

## The repercussion of the emancipation of slaves between 1772-1787

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*Accepted 11/10/2024**Received 15/11/2021***Abstract:**

England knew, during the eighteenth century, a campaign to eliminate slavery, behind it was a group of religious and legal personalities using various means to end this slavery. And this struggle resulted with the emancipation of slaves in England after the issuance of Judge Mansfield's decision in 1772. With the end of the last American Revolution in 1783 against England; the government issued a decree to free all black slaves who were loyal, and participated alongside England in the revolt against the American revolutionaries.

The decision of 1772 led other slaves from several regions to influx to England in search of freedom, and their number increased with the arrival of the black loyalists, this created a social crisis, as these slaves became scattered in the streets of England begging for their livelihood. Some of the figures and the British government worked together to resettle them in another area.

**Keywords:** Slaves; Blacks; Philanthropists; Henry Smeathman; Sierra Leone.

## 1. Introduction

*England knew an operation of liberating black slaves and the flock of others entered the Britain in the second half of the eighteenth century, especially from the American continent, to obtain freedom from what caused overcrowding and congestion in the streets of England and spread of fear among the population, also resulted a social and economic crisis of the government and they scattered all over the country and even formed their own areas. This situation necessitated the intervention of some people with potential in charitable activity and even the government in order to get out of this predicament.*

*In this article, I will try to answer the following questions:*

*How did they liberate these slaves? And what were the results of their liberation on England? What was the solution that the English found to get rid of these slaves?*

*The scientific value, importance and purpose of this study is to shed light on the role played by the slaves in the implementation of some European forces' military plans and in their expansion, and to know the most important forms of colonialism .*

*Due to the nature of the topic, it is imperative that I follow the historical approach by narrating the events surrounding the abolition of the slave trade and its most important results, and addressing the personalities associated with it, without losing sight of the analytical approach with regard to the results obtained from this research, and this of course depends on Various references that have a direct relationship to the topic, such as books, doctoral theses, articles and dictionaries.*

## 2. Slaves Emancipation:

### 2.1 Somerset's case:

James Somerset was taken from Africa as a slave to America in 1749. He was sold in Virginia to "Charles Steuart", a Scottish merchant and slave trader in "Norfolk" who served after 1765 as a high ranking British customs officials. In 1769, Steuart took Somerset with him to England , Somerset escaped from steuart, but was recaptured. Steuart decided to sell Somerset back into slavery in Jamaica, and, in late November 1771, Someset was bound in chains on a ship " Ann and Marry" on the "Thames", awaiting shipment.

Fortunately for "Somerset", (Cleve, 2006, p. 601) "Granville sharp<sup>1</sup> a leader of slavery abolitionist network that existed in London, who heard about him by some people.<sup>2</sup> Granville Sharp

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<sup>1</sup> Granville Sharp: an eminent English philanthropist, born in Durham 1734. He early distinguished himself by his earnest opposition to negro slavery, and published in 1769 " A Presentation of Injustice and Dangerous Tendency of tolerating Slavery in England". Granville Sharp was one of the originators of the Association for the Abolition of Negro Slavery, and took a prominent part in founding the colony of Sierra Leone. Died in 1813. (Thomas J. , 2010, p. 2008)

<sup>2</sup> These people are abolitionists: Thomas Watkins, Elizabeth Cade, and John Marlow. (Peter, 2007, p. 643)

brought him into court before Lord Mansfield,<sup>3</sup> chief Justice of King's Bench in January 1772, (Crooks, 1903, p. 24) and on June 22nd in the same year a judgment was released to free "Somerset" (Gerzina, 1995, p. 129) and also stated that any slave who sets foot in England would become free and could not be carried back to slavery. (Crooks, 1903, p. 24)

This judgment set free between 14000 and 15000 of men at once in England, and they became homeless: suffering from cold and hunger in the streets of the monopolists, and many of them became beggars, others were involved in the crime prevalent in the poorer areas of the city. (Braidwood, 1994, pp. 20,31)

## ***2.2 Lord Dunmore's proclamation:***

As an armed conflict between England and her American colonies began to appear inevitable in 1775, the attention in some British quarters turned toward the half million American slaves hands who could be recruited as invaluable allies within the enemy camp, or even accepting them as soldiers, but it was met with resistance from senior British strategists. (Walker, 1974, pp. PP1-2)

For this war, Lord Dunmore<sup>4</sup> a British's governor in Virginia declared in November 1775 his proclamation that all intended servants and negroes were able and willing to bear arms in supporting Britain in return for their freedom.

This promise of freedom led the British Army to attract tens of thousands of black recruits (Julia, W.P.D, pp. PP 59-60) who took every opportunity to leave their masters, in hope of finding a happy asylum under the protection of the British Army.

At the end of the war, because of their fidelity and bravery, the English nation was determined to an enormous expense in transporting them and their families from the American provinces to Canada. (Ingham, 1894, pp. 134-135) Black Loyalists in particular flocked to Canada by the thousands. Nova Scotia received the majority of British Loyalist refugees in North America in the years after the war. Population surveys conducted in 1784 found that Nova Scotia had gained over 28,000 new inhabitants, which was double the number of settlers who had lived there before the war. By the end of the Loyalist migration, about 30,000 refugees had arrived in Nova Scotia. They estimated 3,000 free Blacks, as well as 1,200 slaves brought over by their Loyalist masters. In July 1783, a town was founded near "Port Roseway" as a settlement for Loyalist refugees. This town was named "Shelborne", and by the end of the year it already had almost 8,000 settlers. During this influx of refugees, Nova Scotia Governor John Parr decided that Black Loyalists should have a separate settlement nearby, rather than residing within "Shelborne". This neighboring settlement was named "Birchtown", after the general who had signed certificates of freedom for the Black Loyalists in New York. By January 1784, "Birchtown" had become a parallel Loyalist town that was home to 1,485 free Blacks, making it one of North America's biggest Black settlements. Also, another major destination for black loyalists after the war's end was Great

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<sup>3</sup> Lord Mansfield ( William Murray): He was born in 1705 in Scotland. After his study, became a MP, Solicitor General and Attorney-General. In 1756 he was appointed Chief Justice of the Court of King's Bench. He died in 1793. (Andrews, 2011, p. 688)

<sup>4</sup> Lord Dunmore ( John Murray): governor of the colony of New York , in 1769, afterwards, the last royal governor of Virginia, after committing many depredation upon the colonists, he returned to England, where he died in 1809. (Baldwin, 1825, p. 167)

Britain. This would seem an obvious choice and many loyalists viewed Britain as a refuge, or even home, and it was estimated up to five thousands black loyalists immigrated to Britain, the majority of them male and former soldiers. Those who were lucky (or unlucky) enough to survive in the war, they were struggling to make a living in England and it soon became common to see black veterans begging for food on the streets of London.<sup>5</sup>

### ***3. The repercussion of the emancipation of slaves:***

#### ***3.1 The Committee for the relief of the black poor:***

Poverty was noted as the most characteristic feature of Britain's blacks by observers and collectively they became known as the "Black Poor". The plight of indigent black poor in London became a matter of public on January 5th, 1786, when the "Public Advertiser" reported that a gentleman, his name was "Jonas Hanwey"<sup>6</sup> had authorized a baker in the city to give out quarter loaves of bread to every black in distress. That same gentleman was taking subscription to assist this purpose. Five days later he met men at a coffeehouse with several other gentlemen, all prominent men and know philanthropists, including the chairman and a director of the bank of England<sup>7</sup> to form the committee for the relief of the black poor.

By April 1786, the committee for the relief of Black poor had raised close to nine hundred pounds, and hired a room in the "White Raven" in "Mile End" and another at the "Yorkshire

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<sup>5</sup> Black Loyalists soon realized that they could hardly rely on the British government for aid. In order to be compensated, claimants needed clear proof of their losses, evidence of their freedom, and most importantly, money. Therefore "the illiterate, the poor, and the poorly connected" were routinely marginalized within this system.<sup>33</sup> Only 47 Blacks successfully filed claims for pensions or property compensation from the British government. The result was that just one man was awarded money for his property losses, while three received meager annual allowances and twenty were given small sums that ranged from five to twenty pounds. In contrast, few White Loyalists were totally denied assistance, while the majority of Blacks received nothing. Allowances of even the poorest Whites tended to be higher than those for the wealthiest Blacks and Whites who were given direct compensation rarely collected fewer than twenty-five pounds. (Bibko, 2016: pp 61-63)

<sup>6</sup> Jonas Hanway: he was an English merchant, philanthropist, traveler, and author, born at Portsmouth 1712, died 1786. (Thomas F., 1840, p. 36)

<sup>7</sup> The Committee's members included men of considerable standing in the world of finance, like "George Peters" was governor of the bank of England and "Thomas Boddington" a director," John Julius Angerstein" a noted philanthropist and was also an art-collector whose pictures later formed the basis of the National Gallery. Over half of the Committee eighteen members were (or had been) bankers or merchants, and several of others were also boards of the public merchants (chiefly hospitals). General Robert Melville was an energetic supporter of charities in London and Scotland. The first chairman was Montagu Burgoyne, an unsuccessful Whig politician and advocate of the agricultural allotments system as a way of providing help to "laboring poor" of countryside. The other member were Benjamin Johnson, Jonas Hanway, James Pettit (or peter) Andrews, Joseph Andrews, Samuel Thornton, Henry Thornton, Samuel Hoare, Richard Shaw, F. Mathews, John Osborne, George Drakke. (Braidwood, 1994, pp. 64-66)

Stingo” on “Lisson Green” in “Marylebone”, which they kept open for several hours each day to distribute relief.

As news of the committee for the relief of the black poor spread, the number of needy attending at the White Raven and the “Yorkshire Stingo” rose dramatically. It soon became apparent that short-term relief was no answer to the entrenched problem of poverty among London’s black community; the fundamental cause was chronic unemployment. (Pybus, 2006, pp. 103,107)

In the meantime, a proposal for a settlement in west coast Africa , exactly in Sierra Leone came to the committee, through the good offices of “Granville Sharp”, who introduced the mercurial botanist “Henry Smeathman”,<sup>8</sup> who lived in Africa for four years, where he had dreamed who lived in Africa for four years, where he had dreamed of the possibilities of an agricultural settlement on the sierra Leone river to produce export crops for Atlantic Markets. (Pybus, 2006, p. 108)

After obtaining the approval of the Committee, “Smeathman” formally presented his proposals to the Treasury in a document dated 17 May. On May 24th, the Treasury submitted Smeathman’s plan to Navy Commissioners for their opinion (perhaps particularly on Smeathman’s estimates for provisions), and they replied the same day with an agreement, and accepted to provide him with money for his plan. (Braidwood, 1994, p. 87)

### ***3.2 Transporting the black poor to Sierra Leone:***

#### ***A. The Sierra Leone geographical site and its kingdoms:***

Sierra Leone is a small country on the west coast of Africa, totalling 27925 square miles (73326 sq. km). It is roughly circular in shape, extending from north to south a maximum distance of 210 miles (332km), and from west to east a distance of about 204 miles (328 km). It is bounded

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<sup>8</sup> Henry Smeathman (1742–1786) was a businessman and private tutor with a love of natural history. He therefore met other natural historians such as “Dru Drury”, “Daniel Solander”, “Joseph Banks” and “John Fothergil” who provided him with money to sponsor him to go to Sierra Leone to collect natural history specimens in 1771. He had most success collecting insects, which his sponsors used in their own collections and for selling. “Henry Smeathman” also hoped to collect duplicate sets to sell at a profit for himself. Dozens of Henry Smeathman’s specimens ended up in Dru Drury’s collecting cabinets and were illustrated in Drury’s three volumes of *Illustrations of Natural History* (1770–82). “Henry Smeathman” lived and worked with Africans and had African assistance in excavating termite mounds. He acknowledged this in a paper to the Royal Society in 1781. “Henry Smeathman” stayed in Africa until 1775. Although he was initially against slavery, he took three African wives and, lived among African and European traders, became less opposed to the slave trade. After leaving Sierra Leone, “Smeathman” spent four years in the British West Indies helping sugar planters to get rid of ant infestations. He suggested a plantation settlement in Sierra Leone but, unlike the Caribbean, with a free labour market particularly made up of emancipated (freed) enslaved people who fought for Britain in the American War of Independence and other Africans in Britain. There were about 5,000 Africans in London in the 1780s, and maybe 10,000 across England. (Museum, 2007, pp. 8-9)

on the west and south-west by the Atlantic Ocean, and on the north-west, north and north-east by the Republic of Guinea and on the east and south-east by the republic of Liberia.

The country has three main relief regions – the Freetown Peninsula Mountains, the lowlands, and the highlands of the east and north-east. There are seven main river systems which are evenly distributed over the country. They flow from the north-east to the south-west into the Atlantic Ocean. Two main seasons are noticeable in the country – the dry season and the wet (rainy) season. The dry season begins about mid-November and lasts until April.

The political organization of some ethnic groups in Sierra Leone, namely, the Temne, Mende, Sherbro and Limba had by the second eighteenth century, created large states with highly-developed political systems. Traditional rulers were, on the whole, not autocratic, for everybody was subject to the same laws. No ruler could exempt himself from the rules of customary law simply because he was a king. Subjects could appeal against their chief. Moreover, kings almost always acted in concert with their principal advisers. If the king wanted to declare war, for instance, he first held a meeting with his advisers. If they felt that the war was unjust, or that the enemy was very strong, they could withhold their support and give orders for peace despite the king. (Alie, 1990, pp. 1,15)

### ***B.Preparations:***

Smeathman's proposal was quickly approved by the committee as well as the British Treasury, which agreed to allot him 14 pounds for each black, in order to encourage them to migrate to Sierra Leone, and this amount of money is condition to the blacks in exchange of going to Sierra Leone.

The government agreed to provide these blacks with supplies and provide them with all the necessities for a period of three months after their disembarkation, (Julia, W.P.D, p. 64) while providing them with: 400 firearms, a quantity of gunpowder and bullets, along with sending more than 25 professionals in order to help them establish this settlement, especially in the agricultural and health field, including four doctors, farmers, gardeners and a specialist in plants, trees and seeds. There were also some craftsmen, such as blacksmiths, weapons makers, land surveyors, builders, carpenters, engineers, tanners, weavers, linen makers, and baker, as "Sharp" suggested establishing schools on board ships to teach them how to read and write and showed the committee a great importance for setting up a church by sending a person who takes care of them and rings the bells called "William Gray", and there were even a group of craftsmen took their families.

Also The committee suggested in May that blacks should be divided into groups of 12 to 24 people, where each group is chaired by a corporal, and at its meeting on June 7th, 1786, it chose 8 of the most qualified corporations among these blacks, (Braidwood, 1994, pp. 87,148) and three positions were created to conduct and organize the campaign during the trip and shortly after: there were the fleet captain who was appointed captain "Thomas Boulden Thompson"<sup>9</sup> and was in

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<sup>9</sup> Thomas Boldan Thompson (February 28th, 1766 – March 3rd, 1828): Born in the city of Kant, a Royal Navy officer and commander with extensive experience in West Africa where he worked there under the direction of his uncle Edward Thompson, commander of a small African naval fleet. He played a major

January 1787 and he had an experience in the field, and the supervisor had been selected “Joseph Irwin”<sup>10</sup> by blacks, and finally the delegate that was chosen by The board of directors of the navy was appointed “Gustavus Vassa”<sup>11</sup> on December 4th, 1786 and is responsible for warehouses and supplies. (Braidwood, 1994, p. 171)

Also, three ships: “Atlantic”, “Belisarius” and “Vernon”, were hired to transport the blacks. It was announced that Vernon would start its journey later than the other ships in order to take the blacks who wished to join the project, (Schama, 2006, p. 194) as well. The government stated that this small fleet would be escorted by a warship called "Nautilus" and would be under the command of “Thomas Boldan Thompson” in order to defend and guard these settlers while staying there in Sierra Leone for the longest time, which was prepared on January 6th, 1787. (Braidwood, 1994, pp. 90,177)

The request of the blacks was also accepted on October 6th, 1786, by providing them with stamped certificates by the king, and the undersigned indicates that they are free and are considered British subjects and are in an armored box. (T1/638/249, 1786)

### ***C. The departure and the foundation of sierra leone:***

Commander “Thomas Baldon Thompson” waited for the fair winds before departure as he inquired about the agreement with local leaders about the plot. (Braidwood, 1994, pp. 148-149)The response from "Lord Sydney"<sup>12</sup> was that if he did not reach an agreement he would have to search for another place and when he became aware of this decision he immediately took off on February 23rd,1787, but unfortunately during the departure of the warship "Nautilus" from the canal "Spidthead", the ship hit the sandbank, also, the fleet did not sail too far from the canal until it was struck by the storm, which led to the separation of the ships on February 27th, as "Vernon" lost its fore topmast and some of Nautilus's stocks were destroyed after falling to the sea, the "Atlantic"

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role in the slave trade abolition movement, as he presented evidence strongly condemning the slave trade to the House of Commons committee in 1790, and he also contributed significantly to the beginnings of the establishment of the Sierra Leone settlement. (Logman, 1829, p. 32)

<sup>10</sup> Joseph Irwin: writer and friend of Henry Smeathman, who, after his death, compensated the latter for chairing and supervising the project. (Egerton, 2009, p. 212)

<sup>11</sup> Gustavus Vassa (1745-1797): his real name is “Olaudah Equiano” and he was born in the village of "Ibo" which is currently in Nigeria, after being kidnapped by slave traders, he was taken across the Atlantic to the farms of the West Indies and In the year 1757, he came to London for the first time and he was 12 years old, and this after he bought it from an English naval commander named “Pascal” about 30 pounds and gave him as a gift to his cousins, where he taught him and baptized him in Saint Margret's Westminster. In the year 1762 the English leader sold him again to a merchant and took him to the West Indies, and after reaching the age of 21 he bought his freedom for about 40 pounds and that on June 10, 1766, and after a year he returned to England and worked as a merchant and sailor and in the year 1786 appointed As the first black worker in the Sierra Leone project. In 1792 he married an English woman “Susanna Gullan” and he had two daughters, “Ann Marry” and “Joanna”. (Walvin, 2000, pp. 1,188)

<sup>12</sup> Lord Sydney (1733- June 30th, 1800): His real name was "Thomas Townshend". He was born in London and educated at the "Clare College" school, then Cambridge where he graduated in 1753 AD and was chosen as a Parliamentarian in 1754 AD. He married in the year 1760 from "Elizabeth Powys" and in 1767 he was appointed a pay changer and a private consultant, and in 1782 he became Minister of the Interior and responsible for concluding a peace treaty with America, and to relieve British prisons he recommended sending criminals and establishing a colony for them in the Botany Cap, Australia. (Hollis, 2001, p. 305)

and "Belisarius" ships were ordered to be placed at "Plymouth Harbor", on 1 March Thomas went to the "Torbay region" and found "Vernon" there and initiated repairs and carpenters from that area were instructed and a priest to make a new fore tompast for the "Vernon", but Because of the persistence of the hurricane, repairs were stalled, and on March 9th, the ships "Nautilus" and "Vernon" sailed to "Plymouth", but with the severe hurricane they returned to "Torbay" and on 15 March they sailed again, and on March 18th, almost a month after sailing, the ships returned to "Plymouth". (Braidwood, 1994, pp. 144,280)

"Thomas Boldan Thompson" made preparations again for Africa, and he and "Irwin" appeared to inspect and verify stock and order to speed up the repair process. He also provided himself with the supply of ships from "Plymouth" stores and requested to maintain sufficient stock for six months. Within nine days, "Vernon" and "Atlantic" were shipped with more than 9,000 Ib. of bread, 2240 4-Ib. pieces of pork and similar quantities of other types of supplies carried on "Vernon" and "Atlantic". He also ordered a supply of dried fruit in the form of raisins and currants, in addition to 5020 Ib. of suet were accordingly put on "Vernon", and the next day after loading the ships moved into the sailing site. On April 9th, 1787 at half past one, the small fleet sailed to Sierra Leone and has 411 black people on board. (Braidwood, 1994, p. 160)

After a passage of just over 4 weeks, (Huddleston, 2010, p. 412) the British ships caught sight of land on May 5th, and five days later the grueling journey to Sierra Leone was finally over. The colonists landed in Frenchman's Bay, which they soon renamed St. George's Bay. Thomas B. Thompson," captain of the *Nautilus*, chose the place nearby where the settlement would be built. Thompson, Joseph Irwin, and Patrick Fraser (the missionary) officially bought the land on June 11 from King Tom<sup>13</sup>, a local Temne chief after an agreement was signed for £59 12s 5d worth of trade goods including 130 gallons of rum, 25 iron bars, 2 dozen lace hats, muskets, powder, shot, cotton goods, tobacco and beads. The settlers cut their way into the bush, renamed the bay St George's bay, and the hill St George's hill, raised the British Flag. (Huddleston, 2010, p. 412)

By the terms of the treaty, Tom promised that he "forever quit claim to a certain district of land for the settling of the said free community to be theirs, theirs Heirs and successors forever". The district involved was of considerable extent, stretching eastwards from the settlement several miles along the River Sierra Leone as far as Gambia Island, "and southerly or inland twenty miles". Frenchman's Bay was renamed after the patron saint of England, as St. George bay, and Tom promised, on behalf of himself and his successors, that: "I will bear true allegiance to his Most Gracious Majesty King George the Third,...and protect the said free settlers his subjects to the utmost of my power against the insurrections and attacks of all Nations and people whatever". (Braidwood, 1994, p. 183)

The colonists landed on May the 14<sup>th</sup>, 1787, but the rainy season set in before they could finish their huts, which were, therefore, neither wind nor water-tight. This bad accommodation was the cause of very many deaths. By September the 13<sup>th</sup>, the provisions, the clothing, tools, etc., were entirely served out to the colonists, and on that day the arms and ammunition were sent on shore.

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<sup>13</sup> King Tom: sub-chief of the Koya Temne kingdom (Ferguson, 1997, p. 19)



When the Captain Thompson sailed for England on September the 16<sup>th</sup>, the colonists , who had numbered over four hundred, were reduced by death and starvation to 276, of whom five were white men and 29 white women, and 242 Blacks. After the first year no extraordinary mortality prevailed, and the settler gradually improved in their circumstances. They were, however, too poor and too ignorant to avail themselves of all the natural advantages of the country, and so many had emigrated to the slave factories that in March, 1788, the community numbered only 130 in all. (Crooks, 1903, pp. 30-31)

In May, 1788, Mr. Granville Sharp chartered, at his own expense, the brig “Myro”, a vessel of 160 tons, in which he shipped two months’ provisions for fifty persons who had engaged to go out with clothing, arms, tools, etc. , and a sum of money to buy live stock on the coast. The vessel sailed June 6<sup>th</sup>, with thirty-nine persons, chiefly white people, on board , but did not arrive at Sierra Leone till 6<sup>th</sup> August, and owing to deaths and other causes, only twenty passengers were landed in the colony. Sending out htses supplies may br said to have preserved the infant colony, for on the vessel’s arrival, the greater part of the wanderers returned. The Grant of Land made by the King Tom to Captain Thompson, Mr. Irwin the Agent Conductor, and Rev. P. Frazer , chaplain , being considered invalid, it having been purchased from people who had no authority to sell it, confirmation of that grant was obtained from King Naimbana, the chief of Sierra Leone, on 22<sup>nd</sup> August, 1788. (Crooks, 1903, p. 31)

#### **4. Conclusion**

Finally, I concluded that:

The freed slaves during the eighteenth century are not, as some have claimed, the result of the efforts of religious people to liberate them, but were also the result of a military strategy, it means that they used them as a military means to win the war in exchange for giving them freedom

Also, in fact the British government was really aiming not to help black people but to cleanse England of generating undesirable elements, and also to use them as a way to create an agricultural colony that would replace its colonies in America that were lost.

The foundation of Sierra Leone was not only a social movement that aimed to help black slaves, but it was a religious, economical and cultural movement intended to provide Britain with agricultural products, and spread Christianity and the English culture.

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