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Annual Report on the Social and Economic Progress of the People of the Gambia 1933.

CHAPTER I. HISTORY, GEOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE.

History.

In the 10th, 11th, 12th and 13th centuries the Arabs acquired and recorded a good deal of information about the interior of West Africa, but the cartography of Senegambia remained still a blank south of the Gezala or Gedala Tuareg of the Soudi-el-Hamma (Wadi Targa) when the Genoese Giovanni di Carignano made his planisphere in 1320.

In the 12th and 13th centuries, however, the numerous Jewish trading communities which traded mainly in gold from such centres as Tuat and Nul Lanta (Wadi Draa) south to Melli (Bandak) and beyond, had acquired so much information about the Western Sudan and Sahara that the maps of the cartographers of Majorca, as, for instance, the planisphere of Angelino Doleant (Majorca) 1339 A.D., and that of the converted Jew, Meiri de Viladestes 1113 A.D., show a considerable advance in recorded knowledge.

The latter shows Tagbazza or Taobani of the salt mines (the Tutek of the El Bekri) as Tatega, and also Tacun, the country of the Tukolor, and for the first time the Gambia River is shown under the name "Nigelaka". To the North of the Nigelaka is a name Ude or Wude, also a country and cape called Abach as well as Hsengar (the Senegal River). In the valley of the river Nigelaka, a place called Tegerit is shown, the name being probably akin to the name Nigelaka, both being derived from the Berber N'gel, N'gae, or N'gir with Berber ending -ek or -ik. Angelino Doleant shows, to the south of the coast region called Abach, a people called Felle who are probably identical with the Ude of Viladestes, *i.e.*, Fulbe.

Though Phœnician sailors from Carthage (Cadiz) are said to have traded down the West Coast of Africa, the first recorded European exploratory expedition to the Gambia by sea was that of the Genoese Antonio Usodimare, who, on the 12th December, 1482, wrote to his relatives that he had "gone 800 leagues further than any other Christian" and had navigated his "carnavel" as far as the Gambia (Gambia).

Usodimare had left Genoa about the time of the death of the King of Spain, John II of Castile in 1454, at a time when the Spaniards were busy protesting to the Pope against the Portuguese expeditions to Cape Bojador and beyond, but Usodimare's interests or sympathies led him to take back to Lisbon an envoy from a Gambian chief, and agree to make a second voyage to the Gambia as an envoy of the King of Portugal, Alphonso V.

In the letter above quoted, he remarks that he is to sail again in ten days from Lisbon. He also says that the envoy from the Gambian chief was a descendant of a Portuguese sailor who had been saved from one of the ships of the Vivabli expedition which had been lost about 170 years before, *i. e.*, in 1285.

Udlimare related his adventures "in the land of Barouel" (*i. e.*, the land of the Bar-Daniel) to the Venetian Ca'da Mosto. The latter, on the 22nd March, 1482, set out on board a Portuguese "navel", supplied by Prince Henry the Navigator, to make further explorations in Senegambia. Ca'da Mosto records that the King of the Jolofs at this time "was called Zueholin". Ca'da Mosto disembarked at Cayor, "the palm beach of Bar-Daniel". At the town of the "Bisbeor", the nephew of the King, Ca'da Mosto was entertained. The Bar-Daniel was a professing Mohammedan at this time.

The Jolof Kingdom is said by Ca'da Mosto to have extended east as far as the country of the Fulbe and the Tukolor. South of the Kingdom of Jolof and north of the Gambia was the country of the Barbosines. Their King lived in the interior in a fortified town called Jagaon (Jago) in place of the former Capital Mbissel in Sine west of Kaolack. Ca'da Mosto also disembarked on an island in the estuary of the Gambia which he called the Land of St. Andrew after the christian name of a sailor who was buried there.

On proceeding further Ca'da Mosto was told that the country belonged to King Parisangal (Bar-Senegal), a vassal of the Bar-Melle.

Twenty leagues south of the Gambia (100 miles) Ca'da Mosto met the Casa Mansa, but before making this journey he records that he went 60 leagues (240 miles) "to the south" in the kingdom of the "Battimansa". The word "south" however, here does not mean "directly south", but south-east. The Battimansa was the king of the "Baddi-bu", between the Bintang Creek and Kantora. Almost at the same time as Ca'da Mosto's visit to the Gambia, it was visited by Diago Gomez who also mentions the "Parisangal" (Bar-Senegal). Guided by a certain Bucker (Buke) Gomez visited Kantora. It was believed by these travellers that the Senegal and Gambia were two mouths of one river enclosing the "delta of the Nile of Gama". The two rivers are so shown on a Venetian map of that period.

According to Pacheco Pereira, the chief commercial centre of Kantora at this time was called Soudan. The whole of the right bank of the Upper River was subject to the King of Melle (Bar-Melle), the left bank presumably being the Kingdom of the Batti Mansa.

The trade route from Kaolack (Gao) to Kantora at this time passed Samanda (near Siga on the Upper Niger), Comuberta (Gakura), and Cereenti (Saralutia), according to an informant of Gomez.

Gomez made a second expedition to the Gambia and visited Ulimansa (Mansa of Wuli) and then the Battimansa on the left bank with whom he made some kind of treaty.

The King of Nonyman (Niami), who had hitherto been hostile, was also visited, and a treaty, "sealed by drinking the red and white wine of Portugal", was made.

In 1460 Gomez returned not to Niimi but to the 'Barbasines', neighbours of the Serrios (Sereres). The Bur Gebil (Jolof chief of the Griots) had just been defeated and pursued by the Burbak, (Jolof king) and had taken refuge at a port called Zaza (Albreda).

The voyages made by Cuda Mosto and by Gomez established the trade supremacy of the Portuguese on the West Coast of Africa and they were able to maintain a monopoly for more than a century. An English expedition, fitted out in 1481 was prevented from sailing by the influence of King John II of Portugal. In 1588 a Patent from Queen Elizabeth gave certain merchants of Devon and London a monopoly for ten years of the "free and whole traffic trade and feat of merchandise" to and within the Senegal and Gambia rivers. It was stated in the Patent that one voyage had already been performed. The second voyage under the Charter, which was made in 1591, is described in Hakluyt. The French had then traded in these parts for above 30 years, but the "Frenchmen never used to go into the river of Gambia, which is a river of secret trade and riches concealed by the Portugals".

The annexation of Portugal to Spain under Philip II in 1580 caused the decline of Portuguese maritime enterprise, and early in the 17th century the English established themselves in the Gambia and the French in Senegal to the north. For the following two centuries these countries contended with varying fortunes for the mastery of the two rivers, the coast ports between and the trade of the hinterland.

In 1618 a Royal Charter was granted by King James I of England to an Association of London Merchants, entitled "The Company of Adventurers of London trading in Africa", with Timbuktu *via* the Gambia as their objective. George Thompson, who had travelled in the Barbary States, was despatched to the Gambia at the head of an expedition, with orders to ascend the river, then believed to be a tributary of the Niger, penetrate into the interior in the search for the Eldorado in Africa of that age, and enter into commercial relations with its ruler. He reached Kassang (Gassan), a Portuguese trading station, some 147 miles up the river, but during his absence inland his ship was captured and the crew murdered by the Portuguese. A relief ship was despatched from England, and Thompson, continuing his explorations, founded a settlement at Fatta Tenda, about 210 miles from the mouth of the river. He was afterwards killed in a quarrel with one of his company.

Richard Jobson then headed two expeditions sent out by the Company to find Thompson. During the second, Jobson sailed up to Fatta Tenda, where he succeeded in establishing friendly relations with the natives. He ascended the river in boats beyond the Barra Kunda rapids, prior to his final return to England. He was followed about 40 years later by Vermyden, a Dutch explorer and merchant of Charles the Second's day.

In the year 1661 Captain (afterwards Admiral Sir Robert) Holmes, R.N., captured from the Duke of Comland's men the Isle of St. Andrew, on which was a small bastioned fort, mounting 8 guns of different calibres.

Captain Holmes re-named the fort in honour of the Duke of York, afterwards King James II of England and called it Fort James. In 1695 the French levelled it to the ground, but it was soon rebuilt, though again twice taken by the French in 1702 and 1709. During the years 1695 to 1697 the French held possession of it, and founded on the North Bank, opposite the island, the fortified settlement of Albreda, the site of which was purchased from the then King of Barra, an ancestor of Demba Sonko, who, in 1826, concluded with the British the Ceded Mile Treaty. By the Treaty of Versailles in 1783 the exclusive British rights to Fort James and the River Gambia were recognized by France in return for a similar recognition on the part of England of the French rights over Senegal, including the Island of Goree, which had been recaptured by British arms in 1759. Great Britain, however, retained the right to trade for gum with the Moors at Portendik, near Cape Blanco, and as a set-off the French retained their factory at Albreda. Territorial re-adjustments followed the Treaty of Paris in 1851, and again in 1857. The headquarters of the Royal African Company on the Gambia were graphically described by Francis Moore, a writer in the service of the Company, in 1730.

The same Company despatched Captain Bartholomew Stibbs in 1723 on a voyage up the Gambia. He was followed by Harrison in 1732, and, in turn, by Captain Leach, Captain Pyke, McHoughton, Captain Major, and many others, all of whom were engaged in trade, exploration, and the slave traffic.

In 1788 the African Association, since merged into the Royal Geographical Society, was formed under the presidency of Sir Joseph Banks, President of the Royal Society, and further steps were taken to explore the interior. In 1791 Major Houghton ascended the river, travelled across the Kingdoms of Bambuk and Wuli, and then disappeared, having, it is thought, been murdered. In 1795, and again in 1805, the Association sent out Mungo Park to explore the River Niger. On the death of Park, the Upper Gambia was abandoned as a route to Timbuktu and the Niger.

Chartered Company administration was ruined by the Act of 1807, which abolished the slave trade, and although an annual subsidy of £23,000 was paid to the Company, it was unable to make a profit and its assets were taken over by the Crown.

Since 1813 the seat of Government has been at Bathurst, which was founded by the English merchants who left Senegal and the Island of Goree when those territories were restored to France after the Napoleonic wars. It was named after the then Secretary of State for the Colonies.

Geography.

The Colony, which comprises the towns of Bathurst and Georgetown and some adjoining land, has an area of only 69 square miles.

The Protectorate is a narrow strip of territory approximately ten kilometres wide on each bank extending up the river for nearly three

hundred miles from Bathurst. The Gambia River has its source near the village of Labe on the Futa Jallon plateau. It flows westward for about 700 miles. The river is navigable for ocean-going steamers as far as Kunta-er, 150 miles up river, and for vessels drawing less than two fathoms as far as Koina—292 miles from Bathurst—the easternmost village in the Protectorate, where there is a rise of two feet daily with the tide. During the rains the upper river rises some thirty feet.

The inhabitants of the Protectorate are mostly Jolofs, Mandinkos, Fulas, and Jolas, nearly all of whom are Mohammedans except the last named tribe who are pagan, though the Mohammedan religion is gaining ground amongst them and, as a result, they are gradually dropping their primitive customs.

Upper River Province, comprising the districts of Wuli, Kantora, Sandu and Fuladu East has an area of 790 square miles and a population of 42,134. The greater number of the inhabitants are Mandinkos and Sarahulis with a rather smaller proportion of Fulas.

The Headquarters of the Province are situated at Basse, which is both the largest town in the Province and one of the most important river-ports in the Protectorate.

The districts of Sandu, Kantora and Wuli are all relics of former native kingdoms.

MacCarthy Island Province consists of the Districts of Sami, Niani, Nianija, Upper Saloou, Lower Saloou, Western Niamina, Eastern Niamina, Dankunku Niamina, Fuladu West, and MacCarthy Island. The area of the Province is 4,101 square miles and the population 38,492. The Headquarters are at Georgetown. The bulk of the population is Jolofs and Mandinkos.

South Bank Province includes the Districts of Western Jarra, Central Jarra, Eastern Jarra, Eastern Kiang, Central Kiang, Kiang West, Foni Jarrol, Foni Boudali, Foni Kansala, Bintang-Karenai, Foni Brefet, South Kombo, East Kombo, Central Kombo, North Kombo and Kombo St. Mary. The area of the Province is 4,294 square miles and the population 65,162. The Headquarters are at Bakau, Cape St. Mary. The majority of the inhabitants are Mandinkos but there is a large number of Fulas in the more easterly Districts while the Foni Districts are largely populated by Jolas.

North Bank Province has an area of 814 square miles and a population of 47,636. The districts of the Province are Lower Niuni, Upper Niuni, Jokadu, Lower Baddibu, Central Baddibu and Upper Baddibu. Of these the three Baddibu districts are predominantly Mandinko in population: Jokadu has a mixed population of Mandinkos, Jolofs and Fulas (Mohammedan Fulas) while the two Niunis are mainly mixed Jolof and Mandinka districts. The Headquarters are at Kerewan.

Climate.

The climate of the Gambia is not healthy though, with modern methods of sanitation and housing, conditions of living generally have greatly improved during recent years. The most trying part of the year is from June to October, which is the wet period. During the remaining months the climate compares favourably with that of other tropical countries.

Meteorological Statistics, 1933.

CAPE ST. MARY STATION.

Month.	Mean Air Temperature.	Relative Humidity.	Rainfall (inches.)
January	76·1	61	—
February	78·1	50	—
March	80	53	—
April	78·1	53	—
May	76	63	—
June	79·1	68	3·07
July	79	76	16·20
August	78·1	80	13·20
September	80	76	5·23
October	80·1	72	5·21
November	74	56	0·37
December	68·1	42	—
			Total ... 43·28 inches.

In the Protectorate the records of rainfall were :—

North Bank Province	(Kerewan)	45·83 inches.
McCarthy Island Province	(Georgetown)	45·75 "
Upper River Province	(Wuli)	58·20 "
South Bank Province	(Cape St. Mary)	43·28 "

CHAPTER II. GOVERNMENT.

The main political divisions of the Gambia are the Colony of the Gambia and the Protectorate, the latter consisting of four Provinces each administered by a Commissioner. The whole country is under the control of the Governor and Commander-in-Chief, to whom the Commissioners are responsible for their respective Provinces. The Colony includes the Island of St. Mary (on which the town of Bathurst is situated) and also Basse, Banjum, MacCarthy Island, the Cedeh Mile and British Kombo all of which are administered by the Commissioners under the Protectorate system. The Governor is assisted by an Executive Council consisting of the Colonial Secretary (ex-officio Member) and several other senior officials. The Legislative Council of the Colony, of which the Governor is the President, includes the Colonial Secretary (ex-officio Member), some Official Members, including the Members of the Executive Council, and also several Unofficial Members.

Protectorate System.—This system was introduced in 1894 by an “Ordinance to provide for the exercise in the Protected Territories of certain powers and jurisdiction by Native Authorities and by Commissioners”, (No. 11 of 1894), which laid down that “All native laws and customs in force in the Protected Territories which are not repugnant to natural justice nor incompatible with any Ordinance of the Colony which applies to the Protected Territories, shall have the same effect as Regulations made under this Ordinance”. The Ordinance defined the powers of the Chiefs in the following terms:—

“31. Every Head Chief and Headman shall possess and exercise—

(a) The powers of a Conservator of the peace, including the power of binding over unruly persons with sureties of the peace, and of preventing or suppressing riots, affrays and tumults of every description.

(b) The power of carrying into execution within his district, sub-district or village any law of the Imperial Parliament or of the Colony of the Gambia, any Order of Her Majesty in Council, any decree or order of the Supreme Court, or any order of the Commissioner, subject to such instructions as he may from time to time receive from the Administrator or Commissioner; or, in respect of decrees or orders of the Supreme Court, from the Chief Magistrate;

(c) The power of apprehending, detaining and sending to the Commissioner’s Court for examination, or to the Courts at Bathurst for examination and trial, of every person accused of any serious offence or crime, such as murder, robbery, slave-dealing, whether of the like or a different kind, and it shall be the duty of every Head Chief and Headman to use his utmost endeavour to discover the authors of all such offences.”

The protection of persons executing Chiefs’ orders was provided for by Section 32 of the Ordinance which reads “Every person employed

may readmit or to the Court in carrying into effect any order of the Court, shall have the like protection for that purpose as a person authorized to execute Process of the Supreme Court".

Ordinance No. 11 of 1894 was later superseded by the Protectorate Ordinance of 1913 and during 1933 an advance was made in the administration of the Protectorate by the enactment of the Native Authority and Native Tribunals Ordinances, (Nos. 3 and 4 of 1933). The two Ordinances, though each deals with separate matters of detail, are in fact directed to one common purpose, the development of local self-government by the Seyfulu and people of the Protectorate, under the advice and supervision of the Commissioners who represent the Governor.

The Native Authority Ordinance provides for the establishment and constitution of Native Authorities in the Protectorate and provision is made for the continuation of existing Seyfulu and Alkalolu as Native Authorities.

It defines in far greater detail than does the Protectorate Ordinance 1913 the duties and powers of Seyfulu and Alkalolu in their executive capacity. It confers on Native Authorities power to issue administrative orders dealing with a great variety of matters in regard to persons subject to their jurisdiction and also imposes duties in connection with the prevention and suppression of crime.

The Native Tribunals Ordinance establishes throughout the Protectorate a system of Native Tribunals with defined jurisdiction both Criminal and Civil. It deals with the judicial powers of Seyfulu and Alkalolu, as the Native Authority Ordinance deals with their executive powers. Sections dealing with the removal of proceedings from Native Tribunals to the Court of a Commissioner and with the revisory powers of Commissioners reproduce in a clearer manner the rules governing these matters in the Protectorate Ordinance 1913. Other sections also reproduce the law existing under the Protectorate Ordinance 1913.

Commissioners no longer sit with Native Tribunals, which are now quite separate from the Courts of the Commissioners.

The administration in the Protectorate still hinges on the Chief (or Seyfu) and the Headman (or Alkali) the Alkali being responsible to the Seyfu for his town and the Seyfu to the Commissioner of the Province for his district. The Alkali is chosen by the people of the village and his position is confirmed by the Commissioner. He acts as the representative of his village in dealing with Government and personifies the village community. This is exemplified by the fact that it is the Alkali who allots, to those who need it, unoccupied land belonging to the village as a community. He is bound by tradition to seek and to listen to the advice of the elder men in the village.

In the event of disputes arising in the community which cannot be composed by the friends or relatives of the parties the Alkali, although armed with no judicial powers is often able by virtue of his office to act successfully as arbitrator and prevent the matter from reaching the point of litigation.

The Seyfu holds a position partly established by legislation and partly inherited from the Kings of former times. The Mandinka word for King (Mansa) is now applied only to the Governor who is, in native phraseology, the "King of Bathurst", and this limitation of the word reflects the passing of much of the old kingly powers. Yet a good deal of the standing and authority of the Kings remains, especially in cases where it is possible to appoint as Chief one of an old ruling family. It is now the policy, therefore, to appoint such men as far as possible, since on the authority inherent in the office depends a great part of the Chief's utility and prestige.

The Seyfu is appointed by the Governor on the recommendation of the Commissioner, who has previously ascertained which of the candidates has the best claim or commands most the respect and obedience of the district. This district opinion is becoming an increasingly important factor in the choice of a chief. Apart from his general administrative duties and the supervision of his district, the Seyfu is usually the President of the Native Tribunal of his district and exercises powers which may be compared roughly to those of a Police Court, appeals lying from his Court to that of the Commissioner.

The former system of advances of seed groundnuts and rice to the Seyfola and people of the Protectorate was discontinued in 1932, and in 1933 each Native Authority made a Rule under which every cultivator of ground-nuts in the Protectorate is required to deposit in the village store, after the winnowing of the year's crop, five bushels of seednuts. Of the amount so deposited four bushels are returnable to the depositor at the beginning of the next planting season, the remaining bushel being placed in the village reserve.

The scheme, with the full co-operation of the Seyfola and people, worked very well and resulted in an adequate supply of seed and a good export crop of ground-nuts.

Ample supplies of home-grown food-stuffs were also produced, and from the scheme there resulted a considerable gain in morale and a more confident local administration by Seyfola and Native Authorities.

Local Government. In 1931 the Bathurst Urban District Council and Board of Health was constituted in place of the former Board of Health for the purpose of advising Government upon matters relating to the welfare of the inhabitants of Bathurst.

The Council, of which the Colonial Secretary is Chairman, is composed of representatives of the various Government Departments most closely concerned in the administration of Bathurst, of six Members elected by the Town Wards of Bathurst, and of four Members nominated by the Governor to represent commerce, industry or other interests.

An election for Ward Representatives is held every December, and meetings of the Council are held every quarter. Much useful advice on matters affecting the Town of Bathurst and its inhabitants has been tendered to Government by the members of this Council both in their individual and collective capacities, and the Council serves as a valuable link between Government and the public.

CHAPTER III. POPULATION.

The population of the Gambia according to the 1931 Census was 199,520 of which 14,370 inhabitants resided on St. Mary's Island. The Island contains few inhabitants outside the Town of Bathurst.

Generally speaking the various races are distributed throughout the Protectorate with the exception of the Jolas who are practically confined to the South Bank Province. The numerical distribution of the races in the Protectorate was given in the Census as follows :—

Mandinka	85,640
Jolof	25,864
Fula	22,273
Jola	19,410
Sarahuli	12,316
Tukulor	11,653
Bambara	3,261
Aku	786
Others	3,947
Total	185,150

People of all these races are included amongst the inhabitants of Bathurst.

Vital statistics are recorded in the Island of St. Mary only as, owing to the illiteracy of the people, the collection of reliable data in the Protectorate is impossible.

The statistics in respect of Bathurst for the past five years are as follows :—

Year.	Births.	Deaths.	Infantile Mortality (per 1,000 births registered).
1929	315	502	333
1930	366	411	283
1931	422	369	227
1932	339	355	242
1933	331	368	290

As regards the above figures it is necessary to state that whereas all deaths taking place in Bathurst are registered (certificates of death and burial permits being required in all cases), births of infants to parents, in particular to illiterate parents, are not registered. This would account for the comparatively large excess of deaths over births which have been registered from year to year.

It is likely, however, that registration of births will soon become more accurate as time goes on since parents, including illiterate parents, are beginning to realise the value of certificates of birth to their children in adult years.

With regard to the Infantile Mortality Rate the figure given for 1933 is for the whole of Bathurst; of the 331 births 82 were conducted by the Clinic Staff and of these 82 infants 8 died within twelve months giving an Infantile Mortality Rate of 9·8 per thousand which compares favourably with similar work in the British Isles and compares more than favourably with the general mortality rate of 290 for the whole of Bathurst.

Emigration and immigration.

There is practically no emigration from the Gambia.

At the commencement of each ground-nut planting season a number of natives cross the border into the Protectorate from French Territory for the purpose of assisting the local farmers in the planting and harvesting of the crop. These 'strange farmers' return to their homes after the crop has been marketed. Likewise a considerable number of foreign labourers and petty traders come to Bathurst at the beginning of each trade season and leave again when the season ends. The number of 'strange farmers', labourers and petty traders visiting the Gambia naturally fluctuates according to trade conditions. Immigration returns show that during the past three years the persons entering Bathurst by sea numbered as follows:—851 in 1931, 634 in 1932 and 817 in 1933; but it may be assumed that the majority of these people returned, or will return, to their homes. Immigration is controlled by the Immigration Restriction Ordinance (No. 12 of 1924) under which no person is allowed to enter the Gambia who:—

- (a) is likely to become a pauper or a public charge,
- (b) is an idiot or insane,
- (c) is deemed by the Governor to be an undesirable immigrant,
- (d) is a prostitute, or
- (e) is not in possession of a passport valid under the law of the country of which he is a citizen.

Any person who appears to the Immigration Officer to be without visible means of support is required to deposit the sum of £60, or to give security by bond in that amount.

At the expiration of eighteen months from the date of entering the Gambia, or at any earlier period, if the depositor not having become destitute or unable to support himself, departs from the Gambia, his deposit is returned to him.