adas has argued that Western commentators often cited African, 'attempts to offset with magical talismans the decisive European advantages in the art of killing', as manifest evidence of childlike, irrational thinking.[1054] Lieutenant Jeckyll of the Royal Engineers was in charge of erecting the wire along the road. In his report, he agreed that the Fantees, at least, interpreted the telegraph wire though a religious/superstitious lens. Yet, he provided a very practical source for such an interpretation. Some Fantee labourers deserted, he claimed:

> after being knocked down by lightning shocks, when handling the wire. This incident was productive of some good, inasmuch as it inspired great respect for the wire, which was henceforth regarded as fetish, and never molested by the natives. Thunderstorms were a constant source of interruption to the work, such strong induced currents being set up in the wire that it was impossible to touch it for a time.[1055]

[1051] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala*, p. 165.
[1052] Melton Prior, *Campaigns of a War Correspondent*, ed. S. L. Bensusan (London: Edward Arnold, 1912) pp. 21-2.
[1053] Henty, *The March to Coomassie*, p. 89.
[1054] Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989) p. 306.
[1055] Whitworth Porter, *History of the Corps of Royal Engineers*, Vol. 2 (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1889) p. 16.

The telegraph instruments often had to be disconnected to protect them from lightning surges, and in December the line wire itself melted after a strike.[1056] Thus, Boyle claimed, the Fantees classed the telegraph line along with the traction engines and the Gatling guns as, 'white man's fetish'.[1057] The very concept of 'fetish' was linked to intellectual inferiority in the British imagination, which lent a deeply critical dimension to such reports of African reception.

5.3 The Men Who Would be King

In a moment of self-reflection, Henty considered that, 'our energy and resources must indeed appear something quite supernatural to this primitive people'.[1058] British commentators tended to highlight those cases in which Africans attributed otherworldly powers to Westerners. To ease the serious water shortage at the Zoulla camp, two coal-fuelled condensers were set up at the seaside. These boilers ran continuously during the British time on shore, producing one thousand gallons of desalinated water per ton of coal.[1059] Henty reported that the Muslim Shoho people working as carriers and guides for the force would not believe that the British were Christians, arguing that, 'you are sons of Shaitan. You are more powerful than the afrits of old. They could move mountains, and fly across the air, but they could never drink from the sea, they could never change salt-water into fresh. You must be sons of Shaitan'.[1060] Markham also claimed that the Shohos, 'were firmly convinced that those strangers who drank water out of the sea, and throve upon it, were in league with Shaitan'.[1061]

[1056] Brackenbury, *The Ashanti War, A Narrative*, 2:85.
[1057] Boyle, *Through Fanteeland to Coomassie*, p. 236.
[1058] Henty, *The March to Magdala*, p. 190.
[1059] Acton, *Life and Reign*, p. 40.
[1060] Henty, *The March to Magdala*, pp. 148-9. The Afrits [Ifrits] are cunning supernatural creatures in Islamic folklore. Shaitan can refer both to the Islamic devil and to a class of spirits or demons.
[1061] Clements Markham, *A History of the Abyssinian Expedition* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1869) p. 153.

The army's railway, understandably, also impressed them. Shepherd described the, 'surprise the Shoho mind experienced', when the engine first began to move along the track, 'impelled by some invisible agency of which their "untutored minds" could form no conception'. He derisively added that their wonder was revealed by, 'an enormous display of eyes and teeth'.[1062] Simpson wrote of an episode in which a group of Tigrean Abyssinians rode with the Head Quarter Staff on the train down to Zoulla. He found them afterward in animated conversation, and told his readers that they had been debating, 'whether Solomon in all his glory ever could have conceived such a mode of travelling as this railway'.[1063] They did not seem to reach a conclusion, but Simpson asserted that by the end of that day, once they had witnessed the British technological wonders at Zoulla, 'they might well have been willing to admit, that if the wisdom of Solomon applied to material things, we could at least show good signs of having had a fair share of the inheritance'.[1064] There is no reason to doubt that the Abyssinians were impressed, but the suggestion that the British had descended from Solomon constituted an assumption on Simpson's part.

Such assumptions about the African mentality placed a filter on the British collective memory of the conflict and influenced the conduct of subsequent small wars. Years later, *The Lancet* recommended that Wolseley should construct a railway on his upcoming expedition to Ashanti to, among other ends, impress the natives. When the Abyssinians had first seen Napier's steam-engine, the article claimed with a supposed direct quote, they declared that the English, 'had put the devil into an iron box and made him work'.[1065]

[1062] Shepherd, *The Campaign in Abyssinia*, p. 40.
[1063] Solomon's genii supposedly carried him through the air on a flying throne.
[1064] Simpson, *Diary of a Journey to Abyssinia*, pp. 133-5.
[1065] 'The Ashantee War', *The Lancet,* Vol. 102, no. 2610 (6 Sep. 1873) p. 344.

When Napier met with Kassa to discuss an alliance, the Ras recounted what he had heard about the more elaborate tools at Britain's disposal. According to Stanley and Henty, Kassa believed that the rockets released a noxious vapour, fatal to man and beast, and could set fire to houses three miles away. He further believed, they reported, that 'these (rockets) were weapons of enchanters. The English, according to [Abyssinian] ideas, practiced enchantment in many things'.[1066] By all evidence, Kassa had intended to side with the British from their arrival, so his exhortations of their spectacular power must be interpreted with due consideration of diplomatic rhetoric. Once reported, however, such words nevertheless made an impression on the British perception of the Abyssinian mind and the effect that 'superstition' could have on the outcome of a campaign.

Henty suggested that Kassa's people were, 'thoroughly convinced that we have great power of enchantment; and this will probably do more to retain their neutrality than any fear of our arms would do'.[1067] Significantly, Stanley claimed, they believed that even though the British, 'could not fight very well in the mountains, still, when they could not conquer by force of arms, they could have recourse to their enchantments, and were therefore invincible and entitled to respect'.[1068] That was an important point regarding the psychological aspects of the expedition. The Abyssinians, in Stanley's interpretation, saw British enchantments as compensating for their innate disadvantages in African mountain warfare. Through encounters such as these, British officers and commentators increasingly saw the potential benefits of technology as spectacle. If Africans were predisposed to interpret modern technology as evidence of supernatural power, those interpretations could be actively fostered.

[1066] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala*, p. 331.
[1067] Henty, *The March to Magdala*, pp. 267-8.
[1068] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala*, p. 331.

5.4 'The collection of machinery excites far deeper interest than anything else exhibited'.[1069]

Earlier explorers in Africa had attempted to use machines to awe the natives they encountered, a form of display Thomas called, 'a pervasive ritual in the history of Western expeditions'.[1070] Livingstone used a magic lantern on a number of his missionary expeditions to project illustrations of Bible stories and impress potential converts. He brought a camera on his 1858-64 Zambezi Expedition, the first ever used in an official British venture.[1071] Bowdich believed himself to have won the favour of the Ashanti King in no small part through gifts of 'ingenious novelties', such as telescopes, pistols, kaleidoscopes, watches, a microscope, a compass, and a camera obscura.[1072] Speke found that the Africans he met became much easier to deal with once he had enthralled them with the speed of his revolvers and even the opening and closing of his umbrella.[1073] When the issue of Theodore's European captives became intractable, Charles Beke, who had travelled to the country in the early 1840s, publically lobbied to be allowed to go to Abyssinia and negotiate for their release. In a letter to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, he proposed that he would take with him, 'an electric-telegraph apparatus, for the purposes of exhibiting and explaining to His Majesty the use and operation of this wonderful and, as to him it would appear, miraculous invention'.[1074]

[1069] *A Guide to the Great Exhibition; Containing a description of every principle object of interest…* (London: George Routledge and Co., 1851) p. 38; Robert Askrill, *The Yorkshire Visitors' Guide to the Great Exhibition* (Leeds: Joseph Buckton, 1851) p. 38.
[1070] Martin Thomas, ed., *Expedition into Empire: Exploratory Journeys and the Making of the Modern World* (New York: Routledge, 2014) p. 15.
[1071] James Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997) p. 30.
[1072] Thomas E. Bowdich, *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee*, pp. 44, 97-8, 455-7; Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men*, pp. 160-1.
[1073] Ibid*.,* p. 162.
[1074] Letter from Dr. Beke to Earl Russell, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, May 19, 1865, in Charles T. Beke, *The British Captives in Abyssinia*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman's, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1867) p. 323.

Many such demonstrations during Napier's expedition were reported in a mocking tone. Lieutenant Scott told his wife of a visit to an Abyssinian church where he convinced the attendant priests that the cover of his pocket watch could only be opened by blowing upon it. After they failed in their attempts, Scott pressed the latch while giving a gentle blow, and left the priests, 'in a delightful state of bewilderment'.[1075] Simpson demonstrated a European child's toy, a wind-up cat playing a harp, to Captain Speedy's Abyssinian servant. The man, 'became wild with excitement', Simpson reported, and asked in Abyssinian, 'how in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost can you people teach cats to do such things?'[1076]

There was, nonetheless, a serious side to these displays of European gadgetry, and a desire to influence Africans for practical effect. In a discussion of Markham's geographical observations from the expedition at the RGS, Sir Stafford Northcote, the Secretary of State for India, suggested that the drought with which the Army in Abyssinia had to contend:

> had not been unattended with advantages; it had enabled us to impress upon some of the native chiefs and their representatives an idea of our skill and power, in being able to turn the sea into drinking-water, and to draw water from the earth by means of Mr. Norton's admirable American pump.[1077]

Sir Samuel Baker advised that 'savages' could be ruled by either 'force' or 'humbug' and recommended that anyone who wished to gain the admiration of Africans should bring tricks and gadgets to encourage the latter. While Governor of British Equatoria (modern South Sudan), he stocked music boxes,

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[1075] 'A Staff Officer' [Lieut. W. W. Scott], *Letters from Abyssinia during the Campaign of 1868* ([n. pub.]: [n.p.], [1868?]) pp. 33-4.
[1076] Simpson, *Diary of a Journey to Abyssinia*, p. 139.
[1077] Clements Markham, 'Geographical Results of the Abyssinian Expedition,' *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society* XII, no. II (1868) p. 116.

a magic lantern, a magnetic battery, fireworks, and mirrored silver balls.[1078] Baker's opinions carried considerable weight among the administrative class. He had travelled extensively in East Africa, held the titles of Pasha and Major-General in the Ottoman Empire and Egypt, and lectured at RUSI on the subject of 'savage warfare'.[1079] In a review of his 1867 book in *Macmillan's Magazine,* Thomas Hughes scornfully referred to him as the 'favourite champion' of 'Mr. Carlyle [and] the Anthropological [Society]' with an over-enthusiastic tendency to 'volunteer his testimony as to the negro race'.[1080]

Thus, while machines had certainly been used as spectacle before the Abyssinian expedition, by the time of the Ashanti war it had become standard practice for the British abroad and a characteristic of the high imperial era. In 1888, Wolseley published an agenda-laden article on the subject of black men as soldiers. In reference to the Sudanese Mahdists, but also meant to apply broadly, he claimed that due to, 'the innate superstition of the black man. I believe that a clever conjuror who could manipulate spectre figures well, would be the most successful of Mahdis in the Soudan'.[1081]

A very similar idea had occurred to Henty in Abyssinia. After hearing of the Tigreans' preconceptions about rockets, and indignant at their dismissal of British cannon as 'too small', Henty made a proposal for future expeditions, which is worth quoting at length:

> As the natives are impressed by enchantment, and are not at all impressed by our soldiers, I should propose that in any future war of the

[1078] Samuel Baker, *The Albert N'yanza,* new ed., (London: Macmillan, 1883) p. 202; A. Cairns, *Prelude to Imperialism: British Reactions to Central African Society 1840-1890* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965) pp. 46-7.
[1079] S. W. Baker, 'Journey to Abyssinia in 1862,' *Journal of the Geographical Society* 33 (1863) pp. 237-41; Sir Samuel Baker, *The Nile Tributaries of Abyssinia and the Sword Hunters of the Hameam Arabs* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1867); Samuel Baker, 'Experience in Savage Warfare,' *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute* 17 (1873) pp. 904-21.
[1080] Thomas Hughes, 'The Nile Tributaries of Abyssinia,' *Macmillan's Magazine* 17 (Nov. 1867-Apr. 1868) p. 149.
[1081] Sir Garnet Wolseley, 'The Negro as a Soldier,' *Fortnightly Review*, no. 264 (Dec. 1888) pp. 701-2.

> same kind there should be an officer appointed under the title of magician to the forces, and that he should have subordinate officers as assistant magician and deputy-assistant magicians. The duty of these officers should be to exhibit signs and wonders. Mr. Anderson might perhaps be induced to undertake the control of the machine tricks and general magic; Mr. Home would do the spiritual business, and could astonish the native mind with the sight of elephants floating in the air, or could terrify a negro potentate by tweaking his nose at a durbar by invisible fingers. One of the deputy-assistant magicians should be a pyrotechnist, whose duty would be to light up the camp with unearthly fire, and to place strange portents in the midnight sky. Certainly, had this department been organised before the expedition began, and had a few of its officers been present, we might have dispensed with several regiments, and the cost of the expedition would have been greatly lessened, however munificent the remuneration of the chiefs of the department might have been. Should Government adopt this suggestion, and I have no doubt they will do so, I shall expect a valuable appointment in the corps.[1082]

Henty clearly meant his modest proposal as a (he might say 'light hearted') criticism of what he took to be African gullibility and low intelligence. At its core, however, the idea of appealing to African 'superstition' was already fairly popular among British explorers and government officials. Moreover, Napier and Wolseley both staged demonstrations with dramatic flair for African ambassadors. The army might not have a department of magic, but the expeditions had considerable supplies of advanced technology in tow. British demonstrations of technology in Abyssinia and Ashanti were rooted in this particular conception of the interpretive filters through which Africans would witness those demonstrations; in European assumptions about the African mode of reception.

5.5 Exhibition and Performance of Technology in Abyssinia and Ashanti

In *Small Wars,* Callwell repeatedly emphasised, 'the great importance of impressing the enemy with the feeling of inferiority, the advantage of a dominating attitude in the theatre of war, the value of moral effect'.[1083] While this could, many argued, be accomplished through the infliction of overwhelming

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[1082] Henty, *The March to Magdala*, pp. 268-9.
[1083] Callwell, *Small Wars,* p. 150.

casualties, it also became common practice in British imperial Africa to engender a feeling of inferiority through demonstrations of European military technology.[1084] During the Emin Pasha Relief Expedition (1886-90), Henry Morton Stanley frequently attempted, with some success, to impress the African leaders with whom he negotiated with a machine gun that Hiram Maxim had donated to the cause.[1085]

Stanley had, of course, witnessed the Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions. These campaigns were in some ways pilot trials for the military demonstration of technology to Africans. Everyone in Napier's army, Shepherd reported in the *Times of India*, was mindful of, 'the desirability of doing everything that could conveniently be done to enable the people through whose country the Force was passing, to form a correct estimate of their nothingness when compared with it'.[1086] While showy in nature, performances of technological spectacle were intended to serve practical strategic purposes. Thus, the Staff Officer in *Blackwood's* was confident, 'that our friendly relations with those around us have largely rested on the military array which we have held all the time in the background'.[1087] This section will explore a series of cases where the military array was deployed to the centre stage.

5.5.1 Abyssinia

Ras Kassa of Tigre First Durbar[1088]

During the march to Magdala, Napier arranged a durbar [meeting] with

[1084] Ian Knight, *Go to Your God Like a Soldier: The British Soldier Fighting for Empire, 1837-1902* (London: Greenhill Books, 1996) p. 170.
[1085] Iain R. Smith, *The Emin Pasha Relief Expedition 1886-1890* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972) p. 269; Roy Maclaren, *African Exploits: The Diaries of William Stairs, 1887-1892* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998) p. 19, 100.
[1086] Shepherd, *The Campaign in Abyssinia*, p. 110.
[1087] 'A Staff-Officer' [William Tweedie], 'Letters from a Staff-Officer with the Abyssinian Expedition. - Part II,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 103, no. 632 (Jun. 1868) p. 728.
[1088] 'Durbar' was an Anglo-Indian term denoting a meeting with a local leader or 'native chief'. It implied fairly formal diplomatic negotiations with at least nominally friendly leaders. The Abyssinian equivalent could be translated as 'conventicle' or 'convention'. It was natural for Anglo-Indians to use this term.

Kassa, the Ras of Tigre, to establish friendly relations. Kassa was among the most powerful of Theodore's rivals and, at that point, may in fact have been stronger than the King.[1089] It was, thus, very important that this relationship be solidified, as the force would rely on Tigrean goodwill for supplies, information, and safe passage. Several aspects of the British performance, such as the use of elephants, have been covered in earlier chapters.

Before the Ras made it to the British camp, he had heard fantastic reports from his ambassadors about the weapons that this foreign army possessed. Scott of the Bengal Artillery wrote to his mother that a group of Kassa's representatives, 'were very anxious to see our guns (the Mountain Train)', but unfortunately found them to be smaller than they had expected.[1090] As the army marched, Scott observed, 'every mile or so along the road the Abyssinians collected, having heard the guns were coming; they have a great respect for guns; but I fancy have seldom seen anything over a three-pounder'.[1091] Abyssinian cannon were, in fact, often of enormous calibre, which was equated directly with power. Henty was frustrated by the Abyssinian focus on size and the subsequent disappointment among some visiting envoys. It was, he suggested:

> a great pity that the artillery and the infantry had not a few rounds of blank cartridge, which would have given his ambassadorship a much more lively idea of what the real thing would be like, and would have given him such a tale to bear to his king and master as would have opened his Majesty's eyes to what the consequences of a war would probably be.[1092]

He later argued that, despite the effort required to transport ammunition inland to be used in such demonstrations, 'the lesson those hundred cartridges would

[1089] Frederic Sharf, David Northrup and Richard Pankhurst, *Abyssinia, 1867-1868: Artists on Campaign: Watercolours and Drawings from the British Expedition Under Sir Robert Napier* (Hollywood: Tsehai, 2003) p. 29.
[1090] 'A Staff Officer' [Scott], *Letters from Abyssinia during the Campaign of 1868*, p. 30.
[1091] Ibid., p. 40.
[1092] Henty, *The March to Magdala*, p. 89.

have taught would have been cheaply purchased at any cost'.[1093] Tales were, nonetheless, told, and Napier sought to encourage the more fantastic rumours about British weaponry by inviting all visiting dignitaries to see the artillery train.

Shepherd told of one group of, 'chiefs who had heard [the] rumour', and wished to, 'judge for themselves regarding its truth or falsity. The intelligent of these were shown the wonders of the Armstrongs and Sniders.'[1094] When Grant and Munzinger returned from a preliminary meeting with the Ras of Tigre, having invited him to meet with Napier, they were escorted by a noble Chief named Llma. Knowing that the man would have Kassa's ear, Markham reported, Napier 'considered it desirable…to hold a review of the troops in his presence. The fire of the mountain-guns and the charge of cavalry across the plain rather astonished [Llma], and must have impressed him with the conviction that it was better to have us as friends than enemies.'[1095] Kassa had every reason to arrive with high expectations.

With the Ras himself due to appear, there was a clear desire among British commentators to use a similar performance of technology, 'in order to convince him of [the Army's] irresistible power'.[1096] Shepherd hoped that, 'showing him the organization, the equipment, and the power of an English Army', would assure, 'that the remembrance of the approaching field-day would make him a wiser and a better man'.[1097] To that end, the party that accompanied Napier to meet Kassa included four Armstrong guns, two elephants, and a group of engineers with a camera and a gas light flash signal.[1098] There was no report of Kassa's opinion of the camera or signaller,

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[1093] Ibid., p. 233.
[1094] Shepherd, *The Campaign in Abyssinia*, p. 110.
[1095] Markham, *A History of the Abyssinian Expedition*, p. 228.
[1096] Ibid., p. 263.
[1097] Shepherd, *The Campaign in Abyssinia*, p. 109.
[1098] Henty, *The March to Magdala*, p. 258.

but the decision to bring those devices along to the meeting suggests a perception among the British that they would have an impact.

Most important for the demonstration, the meeting began with the four Armstrong guns firing a 'salute' of blank charges.[1099] Stanley, who was present for the meeting, was happy to report that the noise of the cannon, 'caused visible commotion among the array of horses and men on the opposite side of the stream; and great uneasiness among the dusky warriors, who, with tilted lances, looked down upon the red-coated army below'.[1100] Highlighting the inferior weapons with which the Tigrean soldiers were armed, Stanley supported the interpretation that they were easily frightened by British technology. Since the custom of firing salutes was not widespread in Abyssinia, it is likely that the men were simply surprised. In his report dated 14 February 1868, Napier described a military parade, cannon demonstration, and mock horse charge that were held after the durbar for Kassa and his chiefs. He expressed his opinion that, 'the fire of the mountain guns…astonished them not a little, and taught them, it is to be hoped, how unwise it would be on their part to reject our friendship'.[1101] Markham seems to have parroted Napier's wording in his later description of the demonstration made for Kassa's ambassador Llma.

In the official history of the expedition, Holland and Hozier concluded that, while the Abyssinians had admired the British infantry and cavalry displays, 'they were chiefly delighted and impressed by the Armstrong guns. Kassai dismounted and closely inspected the pieces, handled the shells, and looked through the rifled barrels'. The claim that Kassa was interested in novel military technology fits with his characterisation in British sources as a

[1099] Markham, *A History of the Abyssinian Expedition*, p. 263.
[1100] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala*, p. 328.
[1101] Holland and Hozier, *The Expedition to Abyssinia*, p. 392.

particularly, perhaps atypically, intelligent Abyssinian. Similar claims, it has been shown in earlier chapters, were made of King Theodore. The more superstitious interpretations were attributed to Kassa's followers, who 'remarked that the English must be good Christians, or Heaven would not grant them intelligence to mould such wondrous weapons. It appeared to their view that the greatest blessings which would be vouchsafed to Christian morality were firearms and gunpowder.'[1102]

All British accounts of African opinion were susceptible to exaggeration at two points, those of experience and of retelling. Scott was present for the entire scene, but made only one passing mention of Kassa being 'allowed to examine one of the Armstrongs'.[1103] The real subject of interest here is what the British *thought* about the impressions that their technological demonstrations made on African observers, and not necessarily what those Africans actually thought. The phlegmatic Europeans may not have been used to Abyssinian diplomatic rhetoric.

Apropos, any Abyssinian references to religion in these discussions were usually taken by British commentators to imply and indicate a declaration of civilisational status. Thus, the Tigreans' claim that the English [British] were very Christian was taken as evidence of their recognition that the British were superior. Such interpretations of Abyssinian religious rhetoric in reference to railways and water purification were discussed earlier in the present chapter. In that sense, therefore, the artillery demonstrations were seen as having achieved the desired effect.

Stanley was, however, still frustrated by the Abyssinian focus on size. He contemptuously reported that, 'the cannon were not so large as what they had

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[1102] Ibid., pp. 415-16.
[1103] 'A Staff Officer' [Scott], *Letters from Abyssinia during the Campaign of 1868*, p. 53.

been led to expect by their camp gossips (Breech-loading Armstrongs with double shells they had no very high praise to bestow upon.)'[1104] Thus, while blank cartridges had indeed on this occasion been fired to gain Kassa's attention, Stanley argued that more should have been done. He suggested that, if Napier had, 'only expended half-a-dozen shells and rockets in exhibiting the real power of the condemned Armstrongs, much lasting benefit would have accrued therefrom'. Stanley did concede that, since little was known about Theodore's fortress at Magdala, Napier did not wish, 'to waste his projectiles of war in a mere exhibition'.[1105] This comment somewhat belied the amount of effort that had in fact been expended on 'mere exhibition'. Once Magdala had been taken, at any rate, there would be ammunition to spare.

Theodore's Envoy

After the battle outside Magdala, the King sent his son in law, Dejach Alami [Dejaj Alamé], to negotiate with Napier. The envoy was accompanied by two of the European captives, Lieutenant Prideaux and Reverend Flad, who later described the meeting. Henry Blanc, a third captive, reported that Napier demanded Theodore's full surrender, 'then showed Alamé some of the "toys" he had brought with him, and explained to him their effects'.[1106] One wonders if those descriptions were at all exaggerated. Napier retained the advantage of novelty since, while the rockets and 7-pounder mountain guns had been used to good effect in the battle the day before, the Armstrong steel guns and the mortars had arrived during the night and had not yet been seen in action by anyone in Magdala. As Flad reported, Napier told the Abyssinian ambassador:

> that the arms used against [the Abyssinians] yesterday were but mere playthings in comparison to these destroying machines; if the King would not surrender and give up, the big mortars and the Armstrong guns

[1104] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala*, p. 331.
[1105] Ibid., p. 331.
[1106] Blanc, *A Narrative of Captivity in Abyssinia*, p. 396.

> would be sent up against him, and then none of his soldiers would escape alive. Horror-struck and amazed, Dejach Alami looked at the elephants which were standing like giants before him, still having the Armstrong cannons on their backs.[1107]

The army and later commentators were thus able to assert a continued state of technological superiority and to suggest that there would always be more devices that Africans could not understand. As a popular history of the campaign would claim, 'Alami was shown the battery of Armstrong guns and mortars…that he might tell King Theodore how much more formidable were the implements of war now ready to be used against him, than those which he had seen employed the day before'.[1108]

Galla Chiefs

During the march back to the Red Sea after the destruction of Magdala, the army was harassed by bands of Gallas. Napier had established peaceful relations with a number of Galla chiefs, but isolated groups continued to rob the baggage train as opportunity allowed. Thus, Shepherd described, when the army halted by a large lake for the day, 'a number of experiments in gunnery [were] made, chiefly with a view to get rid of a large quantity of cumbrous ammunition, and to show the congregated Gallas with what manner of persons they had been meddling'. The Royal Artillery and the Naval Brigade fired hundreds of rockets to test their elevation tables and the tendency to ricochet. The mountain guns fired shells over the water to observe shrapnel spread, and the 4th King's Own practised with their Snider rifles.

As Shepherd had noted, these tests provided a good opportunity to dispose of excess ammunition and train the troops. He was, nonetheless, keen to claim that, 'there is reason to believe that the Gallas were duly impressed with all they saw; for on Sir Robert's pointing to their hills and asking upon

[1107] Holland and Hozier, *The Expedition to Abyssinia*, 2:45.
[1108] Acton, *Life and Reign*, p. 68.

which of the villages they would like the fire directed, they seemed terribly shocked at the idea'.[1109] As well they might. It should be noted that Shepherd was the only British commentator to describe this event in such detail or to make claims about the Galla's reception. Scott mentioned that the 33rd paraded to impress a visiting Galla ambassador, but did not mention any display of technology.[1110] If Napier in fact made the comment that Shepherd described, it would indicate his concern for African reception and reveal a performance element to the tests.

Ras Kassa of Tigre Second Durbar

After Theodore's death, Ras Kassa of Tigre was one of the most powerful and influential leaders in Abyssinia. If there was henceforth to be a single ruler of the country, Napier and many realistic commentators believed that he was a likely candidate. It was thus important to British interests to maintain his friendship. As the army withdrew through Tigre, Napier met with Kassa for a second durbar on 25 and 26 May. The Lieutenant General compensated the Ras for his support with six mortars, six howitzers, 725 muskets, 130 rifles, and a considerable stock of ammunition.[1111] As it happened, Theodore was in fact succeeded by Wagshum Gobeze, who became Emperor Tekle Giyorgis II. Kassa went on to use his new weapons to defeat Gobeze in 1871, becoming Emperor Yohannes IV, or King John; he would reign until 1889.[1112] Napier also invited him to a demonstration put on by the Naval Rocket Brigade. This performance was charged with meaning, as the

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[1109] Shepherd, *The Campaign in Abyssinia*, pp. 308-9.
[1110] 'A Staff Officer' [Scott], *Letters from Abyssinia during the Campaign of 1868*, p. 75.
[1111] R. A. Caulk, 'Firearms and Princely Power in Ethiopia in the Nineteenth Century,' *The Journal of African History* 13, no. 4 (1972) p. 614; Daniel R. Headrick, *Power Over Peoples: Technology, Environments, and Western Imperialism, 1400 to the Present* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010) p. 290.
[1112] Henry Dundas Napier, *Field-Marshal Lord Napier of Magdala G.C.B., G.C.S.I., A Memoir by His Son Lieut.-Colonel Hon. H. D. Napier C.M.G.* (London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1927) p. 200, 251.

British sought to solidify Kassa's long-term goodwill, but also suggest a sense of his subordination. The future King Yohannes IV was not, significantly, rewarded with any rockets of his own.

The *Illustrated London News* claimed that the rockets', 'fame had spread throughout Abyssinia, so that Kasai was most anxious to see these terrible instruments of destruction'. As the brigade fired at a selected rock in the distance, 'Sir Robert Napier led Kassai by the hand, and had the rockets and their action explained to him. The principal chiefs of the Tigré were there, and all manifested the greatest astonishment at what they saw.' It was also duly reported that the Spanish Army observers, General Florente and Count Mirasol, were quite impressed by the rocket demonstration.[1113] Simpson drew a portrait to accompany this description, which was printed in the newspaper and selected for reprinting in the subsequent *ILN* book about the expedition.[1114] In the former, the image was titled, 'The Abyssinian Expedition: The Naval Rocket Brigade Firing Rockets at Senafe', but this was changed in the latter to, 'Kassai Seeing the Practice of the Naval Rocket Brigade at Senafe'. The title change interestingly altered the subject of the image from the rockets themselves to Kassa's gaze at the rockets.

In the image, Simpson and the lithographer conveyed a sharp sense of contrast between the dark-clad British officers and soldiers, who glanced calmly at the rockets whizzing off into the background, and the white-clad and barefoot Kassa with his assorted chiefs, who appeared positively shocked. Napier was in fact shown looking away from the rockets and toward Kassa, his arm outstretched and palm open to direct the Ras' attention to the demonstration.

[1113] 'The Abyssinian Expedition.' *Illustrated London News,* 11 Jul. 1868, p. 28.
[1114] 'The Abyssinian Expedition: The Naval Rocket Brigade Firing Rockets at Senafe', *Illustrated London News*, 11 Jul. 1874, p. 28; Later reprinted as, 'Kassai Seeing the Practice of the Naval Rocket Brigade at Senafe', in Acton, *Life and Reign,* pp. 72-3.

Kassa himself, in contrast, stood with his hands raised to chest level, palms slightly outward, as if vaguely attempting to shield himself. His eyes were unmistakably flared and his mouth open. He appeared as if he was in the act of gasping in surprise. While earlier accounts had interpreted Kassa's interest in technology as a mark of his intelligence, Simpson's image conveyed a duller characterisation of him. Markham likewise downplayed, 'the weak-minded Kasa', and described him as having, 'gazed with stupid wonder at the rocket practice of the Naval Brigade'.[1115]

Three days later, as the British force moved on and Napier bid Kassa farewell, a final brief demonstration of technology was held as part of the concluding ceremonies. A soldier exhibited the Snider's breach-loading action for the Ras and an officer fired 7 shots from an American repeater rifle. Two mountain guns fired a final salute, and the groups parted ways.[1116] Technological spectacle had been a central part of the British interaction with Kassa and the allied Tigreans from beginning to end.

5.5.2 Ashanti

Butler's Rifle Demonstrations

Captain Butler had been sent as special commissioner to West Akim, entrusted with recruiting Chief Quabina Fuah to attack Ashanti along a different route from Wolseley's main army. In addition to the cases of Enfields, bottles of gin, and considerable money with which he sought to enlist Fuah's support, Butler also packed an 'American fourteen-shooter' rifle. During their inaugural meeting, Butler punctuated his argument, 'as [he] spoke', by firing 'fourteen times in rapid succession' over the Chief's head. He claimed in his book that Fuah was left in a 'paroxysm of terror', his soldiers let out 'a roar of

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[1115] Markham, *A History of the Abyssinian Expedition*, p. 381.
[1116] 'The Abyssinian Expedition.' *Illustrated London News,* 11 Jul. 1868, p. 28; Simpson, *Diary of a Journey to Abyssinia*, p. 132.

astonishment follow[ing] the exhibition of the American rifle, and [Butler] went on'.[1117] The placement of this demonstration of technology, in the middle of a call to arms, indicates that Butler expected it to make a strong impression on his African allies.

He described making another demonstration during his inspection of the Akim army, where, 'the climax of the review consisted in the performance of the fourteen-shooter. This weapon, fired with great rapidity across the river nine or ten times without reloading, had a marvellous effect upon the "Army"'. He tried to prolong their reaction by repeatedly lowering the rifle, feigning empty, then firing more shots, to 'still further astonish the wondering Akims'. After several such acts of showmanship, Butler assured his readers, 'the magic weapon became the first-class "fetish"' among the men.[1118]

Traction Engine Exhibition

The traction engine, or steam sapper, at Cape Coast was the first such device ever taken on a British expedition. Able to travel on both roads and rail lines, Wolseley's sapper was a variant of the farming tractor that had been making an impact on British agriculture. The practical and symbolic uses to which the British hoped these engines might be put have been discussed in the preceding chapter. In addition to transport, some hoped that they might also serve a performance role. At the outset of the campaign, the editors of *The Lancet* predicted that 'the moral effect of a steam-engine on the Ashantees would be great'.[1119]

The Fante, it was claimed, demonstrated the expected reactions. Major Home and Captain Buckle managed, after considerable trouble, to get one of the sappers up and running on 30 October. Buckle piloted it through Cape

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[1117] Butler, *Akim-Foo,* p. 99.
[1118] Ibid., p. 156.
[1119] 'The Ashantee War', *The Lancet,* Vol. 102, no. 2610 (6 Sep. 1873) p. 344.

Coast town, he claimed in his log, 'to the intense astonishment of the natives'.[1120] Wolseley similarly wrote to his wife that the engine was working, 'to the utter astonishment of the natives who have never heard of such a thing before'.[1121] Those press representatives who were present provided more colourful characterisations. Henty described streets crowded with people, 'in the highest state of excitement – a mixture of fear and admiration'.[1122] Reade claimed that the Fante, 'uttered screams, compared with which the whistle of the engine was melodious and subdued'.[1123] In Boyle's account, the machine stirred up, 'such excitement as Cape Coast Castle has rarely seen. Mad with delight and astonishment, the populace turned out, galloping from the remotest quarters, with ungirt cloths flying wild, to behold the phenomenon'. The Fante believed, he claimed, that the mechanical, 'thunderbolt of war', would smash the Ashanti army, 'without further exertion on their part'.[1124]

Having thus witnessed and selectively interpreted Fante reactions to the traction engine, the British hoped that it might be used to impress the enemy as well. An opportunity arose only two days later, when an Ashanti prisoner was brought to Cape Coast. Wolseley released the man to carry a letter back to the King in Coomassie, and, 'in order to impress him as much as possible', ordered Butler and Buckle to drive him the two miles to Dunquah aboard the sapper. The Major-General wrote to his wife that he, 'should like to hear what [the messenger's] description of this screaming monster will be when he reaches his destination'.[1125] This means of transport was chosen, Brackenbury claimed, 'in

[1120] TNA, WO 147/27 'Journal of the Engineer Operations on the Gold Coast during the recent Expedition', Captain Buckle, 31 Oct. 1873, p. 14.
[1121] Wolseley to Louisa Wolseley, [3-]5 November 1873, Govt. House C.C. Castle, Hove, Wolseley W/P 3/10 in Beckett, *Wolseley and Ashanti,* p. 203.
[1122] Henty, *The March to Coomassie*, p. 165.
[1123] Reade, *Ashantee Campaign*, p. 194.
[1124] Boyle, *Fanteeland to Coomassie*, p. 51.
[1125] Wolseley to Louisa Wolseley, [3-]5 November 1873, Govt. House C.C. Castle, Hove, Wolseley W/P 3/10 in Beckett, *Wolseley and Ashanti,* p. 203.

order that [the Ashanti man] might be impressed with a sense of the immense power of the white man'.[1126]

The demonstration did not go at all as planned. Buckle recorded in the journal of engineer operations that, a short way along the road, 'her boiler primed, she got short of water, and refused to go up a hill. Altogether, it was not a successful trip. On returning, the engine melted the lead plug in the boiler and blew out…the hills are too steep to allow of an engine working along the road'.[1127] The messenger had to proceed on foot under escort.

Perhaps more disappointing than the technical failure itself was the messenger's decidedly subdued reaction to the steam sapper while it *had* been working. 'Alas!', Butler lamented, 'he seemed to regard it as a most ordinary adjunct of the African bush, and neither its puffing nor its screaming caused him the least astonishment'. When Butler attempted to explain to the messenger that the sapper, 'was a very great fetish, [the Ashanti man] nodded his head in complacent recognition of the fact'.[1128] Faced with the fact that an African had not reacted to, 'this terrible machine', as expected, Henty further embellished Butler's subsequent explanation. 'It was accordingly impressed upon him', Henty claimed, 'that the engine was a great white man's fetish, that its screams and whistles were tokens of its rage at a white man's enemy being placed upon its back, and that if he ever failed to deliver his message to the king the great fetish would assuredly follow and crush him'.[1129] Reade admitted that he had, 'charitably hoped that the Steam Sapper would frighten [the messenger] out of his wits', but reported that the man, 'took his seat as coolly as a railway passenger with a season ticket. The fact is that when a man expects to have his

[1126] Brackenbury, *The Ashanti War, A Narrative*, 2:39.
[1127] TNA, WO 147/27 'Journal of the Engineer Operations on the Gold Coast during the recent Expedition', Captain Buckle, 1 Nov. 1873 p. 15.
[1128] Butler, *Akim-Foo,* pp. 79-80.
[1129] Henty, *The March to Coomassie*, p. 167.

head cut off every moment, he is not easily impressed by the wonders of science.'[1130] The case of the Ashanti messenger thus represented an attempted exhibition of British technology to Africans; it revealed disconnects both between the expected mechanical performance and results and, moreover, between the anticipated and observed African reception of the event.

Ashanti Envoys and the Gatling Gun Demonstration

This chapter will move toward a close with an extended look at another case where African reactions were made to match British expectations. In early January 1874, Wolseley's army was camped on the southern shore of the Prah River, the border of Ashanti territory, preparing for the push to Coomassie. When a party of ambassadors arrived to negotiate on behalf of King Karikari on 4 January, Wolseley gathered them by the shore for a demonstration of the camp's Gatling gun. Earlier tests had given him reason to expect they would be impressed. A practice shoot had been conducted on 12 November at Dunquah, where it was discovered that the traversing mechanism on one of the guns was beyond repair, the gun having to be left behind.[1131] Despite that unfortunate result, the trial had caused quite a commotion, as Boyle described in the *Daily Telegraph*:

> Another desperate excitement amongst the natives! Another rush from all parts of the town, cloths flying loose, and a hurricane of dust. This time it is the Gatling gun which rouses the population. Once more the rumour has spread that "white man's fetish" is about to take up the war single-handed, dispensing with native assistance…the Fantees put an undiminished trust in the "pistol-gun"…The Houssas, who, of course, saw only the beauties of the weapon, turned its handle in ecstasy; their comrades screamed with delight to watch the splash — splash of the bullets, falling like hail into the sea, a thousand yards away.[1132]

Boyle's description, as usual, was couched in the stereotyped image of the unrestrained and childlike African. Events like the November Gatling test

[1130] Reade, *Ashantee Campaign*, p. 194.
[1131] Beckett, *Wolseley and Ashanti*, p. 303.
[1132] Boyle, *Fanteeland to Coomassie*, p. 99.

reinforced an impression among the British that technological spectacle could garner the undivided attention of West African natives. It was a logical step for Wolseley to attempt to use such spectacle, which Rogers described as a 'performance of Gatlingeers with their hydra-barrelled field-piece', to influence the Ashanti envoys.[1133]

On the day of the January demonstration, Wolseley claimed that, 'the roar of [the gun's] fire and the precision of its aim seemed to impress them somewhat'.[1134] In his 1903 memoirs, written long after the public narrative of this event had been set, Wolseley wrote in slightly stronger terms that, 'the sharp roar of its fire, the precision of its aim and the way in which its bullets threw up the water all round the target in the river, impressed them; at least I thought so'.[1135]

It is worth reiterating that this chapter is focused on the British *interpretations* of African responses. Whatever relation such images had to reality, they were disseminated in military and public spheres and, in turn, influenced imperial culture and the idea of Africa. In their descriptions of the January Gatling demonstration, most British commentators made their own claims about the impact that the gun had made upon the Ashanti ambassadors. As Stanley evocatively cast the scene:

> The handle being turned, the Gatling began to speak with startling emphasis. That part of the river at which it was directed began to shoot up tall columns of water and spray, until it appeared as if the Prah was about to form itself into so many grey columns of liquid and to join in a dance…the effect of the exhibition was hailed with boisterous applause by the Fantee spectators and by the Ashantees with low remarks and expressive looks toward one another.[1136]

[1133] Capt E. Rogers, *Campaigning in Western Africa and the Ashantee Invasion* (London: W. Mutchell & Co., 1874) p. 157.
[1134] Wolseley Journal, TNA, WO 147/3, 4 January 1874, in Beckett, *Wolseley and Ashanti,* p. 325.
[1135] Field-Marshal Viscount Wolseley, *The Story of a Soldier's Life* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903) 2:320.
[1136] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala*, pp. 127-8.

It might be noted that the ambassadors in Stanley's description were rather calm. By all accounts, the envoys were actually stoic throughout the practice shoot. Any British claims about impact were thus in reference to their own views of the Ashanti's *hidden* feelings.

Dooner similarly concluded that, 'the Ashantee ambassador played his part well, looking on with a most dignified air, completely disguising what his real feelings were, as I am sure he must have been astonished'.[1137] 'The effect was tremendous', Luxmore claimed in *Blackwoods*, though with little substantiation. 'The Ashantees would have bolted if they could, they looked in a "blue funk"'.[1138] When the, 'Gatling gun was set to work for his education', Henty rather cryptically explained, the ambassador's, 'countenance, as the steady stream of bullets threw up a continuous fountain of spray, showed how deeply the lesson went'.[1139] In his 1884 boy's novel set during the campaign, he more directly claimed that the gun, 'astonished, and evidently filled with awe, the Ashanti ambassador'.[1140]

There remains a question of Wolseley's intent. 'As a soldier [Sir Garnet] did wrong in exhibiting the Gatling to the Ashantee envoys: these surprises should be reserved for the battle-field', Stanley argued, though he then recognised that, 'Sir Garnet thought that the Gatling…would frighten the king into peace'.[1141] Wolseley had not been *planning* to use the machine gun in battle, and was thus not worried about blunting the shock of novelty. The Gatling guns, it seems, were intended primarily *for* intimidating demonstrations, at least once the mechanical problems were encountered at the first test shoot.

[1137] Dooner, *Jottings En Route*, p. 40.
[1138] Percy P. Luxmore, 'Ashantee: Extracts from the Journal of a Naval Officer Addressed to His Wife,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 115, no. 702 (Apr. 1874) pp. 521-2.
[1139] Henty, *The March to Coomassie*, p. 321.
[1140] Henty, *By Sheer Pluck,* p. 134.
[1141] Reade, *Ashantee Campaign*, p. 289.

Thus, when the king soon after sent a second group of Ashanti envoys, 'chiefly with the object of seeing the Gatling gun [having] not believe[d] the report of his first envoys', they were unable to see it because it had been left behind at the Prah camp, considered too heavy and unreliable.[1142]

Some commentators believed that the demonstration had achieved the desired influence on the King's opinion. The editor of *The Spectator* put forward that:

> the effect of the Snider, the terrible power of the Gatling guns, had all been carefully reported to the King, and that inexplicable awe of the white man which falls on all savage races alike, on King Theodore – as brave a man as ever lived – as on Atahualpa, had fallen also on Kaffee KalKallee.[1143]

Stanley put his own words into the King's mouth with the claim that, 'the reputation of the Gatling is now spread throughout Ashantee….The effect of this, combined with many other things, has been to induce the king and his council to deliberate and reflect on the possibility of peace.'[1144] His analysis was quoted in the American *Army and Navy Journal* as well, with the comment that the anonymous author was, 'not surprised that the Ashantees were awe-struck before the power of the Gatling gun. It is easy to understand that it is a weapon which is specially adapted to terrify a barbarous or semi-civilized foe.'[1145]

In the description accompanying an image of the British artillery park, the *Illustrated London News* editor claimed that the Gatlings, 'were only seen by the messengers of the King of Ashantee at Prah-su, but the sight of them was enough to make them return to King Koffee Kalkallee, with such a report as frightened him into submission'.[1146] Such claims are difficult to understand, even from a jingoist position. It took several serious losses on the north side of the

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[1142] Maurice, *The Ashantee War*, p. 266; Brackenbury, *The Ashanti War, A Narrative*, 2:56.
[1143] *The Spectator,* 21 Feb. 1874, p. 9.
[1144] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala*, p. 148.
[1145] *Army and Navy Journal and Gazette of the Regular and Volunteer Forces*, 7 Mar. 1874.
[1146] 'The Ashantee War', *Illustrated London News*, 28 Feb. 1874, p. 194.

Prah and the destruction of his capital for the Ashanti King to consider surrender. Yet, British commentators were keen, with very little evidence, to insert a crippling fear of novel military technology into their interpretations of the Ashanti reception of the Gatling demonstration. This tendency was further evident in the contrasting narratives of a scene that took place the night of the test shoot.

Interpretations of the Ashanti Envoy's Suicide

After the Gatling demonstration, the envoys spent the night in the British camp, under guard but still armed. At about one in the morning, the sound of a gunshot roused most of the army and it was quickly discovered that one of the envoys had committed suicide by placing his own rifle under his chin and pressing the trigger with his toe. On those facts, absolutely everyone agreed. As for the unfortunate man's reasons, however, there was much disagreement among British commentators. It was perhaps understandable, but also indicative of the British perception of the African mind, that many drew a link between the suicide and the Gatling demonstration of the day before.

Wolseley, in fact, made no such link. He recorded in his diary that, after initial inquiries, the dead man's 'brother who is with the party and the head men say he has been brooding over his position & believed we meant to kill him, so they all say that he did it on purpose'.[1147] Wolseley repeated this explanation verbatim in his 1903 memoir, in which the Gatling shoot and the suicide appear in the same paragraph but with no stated connection.[1148] Luxmore described the suicide, but made no mention of the Gatling or any other potential reason for it.[1149]

[1147] Wolseley Journal, TNA, WO 147/3, 5 January 1874, in Beckett, *Wolseley and Ashanti,* p. 326.
[1148] Wolseley, *Soldier's Life*, 2:320.
[1149] Luxmore, *Ashantee: Extracts from the Journal of a Naval Officer*, p. 522.

A large proportion of the military commentators, however, drew a direct causal link between the Gatling demonstration and the Ashanti man's suicide. Private Gilham of the Rifle Brigade described the envoys being shown, 'one or two experiments with the Gatling gun, at which they were greatly astonished, and soon afterwards one of them shot himself'.[1150] A sergeant in the Rifle Brigade sent a letter to his brother, which was then published in *The Times*. He was not present for the firing, but heard down the line that Wolseley, 'told this chief [the envoy] that he wanted King Coffee himself, or he would give him a taste of that instrument of torture, which so frightened the chief that he went away and shot himself. Such is the version that has reached us'.[1151] 'Blue Jacket', a sailor interviewed by the *Daily News* while convalescing from dysentery in a naval hospital at Haslar, had been present and claimed that, 'either the noise of that gun or the sight of us was too much for one of the ambassadors, for that same night he shot himself dead in his tent'.[1152] Dooner agreed that, 'the general idea is, that he was so frightened at the performance of the Gatling, that he thought the best thing was to kill himself at once'.[1153]

In his biography of Wolseley, Low again focused his interpretation on the Ashantis' supposed hidden emotions. 'Though they looked on with well-bred imperturbability, [the gun] created a powerful effect on their minds, for during the night…one of them shot himself'.[1154] Brackenbury made a similar contrast. During the demonstration, he claimed, 'the well-bred native envoys looked coolly on and seemed but little surprised. But the view of the Gatling was destined yet to bear fruit.' After the suicide, he continued, 'it appeared that they

[1150] George Gilham, 'With Wolseley in Ashanti,' in *Told from the Ranks,* p. 80.
[1151] 'The March Through the Bush', *The Times*, 21 Feb. 1874, p. 10.
[1152] 'A Blue Jacket's Campaign in Ashantee', *Daily News,* 25 Mar. 1874, p. 3.
[1153] Dooner, *Jottings En Route*, p. 40.
[1154] Charles Rathbone Low, *A Memoir of Lieutenant-General Sir Garnet J. Wolseley*, Vol. 2 (London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1878) p. 143.

had all been more or less surprised and astonished by the firing of the Gatling; and that this man, being of rather a cowardly nature, had determined to destroy himself'.[1155] The conclusions asserted by these soldiers involved the assumption of fear, but in fact only an abstract link between the Gatling and the suicide. The implication was that the demonstration had simply driven the man mad.

The press correspondents largely made the more direct argument that the envoy had committed suicide out of fear of the machine gun; that modern British technology had scared him to death. *The Times* reported that, 'the moral effect produced by the machine gun was such as to impel one of King Coffee's envoys to blow his brains out, after seeing it fired'.[1156] *The Lancet* correspondent at Cape Coast Castle claimed on good authority that, 'one of the ambassadors (a general) was so much terrified at seeing a Gatling gun go off, and witnessing its effects, that he committed suicide some hours afterward'.[1157] The envoy was not a general. In his first report to the *ILN*, Melton Prior did not attribute the suicide to anything in particular, mentioning only that the envoy had shot himself under the chin.[1158] Yet, in a later despatch, he altered the explanation to focus on the, 'Gatling battery gun, which frightened them so much that one of them went mad, and shot himself in the night'.[1159]

Reade made a vague reference to the notion that differing narratives had been simultaneously circulating through the British force. 'Some say it was pure fright at the Gatling', he reported, 'others, that he had said something treasonable which his companions intended to report against him to the

[1155] Brackenbury, *The Ashanti War, A Narrative*, 2:44-5.
[1156] 'The Artillery In Ashantee', *The Times*, 13 Mar. 1874, p. 5.
[1157] 'The Ashantee War (From our own Correspondent)', *The Lancet,* Vol. 103, no. 2632 (7 Feb. 1874) p. 217.
[1158] 'The Ashantee War', *Illustrated London News*, 7 Feb. 1874, p. 119.
[1159] 'The Ashantee War', *Illustrated London News*, 14 Feb. 1874, p. 143.

king'.[1160] Boyle stated in the *Daily Telegraph* that, 'in regard to the cause of death there are many reports'.[1161] The correspondent originally believed that the suicide had been a result of fear. Ten days later, however, the missionary Mr. Kuhne arrived in camp, having been released from his captivity in Coomassie. Boyle reported that Kuhne had explained to him, 'that this envoy shot himself, not for fear of the Gatling gun, but because he had used incautious words which would, he knew, cost him his head on returning'.[1162] Khune had been acting as a translator during his captivity and was present when the party of envoys returned with Wolseley's letter and the unhappy news. Evidently, the envoy had suggested to a British officer that the King would kill any white messengers sent to Coomassie and knew that his impolitic remark would be punished.[1163] Stanley reported an identical story to Kuhne's, having also interviewed the missionary.[1164] The idea that the envoy had feared punishment for having spoken out of turn was the most measured and realistic explanation among the varying British reports. There were, yet, several different versions.

In the *Daily News,* Maurice claimed that the man, 'had been so frightened by the Gatling that he had said that if white men had those weapons resistance was useless. The other envoys said they would report him to the King of Ashanti, and the fear of death by torture made him kill himself.'[1165] Henty began with the story that the sight of the Gatling had made the envoy believe that he and the others were to be ritually killed by the British. Then, within in the same article, he explained that this version, 'was afterwards found to have been wholly untrue'. The man had, he continued, stated that the

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[1160] Reade, *Ashantee Campaign*, p. 283.
[1161] Boyle, *Fanteeland to Coomassie*, pp. 248-50.
[1162] Ibid., p. 274.
[1163] Friedrich Ramseyer and Johannes Kuhne, *Four Years in Ashantee* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1875) p. 262.
[1164] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala*, p. 147.
[1165] Maurice, *The Ashantee War,* p. 248.

machine gun would make it impossible to resist the British advance. The head ambassador then, 'said that he should report [that] speech to the king. The man, to escape the death by lingering torture which he knew would be the result, committed suicide'.[1166] Maurice and Henty thus presented a narrative in which the man died, not directly from his fear of the Gatling, but still as the result of his disgrace at having *revealed* his fear of the Gatling.

Since all of these interpretations were present in the British public sphere and had their effects on British imperial culture, the issue of the 'correct' version may be moot. While it would only have been read by military officers, Buller's intelligence report agreed most closely with Kuhne's, and thus with Maurice and Henty. Buller conducted interviews with the surviving Ashanti delegates and a Fante carrier who had overheard a private conversation between them. It appeared, he concluded:

> that the man who shot himself on the night of the 4th, was frightened by the Gatling practice, and, having told his comrades that he thought it would be impossible to fight men with such weapons, was by them to be reported to the King for cowardice. Through fear of the consequences he committed suicide.[1167]

The idea that the Gatling had more or less scared the Ashanti envoy to death was nonetheless persuasive and pervasive in British public discourse, perhaps because it appealed so directly to the desire and tendency to believe that novel military technology had made Africa much easier to grapple with.

5.6 Conclusions

The British forces in Abyssinia and Ashanti went to considerable effort to dazzle local populations with the spectacle of modern technology. With these staged performances, they hoped to engender reverence among their allies and morale-breaking bewilderment among their enemies. Such motivations tinted

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[1166] Henty, *The March to Coomassie*, pp. 321-2.
[1167] TNA, WO 147/27 'Papers Relating to the Ashanti Invasion (Gold Coast) &c', Intelligence Department, Horse Guards, War Office, 8th January 1874, p. 122.

the filter through which British observers interpreted and selectively represented the African responses. The resulting vision of the African mind presented in the press was, itself, a sort of imperialist performance. The presupposition that displays of novel military technology would overawe Africans was central to the developing imperial ideal, and vital to the reimagining of Africa as a colonial space. Colonial officials would seek to demonstrate the empire's power through exhibitive machine gun firings for a long time, as seen in the 1920-21 Nyala rising in Southern Darfur.[1168] In Britain, at least, the Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions were seen to provide solid proof that the Army could deploy 'humbug' in the field.

[1168] Chris Vaughan, '"Demonstrating the Machine Guns": Rebellion, Violence and State Formation in Early Colonial Darfur', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History,* Vol. 42, no. 2 (2014), p. 295, 297, 299, 302.

Chapter 6: The 'Idea' of Africa and a Growing Culture of Confidence

Bayly recently argued that the solution to the problems of imperial expansion was sought, among other means, 'in the "civilized" pursuit of ordered, systematic, and "scientific" approaches. These were empires seeking to tame the frontiers of their new territories, and the frontiers of their imaginations too'.[1169] In practice, the taming of the imperial imagination was a long, inconsistent, and continuous process. The struggle to subdue both the real and imagined outer world was not merely a precursor or prerequisite to rapid imperial expansion, but, rather, comprised an integral part of imperialism itself. There were, nonetheless, moments of particular significance, or which were *given* particular significance.

The successes in Abyssinia and Ashanti were held up by the British as pivotal moments in the battle for, and against, the imagined Africa. The campaigns provided seeming proof that both the land and the people of the Dark Continent, indeed, the *idea* of Africa in the British imagination, could be bested. Moreover, these conflicts took place in the midst of particular intellectual currents on the interpretation of race, and precipitated a reassessment of the nature of racial dominance. The conquest of the idea of Africa was intertwined with the development of a new sense of racial superiority.

The medical and military successes in Africa were so at odds with the dire popular expectations that the public sphere tended to exaggerate the importance of these victories to the point that it almost appeared as if the hardest work had already been accomplished, that of breaking through. The

[1169] Martin J. Bayly, *Imagining Afghanistan: British Foreign Policy and the Afghan Polity, 1808-1878* (PhD in International Relations, Department of War Studies, King's College London, 2013) p. 231.

conquest of Africa had not quite yet begun in earnest, but the conceptual door was seen to have swung open.

6.1 Minimisation of the Land

A host of advances in medical science had been achieved from the 1840s to the 1860s, giving Europeans a much better chance in the tropics. The most significant by far was quinine, which could, by 1868, be acquired in consistent quality and sufficient quantity to serve as a daily prophylactic for entire armies.[1170] The morbidity rates of paroxysmal fevers, a diagnosis encompassing both yellow fever and malaria, dropped by 90 per cent in the British West Indies over these two decades; the death rates of those infected had fallen precipitously as well. British India experienced similar improvements to European health. Mortality caused by intestinal disease had also plummeted through a combination of improvements to diet, sanitation standards, and medical treatments, as well as a decline in certain dangerous treatments that in earlier decades had exacerbated such illness.[1171] Missionary societies and Colonial Office officials benefited from these improvements, and the trend was well understood in those circles by the end of the 1860s. Military death rates also underwent what Curtin termed a, 'spectacular decline'.[1172]

Arnold has challenged Headrick's tendency to, 'over-estimate the importance of medicine in general and quinine in particular as a weapon in the armoury of nineteenth-century empire'. Some medical historians, he points out, place the turning point in tropical medicine in the 1940s, not the 1850s.[1173] The focus of this chapter is on the cultural perception of disease, rather than the

[1170] William Beinart and Lotte Hughes, *Environment and Empire*, ed. Roger Louis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) p. 185.
[1171] Philip D. Curtin, *Death by Migration: Europe's Encounter with the Tropical World in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989) p. 62.
[1172] Curtin, *Disease and Empire: The Health of European Troops in the Conquest of Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) p. ix.
[1173] David Arnold, 'Introduction,' in *Imperial Medicine and Indigenous Societies*, ed. David Arnold (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988) p. 10.

numerical trends. It will, in fact, be argued that the stories of the Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions were emplotted in ways that exaggerated the apparent success over disease. Nonetheless, the sense of confidence that those stories engendered in the British imperial mind was itself a weapon in the armoury of nineteenth-century empire.

Apropos, despite the 'spectacular decline' in tropical disease, the medical improvements were not well understood by the general population. The British popular mind at the time of Napier's expedition still saw Africa as the 'white man's grave'.[1174] Vaughan claimed that, 'the representation of Africa as a place of disease, danger and death was one which survived the reductions in European mortality effected by sanitarian policies of the mid-century, and later advances in curative medicine'.[1175] Thus, the surge in imperial confidence connected to the Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions, which this chapter will explore, comprised only part of a long-term and contested dynamic.

In Wolseley's much-publicised first meeting with the chiefs of the allied Gold Coast nations, the assembly declared through their interpreter that, 'when your honour was appointed to come, your honour did not refuse, but came to our help, though you knew that this place was deadly to Europeans! For this we thank your honour.'[1176] The belief in a hostile climate in the region was also dominant among British commentators, as was thoroughly explored in Chapter 3. At his self-congratulatory speech at the Mansion House, Wolseley, '[felt] bound to remind [the audience] that at no previous period of our military history have British troops been called upon to vindicate their country's honour in so

[1174] Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780-1850* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964) p. 362.
[1175] Megan Vaughan, *Curing their Ills: Colonial Power and African Illness* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991) p. 38.
[1176] Viscount Garnet Wolseley, *The Life of King Koffee; Or, Sir Garnet Wolseley, the Ashantees and the Fantees, their Mode of Warfare; Fighting in the Bush!* (London: J. J. Collett, 1873) p. 2.

pestilential a climate'.[1177] Butler optimistically reasoned that, 'it was possible for a hardy English constitution to brave this climate of the forest for a few months [though] many; many, doubtless, would fall even in these few months'.[1178]

Moreover, the notion of a deadly African environment was intertwined with that of the dark and unknown interior. As late as 1872, the epidemiologist Sir William Farr announced in his presidential address before Britain's Statistical Society that, 'of Africa, statistics knows little or nothing *certain*…as yet all Africa is for science a great desert'.[1179] The sense of mystery added to the perception of danger and *The Lancet* stressed that, 'the march beyond the Prah must be to some extent "a leap in the dark"'.[1180] Once British soldiers marched into these unknown places, the health and medical results from the field were bound to be subjects of eager interest in Britain. In light of the troubling professional medical predictions and the positively dire public interpretations of medical opinion, the actual results from Africa turned out to be surprisingly encouraging.

6.1.1 Health in Abyssinia

During the entire expedition to East Africa, the British contingent suffered only 35 (1.3 per cent) deaths from all causes and 333 (12 per cent) cases of serious wound or illness. Over the nine-month deployment, the total admissions to hospital for all reasons amounted to 1,332. This could, at most, have accounted for 49 per cent of the British force if no individuals were admitted multiple times.[1181] The health of the white troops of the Indian army received the

[1177] Wolseley's Speech at the Mansion House**,** 31 March 1874, *The Times,* 1 April 1874, in Ian F. W. Beckett, ed., *Wolseley and Ashanti: The Asante War Journal and Correspondence of Major General Sir Garnet Wolseley 1873-1874* (Stroud, Gloucestershire, UK: The History Press for the Army Records Society, 2009) p. 417.
[1178] W. F. Butler, *Akim-Foo: The History of a Failure*, 3rd ed. (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low, & Searle, 1875) pp. 49-50.
[1179] Sir William Farr, 'The President's Inaugural Address, Session 1872-73', *Journal of the Statistical Society of London,* Vol. 35, no. 4 (Dec. 1872) p. 425.
[1180] 'The Ashantee War', *The Lancet*, Vol. 102, no. 2625 (20 Dec. 1873) p. 885.
[1181] D. G. Chandler, 'The Expedition to Abyssinia 1867-8,' in *Victorian Military Campaigns*, ed. Brian Bond (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1967) p. 153.

bulk of the attention in Britain. This reflected the usual ethnocentrism of the press, but also the widespread assumption that the sepoys had been in less danger to begin with. Yet, the fears of malarial and tsetse fly outbreaks never truly materialised. The assistant surgeon to the Rocket Brigade reported that his unit encountered very little disease while in Abyssinia and that 'goitre' had been the most common ailment demanding his attention.[1182] In his final report to the Medical Department, Dr. Currie put forward the unexpected conclusion, 'that Abyssinia was a very healthy country for Europeans, and this favourable opinion was formed, notwithstanding the hardships of making long and fatiguing marches, exposure to cold, rain, and sleet, and the habitual use of coarse and indigestible food'.[1183]

The Medical Department returns indicated that the British force was in good health for an army on active campaign. More importantly, the fact that these hard numbers were such a surprise against expectations led journalists and commentators to further exaggerate their significance. Tweedie claimed in *Blackwood's* that the climate was, 'not only not unwholesome, but positively most agreeable; and that too while we are living in tents which at no season of the year in India would be acceptable as sufficient shelter from the weather'. The comparison was significant. Though not as bad as the West Indies or West Africa, India was still famous as a dangerous posting, be it civil, military, or missionary. In suggesting that the climate of East Africa was less onerous than that of India, he implied that the British army was *already* well capable of operating there. 'Nothing has been seen or heard of', Tweedie continued, 'excepting in some English newspapers, of those anomalous diseases which we

[1182] TNA, ADM 101/180, 'Journal of the Royal Naval Rocket Battery, Abyssinia 1868'. 25 Jan. 1868 – 1 Jun. 1868, p. 8 *verso.*
[1183] Trevenen J. Holland and Henry Hozier, *The Expedition to Abyssinia Compiled by Order of the Secretary of State for War* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO), 1870) 2:311.

were told to make up our minds for', and thus 'the dangers and difficulties which had been predicted for us happily turned out to be myths'. In an enormous downplaying of perhaps the most serious difficulty to face the campaign, he asserted that, 'water has everywhere in Abyssinia itself, proved sweet and abundant'.[1184] What supply there was had required considerable feats of engineering, and proved insufficient for the large number of lost pack animals.[1185]

'This climate must certainly be an extraordinarily healthy one', Henty reported, 'for, in spite of hardship and privation, or wet, exposure, bad water, and want of stimulants, the health of the troops has been unexceptionally good'.[1186] The men had reason to be relieved, but there was certainly an element of rose-coloured hindsight in their accounts and a tendency toward retroactive minimisation of the threat posed by the African landscape. William Thomas Blanford, the expedition geologist and zoologist, found that, 'the climate during the greater part of the time was perfect', and claimed that he 'only regretted being obliged to return to a more civilized country'.[1187] Scott similarly wrote to his mother from outside Magdala that, 'the climate here nobody can complain against; it is simply perfection'.[1188]

Markham, the expedition geographer and the secretary to the RGS, offered a particularly positive description of Abyssinian travel to *Macmillan's Magazine:*

[1184] 'A Staff-Officer' [William Tweedie], 'Letters from a Staff-Officer with the Abyssinian Expedition. - Part II,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 103, no. 632 (Jun. 1868) pp. 730-1, 737.
[1185] E. F. Chapman, 'The Abyssinian Expedition,' *Minutes of Proceedings of the Royal Artillery Institution* VI (1870) pp. 167-8.
[1186] G. A. Henty, *The March to Magdala* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1868) p. 385.
[1187] W. T. Blanford, *Observations on the Geology and Zoology of Abyssinia, made during the Progress of the British Expedition to that Country in 1867-68* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1870) pp. 103, 138.
[1188] 'A Staff Officer' [Lieut. W. W. Scott], *Letters from Abyssinia during the Campaign of 1868* ([n. pub.]: [n.p.], [1868?]) p. 64.

> There is probably no mountain range in the world that is traversed by so easy a natural pass as the Abyssinian Alps; and the difficulties of crossing these mountains and reaching the table, which has been so much dealt upon by "Nobody," that self-complacent oracle of the *Times*, are purely imaginary.[1189]

That his comments might have been intended to encourage future travellers is suggested by his repeated descriptions of the diverse and abundant game locally available for sportsmen.[1190] In his subsequent book, published after his safe return to London, Markham summarised the campaign in terms so light-hearted they could only have come in hindsight:

> When the Commander-in-chief landed, there remained to organize a transport train, and to march over a fine country, yielding corn, grass, wood, cattle, and means of transport, with a friendly population and no enemy in the field, in one of the most healthy climates in the world, either to Magdala or to some point on Theodore's line of march.[1191]

In his own book account, Shepherd of the *Times of India* deftly backdated the medical success of the Abyssinian campaign, stating that, 'in such a magnificent climate as that of the Abyssinian highlands, the health of the troops could hardly have been otherwise than excellent'.[1192] Shepherd's wording manoeuvred around the fact that few had been so confident ahead of time.

In his annual sanitary report, Sergeant Stewart, doctor to the 3rd Dragoon Guards, expressed his belief in the hitherto unbelievable conclusion, 'that troops stationed on the table land of Abyssinia during the dry season could - if fairly housed or furnished with good and commodious tents, good food and water, appropriate clothing and not too hard work – be maintained at a high standard of health'.[1193] As such assertions, themselves representing somewhat the extreme, were disseminated through rumour and the press back in Britain, they

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[1189] Clements R. Markham, 'The Abyssinian Expedition,' *Macmillan's Magazine* 17 (Nov. 1867-Apr. 1868) p. 141.
[1190] Ibid., p. 143.
[1191] Clements R. Markham, *A History of the Abyssinian Expedition* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1869) p. 204.
[1192] A. F. Shepherd, *The Campaign in Abyssinia* (Bombay: Times of India Office, 1868) p. 155.
[1193] N. H. Stewart, TNA, WO 334/148, 'Annual Sanitary Report for the 3rd Dragoon Guards', Abyssinia, 1 Jan. 1868 – 30 May 1868, p. 12.

shifted the popular image of the African climate more quickly than had the preceding decade of medical improvements that underlay them. It had been accepted fact, common sense, that East Africa was a mire of malaria and other mysterious dangers.[1194] If something so well established could be so quickly (seemingly) debunked, then the validity of the larger idea of 'deadly Africa' could itself come under suspicion. After all, asked *The Spectator*, 'Since when has Europe marched a scientifically organized army into an unknown mountain region in the tropics?'[1195] The experience planted the seed of a belief in the British imagination that things could be taken further, and one of a tendency to minimise the future risk of disease.

When the Ashanti campaign hit British headlines several years later, Abyssinia provided a positive example to be pointed to. Henty recalled that the announcement, 'was followed by the appearance of a number of letters in the papers by gentlemen who knew, or believed they knew, all about the coast; and a host of prophecies of evil, similar to whose which preceded the expedition to Abyssinia, were freely indulged in'.[1196] Henty's readers would have known what came of those Abyssinian prophecies, especially if they had read his book. His comparison implied that any concerns expressed of the Gold Coast climate were also sure to prove false, and cautious commentators exposed as paranoid doomsayers. After noting the, 'very serious risk of death by marching through the most unhealthy country in the world', a writer for the *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle etc* also took some solace in the Abyssinian example. 'There are plenty of stories current as to the deadly creatures which infest the country', he continued, 'but judging from our Abyssinian experience they are

[1194] Malaria was, and still is, a serious problem along the coast. It was the expected severity and distribution of disease that contrasted sharply with the 1868 expedition's experience.
[1195] 'Sir Robert Napier.' *The Spectator,* 18 Apr. 1868, p. 4.
[1196] G. A. Henty, *The March to Coomassie*, 2nd ed. (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1874) p. 16.

nearly sure to be exaggerated'.[1197] *The Spectator,* always in favour of a good campaign, showed even greater confidence in the comparison and greater contempt for the African landscape:

> No doubt it will be said that the thing cannot be done…that Europeans cannot struggle successfully with an African climate and African miasmata; and that we shall only bury treasure and brave men in the Bush, without accomplishing our Quixotic purposes. The same sweeping assertions were made when Napier, creating a town on a desert shore, set out on his march to Magdala. He was to be starved, killed with fever and cholera, drowned in torrents, slain in ambuscades, eaten alive, he and his horses and cattle, by venomous flies…We know the result.[1198]

Hailed as a great experiment, the Abyssinian campaign had yielded positive data. For a myriad of reasons – genuine relief, vested interest, and cultural momentum – many in the British public sphere portrayed the result of that experiment as evidence of a new medical paradigm, applicable to, and predictive of, all future field tests.

6.1.2 Health in Ashanti

That said, Ashanti was, and was seen to be, a very different case. The 1874 campaign had been the subject of even more dire expectations than had the 1868 one. Moreover, the initial results from the Gold Coast theatre were not quite so encouraging. Dr. Anthony Home, the Principal Medical Officer for the expedition, was encouraged by the relatively good health of the British officers in Wolseley's first expedition party. He submitted his prediction, 'as to the *probable* amount and kind of sickness in a picked European force…operating in this country *for six weeks or two months*', and anticipated that such an army would suffer thirty to forty per cent ineffectiveness from sickness alone, excluding battle casualties.[1199] Those figures, while significant, were seen to be optimistic for the Gold Coast. Ten weeks later, Home saw the incoming

[1197] 'The Ashantee War', *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle etc*, 3 Sep. 1873.
[1198] *The Spectator,* 23 Aug. 1873, p. 6.
[1199] TNA, WO 33/26, 'Confidential Report', Correspondence dealing with the problems of Ashanti, [1874?] p. 2.

sickness figures and worried that, 'the amount of sickness amongst the Officers of the Expeditionary Force has been excessive, unlooked for, and such that all calculations, based on former statements, now seem to be erroneous, and must be revised in the light of actual experience'.[1200] Dr. Home was a Victoria Cross recipient who had served as the surgeon of Wolseley's regiment in the Crimea.[1201] He was well acquainted with military disease and was hardly squeamish.

Of the 2,587 men in the European contingent, 1,018 (43 per cent) had to be invalided out by the end of the conflict. The original Wolseley Ring suffered a 71 per cent sickness rate, with 31 of the officers invalided.[1202] Again, the health of the European troops was far bigger news in Britain than that of the West Indian soldiers. Sickness rates were, thus, quite high during the Ashanti campaign, even by tropical standards. The *death rates* due to illness, however, were successfully kept low. Disease killed 40 of the British contingent, 1.5 per cent of its total strength. The West Indian Regiments, in contrast to expectations, lost 34 men to disease, 2.7 per cent of their original number.[1203] 'No deaths occurred beyond the Prah', Surgeon-Major Albert Gore noted in his medical report on the expedition, 'but much sickness'.[1204]

Mortality was, understandably, the greatest concern to the British public and military, rather than illness in itself. Death was also impossible to conceal, while fevers and intestinal disarray could be glossed over in letters home and even in reports to the War Office. Thus, despite the high rate of sickness,

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[1200] Ibid.
[1201] Beckett, *Wolseley and Ashanti,* p. 40.
[1202] Ian F. W. Beckett, 'Manipulating the "Modern Curse of Armies": Wolseley, the Press, and the Ashanti War, 1873-1874,' in *Soldiers and Settlers in Africa, 1850-1918*, ed. Stephen M. Miller (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 2009) p. 224; Alan Lloyd, *The Drums of Kumasi: The Story of the Ashanti Wars* (London: Longmans Green and Co., 1964) p. 150.
[1203] Beckett, *Wolseley and Ashanti,* p. 107; John Keegan, 'The Ashanti Campaign 1873-4,' in *Victorian Military Campaigns*, ed. Brian Bond (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1967) pp. 194-5.
[1204] Surgeon-Major Albert Gore, *A Contribution to the Medical History of our West African Campaigns* (London: Baillière, Tindall and Cox, 1876) p. 61.

reports from the field all seemed to point to the conclusion that the Gold Coast was much less dangerous than had been feared. *The Lancet* described the early skirmishes and raids as having, 'given the medical service something in the way of an experiment as to the amount of sickness and inefficiency they may expect among troops operating in the field, and the doctors are said to be satisfied with the results'.[1205]

Consequently, the normative medical perspective continued to shift toward a lighter view of the Gold Coast climate. In a report to the Sanitary Branch of the Army Medical Department, Muir argued that, 'there is an idea in the minds of many people that the climate of the Coast is of the same deadly character all the year round. This is a mistake…in the dry and healthy season these attacks [of fever] are not only less common but less grave'.[1206] Windows of time had thus opened in which Europeans could ostensibly operate in the region. There was also a greater confidence than ever in the efficacy of medical treatments. Maurice argued that, in light of experience, there could, 'now be no question in anyone's mind who has seen the whole course of experience here, that quinine has been a most important and powerful "prophylactic," as it is called – has, that is to say, helped to ward off fever'.[1207] 'If it were not for quinine and tea', Dooner wrote optimistically to his wife, 'I think the white man would have very little chance of surviving the West African climate'.[1208] Gore summarised his extensive, semi-official, medical summary of the expedition as:

> A large amount of sickness, increasing rapidity with an insignificant mortality – a comparatively few grave cases of remittent fever and haemorrhagic dysentery – many slight wounds, and a few severe ones –

[1205] 'The Health of our Troops on the Gold Coast', *The Lancet*, Vol. 102, no. 2624 (13 Dec. 1873) p. 852.
[1206] W. M. Muir, TNA, MT 23/38, 'Ashanti Expedition. Arrangements for Hospital Ship Conveyance of Troops, Sick & Stores', Army Medical Department, Sanitary Branch, 11 Oct. 1873, p. 1 *verso.*
[1207] 'Daily News' Special Correspondent (Sir John Frederick Maurice), *The Ashantee War: A Popular Narrative* (London: Henry S. King & Co., 1874) p. 303.
[1208] W. T. Dooner, *Jottings En Route to Coomassie* (London: W. Mitchell & Co., 1874) p. 41.

> a great tendency to debility, followed in some instances by speedy recovery, were, in a few words, the medical and surgical teachings of the Expedition.[1209]

That was a far cry from the teachings of the disastrous 1863-4 war. On the whole, *The Lancet* concluded, the results from Ashanti, 'sufficiently indicate that disease, death, and disaster do not necessarily track the footsteps of the European in the bush. It has shown what Englishmen can do in this climate'.[1210]

6.1.3 Good News from Ashanti

Wolseley, in particular, had much to say in derision of the threat that Africa posed to European health. In his letters to London, he repeatedly described the climate in positive terms. Deeply freighted with vested interest, his depiction was intended to encourage and impress War Office officials in anticipation of his planned request for European battalions. 'Each day has shown me that the climate is not, at this and a later season, by any means so injurious to European health as I had imagined', he wrote to Cardwell on 24 October, 'The health of my officers has been excellent: one or two had slight attacks of fever, but none have been seriously ill'.[1211] By 15 November, twenty-nine of Wolseley's sixty-four officers had been hospitalised, seven had been invalided (including both of his ADC's), one had died of dysentery, and the Wolseley himself was confined to bed and unintelligible with fever.[1212] The commanding officer was downplaying the sickness rates in his correspondence. He put forward the dubious appraisal that, 'after a night without rest, a long and fatiguing day's march can be made by Europeans in this climate, without as

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[1209] Gore, *A Contribution to the Medical History of our West African Campaigns*, p. 138.
[1210] 'The Ashantee War', *The Lancet*, Vol. 102, no. 2621 (22 Sep. 1873) p. 745.
[1211] Wolseley to Cardwell, 24 October 1873, Cape Coast Castle, TNA, WO33/26; WO147/27, in Beckett, *Wolseley and Ashanti,* p. 165.
[1212] Ibid., p. 192.

much evil effect from sun and fatigue, as I have often known follow a march of less duration under less fatiguing conditions, on a summer's day in England'.[1213]

In a letter to Cambridge, Wolseley claimed to have, 'set to rest all dread regarding the use of English soldiers for a short spell in this country'. Before the war, Sir A. Clarke had asserted that English soldiers could not march in Africa and would have to be carried. As only one point in Wolseley's several-point refutation of Clarke, he countered that, 'never was there a wilder statement made by an unpractical man. An officer marched in here from Dunquah yesterday heavily laden with pistol, ammunition, water bottle and field glass, a distance of 20 miles.' The marines, he continued, did so, 'with as great regularity as they would at Aldershot'.[1214] Wolseley made similar comparisons between the Gold Coast and British climate settings throughout his correspondence. He sought, above all, to convince the War and Colonial Offices to send him the European battalions that he felt he would need to bring his little war to the public's attention. Wolseley was always one to use popular opinion to support his position, so he ensured that his trivialisations of the African climate made it to the newsstands as well.[1215]

With the medical reports and Wolseley's prodding, the imagined Africa changed very quickly among the British public. In an October article describing military preparations, *The Lancet* took the measured perspective that, 'if half the gloomy anticipations and prophecies under which the expedition has been undertaken be realised, it will prove to be the most disastrous campaign on record. But the pendulum of public opinion swings easily from one extreme to its

[1213] Wolseley to Cardwell, 24 October 1873, Cape Coast Castle, TNA, WO33/26; WO147/27, in Ibid., pp. 165-6.
[1214] Wolseley to Cambridge, 30 October 1873, Government House, Cape Coast Castle, Cambridge MSS, RA VIC/ADD E/I/7222, in Ibid., pp. 185-6.
[1215] Wolseley, *The Life of King Koffee*.

opposite'.[1216] A mere two months later, the journal reported that, 'public opinion appears now to have swung to the opposite extreme in regard to the danger to health of this undertaking. From declaring that everybody was to die or be invalided, it is now prophesied that the loss in these respects will be utterly insignificant.'[1217]

Henty and some of his fellow journalists had an influence on the tonal shift. 'Nothing is more difficult to believe', he reported with exaggerated enthusiasm, 'that the lovely, bright, bustling Sierra Leone "is the white man's grave"'.[1218] Parroting Wolseley (for neither the first nor last time), Henty claimed that the campaign had shown, 'that British soldiers can not only fight in the bush, but that they can make a march under a tropical sun, which would, under similar circumstances, be considered a hard day's work in England'.[1219] 'If the troops were properly cared for and looked after', he extended the comparison, 'the Gold Coast presented little more danger and inconvenience than Dartmoor or Salisbury; and that it was, in short, a sort of earthly paradise'.[1220] Henty went so far as to suggest that the march to Kumase, 'resembled a great picnic rather than a military expedition'.[1221] In a particularly fanciful passage toward the end of his book, the *Standard* special correspondent drew another comparison between the climate of the African bush and that of the British Isles:

> Altogether, what with the thatched roofs, the mud walls, and the universal pig, if an Accra man were put down in an Irish village, far off the general line of traffic, and an inhabitant of that village dropped in Accra, save for the human population, neither would be conscious of any change, except that Paddy would wonder what had bewitched those creatures the pigs.[1222]

[1216] 'The Ashantee Expedition', *The Lancet,* Vol. 102, no. 2614 (4 Oct. 1873) p. 497.
[1217] 'The Health of our Troops on the Gold Coast', *The Lancet*, Vol. 102, no. 2624 (13 Dec. 1873) p. 852.
[1218] Henty, *The March to Coomassie*, p. 29.
[1219] Ibid., p. 114.
[1220] Ibid., p. 16.
[1221] Ibid., p. 18.
[1222] Ibid., p. 257.

Henty had previously told his readers that he found the domestic pigs and cows on the Coast to be quite misbehaved. His passage downplayed the severity of African nature and wildlife, only making mention of farm animals, and completely bypassed the issue of disease.

In a dynamic similar to that seen after Abyssinia, media focus on the medical victories stimulated a popular idea that long-term European residence in the Gold Coast would be possible, even easy, after all. ‘There is very little sickness’, Boyle reported to the *Telegraph* from Mansu, contradicting his readers’ expectations, ‘all experience leads me to believe that…Europeans could live in the African bush with scarcely more risk than in any other country of the Tropics’.[1223] Lord Carnarvon, who succeeded Lord Kimberley at the Colonial Office, claimed in the House of Lords that the mortality rate of soldiers in Ashanti, 23 per thousand, amounted to, ‘about the same as the death-rate in the metropolis, and lower than the death-rate in some English towns’.[1224] This comparison required vigorous massaging of the numbers. Carnarvon held the mortality rate from a two-month campaign up against that from an entire year in London (yet gave his figure in ‘per thousand’, rather than in ‘per thousand per year’). He also failed to recognise that Wolseley’s army represented a cohort of picked soldiers mostly in their twenties and early thirties, while London sheltered a population including infants, the elderly, and the chronically infirm.[1225]

6.1.4 A Path Already Travelled

‘So prevalent is the idea that the whole of Central Africa is either a sandy

[1223] Frederick Boyle, *Through Fanteeland to Coomassie: A Diary of the Ashantee Expedition* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1874) p. 159.
[1224] HL Deb 12 May 1874, vol. 219 col. 157.
[1225] W. Walton Claridge, *A History of the Gold Coast and Ashanti: From the Earliest Times to the Commencement of the Twentieth Century*, 2nd ed. (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., [1915] 1964) 2:164-6.

waste or a wilderness of jungle, that our troops themselves will scarcely be open to any other view until their own experience convinces them of the immense mistake.'[1226] The British explorer Henry Dufton had travelled through Abyssinia in 1862-3, and made the above prediction in his travel narrative, rushed to publication in 1867 on the surge of popular interest in the region. Dufton also forecast that the pleasant highland climate would so surprise the British government that they would reverse their anti-entanglement views in the wake of an expedition. Any military venture inland, he claimed, would presage outright annexation and colonisation in Central Africa.

'Anybody who has seen our line of march would have certainly said it was utterly impossible to take an army anywhere we have been', Scott claimed from Abyssinia, 'Such a line of country it certainly never has, and, probably, never will, fall to the lot of an army to cross again'.[1227] The military correspondent wrote those lines to draw attention to the immensity of the present achievement, in which he felt personal pride. Yet, to many observers, the very fact that a British army *had* successfully crossed into the African interior seemed to present the possibility that more would follow. The unprecedented now had a clear precedent. Collins has argued that 'simply projecting power as far as Peking, Kabul, Cairo, or deep into the interior of Abyssinia, or inland into west Africa, or into the heart of Chetshwayo's kingdom of Zulu warriors, would have seemed like victory in itself to many in Britain during the 1860s and 1870s'.[1228] The intense focus on pomp and display characteristic of the later empire can be understood in part as an attempt to claim victory from the often-ambiguous outcomes of small wars, a feat which in

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[1226] Henry Dufton, *Narrative of a Journey through Abyssinia in 1862-3; with an Appendix on "the Abyssinian Captives Question"* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1867) p. 330.
[1227] 'A Staff Officer' [Scott], *Letters from Abyssinia during the Campaign of 1868*, p. 102.
[1228] Bruce Collins, 'Defining Victory in Victorian Warfare, 1860-1882,' *The Journal of Military History* 77 (Jul. 2013) p. 929.

earlier periods could be achieved with the, 'basic requirement of reaching a distant and hitherto inaccessible objective'.[1229] Magdala and Kumase fit that bill nicely; Napier and Wolseley were champions of empire, at least in the public sphere, simply for having stepped foot in them (to say nothing of subsequently burning them down).

While investing Britain with a feeling of accomplishment, successful marches into the interior also added momentum to the already well-established myth of the healthy African interior. Charles Beke typified this ideal in his book on the plight of the Abyssinian captives:

> when the narrow belt of low land along the shores of the Indian Ocean…[is] passed, and *the eastern edge of the elevated tableland is attained, a climate is met with, which is not merely congenial to European constitutions, but is absolutely more healthy than that of most countries.*' (original emphasis).[1230]

Such pervasive hope that Europeans might find healthy climates in the inland regions of Africa existed alongside, and in tension with, a fear of the unknown Dark Continent. The more optimistic side of the equation rose in prominence on the back of the British military successes. Even after European explorers and empires had mapped most of landmass and failed to uncover it, as Curtin claimed, 'the myth of the healthy interior lived on into the twentieth century'.[1231] Parts of Africa were, certainly, healthier than others, but the myth was one of extremes. Notwithstanding the fact that malaria was more severe on the coast, the widespread hope that vast tracts of virtually disease-free land might exist a mere few hundred miles inland contrasted with reality.

If a zone where white people could thrive did indeed lie just beyond the outer strip, there was, after Abyssinia, more confidence than ever that the

[1229] Ibid.
[1230] Charles T. Beke, *The British Captives in Abyssinia*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman's, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1867) p. xiv.
[1231] Curtin, *The Image of Africa,* p. 353.

hurdle could be successfully crossed. The idea emerged in strength in discussions of the Ashanti war. A writer for *The Lancet* posited that, 'we know nothing of the climatic conditions of the interior of the country. It is quite possible that, as in the case of Abyssinia, the low-lying coast-line once passed, the main sources of malaria and the dangers to health will have been surmounted'.[1232] An article in the following issue made a similar claim and again introduced it with the link, 'as in the case of Abyssinia'.[1233]

In this way, each success added further momentum to the British sense of confidence vis-à-vis the climate. Reporting on the early skirmishes in the West Coast interior, *The Spectator* declared that, 'it now appears that the Marines do not suffer in the bush, but only on the coast, and only there probably from bad sanitary arrangements'.[1234] Boyle similarly blamed the coast for fevers while simultaneously insinuating that the climate was not the only cause: 'It is the coast line, the water, and recklessness that has given this quarter of the world such a deadly eminence'.[1235] *Harper's* asserted that, 'a singular contrast exists between the physical aspects and climate of the Gold Coast and those of the interior'.[1236] Success drove further expectation of success. Maurice felt able to claim that, 'the men were now in such high spirits that the terrors of the bush were no more'.[1237]

Curtin argued that, taken together, the West and East African expeditions were, 'hailed as final proof that European soldiers could now be sent safely to fight in any part of the world'.[1238] Many British commentators focused on the victories as manifest evidence of this point. In his medical treatise, Surgeon-

[1232] 'The Ashantee War', *The Lancet,* Vol. 102, no. 2608 (21 Aug. 1873) p. 268.
[1233] 'The Ashantee War', *The Lancet,* Vol. 102, no. 2609 (30 Aug. 1873) p. 307.
[1234] *The Spectator,* 6 Dec. 1873, p. 3.
[1235] Boyle, *Fanteeland to Coomassie,* p. 159.
[1236] 'Ashantee and the Ashantees', *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 48, no. 283 (Dec. 1873) p. 287.
[1237] Maurice, *The Ashantee War,* p. 329.
[1238] Curtin, *Disease and Empire,* pp. 72, 29-30.

Major Gore claimed that, of all the British wars in tropical settings, 'the Ashanti campaign was undoubtedly the most important, as being the only one where a successful attempt had been made to conquer with European troops a great African kingdom, hitherto deemed to be impregnable'.[1239] The *Medical Times and Gazette* considered it to be a 'fact the present campaign has conclusively established', that Britain was able to, '[send] troops to fight in any part of the known world without incurring exceptionally heavy loss from climate'.[1240]

As Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Forces, the Duke of Cambridge announced his congratulations and thanks to each victorious army. As Napier's force approached the base camp at Zoulla, a general order was distributed featuring a telegram from Cambridge lauding the lieutenant-general for having, 'taught us once more what is meant by an army that can go anywhere and do anything. From first to last all has been done well'.[1241] Years later, speaking at a House of Lords vote to grant an official thanks to Wolseley's expedition, Cambridge again focused on the idea that, 'our gallant General and his troops have proved to this country and the world that British troops can go anywhere if only we have reliance on the spirit of their officers'.[1242] Thus, the importance of the victories lay not just in what had been done, but also in what now *could* be done in future. Now that British troops had accomplished the 'impossible', it could be claimed, and perhaps truly believed, that anything was possible.

In his 1903 memoirs, Wolseley mocked the Ashanti reliance on their natural barricades: 'Accustomed to the bush, in which they could move about as they liked, it never seems to have occurred to the illogical mind of the

[1239] Gore, *A Contribution to the Medical History of our West African Campaigns*, p. v.
[1240] *Medical Times and Gazette*, Vol. 1 (18 Feb. 1874) p. 240, Quoted in Curtin, *Disease and Empire,* p. 72.
[1241] 'The Secretary of State for India to Sir Robert Napier, 27th April 1868', in *Accounts and Papers of the House of Commons,* Session 19 Nov. 1867 – 31 Jul. 1868, Vol. 43, p. 176.
[1242] *The Times*, 31 Mar. 1874, in TNA, WO 211/71, 'The Ashanti expedition of 1873-1874: news cuttings, correspondence and extracts from letters from Hart's son, Lieut. A. Fitzroy Hart'.

Ashantees that we could do so equally well if only we had the courage to face them.'[1243] He of course retroactively obfuscated the point it had not occurred to most *Britons* that a white army could operate in the bush as well as an African one. Once the conceptual (and believed by some to be literal) barrier had been passed, however, many British commentators would speak as if their victory over nature had been expected, predetermined, and assumed.

6.1.5 Tropical Medicine and the Culture of Confidence

On the development of the high imperial ideal, Bell wrote that:

> a Promethean confidence in the power of technology catalyzed and structured the debates over Greater Britain, leading to a fundamental recasting of imperial possibilities. Nature was no longer seen as the immutable, inscrutable foe that had confronted Burke so forcefully; it had been overcome, defeated, tamed.[1244]

The Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions were moments in the British understanding of the taming process, and, in particular, in the role that military technology could play within it. The fundamental idea that Europeans could successfully conquer the natural world of tropical climates, and that native populations could *not* do so, would form much of the conceptual and moral basis of the developing field of tropical medicine.

Arnold argued that, 'western medicine attained its greatest importance in imperial ideology and practice between 1880 and 1930, the period when European empires were at their most expansive and assertive'.[1245] As medicine became 'a hallmark of the racial pride and technological assurance that underpinned the 'new imperialism', so disease ceased to be so terrifying a threat and instead became part of the seeming proof of African and Asian backwardness. Ill health among non-Europeans thus, 'fostered Europeans'

[1243] Field-Marshal Viscount Wolseley, *The Story of a Soldier's Life* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903) 2:264.
[1244] Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860-1900* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007) p. 80.
[1245] Arnold, 'Introduction,' in *Imperial Medicine and Indigenous Societies,* p. 11.

growing sense of their innate racial and physical superiority'.[1246] Denoon claimed that the turn-of-the-century discipline of tropical medicine was, 'implicitly racist', as it was based on, 'an important link between tropical *disease* and tropical *people.* The former could be prevented if the latter were excluded.'[1247] Imperial ideology took it for granted that Africans were incapable of and, perhaps more importantly, disinclined to interrogate nature for her secrets. It followed that they were themselves among the objects of study for tropical medicine.[1248]

Topical medicine was largely a late-nineteenth-century phenomenon, with schools of the subject opening in London and Liverpool in 1899.[1249] Yet, some of the hallmarks of the field could be glimpsed in the aftermath of the Abyssinian and Ashanti campaigns. As discussed, a number of commentators had reacted to the relative medical successes with the conclusion that disease control might be a matter of intervention and sanitation, rather than one of strictly climate. *The Spectator* further reasoned that climate could be altered over time:

> And as to unhealthy climes, if Englishmen had been daunted by them, what now would be the British Empire? Cape Coast is not worse than Bombay and Hooghly a hundred years ago; barely worse than Hong Kong a few years since…Why, it turns out that until the other day, no attempt to take ordinary sanitary precautions was ever made on the Coast. We can only inhabit these countries with comparable immunity by making them habitable.[1250]

A belief that it was incumbent on one's own efforts to improve the climate of tropical regions required a certain level of confidence that it was ultimately

[1246] Ibid., p. 7, 8, 17.
[1247] Donald Denoon, 'Temperate Medicine and Settler Capitalism: On the Reception of Western Medical Ideas,' in *Disease, Medicine, and Empire: Perspectives on Western Medicine and the Experience of European Expansion*, eds. Roy MacLeod and Milton Lewis (London: Routledge, 1988) p. 125.
[1248] Alan C. Cairns, *Prelude to Imperialism: British Reactions to Central African Society 1840-1890* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965) p. 78.
[1249] Arnold, 'Introduction,' in *Imperial Medicine and Indigenous Societies,* p. 12.
[1250] *The Spectator,* 23 Aug. 1873, p. 6.

within one's power to do so successfully. A faith in the protective and destructive power of technology, boosted in the popular imagination by successful small wars, encouraged such confidence among imperial-minded Britons. Tweedie, who had written to *Blackwood's* as 'A Staff-Officer' from Abyssinia, had by 1875 risen to First Assistant Resident to the Government of India. He proposed that the government should intervene to control, 'noxious beasts in India', by employing professional tiger-killers. He suggested that these men would function, 'just like' the mole-catchers and rabbit-killers back in England, implicitly downplaying the wild tropical threat to the level of vermin.[1251]

In his 1829 essay, 'Signs of the Times', Thomas Carlyle attempted to illustrate the sense of confidence and inevitability permeating what he termed the 'Mechanical Age': 'We can remove mountains, and make seas our smooth highway; nothing can resist us. We war with rude Nature; and, by our resistless engines, come off always victorious, and loaded with spoils.'[1252] The following section will explore the changing British estimations of Africans, who were, as explored in earlier chapters, perceived as part of the increasingly defeated natural world.

6.2 Vindicated Arms

The perception that 'easy' victories had been achieved over two substantial African empires nurtured the British imperial culture of confidence and its expression in the public sphere. These successes were seen to be all the more significant since they had been attained with less loss than many had initially expected. The outset of both campaigns had been met with a pervasive

[1251] NAI, H(P), Jan. 1875, A nos. 286-311, no. 297. [n.p.], 'Destruction of noxious beasts in India', Major Tweedie, First Assistant Resident, Berar to Sec., GOI, Home, 5 June 1874, Quoted in Mahesh Rangarajan, 'The Raj and the Natural World: The War Against "Dangerous Beasts" in Colonial India,' in *Wildlife in Asia: Cultural Perspectives*, ed. John Knight (London: Routledge Curzon, 2004) p. 211.
[1252] Thomas Carlyle, 'Signs of the Times', *The Edinburgh Review,* Vol. 49, no. 98 (Jun. 1829) p. 442.

sense of self-doubt in Britain's military capability in Africa, as discussed in Chapter 3. Beke had predicted that any British intervention in Abyssinia, which he considered to be inevitable, would cost, 'the sacrifice of millions of treasure and tens of thousands of human lives'.[1253] The threat of disease intertwined with Britain's human adversaries in the public imagination, and both seemed to challenge the nation's status as a world power. However triumphant she had been in great wars, Henty claimed, Britain, 'has yet notoriously failed in her "little wars"'.[1254] Except for the far south, Britain's unstable presence in Africa until the later 1860s was confined to the absolute edges of the continent.[1255] 'From time immemorial', Wolseley stated in his Mansion House speech, 'our military policy on the Coast of Africa had not been of a nature to impress a powerful and warlike nation with any high opinion of our military strength. This fact was encouraging to the enemy.'[1256]

No wonder, then, that the battle reports from Magdala were met with surprise. In the final despatch to his 'The Abyssinia Expedition' column, Henty considered that:

> it would, in the face of the terrible forebodings which were launched when it was first set about, have seemed an almost impossibility that we could have journeyed here, defeated and almost annihilated Theodore's army…with the loss of only one man dead from his wounds.[1257]

At the end of the campaign, two of Napier's soldiers had been killed. It took fifteen elephants and almost 200 mules to transport the booty looted from

[1253] Beke, *The British Captives in Abyssinia*, p. 296.
[1254] Henty, *The March to Magdala,* p. 431.
[1255] Andrew Porter, 'Introduction,' in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume III: The Nineteenth Century*, eds. Andrew Porter and Wm. Roger Louis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) p. 14.
[1256] Wolseley's Speech at the Mansion House**,** 31 March 1874, *The Times,* 1 Apr. 1874, in Beckett, *Wolseley and Ashanti,* p. 418.
[1257] Henty, *The March to Magdala,* p. 429.

Magdala back to the coast.[1258]

A large number of Wolseley's soldiers were wounded by Ashanti muskets but only thirteen of the Europeans and one of the West Indians died from enemy action in the Gold Coast.[1259] Henty's description of the Elmina raid encapsulated the public view of that war as a whole: 'our objects were attained with but slight loss, and the lesson to the enemy was sharp and startling, while it certainly increased our confidence in ourselves and in our commanders'.[1260]

British commentators put the campaigns forward as repeated manifest proof of British military effectiveness in colonial conflict. Of the victory at Magdala, *The Spectator* claimed, 'the gain in prestige…is but a trifle, compared with the gain in our own self-confidence. We can, then, be efficient, can do the work we intend to do without blunder, or disaster, or endless liability.'[1261] An article in the *Birmingham Daily Post* reprinted the statement and, as if to highlight this newly gained self-confidence, made the bold claim that, 'double that army, leaving it to the same leader…and there is no empire in Asia it could not conquer; treble it, and there is no power in Europe to which it would not be formidable'.[1262] In his seemingly sincere praise of the expedition, the author of a later *Spectator* article implicitly revealed the anxieties that had loomed over it: 'an expedition without a blunder, a march which reached its goal, a retreat without disaster, a great enterprise finished as if it had been designed by Bismarck and organized by Von Moltke, restores our waning self-respect'.[1263]

At the outset of the Ashanti expedition, the War Office had even more to prove. Cardwell had implemented waves of comprehensive reform to army

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[1258] Frederic Sharf, David Northrup and Richard Pankhurst, *Abyssinia, 1867-1868: Artists on Campaign: Watercolours and Drawings from the British Expedition Under Sir Robert Napier* (Hollywood: Tsehai, 2003) p. 28.
[1259] Beckett, *Wolseley and Ashanti,* p. 107.
[1260] Henty, *The March to Coomassie*, p. 117.
[1261] 'The Fall of Theodore', *The Spectator,* 2 May 1868, p. 4.
[1262] 'The Moral of Magdala', *Birmingham Daily Post,* 4 May 1868.
[1263] *The Spectator,* 4 Jul. 1868, p. 4.

organisation and administration since taking office in December 1868, facing considerable resistance from, among others, the conservative majority of the officer corps.[1264] Controversies surrounding Cardwell's abolition of commission purchase and his introduction of short-term service enlistment received serious attention in the public sphere. Conservative officers openly argued that these changes would leave Britain unprepared for war and virtually undefended. The success in Ashanti allowed his supporters (Wolseley foremost among them) to claim proof that the reforms had created an effective and efficient military force, ready to tackle colonial conflict anywhere it might arise.[1265] In matter of fact, the soldiers of Wolseley's picked force were long-term enlistment men of the old system, and the war had been launched and supervised by the Colonial Office, not the War Office.[1266] Nonetheless, the public knew that it had been a British expedition and had achieved victory. Cardwell, at the end of his tenure as Secretary of State for War, felt vindicated. 'You and I had great reason to congratulate ourselves on the success of the Ashanti Expedition', he later wrote to Lord Northbrook, his former under-secretary at the War Office, 'We were told that we had disorganised the War Office and reduced the Army to a force "that could not march".'[1267]

After Wolseley's victory, *The Times* declared that the war had been, 'one of the most credible exploits of British arms'. The article quoted the Earl of Granville's assertion to the House of Lords that the small war 'sort of fighting'

[1264] Edward M. Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army 1868-1902* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992).
[1265] W. D. McIntyre, 'British Policy in West Africa: The Ashanti Expedition of 1873-4,' *The Historical Journal* 5, no. 1 (1962) p. 40.
[1266] Frederick Myatt, *The March to Magdala: The Abyssinian War of 1868* (London: Leo Cooper Ltd., 1970) p. 177.
[1267] Sir Robert Biddulph, *Lord Cardwell at the War Office* (London: John Murray, 1904) p. 224; Also included in Sir Frederick Maurice and Sir George Arthur, *The Life of Lord Wolseley* (London: William Heinemann ltd., 1924) p. 74.

might in fact provide 'the greatest test of each individual man'.[1268] The British military abroad had, it seemed, passed that test.

6.2.1 Foot In the Door

As discussed in the introductory chapter, Henty opened his account of the Abyssinian expedition with the claim that, 'since the expedition of Pizarro and Cortes in the middle ages, no such novel and hazardous expedition is on record'.[1269] Disraeli similarly told the House of Commons that, 'it resembles more than any other event in history…the advance of Cortez into Mexico'.[1270] The earlier chapter considered their choice of analogy in light of its implied characterisation of the African interior as new and uncharted. There was another related connotation to the Cortez example: gold. If the Abyssinian expedition was akin to the conquest of Tenochtitlan, then the 'new world' of Africa was now open to conquest and to profitable business. The imperial British sense of identity also meshed well with the explorer typology.

Butler applied the same conquistador imagery to the Ashanti war. 'Looking for its counterpart', he wrote, 'one must seek the record of by-gone strife, when Latin Europe first moved into the New World, and the mailed chivalry of Spain scaled the sun-shrines of Cusco or pierced the mountain-passes from where the mysterious Mexico lay outspread at their feet.'[1271] In a *United Service Magazine* editorial, Captain Acklom pushed for stronger tactics to be used against the Ashanti to further, 'the march of the Bible, the steam-engine, and the plough' into an African interior that he portrayed as incredibly rich and fertile. The time had arrived, he notably argued, 'for the further opening

[1268] *The Times*, 31 Mar. 1874, in TNA, WO 211/71, 'The Ashanti expedition of 1873-1874: news cuttings, correspondence and extracts from letters from Hart's son, Lieut. A. Fitzroy Hart'; HL Deb 30 Mar. 1874 vol. 218 col. 388.
[1269] Henty, *The March to Magdala*, p. 1.
[1270] HC Deb 27 April 1868, vol. 191 col. 1338.
[1271] Butler, *Akim-Foo,* pp. 249-50.

up and extending the producing limits of civilisation'. The interior, to Acklom, was an untapped source of prosperity, and 'Ashantee alone obstructs the march of civilisation toward the interior of Africa.'[1272] Such all-or-nothing rhetoric was commonly applied to both campaigns, and generated the popular notion that a historic milestone, or significant barrier, had been successfully crossed. Sir Richard Temple posited that, 'the Prah becomes the Rubicon of this story'.[1273] His allusion denoted a point of no return, but also the onset of a spectacular conquest comparable to that of Julius Caesar.

At the outset of Ashanti conflict, Gladstone expressed his hope to Kimberley that, 'the miserable war…abates the disposition of John Bull to put his head hereafter into a noose'.[1274] In his hopes for the return of imperial pacifism, Gladstone would be disappointed. Having seen that British arms could succeed in the Gold Coast, public opinion and interested parties refused to support a withdrawal from the region, which had seemed a foregone conclusion only a few years earlier.[1275] After the army left Ashanti territory, Britain annexed the lands of the Fante Confederacy. The newly founded Gold Coast Colony, proclaimed on 24 July 1874, thus became the first substantially inland British colony in tropical Africa and came about as a direct result of the expedition.[1276]

Captain Glover gave a talk at the RGS entitled *Geographical Notes on the Country Traversed between the River Volta and the Niger* soon after his return. Wolseley, Freemantle, and Sir Bartle Frere, the Society president, were in attendance and the event was transcribed and published in the Society's journal of proceedings. Glover emphasised that, 'there can be no question as to

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[1272] J. E. Acklom, 'The Ashantees,' *United Service Magazine*, no. 540 (Nov., 1873) pp. 366-7.
[1273] Lady Glover, *Life of Sir John Hawley Glover: R.N., G.C.M.G.*, ed. Sir Richard Temple (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1897) p. 166.
[1274] Gladstone to Kimberley, 21 Aug. 1873, *Kimberley Papers*, A/52, Quoted in McIntyre, *British Policy in West Africa*, p. 31.
[1275] McIntyre, *British Policy in West Africa*, p. 45.
[1276] Philip D. Curtin, *The World & the West: The European Challenge and the Overseas Response in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) pp. 28-9.

the amount of gold which is to be obtained' in the country on the far side of the Volta, which the recent British invasion had shown could be trod by large numbers of Europeans. 'I therefore see no objection', he continued, 'to the exploration of that country being carried out, and the really rich stores of gold, which it produces, opened up to our enterprising miners, who, no doubt, will go up there'. Now that the interior, which by Glover's description would be as prosperous as that of myth, had been opened, 'it is only a matter of time before, I suppose, we shall be all eating with gold-handled knives and off gold plates'.[1277]

In the discussion following Glover's talk, Wolseley was keen to define the monumental impact that his little expedition was to have on the range of British influence: 'The effect of opening the road to geographical discovery, as the expedition had done…would be to throw open the interior of Africa in a manner that it had never been done before'. He did 'not think that any explorer would have, for many years to come, any difficulty in penetrating into the very heart of Africa'.[1278]

Frere affirmed in his closing remarks that, 'it appeared as if, for the first time, the veil was lifting up which had concealed the interior of Africa from our view'. Always a supporter of imperial expansion, he gave substantial credit to Wolseley's and Glover's, 'expeditions, [which,] though they might not reach beyond a few hundred miles, showed the possibility of penetrating far into that unexplored interior'.[1279] Frere was made High Commissioner to Southern Africa three years later, and in 1879 would give the order that initiated the Anglo-Zulu War.

[1277] Capt. Sir John Glover, 'Geographical Notes on the Country Traversed between the River Volta and the Niger,' *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society* 18, no. 4 (1874) pp. 290-1.
[1278] Ibid., p. 294.
[1279] Ibid., p. 299.

The decade following Britain's invasion of Ashanti witnessed a marked increase in the pace of African expansion and a rise in popular support for empire.[1280] Porter described the 1870s as a 'new era of competitive imperialism', in which 'the popular mood in Britain seemed to be changing, becoming more enthusiastic towards the extension of the empire for its own sake, instead of merely apathetic or straightforwardly chauvinistic as in the past'.[1281] Elements of this cultural and political shift were certainly in play before Napier's and Wolseley's expeditions, perhaps helping to precipitate them, but the movement received practical legitimisation by the victories those officers achieved. The Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions provided significant examples, data points, to be pointed to in support of Britain's military prowess. Henty suggested that 31 January 1874, which saw the battle of Amoaful, 'will be noted in the annals of Africa as the day on which the British soldier for the first time fairly met the warriors of the hitherto unconquered Ashanti kingdom in their native bush, and after a desperate conflict, lasting five hours and a half, completely routed them'.[1282] Africa was not yet in the bag, by any measure. In 1876, more than 90% of the continent was still ruled by Africans.[1283] Yet, the victories in East and West Africa seemed to prove to the British public what many in military and colonial circles had already hoped, that Africa was *conquerable*. 'If we have other wars to come', the *Illustrated London News* history of Abyssinia trumpeted, 'may they be carried out like this!'[1284] The military door, in tandem with the environmental one, had swung open.

[1280] Lawrence James, *The Savage Wars: British Campaigns in Africa, 1870-1920* (London: Robert Hale Ltd., 1985) p. 22; John D. Hargreaves, *Prelude to the Partition of West Africa* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1963) p. 169.
[1281] Bernard Porter, *The Lion's Share: A Short History of British Imperialism 1850-1995*, 3rd ed. (London: Addison Wesley Longman, 1996) p. 73, 63.
[1282] Henty, *The March to Coomassie*, p. 374.
[1283] Bruce Vandervort, *Wars of Imperial Conquest in Africa, 1830-1914* (London: UCL Press, 1998) p. 28.
[1284] Roger Acton, *The Abyssinian Expedition and the Life and Reign of King Theodore* (London: Office of the Illustrated London News, 1868) p. 77.

British victories in Africa played a stimulating role in a general reappraisal, in both political and public opinion, of the relative costs and benefits of empire.[1285] Porter argued that mid-Victorian anti-annexationism had been sustained by much more than humanitarian fervour. Britain had in fact remained fairly pacifist, 'because it was in her material interests to be; from which it followed that if ever peace was not in her interest she could quite happily resort to war…when the expense and the risks of war seemed worth it'. Small wars, fought in later decades against increasingly technologically inferior opponents, therefore, 'made solid actuarial sense'.[1286] Headrick has consistently argued that it was the flow of new technologies, above all other factors, which 'made imperialism so cheap that it reached the threshold of acceptance among the peoples and governments of Europe, and led nations to become empires'.[1287] This thesis has further argued, in agreement with Edgerton and others, that such thresholds of acceptance are drawn and crossed on the basis of the *perceptions* of new technologies, which may be related to but are not necessarily equal to their actual material potentials. Stafford also regarded technological innovation as the primary driver of the intensified 'new' imperialism, though with more credence given to the cultural dimension of its influence. Advances in these, 'dependable symbols of progress', he argued, 'profoundly stimulated a mind-set already disposed to think about Empire in

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[1285] For a more thorough discussion of Britain's political and cultural transition to from anti-annexationist to competitive expansionist imperialism, see Chapter 1 and the Introduction.
[1286] Bernard Porter, *Britain, Europe, and the World 1850-1986: Delusions of Grandeur*, 2nd ed. (London: Unwin Hyman Ltd., 1987) p. 21; See also Bernard Porter, *The Lion's Share: A Short History of British Imperialism 1850-1995*, 3rd ed. (London: Addison Wesley Longman, 1996) p. 73; Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) pp. 83-114.
[1287] Daniel R. Headrick, *The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981) p. 206.

terms of what was possible, desirable, and (morally speaking) defensible'.[1288] Adas also contended that it was not victory in itself that most impressed Europeans after 1870, but, 'the growing ease of colonial conquest'. The seemingly sudden wave of comparatively easy small wars across the globe, including Abyssinia and Ashanti, 'served to bolster the consensus among European thinkers, politicians, and colonial administrators that they had earned the right (and duty) to be the "lords of humankind"'.[1289] Harcourt flagged the British reactions to Abyssinia and Ashanti as evidence of a reconceptualisation of mid-Victorian humanitarianism. With both conflicts, 'the legitimacy of using "civilized" force to reduce "barbarous" intransigence received public sanction', marking a shift from a paternalist viewpoint to a more providentialist one.[1290] As Bell argued, the growing sense of technological and thus civilisational superiority over indigenous peoples, 'easily slipped into a cyclical logic in which the means of empire became the justification of empire'.[1291] Each victory, or, rather, each case where victory was *declared,* further boosted the consensus on Britain's unrestrained dominance and deepened the expectation of victory.

6.2.2 Foregone Conclusions

'We can ill afford a perpetual succession of "little wars"', claimed the *Illustrated London News* in 1868, 'We have no right to expect that they will all end as fortunately as, thanks to Sir Robert Napier and his gallant army, the war in Abyssinia has ended.'[1292] Quite the contrary, in fact, the developing culture of confidence in Britain was characterised by a growing expectation of easy victory in small wars. Belich considered the functioning of this interpretive dynamic in

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[1288] Robert A. Stafford, 'Scientific Exploration and Empire,' in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume III: The Nineteenth Century*, eds. Andrew Porter and Wm. Roger Louis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) p. 267.
[1289] Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men,* p. 143.
[1290] Freda Harcourt, 'Disraeli's Imperialism, 1866-1868: A Question of Timing,' *The Historical Journal* 23, no. 1 (1980) p. 104.
[1291] Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain,* p. 66.
[1292] 'End of the Abyssinian Expedition.' *Illustrated London News*, 27 Jun. 1868, p. 622.

his history of the New Zealand Wars. He described the expectation of victory as a powerful filter, which 'pervades the interpretation of the Wars'. At one level, this perception led to the exaggeration of British victories and, if necessary, the creation of fictional ones. In those cases where a real defeat was recognised:

> the jarring disjuncture between event and expectation created a traumatic shock, which then had to be alleviated, mainly through the development of acceptable explanations for the disaster. British stereotypes of their own and of Maori military abilities determined what was acceptable and what was not. Unacceptable implications which survived this part of the process were subsequently downplayed, obscured, or forgotten.[1293]

In a similar manner, British victories over the Abyssinians and Ashanti were exaggerated to the point that they were made to signify, conclusively, the dominance of European industrial civilisation over African savagery and barbarism. Once established in popular opinion and the official mind, this dominance became normative and tremendously resilient to contrary data (as confirmation biases usually are). Thus, as Belich argued of the popular interpretation of the New Zealand Wars, what was:

> hard to accept was the way in which sophisticated artefact technology, the European hallmark, was neutralized by superficially less impressive techniques. It was almost impossible for a Victorian to acknowledge that a wonderful scientific achievement such as the Armstrong gun was functionally inferior to an anti-artillery bunker, a mere hole in the ground.[1294]

Once, therefore, the Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions had 'proven' that novel military technology granted the British army a comfortable superiority in African small wars, an unexpected loss would not necessarily shake that presupposition.

[1293] James Belich, *The New Zealand Wars and the Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1986) p. 312.
[1294] Ibid., p. 322.

The Anglo-Zulu war provides a prominent example. In 1879, the *Daily Telegraph* predicted that, 'the mere handful of white men', sent to defeat King Cetshwayo:

> will probably be found equal to the task before them, which is to break down the military peril upon the Natal frontier, and, by conquering and disarming the Zulu barbarians, to open the way for the extension of civilization northwards upon the vast African continent.[1295]

The 'opening up' rhetoric had by then become standard trope, and Lord Chelmsford's columns were expected to pierce the African interior from the south as had Napier from the east and Wolseley from the west. Ten days later, the *Western Morning News* reported that:

> a calamitous reverse has befallen the British arms in South Africa… Englishmen are little accustomed to news of this sort. They sometimes forget that such news is possible. They belong to a conquering race. They have been boasting very much lately that their arms are invincible.[1296]

The loss at Isandlwana was bound to make for shocking news. The British force lost some 1,300 troops, over 700 of which were Army regulars. It is, nonetheless, worth noting that in the fifteen years since the disastrous second Ashanti war, the home press and popular opinion had become so accustomed to victory that the risk of a major loss was no longer seriously considered. Gone from the public sphere were the dire predictions and pessimistic editorials that had anticipated the Abyssinia and Ashanti expeditions. Taken as a whole, the media had approached the declaration of the Anglo-Zulu war with little trepidation and considerable fanfare.

It would have seemed that there was ample reason for such confidence. Notwithstanding Frere's attempts to characterise the Zulu as a race of savage warriors, they were by all accounts far more primitively armed than were the

[1295] *Daily Telegraph,* 4 Feb. 1879, Quoted in Stephen Manning, *Foreign News Gathering and Reporting in the London and Devon Press- the Anglo-Zulu War, 1879, a Case Study* (PhD in History, Faculty of Arts, University of Exeter, 2005) p. 108.
[1296] Albert Grosser, *Western Morning News,* 14 Feb. 1879, Quoted in Ibid., pp. 115-16.

Abyssinians or the Ashanti. They lacked Theodore's artillery train, Karikari's well-connected firearms trade, the protection of mountaintop fortresses, and even the cover of a forest.[1297] The Natal had its problems with the tsetse fly, but it was no 'white man's grave'. It was, in fact, common knowledge that these sorts of little wars were supposed to be easy. Thomas Freedman, owner of the *Freeman's Exmouth Journal*, revealed in his commentary on the Isandlwana disaster where the public expectations for imperial conflict stood:

> it is hardly possible to get rid of the disturbing reflection that the disaster…need never have occurred at all if the invasion of Zululand had been set about in the same deliberate, methodical, and energetic manner as the Abyssinian and Ashantee expeditions, both of which, without any mishaps occurring, were crowned with success.[1298]

Thus, Isandlwana did not strip the British expectation of victory. The strength of that expectation caused commentators to explain away any unexpected losses, as had been done in the New Zealand Wars. As Orme claimed, by 1879, 'expectations about colonial warfare had filtered into the public consciousness'.[1299] The memories of Magdala and Kumase still held, showing that Isandlwana need not become habit.

British popular culture, the media (and nascent 'New Journalism'), and even the 'official mind' of political and military circles continued to look back to Abyssinia and Ashanti as examples of how easy imperial ventures *could* (and therefore should) be. These campaigns had raised the bar for those that followed. Henceforth, when the British public thought about the prospect of small wars, they would do so with an understanding that they could expect success, 'without any mishaps occurring'. That notion tended to make the

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[1297] Stephen Manning, 'British Perception of the Zulu Nation before & After the War of 1879,' *The Journal of the Anglo Zulu War Historical Society* 16 (Dec., 2004).
[1298] Thomas Freeman, *Freeman's Exmouth Journal,* 15 Feb. 1879, Quoted in Manning, *Foreign News Gathering and Reporting in the London and Devon Press,* pp. 120-1.
[1299] Edward B. Orme, 'Victorian Attitudes Toward "Small Wars": The Anglo-Zulu War (1879), a Case Study' (Master's Thesis, University of York, 1984) p. 5.

nation considerably more disposed to support African expansion. In that sense, these two seemingly small and peculiar campaigns made a significant impact on Britain's imperial future.

6.3 Minimisation of the People

Ramseyer, missionary and former captive at Kumase, recalled a certain African servant who, after witnessing the British camp, exclaimed that, 'Europe is come to Africa!' Upon his own arrival sometime later, Ramseyer remarked, 'how wonderful was the appearance of so many white faces in the old African forest'.[1300] The colour of the soldiers' faces was perhaps more significant to the history of British imperial culture than was their flag of allegiance. In his 1915 history of the Gold Coast, Claridge argued that the:

> first part of the war had been conducted mainly by Africans, and a few hundred seamen and marines and a West India Regiment had been the only regular troops employed…This was by far the most arduous part of the campaign; but it aroused very little interest at the time, and it was not until British regiments with well-known names were employed during the operations beyond the Prah that the public in England began to pay any serious attention to what was taking place on the Gold Coast.[1301]

It was the presence and perceived success of European soldiers that made the Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions particularly newsworthy to Victorian Britain. These conflicts took place in the midst of particular intellectual currents on the interpretation of race. Bolt has discussed the link, perhaps prerequisite link, between the aggressive assertion of white superiority in the 1860s and the explosion of British expansion in Africa.[1302] Abyssinia and Ashanti straddled a time when these assertions were beginning to influence imperial policy. Racial ideas also guided the ways the conflicts were interpreted and reported. Retellings of the expeditions in turn reinforced the shifts in British racial thought.

[1300] Friedrich Ramseyer and Johannes Kuhne, *Four Years in Ashantee* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1875) p. 286.
[1301] Claridge, *A History of the Gold Coast and Ashanti*, 2:82.
[1302] Christine Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971) p. xi.

The perceived ease of the military victories, coupled with evident advances in medicine and an imagined triumph over the natural world, precipitated a reassessment of the nature of racial dominance. Integral to this process was a consistent minimisation by British commentators of African people as non-martial.

6.3.1 Previous Beliefs of African Dominance

In his 1863 *Savage Africa,* Reade described the Kingdom of Ashanti in large and threatening terms, 'whose monarch slew Sir Charles Macarthy at the head of his troops, and conquered the English on the brink of the sea. In the centre of his kingdom is Coomassi, the City of Gold.'[1303] As discussed in Chapter 3, Britain's difficult history in African wars left a mark of caution upon any notion of further excursions into the interior. Reade also reported having, 'often heard it said by military men that British soldiers are poor bush-fighters'.[1304] During the planning for the Abyssinian war, the *New York Tribune* played on the conflicting feelings in the British public sphere at the prospect of an inland invasion, positing the following discussion: 'But we have managed the Ashantee war more than once, says the Times and Abyssinia cannot well be worse. No, rejoins a pitiless correspondent, we never did manage an Ashantee war, the Ashantees always managed us.'[1305] Such military setbacks meshed in the popular imagination with developments and fashions in the theory of race and environment.

In a notable speech for the Ethnographical Society of London, also discussed in Chapter 3, Hunt declared his intention to 'examine how far the supposition of man's cosmopolitan power is warranted by an induction from the

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[1303] Winwood Reade, *Savage Africa: Being the Narrative of a Tour in Equatorial, South-Western, and North-Western Africa* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1863) pp. 39-40.
[1304] Winwood Reade, *The Story of the Ashantee Campaign* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1874) p. 306.
[1305] *New York Tribune*, 31 Aug. 1867.

facts at present known to us'.[1306] He wished to scrutinise the modernist ideal that man is capable of thriving anywhere on the globe and determine the extent to which that ambition could be approached. His central conclusion was, 'that it is as difficult to plant a race out of its own centre, as it is to extinguish any race without driving it from its natural centre'.[1307] Significantly, Hunt believed that this applied to *Europeans* as well, thereby limiting their ability to thrive outside of European climates. 'Man', therefore, could not be said to be cosmopolitan because race was the largest determinant of success in any given context (Hunt was, after all, a polygenecist). Thus, to Hunt, Africans could not thrive in Europe just as Europeans could not in Africa or Asia; he argued, for example, that European children could not be reliably raised in India.[1308]

Hunt conceded that one slight exception, or at least flexibility, in this rule was provided by the adaptive influence of 'civilisation':

> It is civilization which chiefly enables the European to bear the extremes of climate. Indeed, a people must be civilized to some extent before they desire to visit distant regions. The Esquimaux, for instance, is perfectly happy in his own way, and has no desire to move to a warmer climate. His whole body and mind are suited for the locality; and were he moved to a warm climate, he would certainly perish. The whole organism of the Esquimaux is fitted solely for a cold climate.[1309]

Hunt believed, however, that the ameliorating influence of 'civilisation' was very limited and best expressed in exploration rather than in procreation. He did not believe that British civilisation, however advanced, would allow Europeans to thrive in the African interior. Hunt may have represented an extreme interpretation, out of the scientific mainstream even by the 1870s, but some of his major themes retained their weight in British culture for years. Less formalised versions of these ideas were still in general circulation during the

[1306] James Hunt, 'On Ethno-Climatology; Or the Acclimatisation of Man,' *Transactions of the Ethnographical Society of London (TESL)* II (1861-2) p. 50.
[1307] Ibid., p. 79.
[1308] Ibid., p. 70.
[1309] Ibid., p. 53.

Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions. McCaskie has described, 'the continuing potency of an imagined Africa in an era of greatly increased factual knowledge'. Even as scientific circles began to reject the influence of climate and ecology on cultural history, 'repetitions, traces, or echoes of [these concepts] are to be found in the literature of colonial conquest concerning Benin, Yorubaland, Igboland, and Sokoto in West Africa, or Zululand and the Sudan elsewhere on the continent'.[1310]

The British army had long responded to the manifest inability of regular soldiers to handle the tropics by employing African soldiers in various capacities. Bowdich, the first European to visit as far inland as Kumase, recommended such an arrangement in 1819. He suggested that soldiers for the British Cape Coast garrison should be recruited from among:

> the Negroes captured in the illicit Spanish and Portuguese slave ships, of whom there must be a number unemployed at Sierra Leone, [they] would form the most desirable military force, even preferable to European…the climate would be natural to them; and they would prove valuable companions, if not intelligible guides, in future missions to the interior.[1311]

As discussed in Chapter 3, the formation of the West Indian Regiments was predicated on the supposed superiority of African soldiers over Europeans in tropical warfare. First conceived to garrison Britain's Caribbean colonies, the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th West Indian Regiments played pivotal roles in the 1863-64 Ashanti war and certainly in the first phase of the 1873 war.[1312] They were, indeed, essential for the defence of British West Africa during this period. Any argument that the white soldiers of the British army were fully capable in tropical

[1310] T. C. McCaskie, 'Cultural Encounters: Britain and Africa in the Nineteenth Century,' in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume III: The Nineteenth Century*, eds. Andrew Porter and Wm. Roger Louis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) pp. 677-8.
[1311] T. Edward Bowdich, *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee, with a Statistical Account of that Kingdom and Geographical Notices of Other Parts of the Interior of Africa* (London: John Murray, 1819) p. 460.
[1312] S. C. Ukpabi, 'West Indian Troops and the Defense of British West Africa in the Nineteenth Century,' *African Studies Review* 17, no. 1 (Apr., 1974) p. 138.

settings was thus bound to be linked to a denigration and dismissal of the black soldiers upon which that army had long relied.

6.3.2 In Victory, Contempt

Despite, perhaps in reaction to, the widespread belief that African warriors excelled in their own environments, British accounts of the Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions demonstrated a strong tendency to portray Africans as impotent and non-martial. Looking back to the fall of Magdala upon the occasion of Lord Napier's death, *The Spectator* claimed that the, 'Abyssinian soldiers, utterly cowed by the white men's weapons, refused to fight.'[1313]

In his memorandum distributed to the European soldiers in Ashanti, Wolseley attested that:

> Providence has implanted in the heart of every native of Africa a superstitious awe and dread of the white man that prevents the negro from daring to meet us face to face in combat. A steady advance or charge, no matter how partial, if made with determination, always means the retreat of the enemy.

While the Ashanti army was formidable to 'enemies of their own colour', he continued, 'they will not stand against the advance of the white man'. Wolseley closed with the declaration: 'Soldiers and sailors, remember that the black man holds you in superstitious awe.'[1314]

British commentators made particular notice of Ashanti 'superstition' as a signifier of, indeed even a metaphor for, the ineffectiveness of that empire's military defences. Almost every official and press source made some reference to the great fetish tree of Kumase. According to Ashanti custom, the city and empire would stand as long as this large tree remained upright. On 6 January 1874, the tree was toppled by storm winds and crashed to the ground. On that

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[1313] *The Spectator*, 18 Jan. 1890; Also included in *In Memoriam: Field-Marshal Lord Napier of Magdala, G.C.B., G,C.S.I., &c. &c., Constable of the Tower: A Reprint of a Few Biographical Notices* (London: Harrison, 1890) p. 27.

[1314] Memorandum by Colonel George Greaves, 20 December 1873, Head Quarters, Cape Coast Castle, in Beckett, *Wolseley and Ashanti,* p. 285.

very day, journalists were keen to emphasise, Wolseley sent his first letter of ultimatum to the King and the first white man of the expedition crossed the Prah River.[1315] It is impossible to determine if this incredible coincidence took place as described or if the dates and details had been altered, but the tale seems to have been agreed upon by all.

Maurice described a forest track purportedly called 'the Haunted Road', on which neither Ashanti nor Fante would dare tread, 'except under the guiding influence of the European in whom he confides with a kind of idolatrous respect. It is in some way sacred to Fetish custom'.[1316] If that was the case, one wonders who had been maintaining the track before the expedition. Maurice's characterisation served the dual purpose of discrediting the power of Fetish rites, and also marking the Ashanti and Fante men as cowards and fools for fearing it.

The *Illustrated London News* ran Prior's tale of a scouting party that encountered, 'an Ashanti priest or wizard'. The man fled, leaving, 'a fetish on the spot, fixed in the ground like a scarecrow, but consisting only of a stick, with bundles of cotton and grass tied round it. This was the terrible guardian of the Ashantee kingdom.'[1317] The failure of these guardians was put forward as marking the failure of an inferior way of life, of a stagnant and superstitious civilisation in the face of a modern and scientific one. Stanley made a direct appraisal:

> Virtue of fetichism seems to be on the wane; the traditional terrors of Coomassie, the stronghold of the Ashantees, have lost their effect. Heaps of broken crockery, corn-meal flour splashed on trees, and stakes, and dwelling houses, are of no avail; human sacrifices, performed with all due ceremony, daunt not the palefaces; lengthy lines of cotton thread strung across bush and branch impede not the advance; all the howling and loud incantations of fetich priests are so much power

[1315] Maurice, *The Ashantee War,* p. 303.
[1316] Ibid*.,* p. 110.
[1317] 'The Ashantee War.' *Illustrated London News*, 28 Feb. 1874, p. 194.

> of demented men's lungs in vain; and vociferous vaunting of braggart chieftains deter not the Saxons' march. No, men with Sniders in their hands march on unrestingly![1318]

These tropes in the British engagement with Africa have been explored throughout this study. The utter defeat of African warriors, the piercing of the bush barricade, the ineffectiveness of fetishism, and the manifest superiority of European technology, all fed into a continually reinforced popular representation of Britain's African enemies as impotent, powerless, and inadequate. Such characterisations were not, however, solely directed toward the enemy. Over the course of the Ashanti campaign, Britain's West African allies were pushed even lower in popular discourse.

6.3.3 West African Allies

Negative African and orientalist stereotypes were asserted most openly in British discussions of their West African allies. It was endlessly repeated that the Fante, Western Akim, Assin, and Wassaw nations were poor soldiers. 'They're a nice lot to fight for them Fantees!', a Naval Brigade private told the *Daily News,* 'If they hear a twig move as they march along they say "Ashantee, Ashantee!" and get their legs together for a run.'[1319] Marvelling at the 'wonderful' dread the Fante appeared to have 'of the white man', Dooner recounted scattering a group of them at Cape Coast by threatening them with a stick.[1320]

Henty characterised the native allies as, 'far worse than worthless as companions in a fight'.[1321] Wolseley, similarly, called them, 'worse than useless…they bolt *en masse* whenever they can, leaving their white officers to

[1318] Henry M. Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala: The Story of Two British Campaigns in Africa* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low & Searle, 1874) p. 182.
[1319] 'A Blue Jacket's Campaign in Ashantee', *Daily News,* 25 Mar. 1874, p. 3.
[1320] W. T. Dooner, *Jottings En Route to Coomassie* (London: W. Mitchell & Co., 1874) p. 22.
[1321] Henty, *The March to Coomassie*, p. 113.

shift for themselves as best they can.[1322] 'It is impossible to exaggerate the cowardice and feebleness of our allies', he wrote to the Secretary of State for the Colonies and also published in *The London Gazette*, 'a sudden panic seizes them and they rush panic-stricken home when no Ashanti is near them'.[1323] Wolseley and Henty would both later describe, 'one of the funniest scenes I have ever witnessed', when the General, unable to convince a Fante force to advance against the enemy and, 'in despair at their utter cowardliness', brought up a company of sword-wielding Kosso soldiers to, 'make a frightening show behind the Fantis and scare them forward'.[1324] Such claims played on the popular notion of an African childish (or feminine) inability to control emotion and bolstered Wolseley's requests for battalions of British soldiers.

Similar terms were used to describe the other allied nations of the British Protectorate. In a lecture at the Royal United Service Institute, Colonel Evelyn Wood claimed that when the leaders of the Assin were offered European officers to train their soldiers, they replied, 'No! our hearts are not big enough to fight as your Officers would require.'[1325] The various kings and chiefs were, perhaps prudently, hesitant to commit their armed forces to march so far into the dreaded Ashanti territory, and this reluctance was always portrayed as cowardice. Wolseley had sent Captain Butler to the Western Akim and Captains Dalrymple and Moore to the Wassaw, instructing them to induce their hosts to invade Ashanti territory. The War Office summary of the conflict indicated that these allied nations were intended to, 'protect his flanks and act as decoys to

[1322] Wolseley to Colonel William Earle, 25 November 1873, Govt. House, Cape Coast, Hove, Wolseley MSS, Autobiographical Collection, in Beckett, *Wolseley and Ashanti,* p. 230.
[1323] *The London Gazette*, 1 Dec. 1873, p. 5667; Also included in ADM 201/39, Royal Marines Ashanti Papers 1873-74.
[1324] Wolseley, *The Negro as a Soldier*, pp. 696-7; Henty, *The March to Coomassie*, p. 187.
[1325] Wood, *'The Ashanti Expedition of 1873-4',* p. 345.

keep the Ashanti disorganized'.[1326] Wolseley was incensed when the Protectorate Kings did not adequately play their decoy roles, writing that:

> the curs of the [Western Akim and Wassaw] King[s] won't move, they procrastinate from day to day, in fact they are afraid to cross the Prah…If this was the beginning of the war I should try one of them & see what effect a sentence of death or transportation would have on them.[1327]

In their criticisms of African allies, many commentators cited their supposed martial shortcomings as evidence of a low racial status. Stanley wrote of 'the most insolent, lying, thieving negroes' of Sierra Leone.[1328] 'It cannot be too firmly impressed on Englishmen', Boyle reported in the *Telegraph*, 'that our native allies of the protectorate are mere beasts, cowardly to a degree incredible unless one had beheld them, slavish and greedy, and treacherous'.[1329] Of the Fante, 'rank cowards', Prior claimed that Wolseley had made them porters and carriers as a direct result of their worthlessness as soldiers.[1330] *The Lancet,* blaming them for the expedition's transport problems, called the Fante, 'the most indolent, timid, and useless of the African tribes. Utterly unfit for soldiers, they seem even incapable of becoming bipeds of burden'.[1331]

The supposed link between martial weakness and racial degradation was in fact taken by many to be a direct result of the British presence in the region. British products, education, and protection were seen to have spoiled the Fante. Henty argued that contact with the white man had, 'completely destroyed the savage virtue of his courage, and their deterioration in this respect has been as complete as that which the Britons underwent when under the protection of the

[1326] TNA, WO 147/27, Precis of the Ashanti Expedition, Intelligence Department, Horse Guards, War Office, 13th April 1874, p. 41.
[1327] Wolseley Journal, Sunday 18 January, TNA, WO 147/4, in Beckett, *Wolseley and Ashanti,* p. 345.
[1328] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala,* p. 7.
[1329] Boyle, *Fanteeland to Coomassie*, p. 90.
[1330] Melton Prior, *Campaigns of a War Correspondent*, ed. S. L. Bensusan (London: Edward Arnold, 1912) p. 7.
[1331] 'The Ashantee War', *The Lancet*, Vol. 102, no. 2625 (20 Dec. 1873) p. 885.

Romans'.[1332] Such attacks on any signs of Europeanisation among non-whites were typical of the period. In having grown weak without becoming civilised, according to this logic, the British allies were considerably worse than the Ashanti. 'The Fantees are only fit to be slaves to the Ashantees', Wolseley wrote in his report, 'and it would be far better for us if the Ashantees had possession of this country…we should have to deal with a fine warlike race instead of with the Fantees who certainly are par excellence the cowards of the world'.[1333] Boyle claimed that, whatever the cruelties of Ashanti slavery, among the 'humane' officers of the expedition, 'one opinion only rules, that the worst fate they could incur is well deserved by the Fantees'.[1334] Luxmore took it a step further in a letter to his wife. He indicated his wish, in which he was 'not alone in saying', that when Wolseley made a treaty with the Ashanti, he insert the stipulation, 'viz. – that they should immediately collect all their fighting men and come down after we leave and *exterminate* UTTERLY these brutes of Fantees. They are fifty times worse than any Ashantee'.[1335]

6.3.4 West Indian Regiments

Wolseley opened his 1888 essay *The Negro as a Soldier* with the suggestive claim that, 'since the abolition of slavery, and until recent years, the ranks of our West India regiments have been filled with fairly good fighting material'.[1336] For the remainder of the essay, however, he argued against the future employment of any black regulars in the British army. Using his experiences in the Ashanti and Zulu wars as anecdotal evidence, Wolseley brought out the usual dismissive claims of African cowardice and stupidity. His

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[1332] Henty, *The March to Coomassie*, p. 177.
[1333] Wolseley to Colonel William Earle, 25 November 1873, Govt. House, Cape Coast, Hove, Wolseley MSS, Autobiographical Collection, in Beckett, *Wolseley and Ashanti,* pp. 230-1.
[1334] Boyle, *Fanteeland to Coomassie*, pp. 90-1.
[1335] Percy P. Luxmore, 'Ashantee: Extracts from the Journal of a Naval Officer Addressed to His Wife,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 115, no. 702 (Apr. 1874) p. 524.
[1336] Sir Garnet Wolseley, 'The Negro as a Soldier,' *Fortnightly Review*, no. 264 (Dec. 1888) p. 689.

central argument, however, was far more specific than that. Wolseley sought to square the well-known historic successes of the West Indian Regiments in colonial small wars with his contemporary claim that they were no longer capable units. The key variable, he argued, was military technology:

> Before the introduction of rifled arms, and especially of the breechloader, the private who could bear fatigue, who was brave, absolutely obedient, and who was to be depended upon to stand by his officer under all circumstances, possessed the best qualities which go to make up a really good soldier. As long as success in war depended on fighting at close quarters, and when accuracy in shooting was of little or no account, the natural instinct of the savage from the interior of Africa went far to make up for his want of intelligence as a soldier.[1337]

Wolseley portrayed the Ashanti and Zulu wars (with the Cardwell reforms unspoken of in the background) as turning points in a transition from the primacy of the 'mechanical soldier' of old to the 'scientific soldier' of the modern world. The former was ostensibly open to all races; the latter was a European prerogative:

> I do not think Europeans learn drill as quickly as the Basuto or the Zulu…There seems to be something in the disposition and genius of the common stock from which they ['savages'] come, some hereditary bias in their brain, in their very blood, which fits them for the easy acquisition of a soldier's duties. And yet many of these races who thus quickly acquire an excellence in drill, &c., cannot be taught any mechanical handicraft; indeed, many can never even learn to draw a straight line.[1338]

The men of the West Indian Regiments had, Wolseley argued, thus been left behind, unable to make the transition to modern warfare. But what of the influences of climate and disease, which had forced the establishment of these novel regiments in 1795 and necessitated their extension across the tropical colonies? Those factors, he claimed, were no longer relevant. In earlier days, he admitted, the regiments had been made up of African-born men who withstood tropical environments and resisted the associated ailments. In more recent years, however, 'now that they are raised from a class of negroes with a

[1337] Ibid.
[1338] Ibid., p. 690.

considerable proportion of English blood in their veins', referring to the creole populations of the British Caribbean, 'they stand the climate at Cape Coast Castle and in the neighbouring provinces little better than the white man'.[1339] Wolseley believed that men from colonial mixed-race populations had, 'lost the best qualities [their] forefathers possessed as savages, and [had] failed to acquire those which belong to that civilization with which [they were] now more or less associated'.[1340]

Wolseley's opinion of the West Indian Regiments stood in stark contrast to the view of African soldiers explored in Chapter 3 and dominant in British military thinking even at the outset of the Ashanti war. That he directed his attack on those regiments was particularly significant, since their very existence was rooted in contemporary British military beliefs of African dominance in tropical climates and supposed innate superiority in bush warfare. They had long been valued specifically *because* they were black. The popular and even professional military views of the West Indian Regiments were tied to, and coloured by, fluctuating martial race ideals. Their fall from grace in some circles provides a potent indicator of the changing views of race.

Wolseley had begun his line of argument in 1873 in Ashanti, where he persistently and repeatedly belittled the West Indian soldiers as incapable of the very kind of irregular warfare in which they were widely believed to excel. He found the 2nd Regiment to be, 'unsuited by their dress and training for bush fighting' and told Earle that, 'they are of little use in the bush under the present organization'.[1341] Surprisingly, Wolseley argued to Cardwell that the West Indians were, 'not physically by any means as capable of withstanding the

[1339] Ibid., p. 691.
[1340] Ibid.
[1341] Wolseley Journal, Tuesday 14 October 1873, TNA, WO 147/3, in Beckett, *Wolseley and Ashanti,* p. 229; Wolseley to Colonel William Earle, 25 November 1873, Govt. House, Cape Coast, Hove, Wolseley MSS, Autobiographical Collection in Ibid., p. 151.

climate, still less exertion and fatigue', as were white soldiers. He claimed it was, 'a well-known fact here that Europeans suffer from the climate less than black men from other localities', a polar opposite position to the received wisdom in Britain. Realising that his own testimony could only carry so far, Wolseley supported his claims by reference to the work of Captain A. Clarke and Staff Assistant-Surgeon W. A. Gardiner.[1342]

Clarke had visited Cape Coast Castle in 1863 and, in the aftermath of the first Anglo-Ashanti war the following year, submitted a report in which he was very critical of the West Indian Regiments and argued against their use in Africa. Man for man, he pointed out, they cost as much to maintain and required the same amount of transport as did British soldiers. For this investment, he continued, 'they have not those moral qualities which the later possess to sustain them in times of pressure, difficulty and disaster. They cannot move with the same rapidity and if broken, or separated from their officers, they are said to be wholly unable to act for themselves.' In an allusion to the 'panic' trope, and without any provided evidence, Clarke also claimed that the black troops of the West Indian Regiments had failed to, 'become free from a certain awe which deters him from even threatening his life'.[1343] The presumed superiority of a white force of soldiers, he posited, meant that the army could replace 1,600 West Indians with a mere 200 Europeans at no loss of strength.[1344]

That same year, Staff Assistant-Surgeon W. A. Gardiner published a sanitary report on the 1863 expedition against the Ashanti Empire, where he had served as senior Medical Officer. He correctly concluded that West Indian-

[1342] Wolseley to Cardwell, 13 October 1873, Cape Coast Castle, TNA, WO33/26; WO106/285; WO147/27, in Ibid., p. 144.
[1343] Captain A. Clarke, W.O. 33/13, Confidential Memorandum, Jun. 1864, Discussed in Ukpabi, *West Indian Troops and the Defense of British West Africa in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 143-4.
[1344] Curtin, *Disease and Empire*, p. 54.

born soldiers of the 1st, 2nd and 4th W. I. Regiments were not immune to West African diseases (at one point a full half of the Prahsu detachment was on the sick list)[1345]. He somehow extended that conclusion, however, to the claim that they 'suffered more from the effects of this climate on their first arrival than white men would', despite the fact that the white officers of the corps suffered a higher sickness rate.[1346] Gardiner further proposed that 'white soldiers might be able to bear up under hardships and changes of climate, even on this coast, black troops cannot without considerable loss; have none of the hardiness and spirited endurance of the white man'. He referred to this critical and intangible advantage Europeans supposedly had in the battle against fever as 'what is commonly called pluck'.[1347]

Clarke and Gardiner were in the minority when they published in 1863-4, when an exaggeratedly positive characterisation of the West Indian Regiments was still the norm. The officers of the second Anglo-Ashanti war brought their reports back to the fore. Brackenbury delivered a lecture about Gardiner's conclusions to the officers on the *Ambriz*, and the doctor's arguments appear to have influenced opinion among the Ashanti Ring officers. In his discussion of 'the abortive effort of 1864', Brackenbury drew particular attention to the 'hardihood and spirited endurance' point.[1348]

Early in the 1873 expedition, while Wolseley was preparing his request for European battalions, Deputy Adjutant-General Armstrong included as fact in his War Office report that, 'those who are familiar with the climate agree in stating that soldiers of our West Indian Regiments do not bear the climate better

[1345] W.A. Gardiner, 'Sanitary Report of the Gold Coast, Including Likewise a Short Account of the Expedition against Ashanti', *Army Medical Department: Statistical, Sanitary, and Medical Reports,* Vol. 5, (1865 [for year 1863]) p. 335
[1346] Ibid.
[1347] Ibid., 337.
[1348] Henry Brackenbury and G. L. Huyshe, *Fanti and Ashanti: Three Papers Read on Board the S.S. Ambriz on the Voyage to the Gold Coast* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1873) pp. 32-3, 34.

than Europeans; this would probably be equally true of Goorkhas, whose employment has been advocated'.[1349] It was a large conceptual leap on the part of British commentators to extend the notion of white superiority to encompass even *climatic* adaptation. Though not yet universally accepted at the time, it was growing in prominence in discussions of empire and race and reinforced quite significantly by interpretations of Napier's and Wolseley's expeditions.

In 1868, *Blackwood's* published Tweedie's declaration that:

> The old theory that the British soldier is less adapted than the Indian for the vicissitudes of campaigning, or that he requires more transport, and greater care taken of him in the field, is surely at last exploded…The truth is, the British soldier…is in all ordinary climates, and most notably in one like that of Abyssinia, by far the hardier of the two.[1350]

Having complimented the Belooch native infantry and the Mazabee pioneers on their performance against Theodore, he cautioned that, 'to suppose, however, that the former possess any special military capabilities which do not exist in a still greater degree in our own countrymen, is contrary to reason and experience'.[1351]

On the Gold Coast, Wolseley felt he had to continuously press his case for access to European battalions. His orders from Cardwell had made very clear that any employment of British soldiers would require thorough justification.[1352] Indeed, Wolseley understated when he commented that, 'I have upon several occasions written disparagingly about the 2nd W.I. Regt'.[1353] When the European soldiers did arrive, and the time came to advance on Kumase, Wolseley held the West Indians back at Amoaful as a reserve and sent the 42nd

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[1349] W. Armstrong, TNA, WO 33/25, 'Ashantee War. – Notes [confidential]', Horse Guards, War Office, 30th Sep. 1873.
[1350] 'A Staff-Officer' [William Tweedie], 'Letters from a Staff-Officer with the Abyssinian Expedition. - Part IV,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 104, no. 635 (Sept. 1868) pp. 363-4.
[1351] Ibid., p. 364.
[1352] Cardwell to Wolseley**,** 8 September 1873, TNA, WO 106/285; WO 147/27; CO 879/6; CO 96/107; BPP, Cmd. 1891, in Beckett, *Wolseley and Ashanti,* pp. 63-4.
[1353] Wolseley to Cambridge, 7 November 1873, Abrakrampa, Cambridge MSS, RA VIC/ADD E/I/7232, in Ibid., p. 214.

Highlanders ahead instead. 'The 2nd West Indians were most unfortunate in having been kept behind at Amoaful', Henty sympathised, 'and it was certainly hard upon them that they were unrepresented at Coomassie'.[1354] Most regiments, in fact, would probably have complained about such a slight. To justify his decision, Wolseley parroted Clarke's point that black soldiers required the same rations and transport support as their white counterparts, yet, 'the services of one English battalion are worth that of two Regts of black soldiers'.[1355] He told the War Office that the West Indian Regiments, 'must, from the very nature of their material, be inferior to…Her Majesty's 42nd Highlanders'.[1356]

Stanley was also unimpressed with the 'material' of the West Indians. He agreed that they were, 'as little capable of standing this climate as white troops are', and that, 'their constitutions are as frail before malarial diseases as those of Europeans'.[1357] While such medical claims were reasonably correct, he characterised the men as unmilitary in character in terms so vague that they could only refer to race:

> as soldiers [the WIR] don't strike me favourably…their appearance contrasts unfavorably with that of the Naval Brigade. Their marching was a mere slouch, a heavy, careless, leaden walk. There was no dignified military pace among them; they jerked their heavy feet forward, after which they permitted them to fall, without order, unison or emphasis, on the ground; and, of course, their bodies were as ill-regulated as their pace. Their arms were swung about as if they were using sledge hammers; their heads bobbed up and down irregularly, and their bodies swayed indolently from side to side, with a downward droop distressing to witness.[1358]

[1354] Henty, *The March to Coomassie*, p. 420.
[1355] Wolseley to Cambridge, 26 December 1873, Government House, Cape Coast Castle, Cambridge MSS, RA VIC/ADD E/1/7276, in Beckett, *Wolseley and Ashanti,* p. 290.
[1356] Wolseley to War Office, TNA, WO 147/27, 'Papers Relating to the Ashanti Invasion (Gold Coast) &c', Intelligence Department, Horse Guards, War Office, No. 119, 18th December 1873, p. 114.
[1357] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala,* p. 134, 118.
[1358] Ibid*.,* p. 129.

This move away from the 'imagined West Indian Regiments' and their supposed advantages in bush warfare had real effects on British policy. The loss of their status as a specialist force hastened their removal from the Gold Coast. Once looked to as the only soldiers capable of defending the empire in tropical climates, the West Indians were pulled back and disbanded around the time of the Ashanti expedition. Some government officials, averse to the idea of black soldiers protecting colonies of black people, had campaigned to that effect and succeeded in reducing the West Indian presence on the Gold Coast from 1,600 in 1864 to 375 in 1872.[1359] The 3rd West Indian Regiment was disbanded entirely in 1873 and Kimberley considered replacing them with a local irregular force of armed police.[1360]

After the Ashanti war, the reports from the field seemed to finalise the government's choice. As Parkes noted in his medical report, 'it is true that the men of the West India regiments had not shown the same impunity to climate since they had been largely recruited in the West Indies; and a local force of Houssas, a Mahometan martial tribe very loyal to England, had been suggested as a substitute'.[1361]

6.3.5 Hausa Armed Police

The Hausa Armed Police force of the Ashanti expedition were spared much of the harsh criticism directed toward the West Indian Regiments. A number of British commentators couched their praise in direct comparisons between the former over the latter. Brevet-Major A. Gordon, who had commanded the Hausa, wrote in his report that they were:

[1359] Ukpabi, *West Indian Troops and the Defense of British West Africa in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 142-3.
[1360] Kimberley to Colonel R. W. Harley, P.P., 1874 XLVI, p. 279, Defence of the Forts, 12 May 1873, Quoted in Ibid., p. 144.
[1361] E. A. Parkes, *On the Issue of a Spirit Ration during the Ashanti Campaign of 1874* (London: J. & A. Churchill, 1875) p. 61; Parkes, 'Report on the issue of a spirit ration during the march to Coomassie', *The Lancet*, Vol. 104, no. 2660 (22 Aug. 1874) pp. 263-7.

> the best and cheapest of Colonial force. In courage and dash they are unspeakably superior to any of the native races in the Protectorate. In action they require to be restrained rather than urged on. They will march any distance without requiring a train of carriers and hammock-bearers, and supplies of rations, hospital comforts, &c., without which the men of the West India Regiments cannot march.[1362]

In a much-publicised lecture on his part of the expedition, Captain Glover described, 'the élan, bravery, and good conduct of the Houssas', and tellingly described them as 'the *Sikhs* of Africa'.[1363]

Their supporters, it is worth noting, tended to focus on the claim that the Hausa were cheap to maintain, not necessarily superior to army regular alternatives. It required a twist of perception and of logic to argue that the Hausa were superior to the West Indian Regiments because they required less pampering and impedimenta, yet also believe that British soldiers were better still in spite of having those same requirements. It was an argument that required a heavy consideration of race as possessing independent value, which, as the following section will argue, had become typical of the period. The Hausa were not envisioned to be simply the West Indian Regiments' replacements, but as holding a position in a new conceptual ladder of martial qualities. British officers may have felt more endeared to the Hausa than to the West Indian Regiments because the military did not consider them to be on equal footing with the white regulars, as it did the West Indians. Hausa troops and other irregulars fit more comfortably with the developing image of subordinate martial races, which was predicated on a consistent racial hierarchy. In a sense, the Hausa were seen to 'know their place' in line with

[1362] A. Gordon, 'Memorandum on the Employment of Houssas on the Gold Coast', TNA, CO 879/6, Further Correspondence Respecting the Ashantee Invasion, Gold Coast, No. 17, Colonial Office, 15 Apr., 1874, pp. 15-16.
[1363] Glover, Sir Captain John H., '"The Volta Expedition, during the Late Ashantee Campaign": A Royal United Service Institution Lecture,' *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute* 18, no. 2 (1875) p. 330; 'The Volta Expedition', *The Times*, 14 May 1874; Also included in TNA, WO 211/71, 'The Ashanti expedition of 1873-1874: news cuttings, correspondence and extracts from letters from Hart's son, Lieut. A. Fitzroy Hart'.

where contemporary military opinion imagined their place to be. Apropos, Henty painted a scene during the battle of Amoaful in which the Houssas, 'their usual pluck and dash [having] deserted them', would not advance. When the Naval Brigade moved up to charge in their place, Henty claimed that, 'the lesson then given of the white man's superiority now stood us in good stead'.[1364]

6.4 Reconsidered Options

Underlying the decline in the reputations of Britain's African soldiers, allies, and enemies was an important general shift in popular perspectives of race, place, and the Other. The military successes in Abyssinia and Ashanti accelerated a reappraisal of the nature of racial dominance. The ethnocentrism common to so many imperial commentators caused them to exaggerate the conclusions that could be drawn from Napier's and Wolseley's victories. One recurring suggestion was that white soldiers had been proven superior to black soldiers, even *within Africa*.

Reade had defied convention when he asserted before the West African campaign, 'that Europeans alone could conquer Ashantee'. There was not, he wrote to *The Times* from Sierra Leone, 'the least prospect of the Commander-in-Chief being able to bring this war to an honourable termination without European troops…they are essential to the success of this expedition'.[1365] When the European battalions arrived at Cape Coast, Stanley assured his readers that, 'we may confidently back these white men against any number of Ashantees. Even the tribes of the entire West Coast of Africa combined could not oppose them successfully, bush or no bush.'[1366] Henty argued that the attack on Elmina and other early engagements, 'taught us that it was upon

[1364] Henty, *The March to Coomassie*, pp. 394-5.
[1365] Reade, *Ashantee Campaign,* p. 138; *The Times,* 27 Sept. 1873.
[1366] Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala,* p. 107.

white men, and upon white men alone, that we must rely in our campaign against Ashanti'.[1367]

In a report to the Army Medical Department, which was reprinted both as a pamphlet and in *The Lancet,* Dr. Parkes claimed that Wolseley, 'has shown the superiority of a handful of disciplined men to hordes of barbarians'.[1368] In his own medical report, Gore came to the conclusion that, 'the best fighting force for such a climate would appear to be Europeans in reserve or support of disciplined and irregular native auxiliaries'.[1369] The medical appraisal of European soldiers in tropical settings had seemingly shifted from utterly incapable, to, in fact, the best and most reliable choice.

Wolseley's opinions on the comparative value of European and African soldiers were well known and have already been discussed. In his request for a third British battalion, he stressed that combat experience had, 'convinced me more strongly than any opinions of others could have done, that it is quite practicable for European troops to best the natives in bush fighting'. British soldiers were, thus, 'the only troops by which this war can be satisfactorily ended'.[1370] In one of his periodic ultimatum letters to King Karikari, Wolseley attempted to, 'impress upon your Majesty that hitherto your soldiers have only had to fight against black men, helped by a few Englishmen. If, however, you should now be so ill-advised as to continue this war, your troops will have to meet an army of white soldiers.'[1371] In another letter later that month, he argued

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[1367] Henty, *The March to Coomassie*, p. 113.

[1368] Parkes, *On the Issue of a Spirit Ration,* p. 78; E. A. Parkes, 'Report on the issue of a spirit ration during the march to Coomassie', *The Lancet*, Vol. 104, no. 2660 (22 Aug. 1874) pp. 263-7.

[1369] Gore, *A Contribution to the Medical History of our West African Campaigns*, p. 69.

[1370] Wolseley to Cardwell, 24 October 1873, Cape Coast Castle, TNA, WO33/26; WO147/27, in Beckett, *Wolseley and Ashanti,* pp. 165-6; He made the same claim in *The London Gazette*, 1 Dec. 1873, p. 5665; and ADM 201/39, Royal Marines Ashanti Papers 1873-74.

[1371] Wolseley to King Kofi Kakari, 2 January 1874, TNA, CO 879/6, CO 806/2, in Ibid., p. 316.

that, ‘you know that your soldiers are powerless before an army of white men’.[1372]

As with their claims of British technological superiority, many commentators suggested that their African enemies were themselves well convinced of their subordinate military status. Upon the capture of Karikari’s capital, *The Spectator* concluded that, ‘the most powerful and most brutal race in Africa has learned that it cannot measure itself against the white man with any chance of success…and we ourselves have learned the conditions of a successful African war’.[1373] The British army had, Dooner claimed:

> taught the whole coloured race a lesson, which the men of the different tribes cannot fail to talk about. The warlike Kings of Bonny, Opobo, and the Kossoos will all hear of how the white man went into the bush and drove the Ashantee out of his stronghold. The name of England will now be respected on the Coast – the superiority of her soldiers acknowledged; and I do not think we shall be troubled during the present generation with any more Ashantee invasions of the Protectorate.[1374]

After the destruction of Magdala, similarly, the *Pall Mall Gazette* rejoiced in the belief that rulers in India and Africa would surely henceforth recognise that European powers were, ‘absolutely irresistible by less civilized races’.[1375] Imperialists and jingoists believed they had their proof that the British soldier was militarily superior anywhere and, hence, the British race everywhere.

6.5 Context Insensitivity

Colonel George Charles Depree, Surveyor-General of the Government of India from 1884-87, once noticed that some of his European surveyors had been instructing their Indian servants to make field drawings. He insisted that this practice stop in a memorandum to the Public Service Commission, arguing that, ‘it is suicidal for the Europeans to admit that Natives can do any one thing

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[1372] Wolseley to King Kofi Kakari, 26 January 1874, TNA, CO 879/6, in Ibid., p. 355.
[1373] ‘The Capture of Coomassie’, *The Spectator,* 28 Feb. 1874, p. 4.
[1374] Dooner, *Jottings En Route,* p. 70.
[1375] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 27 Apr. 1868, p. 1.

better than themselves. They should claim to be superior in *everything* and only allow Natives to take a secondary or subordinate part'.[1376] During the time of the Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions, the conceptual norm in Britain was moving from what this study has earlier referred to as 'racial environmentalism' to a characterisation of race that was rigidly hierarchical and in which a person's place in that hierarchy was believed to manifest in all attributes. The determining influence of setting had seemingly been dropped from the issue. The dominance of the white European was increasingly put forward as context-independent.

As Bolt argued, when evolutionary theory was applied to anthropology in the 1860s and '70s, 'Victorians' ethnocentrism allowed them to think in terms of a cultural hierarchy, in which Western civilizations occupied first place, followed by those of the East, and with the stagnant, technologically backward cultures of Africa and the Pacific at the bottom.'[1377] Early- to mid-century ethnocentrism could, in and of itself, still allow for Europeans to take subordinate roles in some categories and in some settings, the tropics in particular. The cultural hierarchy formulated in the mid- to late-century, conversely, was taken to be categorical and thus universal. Spurr described this mode of scientific discourse, devoted to the arrangement of things into one master 'table', as the 'squared and spacialized' development of natural history. While premised on a strict conformity to observation and measurement, such systems require the prioritisation of particular traits to determine table placement, which is then

[1376] Memorandum by Col. Depree, Proceedings of the Sub-Committee, Public Service Commission, Survey Department of India, p. 23 in Bose, Pramatha Nath, *A History of Hindu Civilization During British Rule,* Vol. 3, (Calcutta: W. Newman & Co., 1896). For more on the imperial dynamic of mapping, see Matthew Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765-1843* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).
[1377] Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race*, p. 27.

projected back onto the interpretation of other traits.[1378] Thus, for example, a people with less-well-developed methods of iron manufacture would be presumed to also lag behind in the medical, governmental, and philosophical fields.

This focus on hierarchy was reflected by a shift in the emphasis of anthropological surveys during the 1860s from comparative linguistic analysis, which is tied to culture and upbringing, to comparisons of physical traits, thought to be immutable, deterministic, and certainly quantifiable.[1379] A person's status, in short, was increasingly believed to derive from their inherited characteristics above all else. Moreover, these ideas were increasingly reflected in imperial administration. Perhaps the most famous example was the eight-volume *The People of India,* published from 1868 to 1876 by the India Office. The work represents an ambitious attempt to quantify and establish lines of racial grading. It was also notable for its use of photographic technology, containing 468 annotated photographs of 'typical' representatives of the Indian tribes and castes.[1380]

There is always the consideration of the degree to which theories of race and ethnography impacted upon the broad British population. As MacKenzie argued:

> It was, perhaps, principally through warfare that the racial ideas of the day were diffused to the public at large. Concepts of race were closely related in popular literature to the imperative of conflict between cultures, and the evidence of superiority it provided. Colonial heroes became the

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[1378] David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993) pp. 63-4.
[1379] Douglas A. Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians: English Attitudes to the Negro in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1978) p. 16.
[1380] Andrew S. Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back?: The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Harlow, UK: Pearson Longman, 2005) p. 26; John F. Watson and John W. Kaye, eds., *The People of India: a series of photographic illustrations, with descriptive letterpress, of the races and tribes of Hindustan*, Volumes 1-8, (London: India Museum [W. H. Allen & Co.], 1868-1875); James R. Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997) p. 219.

> prime exemplars of a master people, and this enhanced their position in the military cult of personality.[1381]

Thus, British engagements with the Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions were more than simply reflective of contemporary notions of race and dominance, but were in fact integral to their development and dissemination. Small wars drew the Victorian attention and naturally generated discussion on matters of race. Men of the officer class were more than likely to read on the subject and often keen to garner public attention. Imperial conflicts were usually followed by a surge in public speeches and article presentations. Wolseley had many opinions on race and he gained a much larger share of the public ear due to the Ashanti expedition. Newspapers naturally ran stories on the areas in which small wars were taking place, reviving earlier geographic and ethnographic surveys. Military conflict in any scenario tends to promote comparisons between 'us' and 'them'. Reade had already published ethnographic work, *Savage Africa* in particular, which then gained a boost in notoriety and prestige on the back of his involvement as a special correspondent. His strongly-held opinions influenced the tone of his reporting in the field. In these ways, officers and journalists provided a number of bridges between the work generated by learned societies and the general public. Indeed, this study has shown that the coverage of colonial and imperial small wars provided an imagined setting in which issues of cultural identity were negotiated and contested.

British successes in the African interior encouraged a very direct interpretation of natural selection in discussions of empire. In January 1867, the London *Fortnightly Review* published a series of five essays by the journalist, banker, and *Economist* editor Walter Bagehot. In 1872, the essays were published as a book titled *Physics and Politics, or: Thoughts on the Application*

[1381] John M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion 1880-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984) p. 7.

of the Principles of "Natural Selection" and "Inheritance" to Political Society.[1382] Bagehot set out to explain the influence of evolution by natural selection in human social development, which, according to his interpretation, both explained and justified imperial conquest and nationalist militarism.[1383] War, he claimed, was the foundation of human nature and the ultimate arbiter of civilisational progress (and thus of comparative superiority). He asserted that, 'since the long-headed men first drove the short-headed men out of the best land in Europe, all European history has been the history of the superposition of the more military races over the less military'.[1384] Civilisation itself, he continued, 'begins, because the beginning of civilization is a military advantage'.[1385] It was not only weaponry, therefore, but also non-military technologies that served as clear indicators of British military superiority over less advanced civilisations.

In his study of the Anglo-Maratha campaigns in India, historian Randolf Cooper argued as well that the ubiquitous concept of 'superior British training, discipline and drill' in nineteenth-century discussions of small wars had itself developed from social Darwinism.[1386] The term 'discipline' provided Europeans with a respectable and seemingly 'objective' means of evoking assumed racial superiority.

Certain commentators concluded that Darwin and Wallace had in fact described the workings of a categorical hierarchy of races, and that this provided a strong justification for imperial expansion. Wallace in particular wrote

[1382] Walter Bagehot, *Physics and Politics, or: Thoughts on the Application of the Principles of "Natural Selection" and "Inheritance" to Political Society,* Roger Kimball, ed. (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1999 [1872]).
[1383] For a concise analysis of Bagehot's work, see Richard G. Olson, *Science and Scientism in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008) pp. 254-7.
[1384] Bagehot, *Physics and Politics,* p. 46.
[1385] Ibid., p. 48.
[1386] R.G.S. Cooper, *The Anglo-Maratha Campaigns and the Conquest for India: The Struggle for Control of the South Asian Military Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) pp. 310-11.

of the, 'great law of "*the preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life*," which leads to the inevitable extinction of all those low and mentally undeveloped populations with which Europeans come in contact'. Wallace, at least as interpreted by some readers, went beyond the claim that the strong would defeat the weak through military conflict. Rather, he posited that humans could remove themselves from the boundaries of nature through the adaptive influence of civilisation, but that the different races sat at different points along this process. He thought that the key to the origin of the races lay in the idea that, 'in proportion as man's social, moral and intellectual faculties became developed, his physical structure would cease to be affected by the operation of "natural selection"'. Europeans and Africans, therefore, had diverged in form as the former pulled ahead in the race to separate themselves from, and thus conquer, nature. When Europeans came into contact with less developed races, the natives, 'die out, not from any one special cause, but from the inevitable effects of an unequal mental and physical struggle. The intellectual and moral, as well as the physical qualities of the European are superior.'[1387] Hence, to many British commentators, Europeans were *a priori* able to adapt and thrive in any environment, at the expense of those less adapted races. Context was irrelevant.

A year earlier, Reade closed his study of West Africa with a certain anticipation of the coming scramble:

> Africa shall be redeemed. Her children shall perform this mighty work. Her morasses shall be drained; her deserts shall be watered by canals; her forests shall be reduced to firewood. Her children shall do this. They shall pour an *elixir vitae* into the veins of their mother now withered and diseased. They shall restore her to youth and to immortal beauty. In this amiable task they may possibly become exterminated. We must learn to

[1387] A. R. Wallace, 'The origin of human races and the antiquity of man deduced from the theory of "natural selection"', *Journal of the Anthropological Society of London,* Vol. 2, (1864) pp. clxiv-clxv.

look on this result with composure. It illustrates the beneficent law of nature, that the weak must be devoured by the strong.[1388]

Reade predicted that, as European civilisation advanced into the African interior, the country itself would be altered, made more habitable to the newcomers and yet less habitable to natives. This was the ultimate goal of acclimatisation studies and the final success of the conceptual civilisational bubble that men of the Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions had sought to use novel technology to erect.[1389] Climatic context would follow the British, and then Africans would find themselves out of their element.

In 1899, an article in *Pearson's Weekly* reflected the tenor of British popular views of race, space, and dominance that had developed over the imperial renaissance. Asking, 'Are we an aggressive race?', the article replied that progress required strong states to conquer weak states and that the Empire was thus an agent of progress. Some natives had benefited from this progress, but, 'there are coloured races who wither in the presence of civilisation, but that is because they are deficient in that quality which we call adaptation to environment'.[1390]

6.6 Conclusions

The Victorian fixation with novel technology thus united with ethnocentrism to provide the justification of British civilisation's superiority over nature and those 'lesser' races still tied closely to nature. Macgregor Laird encapsulated the confidence of the Victorian imperial impulse in the often-quoted close to his book, *Narrative of an Expedition into the Interior of*

[1388] Reade, *Savage Africa,* p. 587.
[1389] Osborne, Michael A. 'Acclimatizing the World: A History of the Paradigmatic Colonial Science.' *Osiris* 2nd Series, Vol. 15, Nature and Empire: Science and the Colonial Enterprise, (2000) pp. 135-51.
[1390] 'Are we an aggressive race?', *Pearson's Weekly*, 21 Oct. 1899, p. 245; Also discussed in Peter Broks, *Media Science before the Great War* (London: MacMillan Press, 1996) p. 93.

Africa.[1391] The wealthy son of a shipbuilder, Laird had steamed up the Niger in a high-publicity expedition with the stated intent of opening the interior of Africa to British trade and the Christian religion. Forty of the forty-nine Europeans died during the voyage, and Laird was financially ruined by the attempt.[1392] Yet, he did not lose his enthusiasm for novel technology, which he saw as the engine of humanity's progress. He closed with a call for Britain to end slavery in Africa:

> We have the power in our hands, moral, physical and mechanical; the first, based on the Bible; the second, upon the wonderful adaptation of the Anglo-Saxon race to all climates, situations, and circumstances, - a facility of constitution which has spread them from Hudson's Bay to the Gulf of Mexico – which is fast peopling Australasia, and which has changed the government of a hundred millions of people in the East: the third, bequeathed to us by the immortal Watt. By his invention every river is laid open to us, time and distance are shortened.[1393]

As British armies penetrated the African interior, it appeared to some that Laird's view of the transformative power of civilisation had toppled Hunt's restrictions. Civilisation had taken primacy over the limits of climate, and novel technology had brought it there.

[1391] Quoted in, for example, Daniel R. Headrick, 'The Tools of Imperialism: Technology and the Expansion of European Colonial Empires in the Nineteenth Century,' *The Journal of Modern History* 51, no. 2 (1979) pp. 231-63; and Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain.*
[1392] Curtin, *The Image of Africa,* p. 296.
[1393] MacGregor Laird and R. A. K. Oldfield, *Narrative of an Expedition into the Interior of Africa* (London: Richard Bentley, 1837) 2:397-8.

Thesis Conclusion

This thesis began with the bold claim that the Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions were Britain's first successful major forays into the African interior, and turning points in the imperial project. This concluding section will review the arguments that have been put forward in justification of that statement, touch on the state of the British idea of Africa at the end of the surveyed time period, and offer some comments on this study's larger resonance.

Throughout this examination of the portrayal and reception of military technology as constructed spectacle in the popular coverage of these expeditions, it has been argued that new and 'novel' military technologies were made to serve symbolic roles in a technophile discourse that cast expansion into Africa as part of a final conquest of the natural world. The 'idea' of small wars became an important component of the frame through which British society viewed its relationship with the non-Western world, and with Africa in particular. It incorporated both the struggle for, and the moral justification for, imperial conquest. Different groups in Britain each saw in small wars what they wanted to see, and made the idea of imperial conflict work for them. Small wars, in turn, became a site on which British culture was contested and remade.

A central claim of this thesis has been that the conduct of small wars in the field mirrored and reflected the sense of performance that characterised the media reproductions and narratives of such conflicts in the home country. A certain technophile impulse pervaded how the expeditions were conceived, but also how they were actually performed. The vision of Africa that was solidified during this collective engagement with the Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions had ramifications on Britain's future on that continent. These campaigns received considerable popular attention in Britain, around the empire, and

among the other Great Powers. The manner in which they were discussed in the public narrative enhanced the subsequent popularity of, and popular comfort with, the notion of imperial small wars.

The form that imperial culture would take through the ‘scramble’ period to the late nineteenth-century owed much to the manner in which these early expeditions were presented, perceived, and remembered by the public and by the military. The success of these ventures enhanced perceptions of military capability, technological superiority, and civilisational supremacy in the Victorian imagination. The perceived ease of the victories, along with the manifest evidence of advances in medicine, precipitated a reassessment of the nature of racial dominance.

This thesis has also demonstrated how the press and military accounts of the expeditions were framed by discourses emplotting a battle against the natural world, discourses in which the people of Abyssinia and Ashanti were portrayed as reflections of that natural world. Narratives of technological superiority and scientific violence were generated in response to particular anxieties of the perceived dangers of the African interior. Accounts of the expeditions analysed in this thesis demonstrated a strong hope, desire to claim, and tendency to interpret that the presence of novel technology would shield British forces, beat back the wild climate, and terrify Africans into submission. Furthermore, officers in the field went to considerable effort to dazzle local populations with the spectacle of modern technology. The presupposition that these displays would overawe Africans was central to the developing imperial ideal. Novel military technology was integral to the British re-imagining of Africa as a colonial space, from the ‘white man’s grave’ to something that *could* be conquered. This ‘technologised’ imperial rhetoric, then, was more than a simple

expression of arrogant ethnocentrism. It was a reaction to anxiety as much it was an assertion of confidence, and imperial culture emerged out of the tension between them.

In practice, the taming of the imperial imagination was a long, inconsistent, and continuous process. The struggle to subdue both the real and imagined outer world was, not merely a precursor or prerequisite to rapid imperial expansion, but was itself an integral part of imperialism. The popular image of Africa had indeed been tamed over the late 1860s and early 1870s. The multifarious strands of such discourses have been examined throughout this study.

Patrick Porter has argued that Western views of the Orient at war were highly fluid. As 'a mixed bag of self-glorification and self-doubt', images of the Other could be made, ruptured and redrawn in the wake of events, all the while maintaining the assemblage of stereotypes upon which both the original and transformed images were based.[1394]

As this thesis has demonstrated, Western images of Africa were similarly malleable. The experience of war, selectively interpreted and filtered by layers of military culture, press culture, exploration culture, exhibition culture, indeed, imperial culture, reinforced many of the existing stereotypes of African nature and African people. Yet, the same process drastically altered the public's reactions to these images of Africa's nature and people, both of which were heavily fictionalised constructions. These clichéd tropes received a boost and took greater hold in British culture in the late 1860s and early 1870s. The military and public engagement with the Abyssinian and Ashanti expeditions further show how the accepted emplotments of particular events can become

[1394] Patrick Porter, *Military Orientalism: Eastern War through Western Eyes* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2009) p. 23, 29.

embedded in the popular ‘idea’ of a place, concept, or activity. After the British successes in Abyssinia and Ashanti, the weight of feeling had swung from self-doubt to self-glorification.

The associated view of Africa as more ‘conquerable’ became, to many in Britain, the one upon which their support of future expansion was based. Such stereotypes formed part of the intellectual foundation for the Scramble for Africa. These ideas did not change overnight, of course, nor ever achieve consistent or uniform penetration among the population. Rather, these campaigns became shorthand references, signifiers for a range of associated images and interpretations, which advocates of empire could employ in their defence of future invasions. Over time, the positive associations that those references implied surely had some effect on popular moods. Such effects bear on Collins’ concept of ‘creating victory’ in Victorian warfare. He rightly argues that, ‘the political and psychological processes involved in creating victory were fluid and multi-faceted’, depending upon the perceptions of a wide variety of participants.[1395] The Abyssinian and Ashanti campaigns became signifiers that could be used in the psychological generation of victory. They formed part of the corpus, or ‘text’, of imperial ideals on which debates were often outwardly premised.

It is important to recognise that the shift in Britain’s culture of confidence was one of *ideals* and *expectations,* and not necessarily one of coherent or consistent maxims for foreign policy. There were certainly many examples during the 1880s and 90s where Britain did *not* move aggressively into Africa. Each case featured its own push factors, pull factors, interested parties, and political divisions. Yet, the debates over each new case – in the press, pubs,

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[1395] Bruce Collins, ‘Defining Victory in Victorian Warfare, 1860-1882,’ *The Journal of Military History* 77 (Jul. 2013) p. 927.

peace societies, Parliament, and Colonial and War Offices – were conducted in reference to an imprecise 'idea' of Africa, which posed certain risks and presented certain potential (psychological as well as material) rewards. Any shifts in the form of that 'imagined Africa' would affect the substance of those debates. The existence of a set of ideal expedition types in the public consciousness likely had some effect on government policies, as politicians must respond to, and cater for, public expectations, and themselves exist within their nation's culture.

Wolseley's and Napier's expeditions were notable in their time for having defied expectations. Far more significant, in retrospect, was the fact that they then *became* part of the collective expectation, clichés in themselves. Imperialism, and the small wars that drove it forward, had changed because portions of the British public, government, and military establishment *believed* they had changed. While malleable, such constructed perceptions gained a momentum and indelibility of their own. The small wars and expeditions that followed in later years were selectively interpreted and incorporated into an idealised, 'All Sir Garnet', image that remained recognisable throughout the Scramble for Africa and the 'new' imperial era. Henceforth, doubts could be allayed and jingoism encouraged by appealing to these 'very models of the modern expedition imperial'.[1396]

This thesis more widely illustrates that the study of imperial culture and popular imperialism has much to gain from the study of the internal cultures of military organisations, the history of technology, and the popular narratives of campaigns. The cultures of military organisations, in particular, offer a rich area for further study into the processes of interpretation and incorporation of new

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[1396] A reference to Arthur Sullivan and William Gilbert, *The Pirates of Penzance: Or, The Slave of Duty,* (London: Chappell & Co., 1911 [1879]). Also discussed on p. 129.

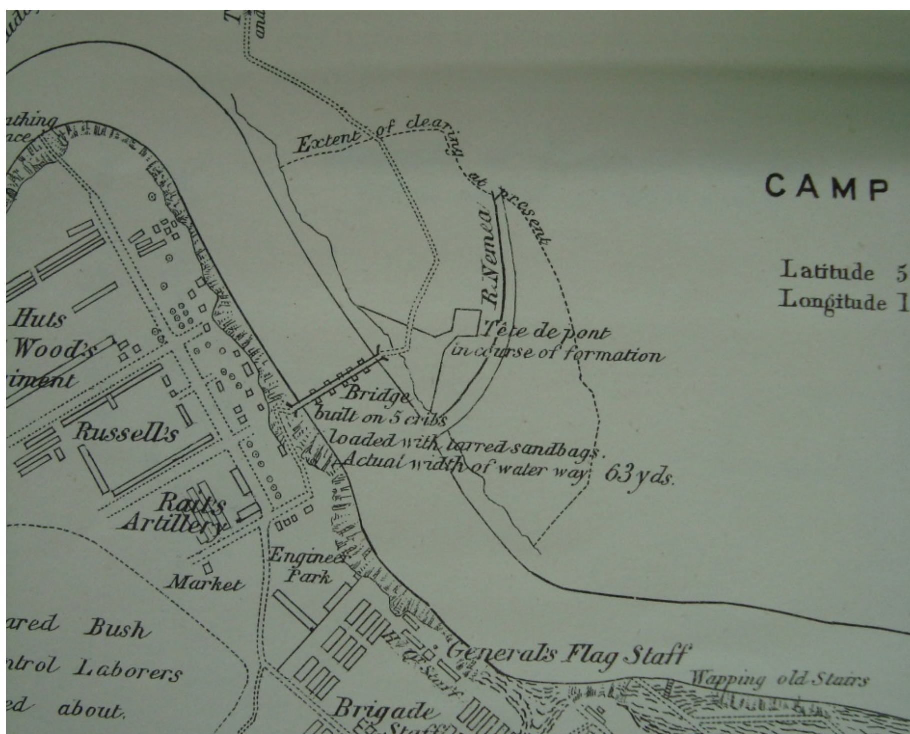
technologies. This applies to ‘civilian’ technology as well as firearms. Virtually every British small war saw the introduction of some new weapon, medical, or transport technology. The military and public engagement with these technologies can provide windows into the contested and intersecting interpretations of race, climate, landscape, and national purpose to be found in the parent societies.

The history of military technology can lend significant insights to the study of culture, and must itself be undertaken with due consideration of the social and cultural factors that influence weapons development. Interdisciplinarity may be the appropriate term, though it should not obfuscate the simple fact that these issues and processes were intertwined in the first place. Indeed, how could a society’s reaction to a weapon system be discussed adequately *without* serious investigation of that society’s prevailing images of their enemies, and of their own self-identified purpose in warfare? The answers are never straightforward, and rarely to be found solely on the battlefields.

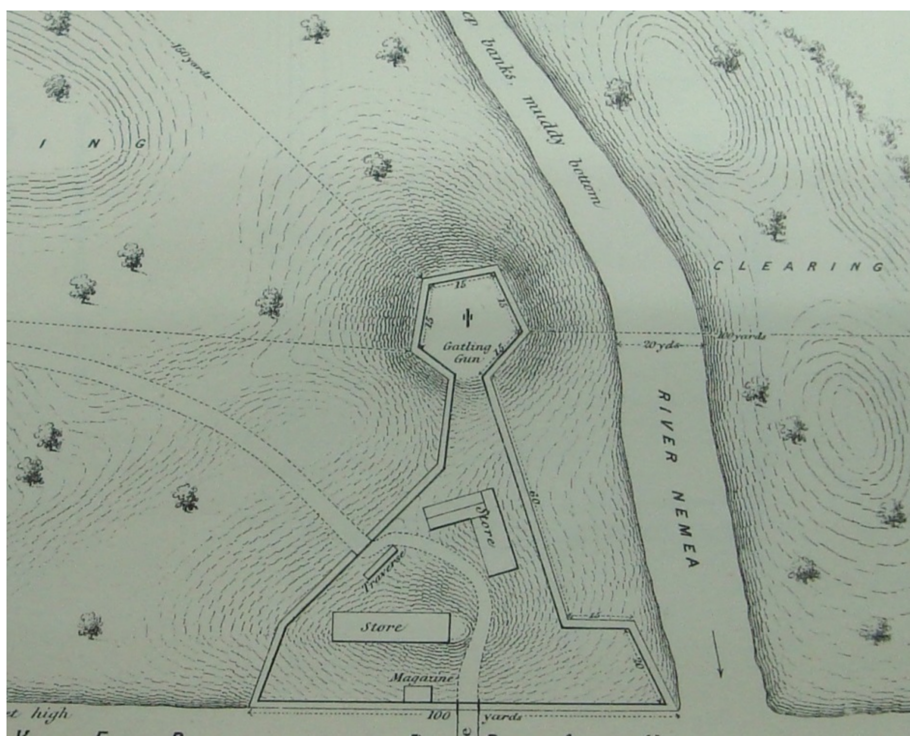
At some philosophical, and even strategic, levels, war never changes. Yet, the particulars of ‘how’ and ‘why’, as well as those of ‘them’ and ‘we’, are historically mutable and highly sensitive to context. The study of small wars can illustrate both of these points, which alone makes it a subject of great contemporary relevance and resonance.

Appendixes

Chapter 4 Appendix:



Appendix 1: 'Camp on the River Prah'.[1397]



Appendix 2: 'Rough Sketch of the Tete-De-Pont at the Prah'. [1398]

[1397] TNA, WO 147/27 'Journal of the Engineer Operations on the Gold Coast during the recent Expedition', Major Robert Home, 13 Oct. 1873, p. 64.
[1398] Ibid.

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Nature
New York Times
New York Tribune
Newcastle Courant
Pall Mall Gazette
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