

THE CONSTANT DEMAND OF THE FRENCH: THE
MASCARENE SLAVE TRADE AND THE WORLDS
OF THE INDIAN OCEAN AND ATLANTIC DURING
THE EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH
CENTURIES*

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ABSTRACT: Analysis of an inventory of 641 slaving voyages involving Mauritius and Réunion between 1768 and 1809 reveals that the Mascarene Islands were at the center of a substantial and dynamic regional slave trading network that also reached into the Americas in ways that raise questions about the relationship between the ‘worlds’ of the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic. The fact that colonial, as well as metropolitan, merchant capital underwrote Mascarene-based slave trading ventures raises additional questions about the role of locally generated and/or non-Western capital in financing the movement of slave, and ultimately ‘free’, labor throughout the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century colonial world.

KEY WORDS: slave trade, Mascarenes, Mauritius, Réunion, Indian Ocean, Madagascar, Mozambique, Swahili Coast, India.

IN May 1792, William G. Farmer, the British East India Company’s administrator at Calicut, reported to his superiors about the ‘evil’ then prevailing in the newly acquired province of Malabar: ‘the very extensive Slave Trade carried on by the French at Mahé from whence numerous cargoes have of late been carried for the supply of the Islands of Bourbon and Mauritius’.¹ Farmer’s report prompted Company officials in London to express their concern that the ‘constant demand of the French’ to supply these islands had created a permanent trade in slaves in Malabar. Their unease over this development stemmed partly from their belief that any such traffic was antithetical to ‘every regulation which could be framed for the improvement of the Country, and for the happiness and welfare of the People’.² The government in Bombay was directed accordingly to report regularly on the measures being taken to ensure that what a

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¹ Oriental and India Office Collections (OIOC), British Library, London, P/E/5, 398-9, Letter from W. G. Farmer at Calicut, 17 May 1792.

² OIOC, E/4/1009, 246-9, [Despatch to] Bombay, Political Department, Answer to the Letters in the Political Department dated 4th August 1792, 7th September 1792, 21st December 1792 and 10th March 1793 [Bombay Political Consultation, 19 Feb. 1794].

subsequent despatch described as ‘this inhuman traffic’ would come to a complete end.³

This was not the first time that Company officials had expressed their concern about European slave traders operating in India, nor would it be the last.⁴ As early as 1774, the justification for new regulations to control slave trading in Bengal noted that ‘this Savage Commerce’ had led to large numbers of children being conveyed out of the country on Dutch, and especially French, vessels.⁵ Many of these slaves, like those exported from Malabar, were also destined for the French-controlled Mascarene Islands of the Île de France (Mauritius) and the Île de Bourbon (Réunion) in the southwestern Indian Ocean.⁶

There can be little doubt that the Company’s concern about French slave traders operating in its territories was linked to the on-going struggle between Britain and France for power in India that had begun during the 1740s. However, the significance of this trafficking in Indian slaves reaches far beyond the immediacies of political and diplomatic life on the subcontinent. The demand for slaves in Mauritius and Réunion raises important questions about the dynamics of the Mascarene trade, the regional and global systems of which it was part, and the expansion of labor trading networks in the Indian Ocean – and beyond – during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In so doing, the Mascarene trade challenges us to reconsider how we conceptualize not only the ‘world’ of the Indian Ocean, but also that of the Atlantic.

THE HISTORIOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

Serious interest in European slave trading in the western Indian Ocean dates to the 1960s when several scholars investigated French activity along the East African coast.⁷ J. M. Filliot’s 1974 study highlighted the vastness of the catchment area, which stretched from West Africa to the Indonesian archipelago that supplied the Mascarenes with chattel labor. Filliot also estimated that 160,000 slaves reached the islands between 1670 and 1810, with 69 per cent of all such imports occurring between 1767 and 1810.⁸ His figures gave substance to Edward Alpers’s argument that the Mascarene demand

³ OIOC, E/4/1011, 412, [Despatch] To President in Council at Bombay, 5 August 1796. Answer to the Letter in the Political Department dated 25th Sept 1794.

⁴ Richard B. Allen, ‘Carrying away the unfortunate: the exportation of slaves from India during the late eighteenth century’, in Jacques Weber (ed.), *Le monde créole: peuplement, sociétés et condition humaine, XVIIe–XXe siècles* (Paris, 2005), 285–98.

⁵ OIOC, P/49/46, 1485, Regulations issued 17 May 1774.

⁶ The island known as the Île de France between 1721 and 1810 was first named Mauritius by the Dutch during their occupation of the island from 1638 to 1710. Following its conquest by the British in 1810, the island was called Mauritius once again. The neighboring Île de Bourbon was renamed Réunion in 1848.

⁷ G. S. P. Freeman-Grenville, *The French at Kilwa Island* (Oxford, 1965); G. A. Akinola, ‘The French on the Lindi coast, 1785–1789’, *Tanzania Notes and Records*, 70 (1970), 13–20; Edward A. Alpers, ‘The French slave trade in East Africa (1721–1810)’, *Cahiers d’études africaines*, 37 (1970), 80–124.

⁸ J. M. Filliot, *La traite des esclaves vers les Mascareignes au XVIIe siècle* (Paris, 1974), 51.

for servile labor was a major spur to the dramatic expansion of the Malagasy and East African slave trades during the late eighteenth century,⁹ and underpinned estimates by Réunionnais historians that more than 200,000 slaves reached that island between the late seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries.¹⁰

Subsequent work has expanded our knowledge about slave trading in the western Indian Ocean.¹¹ The movement of Malagasy slaves to Southeast Asia has been outlined,¹² while Gwyn Campbell¹³ and Pier Larson¹⁴ have probed the exportation of Malagasy slaves to other parts of the Indian Ocean during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Major studies of the Mozambican and East African trades¹⁵ have been supplemented by research on the movement of slaves from Mozambique to Portugal's possessions in India,¹⁶ some of whom subsequently reached Mauritius and

⁹ Alpers, 'The French slave trade', 80–2.

¹⁰ J. V. Payet, *Histoire de l'esclavage à l'Île Bourbon* (Paris, 1990), 14; Sudel Fuma, *L'Esclavagisme à La Réunion* (Paris, 1992), 18.

¹¹ William Gervase Clarence-Smith (ed.), *The Economics of the Indian Ocean Slave Trade in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1989); Shihan de S. Jayasuriya and Richard Pankhurst (eds.), *The African Diaspora in the Indian Ocean* (Trenton NJ, 2003); Gwyn Campbell (ed.), *The Structure of Slavery in Indian Ocean, Africa and Asia* (London, 2004).

¹² Robert J. Young, 'Slaves, coolies and bondsmen. A study of assisted migration in response to emerging English shipping networks in the Indian Ocean, 1685–1776', *Indian Ocean Review*, 2 (1989), 23–6.

¹³ See 'Madagascar and the slave trade, 1810–1895', *Journal of African History*, 22 (1981), 203–27; 'Madagascar and Mozambique in the slave trade of the Western Indian Ocean, 1800–1861', *Slavery and Abolition*, 9 (1988), 166–93; 'The East African slave trade, 1861–1895: the "Southern" complex', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 22 (1989), 1–26; 'The structure of trade in Madagascar, 1750–1810', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 26 (1993), 111–48; 'Madagascar and the slave trade in the South-West Indian Ocean', in Sandra J. T. Evers and Vinesh Y. Hookoomsing (eds.), *Globalisation and the South-West Indian Ocean* (Réduit, Mauritius, 2000), 91–108; *An Economic History of Imperial Madagascar, 1750–1895* (Cambridge, 2005), especially 213–42.

¹⁴ See 'A census of slaves exported from central Madagascar to the Mascarenes between 1769 and 1820', in Ignace Rakoto (ed.), *L'esclavage à Madagascar: aspects historiques et résurgences contemporaines* (Antananarivo, 1997), 131–45; *History and Memory in the Age of Enslavement: Becoming Merina in Highland Madagascar, 1770–1822* (Portsmouth NH, 2000); 'The route of the slave from Highland Madagascar to the Mascarenes: commercial organization, 1770–1820', in Ignace Rakoto (ed.), *La route des esclaves: système servile et traite dans l'est malgache* (Paris, 2000), 119–80; 'The origins of Malagasy arriving at Mauritius and Réunion: expanding the history of Mascarene slavery', in Vijayalakshmi Teelock and Edward A. Alpers (eds.), *History, Memory and Identity* (Réduit, Mauritius, 2001), 195–236.

¹⁵ E.g. Edward A. Alpers, *Ivory and Slaves in East Central Africa* (Berkeley, 1975); R. W. Beachey, *The Slave Trade of Eastern Africa* (New York, 1976); Abdul Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory in Zanzibar* (London, 1987); José Capela and Eduardo Medeiros, 'La traite au départ du Mozambique vers les îles françaises de l'Océan Indien, 1720–1904', in U. Bissoondoyal and S. B. C. Servansing (eds.), *Slavery in South West Indian Ocean* (Moka, Mauritius, 1989), especially 249–66; Benigna Zimba, Edward Alpers and Allen Isaacman (eds.), *Slave Routes and Oral Tradition in Southeastern Africa* (Maputo, 2005).

¹⁶ Rudy Bauss, 'The Portuguese slave trade from Mozambique to Portuguese India and Macau and comments on Timor, 1750–1850: new evidence from the archives',

Réunion.¹⁷ Historians have long noted the presence of Indian and Malay slaves in South Africa¹⁸ and the Mascarenes,¹⁹ but only a handful of studies have attempted to explore the movement of slaves from India and Southeast Asia into the wider Indian Ocean.²⁰ The illegal slave trade to Mauritius and Réunion during the early nineteenth century has also been a subject of scholarly interest.²¹

Camões Center Quarterly, 6–7 (1997), 21–7; Pedro Machado, ‘A forgotten corner of the Indian Ocean: Gujarati merchants, Portuguese India and the Mozambique slave-trade, c. 1730–1830’, in Campbell (ed.), *The Structure of Slavery*, 17–32, and Machado, ‘Gujarati Indian merchant networks in Mozambique, 1777–c. 1830’ (Ph.D. diss., University of London, 2005), especially 212–51.

¹⁷ Teotonio R. de Souza, ‘French slave-trading in Portuguese Goa (1773–1791)’, in de Souza (ed.), *Essays in Goan History* (New Delhi, 1989), 123–6; Jeannette Pinto, ‘The slave trade in the Indian Ocean: the French experience’, in K. S. Mathew (ed.), *French in India and Indian Nationalism (1700 A.D.–1963 A.D.)* (Delhi, 1999), II, 606–7.

¹⁸ E.g. Robert Shell, *Children of Bondage: A Social History of the Slave Society at the Cape of Good Hope, 1652–1838* (Hanover NH, 1994); Nigel Worden, *Slavery in Dutch South Africa* (Cambridge, 1995).

¹⁹ Hubert Gerbeau, ‘Des minorités mal-connues: esclaves indiens et malais des Mascareignes au XIXe siècle’, in *Migrations, minorités et échanges en Océan Indien, XIXe–XXe siècle* (IHPOM Études et Documents No. 11) (Aix-en-Provence, 1978), 160–242, and Gerbeau, ‘Les esclaves asiatiques des Mascareignes: enquêtes et hypothèses’, *Annuaire des pays de l’océan indien*, 7 (1980), 169–97; Marina Carter, ‘Indian slaves in Mauritius (1729–1834)’, *Indian Historical Review*, 15 (1988–9), 233–47; and Carter, ‘A servile minority in a sugar island: Malay and Chinese slaves in Mauritius’, in Weber (ed.), *Le monde créole*, 257–71.

²⁰ A. Reid, ‘Introduction: slavery and bondage in Southeast Asian history’, in Anthony Reid (ed.), *Slavery, Bondage and Dependency in Southeast Asia* (New York, 1983), especially 27–33; A. van de Kraan, ‘Bali: slavery and slave trade’, in Reid (ed.), *Slavery, Bondage and Dependency*, especially 329–37; S. Arasaratnam, ‘Slave trade in the Indian Ocean in the seventeenth century’, in K. S. Matthews (ed.), *Mariners, Merchants and Oceans: Studies in Maritime History* (New Delhi, 1995), 195–208; Markus Vink, ‘“The World’s Oldest Trade”. Dutch slavery and slave trade in the Indian Ocean in the seventeenth century’, *Journal of World History*, 14 (2003), 131–77; Allen, ‘Carrying away the unfortunate’; Marina Carter, ‘Slavery and unfree labour in the Indian Ocean’, *History Compass*, 4 (2006), 800–13.

²¹ Hubert Gerbeau, ‘Quelques aspects de la traite illégale des esclaves à l’Île Bourbon au XIXe siècle’, in *Mouvements de populations dans l’Océan Indien* (Paris, 1979), 273–308, and Gerbeau, ‘L’Océan Indien n’est pas l’Atlantique: la traite illégale à Bourbon au XIXe siècle’, *Revue Outre-mers, Revue d’histoire*, 89 (2002), 79–108; Marina Carter and Hubert Gerbeau, ‘Covert slaves and coveted coolies in the early 19th century Mascareignes’, *Slavery and Abolition*, 9 (1988), 194–208; Claude Wanquet, ‘La traite illégale à Maurice à l’époque anglaise (1811–1835)’, in Serge Daget (ed.), *De la traite à l’esclavage: actes du colloque internationale sur la traite des noirs, Nantes, 1985* (Nantes, 1988), II, 451–66; Serge Daget, ‘Révolution ajournée: Bourbon et la traite illégale française, 1815–1832’, in Claude Wanquet and Benoît Jullien (eds.), *Révolution française et Océan indien: prémices, paroxysmes, héritages et déviations* (Paris, 1996), 333–46; Deryck Scarr, *Slaving and Slavery in the Indian Ocean* (London, 1998); Richard B. Allen, ‘Licentious and unbridled proceedings: the illegal slave trade to Mauritius and the Seychelles during the early nineteenth century’, *Journal of African History*, 42 (2001), 91–116.

If the ‘history of silence’ that surrounds slavery and slave trading in the Indian Ocean is not nearly as deafening as it once was,²² our understanding of the traffic in chattel labor in this part of the world nevertheless remains far from complete. This state of affairs stems partly from the relative scarcity of archival sources on slavery and slave trading in the Indian Ocean compared to those that exist for the Atlantic.²³ It also reflects what has been aptly characterized as the continuing ‘tyranny of the Atlantic’ in slavery and African diaspora studies.²⁴ Recent arguments that Filliot underestimated the volume of the Mascarene trade and that perhaps as many as 388,000 slaves were exported to Mauritius and Réunion between 1670 and 1848²⁵ underscore the importance of this region to understanding an African diaspora that, as Joseph Harris noted 35 years ago, reached across the Indian Ocean as well as the Atlantic.²⁶ Suggestions that concern about suppressing the Indian slave trade, and the trade in enslaved Indian children in particular, to the Mascarenes may have contributed to the development of the British abolitionist movement during the late eighteenth century underscores the need to explore the dynamics of slave trading in lands washed by the *Maris Indici* in greater detail.²⁷

The compilation of an inventory of 641 slaving voyages involving Mauritius and Réunion between 1768 and 1809 affords an opportunity to explore the workings of the Mascarene trade in greater detail and to situate this traffic more firmly in regional and global contexts. This inventory sheds new light on the complex trading networks that moved African, Indian, Malagasy and Southeast Asian slaves throughout the Indian Ocean. These data also demonstrate that colonial, as well as metropolitan, merchant capital underwrote slave trading ventures in the region, a development that raises questions about the role of locally generated and/or non-Western capital in financing the movement of chattel and ultimately ‘free’ labor throughout the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century colonial world. Lastly, this inventory reveals that the Mascarenes were at the center of a substantial and dynamic slave trading network that reached not only across the Indian Ocean, but also

²² Hubert Gerbeau, ‘The slave trade in the Indian Ocean: problems facing the historian and research to be undertaken’, in *The African Slave Trade from the Fifteenth to the Nineteenth Century* (Paris, 1979), 184–207.

²³ Cf. David Eltis, David Richardson, Stephen D. Behrendt and Herbert S. Klein, *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A Database on CD-ROM* (Cambridge, 2000).

²⁴ Edward A. Alpers, ‘The African diaspora in the Northwestern Indian Ocean: reconsideration of an old problem, new directions for research’, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 17 (1997), 62. Cf. Robert Louis Stein, *The French Slave Trade in the Eighteenth Century: An Old Régime Business* (Madison, 1979); Michael A. Gomez, *Reversing Sail: A History of the African Diaspora* (Cambridge, 2005).

²⁵ Richard B. Allen, ‘The Mascarene slave-trade and labour migration in the Indian Ocean during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries’, in Campbell (ed.), *The Structure of Slavery*, 33–50.

²⁶ Joseph E. Harris, *The African Presence in Asia* (Evanston, 1971).

²⁷ Richard B. Allen, ‘A traffic repugnant to humanity: children, the Mascarene slave trade, and British abolitionism’, *Slavery and Abolition*, 27 (2006), 219–36, and Allen, ‘Suppressing a nefarious traffic: the Mascarenes, Britain and the abolition of slave trading in the western Indian Ocean, 1770–1835’ (paper presented to the International Conference on the Domestic and International Consequences of the First Governmental Efforts to Abolish the Atlantic Slave Trade, Accra and Elmina, 8–12 Aug. 2007).

into the Americas in ways that raise questions about how we view the relationship between the 'worlds' of the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

SOURCES

Information on slaves and slaving trading in the Indian Ocean is often fragmentary. The British East India Company archives, for example, contain only scattered and rather oblique references to Company involvement in slave trading during much of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.²⁸ Data on French slave trading can be equally elusive. Philippe Haudrère's magisterial study of the French *Compagnie des Indes* makes no reference to slave trading by the *Compagnie* and demonstrates that information on even elementary aspects of Mascarene trade and commerce between 1735 and 1767 are basically non-existent.²⁹ Documentation becomes much more abundant after 1767, but the Mauritian archival record has suffered over the years from the official 'weeding-out' of documents during the nineteenth century and the loss of others because of neglect, insect predation and the damage wrought by cyclones and the island's tropical climate.³⁰ Much of the eighteenth-century Réunionnais archival record has also been lost.

The sources that speak to Mascarene mercantile activity from 1767 to 1810, of which the declarations made by ship captains upon reaching Mauritius are the most important, are themselves frequently problematic. Not all captains who arrived at Port Louis made such *déclarations d'arrivées*, and both the quantity and the quality of the information in these statements varies widely. Declarations made to Admiralty officials were often more detailed than those made to other authorities, but this detail usually consists of reports on weather conditions and damage to the vessel in question. In other instances, captains' statements are vague about whether the number of slaves being declared represented the number who had been loaded or who were being landed. Official record keeping became even more lax between 1789, when royal authority in the islands collapsed, and the reassertion of metropolitan control in 1803.³¹

Auguste Toussaint, the foremost student of Mascarene maritime history, ignored the slave trade in most of his work on late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century French commerce and trade in the Indian Ocean.³² The one exception is his 1967 *La route des îles* in which he tallied a total of 515

²⁸ Jill Louise Geber, 'The East India Company and Southern Africa: a guide to the Archives of the East India Company and the Board of Control, 1600–1858' (Ph.D. diss., University College London, 1998), 101.

²⁹ Philippe Haudrère, *La compagnie française des Indes au XVIIIe siècle (1719–1795)* (Paris, 1989).

³⁰ Auguste Toussaint, *La route des îles: contribution à l'histoire maritime des Mascareignes* (Paris, 1967), 96, 98–9.

³¹ *Ibid.* 101–9, and Toussaint, *Histoire des îles Mascareignes* (Paris, 1972), 107ff.

³² See *Early American Trade with Mauritius* (Port Louis, 1954); *Histoire de l'Océan indien* (Paris, 1961; English trans. as *History of the Indian Ocean* [Chicago, 1966]); *L'Océan indien au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1974); *Le mirage des îles: le négoce français aux Mascareignes au XVIIIe siècle* (Aix-en-Provence, 1977); *Les frères Surcouf* (Paris, 1979); *'Avant Surcouf': corsaires en Océan indien au 18eme siècle* (Aix-en-Provence, 1989).

slaving voyages to the islands between 1773 and 1810.³³ Unfortunately, Toussaint neither listed the vessels and/or voyages in question nor discussed these undertakings in any detail, and limited his analysis of the data at his disposal to compiling six rather simple tables that summarize information about the tonnage of the vessels involved, the size of their human cargoes and slave mortality en route to the islands.

This study draws upon the same archival materials that Toussaint used,³⁴ together with other documentary sources that seemingly escaped his attention and the data contained in the important repertoires compiled by Jean Mettas on the eighteenth-century French slave trade³⁵ and José Capela on the Mozambican trade.³⁶ These sources yield a total of 641 slaving voyages between 1768 and 1809 that involved the Mascarenes, either as the recipient of slave cargoes or as a base from which slave trading expeditions to South Africa and the Americas were mounted (Table 1). The 549 voyages currently known to have transported slaves to the Mascarenes may represent 50–55 per cent of all such voyages during the period under consideration. Further research in French, Portuguese and other archives will undoubtedly allow the data presented in this paper to be refined and expanded upon.

TRADING SLAVES TO THE MASCARENES

The Dutch first introduced slaves into the Mascarenes during their attempts to colonize Mauritius between 1638 and 1710.³⁷ The legal status of the Malagasy laborers who reached the Île de Bourbon during the 1660s and 1670s remains uncertain, but slavery was a *de facto* reality on the island by 1687.³⁸ Slaves reached Mauritius again soon after the island was colonized by the French late in 1721, and at least 23 cargoes of Malagasy, Indian, Mozambican and West African slaves reached the Île de France between 1722 and 1735.³⁹ No fewer than 21 cargoes of Malagasy, West African and Mozambican origin were also landed on Réunion between 1729 and 1735.⁴⁰ These and subsequent imports led to a steady increase in the number of slaves on the islands, from 1,800 in 1725 to 7,221 in 1735 and then to 22,599 by 1757–8.

³³ Toussaint, *La route des îles*, 350–7, 449–54.

³⁴ I was able to recover information on more than 440 of Toussaint's 515 voyages. The discrepancy in the size of these two samples is due in part to the destruction by insects and climatic factors of records that were much more complete when Toussaint used them more than forty years ago.

³⁵ Jean Mettas, *Répertoire des expéditions négrières françaises au XVIIIe siècle*, vol. I: *Nantes*, ed. Serge Daget (Paris, 1978), and vol. II: *Ports autres que Nantes*, ed. Serge et Michèle Daget (Paris, 1984).

³⁶ José Capela, *O Tráfico de Escravos nos Portos de Moçambique, 1773–1904* (Porto, 2002). My thanks to the anonymous reviewer who brought this work to my attention.

³⁷ P. J. Moree, *A Concise History of Dutch Mauritius, 1598–1710* (London, 1998).

³⁸ Jean-Marie Desport, *De la servitude à la liberté: Bourbon des origines à 1848* (Réunion, 1989), 8.

³⁹ Robert Chaudenson, 'À propos de la genèse du créole mauricien: le peuplement de l'Île de France de 1721 à 1735', *Études créoles*, 1 (1979), 43–57.

⁴⁰ Mettas, *Répertoire des expéditions*, II, 223–4; Prosper Eve, *Les esclaves de Bourbon: la mer et la montagne* (Paris, 2003), 45, 60–3.

Table 1. *Slaving voyages involving the Mascarenes, 1768–1809*

Slaving voyages to the Mascarenes from:	Period				Total
	1768–79	1780–9	1790–9	1800–9	
Madagascar ^a	32	18	32	147	229
Mozambique ^b	37	27	51 ^c	81 ^d	196
Swahili Coast ^e	11	16	24	33	84
India ^f	11	1	8	1	21
Muscat	2	—	—	—	2
Anjouan	—	1	1	—	2
Multiple ^g	1	3	5	—	9
Not reported	4	1	—	1	6
Subtotal	98	67	121	263	549
Mascarene-based slaving voyages to:	[1770–9]		[1790–2]		
Cape of Good Hope ^h	—	3	—	—	3
Caribbean via:					
Mozambique	5	35	14	—	54
Swahili Coast	1	11	2	—	14
West Central Africa ⁱ	2	8	3	—	13
Not reported	1	5	1	—	7
South America via Mozambique	—	—	—	1	1
Subtotal	9	62	20	1	92
GRAND TOTAL	107	129	141	264	641

Notes: ^a Madagascar, including Angontil Bay, Bombetoc, Fort Dauphin, Foulpointe, Matatam, Ste. Luce, Ste. Marie, Tamatave.

^b Mozambique, including Mozambique, Ibo, Inhambane, Querimba, Quelimane.

^c Includes 20 voyages from the Île de France to Mozambique presumed to have returned to the Mascarenes.

^d Includes 24 voyages from the Île de France to Mozambique presumed to have returned to the Mascarenes.

^e Swahili Coast, including Côte d’Afrique, Kilwa, Lindi, Mafia, Mombasa, Mongale, Mouttage, Zanzibar.

^f Including Anjengo, Bengal, Cochin, Coringa, Coromandel Coast, Goa, Goudelour, Karikal, Mahé, Malabar Coast, Pondichéry, Yanam.

^g Multiple provenances, e.g., Kilwa and Madagascar, Madagascar and Mozambique.

^h Via Mozambique.

ⁱ Angola, Cabinda, Malimbe.

Sources: Mauritius National Archives: F 4, Municipalité du Port Nord-Ouest – Registre pour l’enregistrement des déclarations d’arrivées de capitaines de navires et des cautionnements, 7 juillet 1794–20 septembre 1803; F 10, Amirauté – Registre des déclarations d’arrivées et autres, 18 janvier 1791–18 novembre 1793; F 30, Amirauté – Registre des déclarations d’arrivées et autres, 30 avril 1794–28 septembre 1803; GB 26, Bureau Central de Police – Registre pour servir à l’enregistrement des déclarations d’arrivées de capitaines, 7 vendémiaire XII (30 septembre 1803)–15 octobre 1810, 10 janvier 1811–19 avril 1815; GB 40, Amirauté (Tribunal de Première Instance) – Registre pour servir aux déclarations d’amirauté, 8 vendémiaire XII (1^{er} octobre 1803–8 mai 1809); HB 12/9, fo. 64, Chargement sur la flute du Roy L’africain, Foulpointe, 11 novembre 1770; HB 12/12, fos. 113–14, Etat des Vivres et autres Objets d’Envois de Madagascar au Compte du Roy ... [la flute du Roi Le Nécessaire, 15 septembre 1788]; HB 16/9, Compte des noirs particuliers embarqués par connaissance sur la Corvette *La Normande* – Année 1769; OA 44, Bureau du Domaine – Comptes de recettes et dépenses, 1772–5; OA 91, fo. 27v, Bureau de Police (Jurisdiction Royale) – Journal pour la consignation des rapports de police, 23 novembre 1769–10 juin 1775; JH 1, Dépôts civils, 1772–7; JH 12, Dépôts civils, 1791; JH 13, Dépôts civils, 1792; OB 21, Amirauté (Jurisdiction Royale) – Registre des déclarations d’arrivées et autres, 11 février 1782–1 mars 1784; OB 23, Amirauté (Jurisdiction Royale) – Registre des déclarations d’arrivées et autres, 7 avril 1784–1 mai 1786; OB 28, Amirauté (Jurisdiction Royale) – Registre des déclarations d’arrivées et autres, 4 juin 1788–17 janvier 1791; OB 29, Amirauté (Jurisdiction Royale) – Registre des déclarations d’arrivées et autres, 28 septembre 1773–27 novembre 1777; OC 24B, Journal de navigation du vaisseau l’Espérance, cap. Desmolière, faisant la traite à la côte d’Afrique, 5 novembre 1774–30 mai 1775 (incomplete); OC 40, Amirauté (Jurisdiction Royale) – Registre des déclarations d’arrivées et autres, 28 novembre 1777–6 février 1782; OC 48, Amirauté (Jurisdiction Royale) – Registre des déclarations d’arrivées et autres, 5 mai 1786–30 mai 1788.

Mettas, *Répertoire des expéditions négrières françaises*; Capela, *O Tráfico de Escravos*, 311–27.

The advent of royal rule in 1767 and the issuance of a decree in 1769 that opened the islands to free trade by all French nationals had a dramatic impact on regional slaving interests as the treaty that Jean-Vincent Morice signed with the Sultan of Kilwa in 1776 illustrates.⁴¹ The extension of free trade privileges to Americans in 1784 and to all other foreign nationals in 1787 turned the islands into a major regional commercial entrepôt that attracted shipping from northern Europe and the Americas.⁴² The demand for laborers to produce the foodstuffs and maritime stores needed by the increasing numbers of French and other vessels operating in the western Indian Ocean, coupled with high rates of slave mortality,⁴³ spurred the importation of even larger numbers of slaves into the islands. The Mascarenes housed 71,197 slaves by 1787–8, a figure that climbed to almost 133,000 by 1807–8 and peaked at some 136,400 in 1815 before beginning to decline. Mauritius held 61,162 bondmen, women and children when slavery was abolished in the colony early in 1835; thirteen years later, slave emancipation freed 62,151 men, women and children on Réunion.⁴⁴

The global scope of the Mascarene trade is illustrated by early nineteenth-century accounts that noted the presence of ‘blacks of every ethnicity’ on Mauritius: Anjouanais from the Comoros; Abyssinians from the Horn of Africa; Bambaras, Guineans and Wolofs from West Africa; Bengalis, Malabars and Talingas from India; Malays and Timorese from Southeast Asia.⁴⁵ Slaves from Madagascar and eastern Africa, the two most important sources of Mascarene bondmen and women, came from a wide range of ethnic or cultural backgrounds. An 1817 Mauritian slave register reveals that those of Malagasy origin included individuals taken from among the Ambanivolo, Amboalambo (Merina), Andrantsay, Antaisaka, Antalaoatra, Antanosy, Antatsimo, Betanimena, Maninga (*sic*), Marvace (*sic*) and Sakalava.⁴⁶ Other sources also refer to Antateime (*sic*), Betsileo and Hova (Merina) among the island’s Malagasy chattel laborers.⁴⁷ Slaves of ‘Mozambican’ origin⁴⁸ likewise came from a large number of ethnic or cultural groups, some of which were located as far away as modern Malawi and

⁴¹ Toussaint, *Le mirage des îles*, 20ff.; Freeman-Grenville, *The French at Kilwa Island*, 10–24; Alpers, *Ivory and Slaves*, 150–1. The Sultan promised to supply Morice with 1,000 slaves each year and to bar other Europeans from trading for slaves in his dominion.

⁴² Madeleine Ly-Tio-Fane, ‘Les américains et l’attribution du statut de port franc au Port-Louis de l’Île de France (25 avril 1784)’, *Annuaire des pays de l’Océan indien*, 14 (1995–6), 373–82.

⁴³ Allen, ‘The Mascarene slave-trade’, 37–8.

⁴⁴ The Mascarenes were captured by a British expeditionary force in 1810. The 1814 Treaty of Paris ceded Mauritius and its various dependencies, including Rodrigues and the Seychelles, to Britain and returned Réunion to French control.

⁴⁵ Raymond Decary, *Les voyages du chirurgien Avine à l’île de France et dans la mer des Indes au début du XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1961), 17; M. J. Milbert, *Voyage pittoresque à l’Île de France, au Cap de Bonne-Espérance et à l’Île de Ténériffe* (Paris, 1812), I, 257.

⁴⁶ British National Archives (BNA), Kew, T 71/566, Registry of Personal Slaves, 1817; T 71/571, Registry of Plantation Slaves, 1817. My thanks to Pier Larson for his generous assistance in identifying many of the original ethnonyms in question.

⁴⁷ Baron d’Unienville, *Statistiques de l’île Maurice et ses dépendances suivie d’une notice historique sur cette colonie et d’un essai sur l’île de Madagascar* (2nd ed., Maurice, 1885–6), I, 257.

⁴⁸ Mascarene slaves described as ‘Mozambique’ in contemporary sources came from the Swahili Coast as well as Mozambique. For a recent discussion of Mozambican slave

eastern Zambia. The 1817 Mauritian register refers to persons drawn from the Bisa, Ekoti, Kamanga, Lolo (Lomwe), Makonde, Makua, Maravi, Mrima, Mujao (probably Yao), Ngindo, Nyambane, Nyamwezi, Sagara and Sena, as well as other groups whose modern identity remains uncertain.⁴⁹ In addition to 'Malays'⁵⁰ and Timorese, the 1817 register and other sources record the presence of slaves from Bali, Java, Macassar (Celebes), Nias and Sumatra in the Indonesian archipelago, and even from as far away as China.⁵¹

While the great majority of slavers that reached the Mascarenes sailed under French colors, cargoes also arrived on foreign-flagged vessels. Evidence of foreign nationals transporting slaves to the islands during the late eighteenth century is often circumstantial. The Mauritian archival record reveals at least 11 Portuguese vessels made a total of 15 voyages from Mozambique or the 'African coast' to the islands between 1775 and 1796.⁵² Known Portuguese-flagged slavers appear to have first reached the Île de France in 1793;⁵³ the first recorded arrival of such a slaver dates to 1802 when the *Ana Fouaquin* landed 310 Mozambican slaves at Port Louis.⁵⁴ Two other Portuguese vessels – *Le Général Isidre* (*General Isidro*) and *L'Embuscade* (*Emboscado*) – reached Port Louis the following year with a total of 520 slaves.⁵⁵ *Le Général Isidre* returned to Mauritius on two occasions in 1804 carrying a total of 628 slaves and again in 1806 with a cargo of unknown size.⁵⁶ Altogether, at least 12 Portuguese slaving voyages were reported as having reached Mauritius between 1802 and 1807.⁵⁷ The Spanish *La Bonne Espérance* carried slaves from Mozambique to Mauritius in 1804,⁵⁸ while the following year the 'Arab' ship *Salih* arrived at Port Louis from Zanzibar with 150 slaves on board.⁵⁹ Vessels from the United States likewise participated in the Mascarene trade. An unnamed American vessel transported slaves from Mozambique to the Île de France in 1797,⁶⁰ while the *Al ciope* (*sic*) reached Port Louis in June 1807 with 200 Mozambican slaves on board.⁶¹ Mauritius also served as the base from which the *Juliana*, out

identity, see Edward A. Alpers, 'Mozambique and "Mozambiques": slave trade and diaspora on a global scale', in Zimba *et al.*, *Slave Routes*, especially 40–6.

⁴⁹ BNA, T 71/566; T 71/571. My thanks to Edward A. Alpers for his generous assistance in identifying some of the 'Mozambican' ethnonyms in this registry.

⁵⁰ The designation 'Malay' could refer not only to persons from Malaya and elsewhere in southeastern Asia, but also to those originating in India or the Maldives. Gerbeau, 'Des minorités mal-connues', 160–4.

⁵¹ Carter, 'A servile minority in a sugar island', 259–60.

⁵² Toussaint, *La route des îles*, 241–62. ⁵³ Capela, *O Tráfico de Escravos*, 317.

⁵⁴ MNA, F 4/1191, 3 complémentaire An X.

⁵⁵ MNA, F 4/1360, 11 thermidor An XI, and F 4/1368, 22 thermidor An XI, respectively.

⁵⁶ MNA, GB 26/210, 15 prairial An XII; GB 40/56, 2 complémentaire An XII; GB 26/733, 28 juin 1806.

⁵⁷ Toussaint reports the arrival of 13 Portuguese vessels from Mozambique, Inhambane and Quelimane between 1802 and 1808 (*La route des îles*, 263–73).

⁵⁸ MNA, GB 26/241, 16 messidor An XII.

⁵⁹ MNA, GB 26/460, 4 germinal An XIII. At least six 'Arab' vessels arrived in the islands between 1796 and 1802 (Toussaint, *La route des îles*, 172).

⁶⁰ Capela, *O Tráfico de Escravos*, 318. ⁶¹ MNA, GB 26/857, 17 juin 1807.

Table 2. *Size of slave cargoes from Madagascar, 1768–1809*

	No. of cargoes	Cargo size (per cent)					Average size
		< 10	10–24	25–49	50–99	100+	
Loaded: 1769–1809	42	7.1	16.7	38.1	26.2	11.9	57
Landed: 1769–97	33	12.1	33.3	30.3	9.1	15.2	43
1800–9	98	6.1	19.4	24.5	30.6	19.4	61
Total/average	131	7.6	22.9	26.0	25.2	18.3	57

Sources: see Table 1.

Table 3. *Size of slave cargoes from Eastern Africa, 1773–1809*

	No. of cargoes	Cargo size (per cent)					Average size
		< 100	100–99	200–99	300–99	400+	
Loaded at:							
Mozambique	42	16.7	23.8	21.4	23.8	14.3	245
Swahili Coast	29	20.7	17.2	37.9	10.4	13.8	236
Total/average	71	18.3	21.1	28.2	18.3	14.1	241
Landed from:							
Mozambique	62	35.5	32.3	17.7	12.9	1.6	162
Swahili Coast	41	24.4	43.9	17.1	9.7	4.9	176
Total/average	103	31.1	36.9	17.5	11.6	2.9	167

Sources: see Table 1.

of Boston, sailed to Mozambique in 1805 to trade for slaves subsequently carried to Montevideo.⁶²

Previous scholarship has shed little substantive information on the size of the cargoes that reached the Mascarenes. A re-examination of the archival record yields information on the size of more than 200 slave cargoes destined for the islands. As Tables 2 and 3 indicate, those from Madagascar were usually substantially smaller than those arriving from eastern Africa. The largest cargo known to have been loaded in Madagascar contained 264 slaves,⁶³ while in Mozambique and along the Swahili Coast cargoes of 400 or more men, women and children were not uncommon. The 475-ton *Le Saturne*, for instance, landed 444 Mozambican slaves at Port Louis in 1792 and 469 slaves of East African origin the following year.⁶⁴ On occasion, even larger cargoes were shipped to the Mascarenes; when *Le Duc de la Vallière* left Mozambique for the Île de France in 1779, it did so with 600 slaves on board.⁶⁵

⁶² Capela, *O Tráfico de Escravos*, 324.

⁶³ MNA, OC 40/19, 5 février 1778.

⁶⁴ MNA, F 10/345, 17 octobre 1792, and F 27/39, [3 décembre 1793], respectively.

⁶⁵ MNA, OC 40/135, 11 juin 1779.

Table 4. *Composition of slave cargoes to the Mascarenes, 1769–1775*

Demographic category	(Per cent)			Total
	From Madagascar	From Mozambique	From India	
<i>Noirs</i> (adult males)	52.1	28.9	37.1	34.0
<i>Négresses</i> (adult females)	24.6	22.6	21.3	22.9
<i>Capors</i> (male youths)	2.9	13.5	24.6	12.6
<i>Caporines</i> (female youths)	0.8	0.2	—	0.3
<i>Négrillons</i> (boys)	12.6	23.3	8.9	19.9
<i>Négrittes</i> (girls)	6.2	7.2	5.8	6.9
N&N total ^a	19.6	34.8	17.0	30.2
No. of cargoes	19	16	7	42
Total slaves	627	2,373	329	3,329

Note: ^a *Négrillons* and *négrittes*, plus cargoes in which *négrillons* and *négrittes* were mentioned but not differentiated from one another.

Sources: see Table 1.

Information on the demographic structure of these cargoes is limited largely to 1769–75, and especially 1772–5 (Table 4). Scattered references to cargoes reaching Réunion in 1733 and 1735 indicate that males could outnumber females by a ratio of 3:1 during the early years of the Mascarene trade.⁶⁶ By the 1770s, however, the 2:1 male-to-female ratio that generally characterized eighteenth-century trans-Atlantic cargoes also prevailed in the Mascarene trade.⁶⁷ Children⁶⁸ apparently comprised approximately one-fifth of Malagasy and Indian cargoes, a pattern also consistent with that in the Atlantic during the same period.⁶⁹ There are indications that children may have comprised a higher percentage of cargoes of Mozambican origin during the early 1770s, but the extent to which such a pattern persisted cannot be

⁶⁶ Eve, *Les esclaves de Bourbon*, 60–1.

⁶⁷ Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*, 65. For specific information on the French trans-Atlantic trade, see David Geggus, 'Sex ratio, age and ethnicity in the Atlantic trade: data from French shipping and plantation records', *Journal of African History*, 30 (1989), 23–44, and Geggus, 'The French slave trade: an overview', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 58, 3rd ser. (2001), 119–38.

⁶⁸ Distinguishing 'children' and 'youths' from one another and ultimately from adults can be problematic. In the Mascarenes, slave children (*négrillons* and *négrittes*) were usually defined as being 14 years of age and under; except for slave cargoes, few references exist to 'youths' (Fr. *caports* and *caporines*, from the Port. *caporo*) in the Mascarene slave population. The age of the *caporos/caports* shipped by Portuguese and French slavers remains a subject of debate. In 1804, British officials in the Moluccas defined slave children as being age 10 and under (OIOC, F/4/184/3719, 24, Cecil Smith and P. Bruce to Chief Secretary to Government, 15 Dec. 1804). 'Youths' may accordingly have been regarded as being aged 11 to 14–15 or possibly even 16. On the criteria used to distinguish children in the Atlantic trades, see Gwyn Campbell, 'Children and slavery in the New World: a review', *Slavery and Abolition*, 27 (2006), 261–2.

⁶⁹ Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*, 65.

ascertained.⁷⁰ Isolated reports suggest that the general demographic structure of the Mascarene trade did not change significantly between the mid-1770s and the early nineteenth century. The 411 slaves handed over to Mr. Durouzou (?) by the captain of *Le Perier* in 1792 included 225 men, 54 male youths, 31 boys, 69 women, 16 female youths and 16 girls.⁷¹ Information on 235 of the 350–5 slaves found on the Portuguese brig *La Santa Delfina* in 1808 indicates that males outnumbered females by a margin of 2:1 and that children comprised approximately one-fifth of the vessel's cargo.⁷²

Information on the logistics of the Mascarene trade is limited. Slavers destined to the islands from Mozambique and the Swahili Coast were usually less tightly packed than those crossing the Atlantic where cargo densities normally ranged from 1.5 to 2.5 slaves per ton.⁷³ The low slave-per-ton ratio on vessels sailing from Madagascar reflects the fact that slaves were usually just one component of cargoes that included large quantities of rice, foodstuffs and/or cattle. Although the Mascarenes were situated relatively close to their Malagasy and eastern African sources of supply, the problematic winds and currents that prevailed in the western Indian Ocean, and especially in the Mozambique Channel and along the East African coast, meant that slavers could be at sea for extended periods of time before reaching the islands.⁷⁴ Frequent reports that slavers had been obliged to put into the Seychelles or other ports to 'refresh' their cargoes highlights the difficulties that shipping slaves from eastern African ports, and Mozambican ports in particular, could entail.⁷⁵

The regional middle passage often entailed considerable hardship for the men, women and children caught up in this traffic. In some instances, their suffering stemmed from the poor physical condition of the vessels in question. The destruction of a substantial portion of *Le Petit Gustave's* food supply when the brig began to take on water in 1804, for example, forced the ship's captain to reduce the daily rice ration for both crew and slaves to just 5 ounces.⁷⁶ As in the Atlantic, significant numbers of slaves died en route to the Mascarenes. In 1791, Captain Charles Maugin of *L'Eugénie* reported that various afflictions, including smallpox, *seringos* (a form of dysentery endemic

⁷⁰ These figures may not be out of line with recent information on the French trade. See Geggus, 'The French slave trade', 135.

⁷¹ MNA, JH 13, 21 7bre 1792 – Dépot de la livraison de la cargaison du Nre le Perier consistant en 411 tetes d'esclaves a Durouzou (?).

⁷² MNA, GB 26/1054, 17 juin 1808; GB 116/4, Amiraute – Relevé du cargaison d'esclaves du navire portugais La Santa Delfina, 1808.

⁷³ The average number of slaves carried per ton between 1774 and 1793 was 0.45 from Madagascar (19 voyages), 1.35 from Mozambique (20 voyages), and 1.0 from the Swahili Coast (16 voyages). For cargo densities across the Atlantic, see Herbert S. Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade* (Cambridge, 1999), 144.

⁷⁴ The average length of slaving voyages to the Mascarenes (inclusive of days of departure and arrival) between 1774 and 1809 was: 21 days from Madagascar (148 voyages); 59 days from Mozambique (41 voyages); 54 days from the Swahili Coast (36 voyages); 44 days from India (7 voyages).

⁷⁵ Voyages to the Seychelles from Mozambique averaged 30 days (inclusive of days of departure and arrival) and 28 days from the Swahili Coast (15 and 9 voyages, respectively, between 1774 and 1809). Vessels remained in the Seychelles an average of 36 days (25 voyages) and took another 34 days to sail to the Île de France or the Île de Bourbon (28 voyages).

⁷⁶ MNA, GB 40/1, 8 vendémiaire An XII.

in Africa), scurvy and gangrenous wounds, killed 71 of the 252 slaves he had acquired at Kilwa.⁷⁷ Other causes of death included abscesses, 'exhaustion', 'malign fevers' and 'maladies vermineuses'. Some captives also committed suicide by throwing themselves overboard if the opportunity to do so arose, as happened on board *La Bonne Espérance* after two men were released from their chains.⁷⁸

Smallpox was a particularly virulent killer that could resist even the most determined efforts to contain it.⁷⁹ In other instances, inclement weather and shipwrecks decimated slave cargoes. The unexpected calm that left *Le St. Pierre* drifting for weeks north of Madagascar in 1779 resulted in the death of 200 of the 400 slaves on board.⁸⁰ Almost thirty years later, 166 slaves were literally battered to death in *La Minerve's* hold when it encountered a violent storm.⁸¹ On occasion, cargoes were devastated by a combination of factors. Such was the case on *Le Bélisaire* which, after leaving Ibo with 246 slaves, lost 92 slaves while becalmed for a month off Anjouan, another 11 during a refreshment stop in the Seychelles, and a further 66 when the ship was wrecked near Ibo upon its return to the Mozambican coast.⁸²

The overall mortality rate among Mascarene-bound slaves appears to have been higher than the 14.9 per cent average that prevailed on French slavers operating in the Atlantic.⁸³ Toussaint reported average mortality rates of 12 per cent on 27 voyages from Madagascar between 1775 and 1808, and 21 per cent on 64 voyages from eastern Africa between 1777 and 1808.⁸⁴ Filliot in turn estimated that mortality rates averaged at 20–25 per cent from India and 25–30 per cent from West Africa.⁸⁵ Several factors contributed to lower death rates en route from Madagascar: the Grande Île's proximity, less problematic winds and currents than along the East African coast, and the attendant shorter duration of expeditions to the island.⁸⁶ A review of extant sources confirms Toussaint's figure for cargoes of Malagasy origin (Table 5). These sources also point to a possibly substantially higher average mortality rate among cargoes from eastern Africa than Toussaint reported. The inability to reconstruct his data base in its totality suggests, however, that the higher mortality rates among cargoes from eastern Africa reported in Table 5 must be used with care. Isolated reports indicate that mortality rates on board ships that engaged in the illegal slave trade that flourished between 1811 and the early 1830s remained much the same as those that Toussaint reported for 1775–1808.⁸⁷

Shipboard revolts were yet another hazard slavers had to face. Unlike for the Atlantic trade,⁸⁸ relatively little information exists about insurrections on

⁷⁷ MNA, F 10/168, 1 décembre 1791.

⁷⁸ MNA, F 10/224, 3 avril 1792.

⁷⁹ MNA, OC 24B, Journal de navigation du vaisseau L'Espérance, cap. Desmolière, faisant la traite à la côte d'Afrique, 5 novembre 1774–30 mai 1775 (incomplete). Of the 579 slaves loaded at Zanzibar, 98 had died and another 150 were afflicted with the disease at the time of the last entry in the ship's log.

⁸⁰ MNA, OC 40/130, 2 juin 1779.

⁸¹ MNA, GB 40/312, 27 janvier 1808.

⁸² MNA, OC 48/102, 12 octobre 1786.

⁸³ Herbert S. Klein, *The Middle Passage: Comparative Studies in the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Princeton, 1978), 195–6.

⁸⁴ Toussaint, *La route des îles*, 451, 454.

⁸⁵ Filliot, *La traite des esclaves*, 228.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 107.

⁸⁷ Allen, 'Licentious and unbridled proceedings', 110.

⁸⁸ See: Stephen D. Behrendt, David Eltis and David Richardson, 'The costs of coercion: African agency in the pre-modern Atlantic world', *Economic History Review*, 54

Table 5. *Slave mortality en route to the Mascarenes, 1770–1808*

Period	From Madagascar				From Eastern Africa ^a			
	No. of voyages	Slaves loaded	DEN ^b	% MEN ^c	No. of voyages	Slaves loaded	DEN	% MEN
1770–9	4	478	58	12.1	13	3,483	1,154+	33.1+
1780–9	5	339	45	13.3	11	2,709	817	30.2
1790–3	3	74	7	9.5	15	4,482	1,144+	25.5+
1802–8	1	54	8	14.8	11	2,612	655	25.1
Total/ average	13	945	118	12.5	50	13,286	3,770+	28.4+

Notes: ^a Mozambique and the Swahili Coast.

^b Slave deaths en route exclusive of shipwrecks.

^c Slave mortality en route exclusive of shipwrecks.

Sources: see Table 1.

Mascarene-bound vessels. The records of only 23 of the voyages under consideration include references to overt acts of shipboard resistance by slaves, a number that undoubtedly under-represents the extent of this activity. The absence of more such cases in the archival record may reflect the fact that some captains apparently viewed shipboard revolts as nothing unexpected. Antoine Vauverd's account of events on the 120-ton snow *Les Deux Amis* late in 1778, for example, is strikingly terse; he reported simply that 80 slaves had thrown themselves overboard while the ship was at sea and that the crew had recovered all of the slaves except for 15 who had been eaten by sharks.⁸⁹

Uprisings occurred not only on the high seas, but also while ships were at anchor trading for slaves. Shipboard revolts occurred on at least five occasions in the Mozambique roads, once at Ibo, once at Kilwa and twice at ports (Foulpointe and Ste. Luce) along the Malagasy coast. Some crews contained these uprisings by themselves, but in other instances captains had to call on local authorities for assistance in doing so. The revolt that broke out on the morning of 6 November 1787 aboard *Le Tigre* at Foulpointe, for instance, ended the following morning only after the local chief and his men attacked the brig after peppering it with musket fire throughout the night.⁹⁰

(2001), 454–76; Richard Sheridan, 'Resistance and rebellion of African captives in the transatlantic slave trade before becoming seasoned labourers in the British Caribbean, 1690–1807', in Verene A. Shepherd (ed.), *Working Slavery, Pricing Freedom: Perspectives from the Caribbean, Africa and the African Diaspora* (New York, 2002), 181–205; David Richardson, 'Shipboard revolts, African authority, and the transatlantic slave trade', in Sylviane A. Diouf (ed.), *Fighting the Slave Trade: West African Strategies* (Athens OH, 2003), 199–218; Eric Robert Taylor, *If We Must Die: Shipboard Insurrections in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Baton Rouge, 2006).

⁸⁹ MNA, OC 40/103, 12 décembre 1778. ⁹⁰ MNA, OC 48/308, 16 avril 1788.

The significant loss of life that occurred during some revolts attests not only to the desperation and/or determination of the slaves involved,⁹¹ but also to the fact that some uprisings were well organized and well led. Crews reported on a number of occasions that revolts began with 'a great cry' when large numbers of slaves were on deck being fed or exercised. The decision by the officers of the Portuguese ship *La Ste. Antoine* to execute a slave named Bororo after a failed insurrection on the high seas provides a brief but tantalizing view into the internal dynamics of such an insurrection.⁹² Captain Joseph Caetanne Rodrigue reported that Bororo had given the signal that began an uprising which led to the death of several crew members before it was suppressed. His reputation as a 'sorcerer' among the 200 slaves still in the ship's hold raised fears that he might lead another uprising that the crew would be ill equipped to handle. These fears prompted the ship's officers to hold a summary hearing that resulted in Bororo being tied to a mast and shot before all of the slaves on the vessel, after which his body was thrown overboard.⁹³

Not all of these revolts failed. On at least one occasion, slaves took control of the vessel on which they were being transported and returned to their homeland. The lives of the surviving crew members on *Les Bons Amis* were spared in October 1790 on the condition that they would sail the ship to Viboulle (*sic*) on the Malagasy coast, which they did.⁹⁴ The ultimate outcome of a second revolt is less certain. Fear that their ship might catch fire, coupled with their inability to put down the slave uprising that began at 6.0 p.m. on 4 October 1793 off the Malagasy coast, forced the crew of *La Constance Adelle* to abandon the brig at 5.0 p.m. the following day.⁹⁵ Unfortunately, we do not know what subsequently happened to the vessel and the men, women and children on it.

THE ECONOMICS OF THE MASCARENE TRADE

The active participation of both metropolitan and local mercantile interests in the Mascarene trade further illustrates the complex dynamics of slave trading in the western Indian Ocean during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Merchants from ports including Bordeaux, Le Havre, Lorient, Marseilles, Nantes and Saint-Malo organized slave trading expeditions to the region, but the limited and often problematic shipping data at our disposal make it difficult to ascertain the scale of this activity with any precision.⁹⁶ Perhaps 15 ships are known to have left Nantes to trade for slaves

⁹¹ An uprising aboard *Le Perier* in the Mozambique roads on 21 April 1792 resulted in the death of 23 slaves from drowning or being eaten by sharks (MNA, F 10/281, 4 juillet 1792). The insurrection which lasted two-and-a-half hours on board *Les Trois Frères* on 28 November 1792 while the ship was at sea left 12 slaves killed and 13 drowned (MNA, F 10/386, 17 janvier 1793).

⁹² 'Bororo' was the name the Portuguese gave to the region east of the Shire and north of the Zambezi as far as Angoche (Alpers, *Ivory and Slaves*, 53).

⁹³ MNA, OC 40/237, 18 novembre 1780.

⁹⁴ MNA, OB 28/249, 14 juillet 1789.

⁹⁵ MNA, F 10/573, 4 novembre 1793.

⁹⁶ Patrick Villiers, 'The slave and colonial trade in France just before the Revolution', in Barbara L. Solow (ed.), *Slavery and the Rise of the Atlantic System* (Cambridge, 1991), 210–36.

in the Indian Ocean between 1769 and 1782.⁹⁷ Only 23 vessels are known to have sailed from Bordeaux for the Île de France between 1790 and 1792; Bordelais underwriters, on the other hand, insured at least 87 voyages to the Indian Ocean in 1791 and 1792.⁹⁸ Information on metropolitan-based slaving ventures to the region during the early nineteenth century is equally problematic. Éric Saugera reports that 14 such expeditions landed slaves on Mauritius between 1800 and 1805, a figure that may or may not ultimately be at variance with his subsequent report of a total of 19 slaving voyages destined for the Malagasy coast or Zanzibar via the Île de France during the same period.⁹⁹ Saugera's estimate that the East African coast attracted only 3 per cent of metropolitan-based French slavers during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries will undoubtedly need to be revisited in light of the arrival in Mauritius of at least 685 vessels from France between 1773 and 1810¹⁰⁰ and the identification of at least 164 known slaving voyages in the western Indian Ocean between 1769 and 1809 linked explicitly to mercantile interests in France (Table 6).

If the extent to which French slavers operated in the Indian Ocean remains to be determined, there can be little doubt that metropolitan merchants engaged in this traffic because of its potential profitability. The fact that metropolitan-based vessels such as *Les Boynes* transported multiple cargoes to the Mascarenes in the mid-1770s attests as much.¹⁰¹ Evidence on the profitability of individual voyages remains elusive, but scattered information on slave prices along the Malagasy and East African coasts during the late 1760s and 1770s¹⁰² indicates that slaves could sell in the Mascarenes for twice their original purchase price, if not more.¹⁰³ Such was probably the case when Port Louis merchant Joseph Pichard sold 230 male and female slaves for 60 piastres (\$) each in 1786.¹⁰⁴ The local demand for servile labor meant that even unhealthy slaves could command significant sums on the auction block.

⁹⁷ Nathalie Sannier, 'Nantes, la traite négrière et l'océan indien au 18e siècle', *Cahier des annuaires de la mémoire*, 1 (1999), 60.

⁹⁸ Paul Butel, 'Les ports atlantiques français et l'Océan Indien sous la révolution et l'empire, l'exemple de Bordeaux', in Wanquet and Jullien (eds.), *Révolution française et Océan Indien*, 86–7.

⁹⁹ Eric Saugera, 'Pour une histoire de la traite française sous le Consulat et l'Empire', *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer*, 76 (1989), 226, and Saugera, 'Les armements négriers français vers l'Océan Indien sous le Consulat', in Wanquet and Jullien (eds.), *Révolution française et Océan Indien*, 103, respectively.

¹⁰⁰ Toussaint, *La route des îles*, 167, 169, 171, 173.

¹⁰¹ Mettas, *La traite négrière*, II, 757–8.

¹⁰² The adult male slaves loaded on *La Normande* at Foulpointe in 1769 cost 29–34 piastres (\$) each, while the adult females in the ship's cargo cost between \$27 and \$34 and its boys and girls were purchased for \$28–\$32½ (MNA, HB 16/9, *Compte des noirs particuliers embarqués par connaissance sur la Corvette La Normande – Année 1769*). According to a contemporary Dutch source, slaves cost \$25 along the Swahili Coast in 1776. Robert Ross, 'The Dutch on the Swahili Coast, 1776–1778: two slaving journals, Part I', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 19 (1986), 334–5.

¹⁰³ On the profitability of the illegal slave trade to the Mascarenes, see Allen, 'Licentious and unbridled proceedings', 102–3.

¹⁰⁴ MNA, OC 48/58, 16 août 1786. One-half of the \$13,800 total selling-price was due at the time of the sale, with the balance due in two equal payments, one in three months and the other in six months.

Table 6. *Metropolitan French ports and known slaving voyages in the western Indian Ocean, 1769–1809*

Home port	1769–79	1780–9	1790–2	1803–6	Total
Bordeaux	1	39	9	1	50
Le Havre	1	3	3	—	7
Lorient	4	10	3	—	17
Marseille	3	17	15	—	35
Nantes	5	11	8	1	25
Saint-Malo	6	6	3	3	8
Other ^a	—	2	2	—	4
Unknown/uncertain ^b	2	2	4	—	8
Total	22	90	47	5	164

Notes: ^a Brest, La Rochelle, St. Briec.

^b Different ports of *armement* and departure (e.g., Lorient/Bordeaux).

Source: see Table 1.

Louis Bernard, captain and outfitter of *Le Lion*, for one, realized 13,551 livres 10 sols in 1775 from the sale of 27 Mozambican slaves who were readily acknowledged to be in poor health.¹⁰⁵ The purchase of slaves on the Île de France for resale on the Île de Bourbon could likewise be a profitable undertaking; the sale of 36 slaves on Réunion, probably by Louis Bonneau in May 1787, yielded a profit of 4,150 livres, or 12.8 per cent, over their purchase price of 32,400 livres in Mauritius.¹⁰⁶

The voyages of *Le Général Moreau*, outfitted at Saint-Malo by Sieurs Deschais and Cosson, afford an opportunity to examine the activities of metropolitan-based slavers in greater detail. The ship left Saint-Malo on 27 January 1803 with \$7,810 in specie on board. After taking on rice and other provisions needed to feed a human cargo at the Cape of Good Hope, the ship proceeded to Kilwa where the captain and crew procured 219 slaves, 187 of whom survived the passage to the Seychelles and Réunion where they were sold for \$17,511. The ship returned to the Cape where \$2,000 was spent to purchase a cargo of wine, eau de vie, butter, iron, cordage, beer, etc., which subsequently sold for \$10,740 in Réunion. From Réunion, *Le Général Moreau* sailed again to Kilwa with \$8,000 where it acquired 170 slaves who sold for \$13,950 upon the vessel's return to Réunion and Mauritius. The ship then sailed for Mozambique with a cargo of piastres and mixed merchandise valued at \$10,751, at least part of which was used to purchase 110 slaves who were carried to Réunion where they were sold for an unknown sum. From Réunion, *Le Général Moreau* sailed to Foulpointe where it acquired a slave cargo of unknown size that sold for \$12,695 on Réunion and Mauritius. The ship's return voyage to Madagascar, however, ended in disaster for its owners; shortly after leaving Foulpointe on 2 December 1806 with a cargo of rice

¹⁰⁵ MNA, NA 22/6/25, 4 juillet 1775. The adult males sold for between 105 and 1,000 livres, while the adult women sold for 350 to 800 livres.

¹⁰⁶ MNA, JH 9, Etat Des Noirs que J'ai Vendu a Bourbon.

worth \$8,000, *Le Général Moreau* (itself valued at \$7,000) was captured by a British vessel.¹⁰⁷

While some metropolitan merchants sought to exploit the local demand for servile labor, others used the islands as a staging point from which to mount expeditions to acquire slaves for France's colonies in the Americas, especially Saint-Domingue. The earliest explicit reference to such activity dates to 1772 when *La Digue*, outfitted in Lorient, sailed from the Île de France to the Mozambican coast to acquire slaves who were subsequently landed at Cap Français in Saint-Domingue.¹⁰⁸ In some instances, vessels outfitted in France carried one or more slave cargoes to the Mascarenes before returning to the African coast where they acquired slaves destined for the Americas. On at least 16 occasions between 1776 and 1791, the Île de France itself served as a 'refreshment' station for vessels carrying slaves from Kilwa and Mozambique to the Americas. The extent to which the Mascarenes functioned as a staging point for American-bound ventures is difficult to determine but, as Table 1 indicates, there is reason to believe that significant numbers of metropolitan vessels did so.

Port Louis merchants were clearly instrumental in mounting some of these voyages. The permit that authorized the captain of the 200-ton brigantine *La Petite Dorade* to leave the Île de France for the African coast in May 1788 (where it took on a cargo of 242 slaves at Mozambique) noted that the 22-man crew had been provided by Janvier Monneron, a prominent Port Louis merchant acting for Louis Bourdon of Bordeaux.¹⁰⁹ On 6 July the following year, Pitot Frères, another prominent local merchant house and consignee of the 395 slaves who comprised the cargo of *La Ville de Bordeaux*, sold 386 of these slaves to Captains Jean Valeau, acting on behalf of MM. Letellier Frères and Jean Dufourg, acting on behalf of MM. Pierre Bourbon *ainé* and Jean Laroche (both Bordelais merchants), for 428,460 livres.¹¹⁰ Valeau and Dufourg had formed a partnership two days earlier to purchase *La Ville de Bordeaux's* cargo, load it onto *L'Honorine*, captained by Dufourg, as soon as the monsoon permitted, and transport it to Saint-Domingue where, they agreed, the slaves who survived the voyage were not to be sold in the southern part of the colony.¹¹¹

More detailed information about these voyages to the Americas via the Mascarenes is scarce. Thirty-three Mascarene-based voyages are known to have landed some 6,700 Mozambican and 1,700 East African slaves in the Americas between 1772 and 1790, while eight voyages that entailed visits to the Île de France subsequently landed more than 3,800 slaves from Angola and Cabinda in the New World between 1776 and 1790.¹¹² We have information on the composition of only two of the Mozambican cargoes in question; 44 per cent of the 340 slaves involved were adult males compared to

¹⁰⁷ MNA: GB 14/55, 4 juillet 1810. ¹⁰⁸ Mettas, *La traite négrière*, II, 615.

¹⁰⁹ MNA, OB 50/180, 20 mai 1788; OB 28/75, 1 novembre 1788.

¹¹⁰ MNA, OC 4/126, [Contrat] entre Jean Pascal Dufourg et Valteau, Capitaines de Marine Marchande et Pitot frères compagnie Négociants de cette Isle, consignataires du V^{au} La Ville de Bordeaux, 6 juillet 1789.

¹¹¹ MNA, OC 4/126, [Société] entre Jⁿ Valeau cap^{ne} du Navire le Comte de fume[?] et Jean Dufourg Cap^{ne} du Navire l'honorine de Bordeaux, 4 juillet 1789. For reasons why slavers preferred to sell their cargoes in and around Cap Français, see Geggus, 'The French slave trade', 126ff.

¹¹² Mettas, *La traite négrière*, I and II.

26 per cent adult females, 18 per cent boys and 12 per cent girls. Data on mortality en route to the Americas is equally sketchy. *L'Euphrasie*, which arrived at the Île de France with 188 of the 222 slaves it had loaded at Mozambique, landed 145 slaves when it ultimately arrived at Port-au-Prince.¹¹³ *La Petite Dorade* in turn reached Cap Français with 159 of the 242 Mozambican slaves originally in its hold.¹¹⁴

Local merchants also participated actively in the slave trade. Port Louis housed a sizeable merchant community by the early nineteenth century; in 1805, 74 of the city's white inhabitants declared their occupation to be that of *négoçiant* (merchant or trader) compared to 26 who had done so in 1776.¹¹⁵ Explicit references to their involvement in slaving ventures date mostly to the 1770s and 1780s when *déclarations d'arrivées* often included the name of a vessel's *armateur* or outfitter. Among those named as *armateurs* based on the Île de France were Sieurs Closnard, Cloupet (four voyages), Collique, Drieux, Geoffriou, De La Rochelle, Le Blanc et Rolland (five voyages), Le Bouchet (two voyages), Le Bourdé et Dahuy (?), Janvier Monneron et C^{ie} (two voyages), Morice et Société (two voyages), Laurent Raphaël, Solminiac et La Corte, and Vally. One merchant based on Réunion, Sieur Mannier, is also mentioned. In other instances, independent ship captains such as Sieurs Pichard, Antoine Vauverd (two voyages), and Jean Olivier (two voyages) served as their own *armateurs*. Voyages were also occasionally family enterprises: brothers Sebastien and Thomas Boileau were co-*armateurs* of *La Marianne* which Sebastien also captained.¹¹⁶

Partnership agreements from the early 1780s demonstrate that local merchants could mobilize significant capital resources for such ventures. Fulerand Dejean and Emmanuel Touche du Pujol each contributed 100,000 livres to the commercial enterprise they established on 12 October 1780.¹¹⁷ Two years later, Louis Joseph Pigeot de Carey, his brother Isidore Pigeot de St. Vallery, and Paul Trebillard de la Relandière contributed a total of 400,000 livres to capitalize the commercial partnership they were establishing for three years.¹¹⁸ Specific references to the ways in which local merchants financed slaving voyages are scarce, but those that exist suggest that substantial sums could be raised locally without undue difficulty. Early in 1784, for example, a surgeon at the royal hospital invested 19,000 livres in *Le Bélisaire*, a slaver bound for the African coast and then the Cape of Good Hope.¹¹⁹ Nine years later, Sieur d'Hotman, proprietor and *armateur* of *Le Bon Père* destined for Mozambique to purchase slaves, acknowledged receiving 51,352 livres 5 sols 10 deniers from Gabriel Burquel for his one-third share in the voyage.¹²⁰ The multiple slaving voyages undertaken by

¹¹³ MNA: OB 28/40, 16 août 1788; Mettas, *La traite négrière*, II, 95.

¹¹⁴ MNA: OB 28/75, 1 novembre 1788; Mettas, *La traite négrière*, II, 97–8.

¹¹⁵ Respectively: MNA, KK 3, Recensement des populations blanche et libres, Port Louis (1805); Centre des Archives d'Outre-Mer (CAOM), Aix-en-Provence, G¹ 473, Recensement général de l'Isle de France, 1776.

¹¹⁶ MNA, OA 57/48, 7 septembre 1778; OC 40/186, 12 février 1780.

¹¹⁷ MNA, OB 18/6, 12 octobre 1780. In 1783, Touche du Pujol, acting in his own name and that of his associates, was involved in financing the voyage of *Le Bollé* to the amount of more than 109,000 livres (MNA, OB 21/243, 14 octobre 1783).

¹¹⁸ MNA, OB 18/18, 28 septembre 1782. ¹¹⁹ MNA, OB 21/290, 4 janvier 1784.

¹²⁰ MNA, F 23/73, 15 janvier 1793.

individual vessels likewise demonstrate the ready availability of financing. Both *L'Eugénie* and *La Favorite* made at least 13 voyages to Madagascar between 1802 and 1807, while *La Charlotte*, *Le Créol* and *La Fanny* each made at least eight voyages to the Grande Île between 1803 and 1809. Six other vessels made a minimum of three voyages to Madagascar during the first decade of the nineteenth century.

While it is impossible to determine the extent of their involvement with any precision, there is good reason to believe that Mascarene merchants underwrote the costs of a substantial majority of slaving voyages to Madagascar, and that they were frequently involved in voyages that brought slaves from eastern Africa and southern Asia to the islands. Vessels financed by Port Louis merchants also participated in the trans-Atlantic trade. In December 1781, *La Caroline*, fitted out by Sieur Cloupet, left Port Louis for Querimba where it loaded 280 slaves destined for the Americas before ultimately being forced to return to the Île de France by contrary monsoon winds.¹²¹ Five years later, the Mauritian-based *L'Eléonore* landed 120 slaves in Saint-Domingue who had been acquired at Kilwa.¹²²

A distinguishing feature of the slave trade with Madagascar was its intimate connection with the beef and rice trade that was crucial to the islands' survival. Mauritius depended heavily upon imported foodstuffs to feed its population throughout the period of French rule (1721–1810),¹²³ and continued to do so after the advent of British rule in 1810. A survey of 135 *déclarations* made by captains returning from Madagascar between 1802 and 1809 demonstrates the extent to which these trades were inextricably intertwined; only three of these statements suggest that the cargoes in question consisted only of slaves.¹²⁴ More detailed information about individual cargoes underscores this point. The 900-ton *L'Eléphant*, for instance, loaded 200 slaves and 343 cattle when it visited the Malagasy coast in 1782.¹²⁵ Twenty years later, *Le Réparateur* carried a cargo of 150 cattle, 4 sheep, 5 goats, 400 fowl, 20,000 pounds of rice, 60 barrels of salted meat and 11 slaves when it left Fort Dauphin.¹²⁶

Although voyages to (or from) the East African coast apparently focused largely on slaves, these ventures also dealt at least occasionally in foodstuffs and other merchandise. The Portuguese chasseur *La Perriquitto*, for instance, carried leather, tallow, cinchona, soap and candles as well as 35 slaves when it arrived at Port Louis from Mozambique late in April 1806.¹²⁷ The following year, the hold of *La Diane*, another Portuguese arrival from Mozambique, contained Madeira wine, whale oil, butter and sheep tallow as well as 30 slaves for sale.¹²⁸

¹²¹ MNA, OB 21/108, 21 novembre 1782.

¹²² Mettas, *La traite négrière*, II, 229.

¹²³ Auguste Toussaint, 'Le trafic commerciale entre les Mascareignes et Madagascar, de 1773 à 1810', *Annales de l'Université de Madagascar*, Série lettres et sciences humaines, 6 (1967), 35–89; Madeleine Ly-Tio-Fane, 'Problèmes d'approvisionnement de l'Île de France au temps de l'Intendant Poivre', *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Arts and Sciences of Mauritius*, 3 (1968), 101–15; Campbell, 'The structure of trade', 113.

¹²⁴ MNA, F 4; GB 26.

¹²⁵ MNA, OB 21/73, 16 septembre 1782.

¹²⁶ MNA, F 4/1156, 23 messidor An X.

¹²⁷ MNA, GB 26/715, 28 avril 1806.

¹²⁸ MNA, GB 26/973, 29 décembre 1807.

The slave trade from India during this era incorporated elements of both the Malagasy and East African trades. Unfortunately, information exists on only a handful of voyages known to have carried slaves from South Asia to the Mascarenes. In some instances, ships carried sizeable numbers of slaves away from the Indian subcontinent; *Le Chandernagore*, for instance, landed 135 Bengali slaves on the Île de France in July 1772.¹²⁹ The early 1790s in particular witnessed a number of large-scale slaving ventures along the Indian coast as merchants sought to exploit the opportunities created by the famine that raged in the northern Circars. In February 1792, *Les Amies Réunis (sic)* sailed for Mauritius from the Coromandel Coast with about 300 slaves;¹³⁰ that December, two French ships left the Coringa roads near Yanam with 800–900 slaves on board.¹³¹ In other instances, slaves were clearly just one of many commodities being sought and exported from India. Captain Alexis Joseph Bartro of *Le Chevalier d'Entrecasteaux*, for example, was instructed in April 1789 to acquire 3,000 sacks of rice, a wide assortment of textiles, and 80 male and female slaves between 12 and 18 years of age during his forthcoming voyage from the Île de France to Bengal.¹³² The snow *L'Heureux Marie (sic)* reached Mauritius from Bengal late in December 1792 with a cargo of textiles, ghee and 7 slaves.¹³³ The following year, the cargo of *Les Deux Amis* comprised 150,000 lbs of rice, 75,000 lbs of wheat and 18 Bengali slaves,¹³⁴ while that of *Le Dioré* included 32 Bengali slaves, 30,000 lbs of salt, 20,500 lbs of sugar and assorted cotton and silk textiles.¹³⁵

At least 510 vessels reached the Mascarenes from India between 1773 and 1810,¹³⁶ and there is good reason to suspect that many of the estimated 19,750–23,900 Indian slaves exported to the islands during the eighteenth century arrived in relatively small groups as part of larger mixed cargoes.¹³⁷ Unfortunately, the archival record has remained largely silent about the movement of the Balinese, Javanese, Malay, Sumatran, Timorese and other slaves of Southeast Asian or East Asian origin who reached the Mascarenes.¹³⁸ Toussaint tallied 175 vessels arriving from the Indonesian archipelago during the period under consideration and, like their Indian counterparts, many, if not most, of the Southeast Asian slaves who reached the islands before 1810 probably did so in small groups as part of larger mixed cargoes.

THE MASCARENE SLAVE TRADE IN PERSPECTIVE

The picture that emerges from this study is of an important and vibrant trade in chattel labor that integrated Madagascar, Mozambique, the Swahili

¹²⁹ MNA, OA 44/1, No. 126 Domaine Recette, entry dated 3 juillet 1772.

¹³⁰ OIOC, P/241/31, 562, Matthew Yeats to Major-General Medows, 3 Feb. 1792.

¹³¹ OIOC, P/241/36, 16, 19, Matthew Yeats to Sir Charles Oakeley, 22 Dec. 1792.

¹³² MNA, JH 10, Instructions, et conditions de M^r Bartro Capitaine du N^{re} le Ch^f Dentrecasteaux en avril 1789.

¹³³ MNA, OA 44/1, No. 126 Domaine Recette, entry dated 29 décembre 1772.

¹³⁴ MNA, OA 44/2, No. 127 Domaine du Roy Recette, entry dated 21 mai 1773.

¹³⁵ MNA, OA 44/2, No. 127 Domaine du Roy Recette, entry dated 15 juillet 1773.

¹³⁶ Toussaint, *La route des îles*, 193–238.

¹³⁷ Allen, 'The Mascarene slave-trade', 41.

¹³⁸ See *ibid.*; Carter, 'A servile minority'.

Coast, India and the Mascarenes into an increasingly complex web of social, economic and political relationships during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Colonial censuses confirm the scale of this trade; the Mauritian slave population soared from 18,100 in 1766 to 60,000 in 1809,¹³⁹ while that on Réunion also tripled, from 21,150 in 1765 to 65,140 in 1808.¹⁴⁰ I have argued elsewhere that slave imports into the islands before 1810 were 12–27 per cent higher than Filliot estimated, and that 160,500–186,800 slaves may have been exported to the Île de France and Île de Bourbon between 1770 and 1810.¹⁴¹ Projections based on the average size of Mascarene-bound cargoes and the number of vessels known to have reached Mauritius support these estimates, suggesting as they do that some 101,000 slaves could have been exported to the Île de France between 1773 and 1809. The dearth of information on the Réunionnais trade makes it difficult to ascertain how many slaves reached the Île de Bourbon during this era. However, the fact that 1,747 merchant vessels called at Réunion between 1773 and 1810 leaves little doubt that many tens of thousands of bondmen and women also reached this island during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.¹⁴²

This traffic's significance transcends its obvious impact on Mauritian and Réunionnais society and economy. The frequent references to slavers using the Seychelles as a refreshment station, for example, raises the question of whether the colonization of this archipelago in 1770 was driven, at least in part, by the anticipated need for such facilities following the promulgation of the 1769 decree that opened the Mascarenes to free trade by all French nationals. Histories of the Seychelles are largely silent about the reasons behind the islands' settlement.¹⁴³

The Mascarene trade also raises other questions that are central to understanding the movement of slave labor in the western Indian Ocean before the early nineteenth century. As noted earlier, Edward Alpers argued more than 35 years ago that the Mascarene demand for chattel labor was the driving force behind the dramatic expansion of the East African and Malagasy trades after *circa* 1770, a position to which historians of the Mascarenes, the Indian Ocean and the African slave trades have continued to subscribe. Recently, however, Thomas Vernet has challenged this argument by asserting that slave trading along the Swahili Coast was an important, large-scale business long before French and Omani slavers made additional demands on this commercial system during the second half of the eighteenth century.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ CAOM, G¹ 505, no. 2, Tableau Général de l'Etat de Population et de Culture ou étoit L'Isle de France, L'année 1766; BNA, CO 167/5, Relevé du Cadastre Général de l'Isle de France pour l'Année Mil huit Cent Neuf d'après les Recensemens Fournis par les Habitants.

¹⁴⁰ Payet, *Histoire de l'esclavage*, 17.

¹⁴¹ Allen, 'The Mascarene slave-trade', 38–41.

¹⁴² Toussaint, *La route des îles*, 183–4.

¹⁴³ Burton Benedict, *People of the Seychelles* (3rd ed., London, 1970); Toussaint, *Histoire des îles Mascareignes*, 80–1; Deryck Scarr, *Seychelles Since 1770: History of a Slave and Post-Slave Society* (London, 2000).

¹⁴⁴ Thomas Vernet, 'Le commerce des esclaves sur la côte Swahili, 1500–1750', *Azania*, 38 (2003), 69–97.

Vernet's assertion is not without its problems, including a readily acknowledged scarcity of archival materials on the period from 1698 to 1750. Nevertheless, his thesis, together with what we now know about the Mascarene trade, points up the need to reassess the structure and dynamics of slave trading along the eastern African coast during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The existence before 1750 of a more developed commercial system along the Swahili Coast than hitherto believed helps to explain, for instance, why the Mascarene trade became such a dynamic and sophisticated system in the wake of the 1769 free trade decree. In so doing, Vernet's argument lends additional, albeit indirect, support to revised estimates of slave exports to Mauritius and Réunion between 1770 and 1810.

The Mascarenes' place in such an integrated commercial network has other implications. Firstly, it helps to explain why the suppression of the Mascarene trade during the early nineteenth century took as long as it did and how and why this illicit traffic shaped Anglo-Malagasy, Franco-Malagasy and Anglo-Omani diplomatic relations after 1810 to the extent that it did. An estimated 52,500 slaves were landed clandestinely on Mauritius between 1811 and *circa* 1827 by what British authorities acknowledged was a well developed and highly resilient slave trading system;¹⁴⁵ another 45,000–50,000, if not more, slaves also reached Réunion between 1811 and 1848, mostly before *circa* 1831.¹⁴⁶ Secondly, the extent to which a well-developed commercial system existed before 1750 bears directly on the origins, structure and development of what Gwyn Campbell has characterized as a 'southern' slave trading complex along the eastern African coast.¹⁴⁷ Campbell views this complex as basically a nineteenth-century phenomenon, a characterization that must necessarily be re-examined in light of what we now know about the slave trades that flourished in the southwestern Indian Ocean before 1800.

The extensive participation of metropolitan and colonial mercantile interests in the Mascarene trade highlights the need to include developments in the Indian Ocean in any meaningful discussion of European slave trading from Africa, and the French slave trade in particular, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The exportation of perhaps as many as 364,000 men, women and children from Madagascar, Mozambique and the Swahili Coast to Mauritius and Réunion between 1670 and 1848 requires us, at a minimum, to revise estimates of slave exports from eastern Africa between the late seventeenth and mid nineteenth century. Adding the number of men, women and children exported to the Mascarenes in French vessels to those embarked on French slavers plying the Atlantic, for instance, increases French slave exports from Africa by some 29 per cent over current estimates of 1.25 million.¹⁴⁸

What we know about the Mascarene trade also raises questions about how we conceptualize the 'world' of the Indian Ocean. Histories of the

¹⁴⁵ Allen, 'Licentious and unbridled proceedings', 100.

¹⁴⁶ Gerbeau, 'Quelques aspects de la traite illégale', 296, and Gerbeau, 'L'Océan Indien n'est pas l'Atlantique', 96; Allen, 'The Mascarene slave-trade', 41.

¹⁴⁷ Campbell, 'Madagascar and Mozambique in the slave trade', and Campbell, 'The East African slave trade, 1861–1895'. ¹⁴⁸ Geggus, 'The French Slave Trade', 121.

Indian Ocean have paid little or no attention to slave trading although labor migration is often regarded as one of the important sinews that tied this huge, diverse region together.¹⁴⁹ The smaller volume of the various Indian Ocean slave trades during the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries compared to those across the Atlantic during these same centuries has led some to argue that slavery and slave trading were not as central to the creation of an Indian Ocean world as they were to that which took shape in the Atlantic.¹⁵⁰ However, the particulars of a trade that reached from Madagascar, Mozambique and the Swahili Coast to the Indian subcontinent and finally to Southeast Asia and the Indonesian archipelago suggests that such characterizations must, at a minimum, be carefully qualified. The need to do so is underscored by Pier Larson's recent review of the Atlantic trade's role in shaping the global African diaspora; Larson reminds us that not only did the total number of African slaves transported across the Sahara and Indian Ocean probably exceed that carried across the Atlantic, but also that these non-Atlantic trades were of far greater antiquity.¹⁵¹ The need to do so is further underscored by Campbell's and Larson's work which has revealed the role that slave trading in the southwestern Indian Ocean – and the Mascarene trade in particular – played in the development of the Merina state in highland Madagascar and in that empire's subsequent relations with Britain and France during the nineteenth century.¹⁵² The Mascarene trade is also crucial to understanding a hitherto ignored diaspora of Malagasy speakers that may have entailed the largest movement of a single African people in the western Indian Ocean.¹⁵³

Although fewer than 24,000 Indian slaves were probably exported to the Île de France and Île de Bourbon during the eighteenth century, the significance of this traffic cannot be assessed only in terms of the numbers of men, women and children who were caught up in it. To do so is to ignore the larger interactive contexts within which this trade existed and of which it was

¹⁴⁹ See J. Auber, *Histoire de l'Océan Indien* (Tananarive, 1955); Toussaint, *History of the Indian Ocean*; K. N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge, 1985); Kenneth McPherson, *The Indian Ocean: A History of People and the Sea* (Delhi, 1993); Richard Hall, *Empires of the Monsoon: A History of the Indian Ocean and Its Invaders* (London, 1996); R. J. Barendse, *The Arabian Seas: The Indian Ocean World of the Seventeenth Century* (Armonk, 2002); Milo Kearney, *The Indian Ocean in World History* (New York, 2004); Sugata Bose, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire* (Cambridge MA, 2006).

¹⁵⁰ Niels Steensgaard, 'The Indian Ocean network and the emerging world-economy, c. 1500–1750', in Satish Chandra (ed.), *The Indian Ocean: Explorations in History, Commerce and Politics* (Delhi, 1987), 127; Janet J. Ewald, 'Crossers of the sea: slaves, freedmen, and other migrants in the Northwestern Indian Ocean, c. 1750–1914', *American Historical Review*, 105 (2000), 69.

¹⁵¹ Pier Larson, 'African diasporas and the Atlantic', in Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra and Erik R. Seeman (eds.), *The Atlantic in Global History, 1500–2000* (Upper Saddle River NJ, 2007), 129–47. For another recent overview of the Indian Ocean trades, see Gwyn Campbell, 'Slavery and the trans-Indian Ocean world slave trade: a historical outline', in Himanshu Prabha Ray and Edward A. Alpers (eds.), *Cross Currents and Community Networks: The History of the Indian Ocean* (Oxford, 2007), 286–305.

¹⁵² Larson, *History and Memory*; Campbell, *An Economic History*.

¹⁵³ Pier Larson, personal communication.

an integral part.¹⁵⁴ The presence of significant numbers of Indian slaves in the islands is a reminder that South Asia was itself a source of the chattel labor that moved throughout the Indian Ocean basin and that slaves could flow towards as well as away from Africa. The presence of Indian and Malay slaves in the Mascarenes and South Africa also underlines the fact that European slave trading in this part of the world was not limited only to Africa, and that both the geographical parameters and level of European involvement in this activity increased with the passage of time.¹⁵⁵

The trade in Indian slaves to the Mascarenes becomes particularly important if it is viewed as the institutional precursor of the purported 'new system of slavery' that scattered more than 2 million African, Chinese, Indian, Javanese, Melanesian and other indentured laborers throughout the colonial plantation world and beyond between the mid-1830s and the early twentieth century.¹⁵⁶ Mauritius was the crucial test case for the use of indentured Indian labor in the post-emancipation colonial world¹⁵⁷ and more than 451,000 of these workers landed on the island between 1834 and 1910; another 75,000 also reached Réunion between the 1840s and 1880s. More than 35 years ago, Benedicte Hjejle suggested that the recruitment of some of these 'free' contractual workers cannot be understood without reference to indigenous systems of slavery in India, and argued that a significant number of the migrant workers who reached Ceylon between 1843 and 1873 came from the ranks of South India's praedial slave population.¹⁵⁸ Entries in the Indian immigrant registers housed at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute confirm the presence of individuals of 'slave' caste status among the indentured laborers who reached Mauritius from southern India during the late 1830s.¹⁵⁹ Arguments that the recruitment of tens of thousands of 'indentured' East Africans to work in Réunion's cane fields after slavery was abolished on that island in 1848 was nothing more than the old slave trade in new garb further demonstrate the need to explore structural connections between the slave and indentured labor trades in greater detail.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁴ John E. Willis, Jr., 'Maritime Asia, 1500–1800: the interactive emergence of European domination', *American Historical Review*, 98 (1993), 83–105.

¹⁵⁵ Allen, 'The Mascarene slave-trade', 42.

¹⁵⁶ Allen, 'Carrying away the unfortunate', 295–6. Indians comprised 65.5 per cent of all such workers. David Northrup, *Indentured Labor in the Age of Imperialism, 1834–1922* (Cambridge, 1995), 156–7. Nineteenth-century abolitionists first advanced the notion that the indentured labor system was little more than 'a new system of slavery'. Modern proponents of this argument follow Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830–1920* (2nd ed., London, 1993 [1974]).

¹⁵⁷ I. M. Cumpston, *Indians Overseas in British Territories, 1834–1854* (London, 1953), 85.

¹⁵⁸ Benedicte Hjejle, 'Slavery and agricultural bondage in South India in the nineteenth century', *Scandinavian Economic History Review*, 15 (1967), 106.

¹⁵⁹ Mahatma Gandhi Institute, Moka, Mauritius, PE 1. The men in question belonged to the Palin caste.

¹⁶⁰ Huguette Ly-Tio-Fane, 'Aperçu d'une immigration forcée: l'importation d'afri-cains libérés aux Mascareignes et aux Seychelles, 1840–1880', in *Minorités et gens de mer en océan indien, XIXe–XXe siècles* (IHPOM Études et documents, 12) (Aix-en-Provence, 1979), 73–84; Hubert Gerbeau, 'Engagées and coolies in Réunion Island: slavery's masks and freedom's constraints', in P. C. Emmer (ed.), *Colonialism and Migration: Indentured*

The presence of European slavers in the Indian Ocean during the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Mascarenes' status as a commercial center from which slaving voyages to the Americas were mounted, and the Mauritian role in the development of the indentured labor trades that reached from the Indian Ocean into the Caribbean during the nineteenth century raise further questions about how we think about the 'world' of the Atlantic. The prevailing paradigm does so in terms of a system marked by the ever-increasing integration of Europe, West and Central Africa and the Americas and the rise of the modern plantation complex.¹⁶¹ Implicit in such a model is the assumption that once ships sailed eastward past the Cape of Good Hope, they entered a realm separate and removed from whence they had come.

The slave trade to Mauritius and Réunion demonstrates otherwise. Slaves reached the Americas from southern Asia as well as Mozambique and Kilwa; in 1778, for example, 258 men, 49 women, 57 boys and 22 girls from the 'coasts of India' reached Saint-Domingue aboard *La Cibèle*.¹⁶² Slaves from western and central Africa moved eastwards into the Indian Ocean as well as westwards across the Atlantic. 'Guineans' first reached Réunion in 1702 and West Africans, who continued to arrive in the Mascarenes until at least the 1760s,¹⁶³ comprised a significant proportion of the Mauritian chattel population during the early and mid eighteenth century when they were favored as Compagnie and then royal slaves.¹⁶⁴ Nor were the French the only Europeans to ship West Africans to the Indian Ocean. No later than 1671, the British East India Company ordered the purchase of West African slaves for its factory at Bantam in Java;¹⁶⁵ more than ninety years later, on 9 September 1765, the *Royal George* would deliver 149 Angolan slaves to the Company's factory at Bencoolen on the west coast of Sumatra.¹⁶⁶

The increasingly complex interaction between these two worlds during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is made manifest in other ways. Recent work has begun to examine the considerable Brazilian commercial activity in the western Indian Ocean during the eighteenth

Labour Before and After Slavery (Dordrecht, 1986), especially 220–3, 236; Campbell, 'The East African slave trade, 1861–1895', 23–4; Capela and Medeiros, 'La traite au départ du Mozambique', 266–71; Sudel Fuma, 'La traite des esclaves dans le bassin du sud-ouest de l'Océan Indien et la France après 1848', in Rakoto, *La route des esclaves*, 247–61.

¹⁶¹ E.g. Philip D. Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex* (2nd ed., Cambridge, 1998); John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400–1800* (2nd ed., Cambridge, 1998); Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours* (Cambridge MA, 2005). For a recent review of the issues surrounding the definition of the Atlantic world, see Alison Games, 'Atlantic history: definitions, challenges, and opportunities', *American Historical Review*, 111 (2006), 741–57. This article was part of an AHR Forum on 'Oceans of History,' a forum that completely ignored the Indian Ocean.

¹⁶² Mettas, *La traite négrière*, I, 613–14. ¹⁶³ Filliot, *La traite des esclaves*, 183–7.

¹⁶⁴ Megan Vaughan, *Creating the Creole Island: Slavery in Eighteenth-Century Mauritius* (Durham NC, 2005), 113.

¹⁶⁵ Ethel Bruce Sainsbury, *A Calendar of the Court Minutes, Etc. of the East India Company, 1671–1673* (Oxford, 1932), 4, 6.

¹⁶⁶ OIOC, L/MAR/B/17H, Ship's log of the *Royal George* – journey from England to Cabinda, St. Helena and Bencoolen, 1764–5.

century,¹⁶⁷ activity illustrated by the *Africana do Rio*'s carrying slaves from Mozambique to the Île de France in 1805.¹⁶⁸ The archival record suggests that some French slavers operated along the Angolan coast only after voyaging to India to acquire appropriate trade goods, especially cotton textiles.¹⁶⁹ The papers of two Port Louis merchants lend credence to such a suggestion; not only were Sieurs Charoux and Lougnet involved in 1790 in shipping Indian merchandise to both Europe and the New World, but also they held a 25 per cent interest in the *armement* of *Le Paquebot No. 4*, a well-known participant in the Mascarene slave trade, which had sailed from the Île de France bound for Angola and the Americas.¹⁷⁰

The archival record also gives substance to assertions about the commercial supremacy of Asian over metropolitan merchants in Portugal's eastern empire between 1770 and 1850.¹⁷¹ This information, coupled with what we know about the activities of Asian merchants in the Indian Ocean,¹⁷² raises tantalizing questions about the extent to which Indian merchant capital underwrote the exportation of 90,000 Mozambican slaves to the Mascarenes and the Americas before 1811, and another 386,000 Mozambican bondmen and women to the New World after 1811.¹⁷³ Pedro Machado's recent work on Gujarati merchants in Mozambique underscores the need to pose such questions. Machado reports that merchants such as Sobhachand Sowchand became increasingly involved in the Mozambican slave trade, often as financiers, during the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Late in 1805 or early in 1806, Sobhachand took possession of the *General Izidro (sic)*, a ship

¹⁶⁷ A. J. R. Russell-Wood, 'A Brazilian commercial presence beyond the Cape of Good Hope, 16th–19th centuries', in Pius Malekandathil and Jamal Mohammed (eds.), *The Portuguese, Indian Ocean and European Bridgeheads 1500–1800* (Goa, 2001), 191–211. My thanks to the author for providing me with a copy of this article. On the slave trade from Mozambique to Brazil, see: Manolo Florentino, 'Slave trade between Mozambique and the port of Rio de Janeiro, c. 1790–c. 1850, demographic, social and economic aspects', in Benigna et al. (eds.), *Slave Routes*, 63–90.

¹⁶⁸ Capela, *O Tráfico de Escravos*, 324. The voyage in question originated in Rio de Janeiro. On the Mozambican slave diaspora, see Alpers, 'Mozambique and "Mozambiques"', especially 47–61.

¹⁶⁹ Such may have the case with *Le Moissonneur*, outfitted at Saint-Malo, during 1776–8, and *La Geneviève*, out of Nantes, during 1782–4 (Mettas, *La traite négrière*, II, 762, and II, 623, respectively). Cotton textiles, originally from Asia and later from Europe, played a central role in the Angolan slave trade. Joseph C. Miller, *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730–1830* (Madison, 1988), 74.

¹⁷⁰ MNA, JH 11, Inventaire ou Etat General des affaires de S^{rs} Charoux et Lougnet Tant En Marchand, argent Complant, Bons, & Billets de Changes, Dettes actives qui Leurs sont Duës Meubles et Ymeubles, Esclaves que Dettes Passives, que les dits Sieurs Doiv^t à Divers, Tant en Europe, Lamérique, que dans La Colonie fait ce Jour 22 Juillet 1790.

¹⁷¹ Rudy Bauss, 'Indian and Chinese control of the Portuguese eastern empire (1770–1850)', *Purabhilekh-Puratatva* 10 (1992), 1–19. My thanks to James C. Armstrong for providing me with a copy of this article.

¹⁷² E.g. Denys Lombard and Jean Aubin (eds.), *Asian Merchants and Businessmen in the Indian Ocean and the China Sea* (New Delhi, 2000); Uma Das Gupta (comp.), *The World of the Indian Ocean Merchant, 1500–1800: Collected Essays of Ashin Das Gupta* (New Delhi, 2001).

¹⁷³ Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 70–1. See also Alpers, 'Mozambique and "Mozambiques"', 51, 55.

that carried slaves not only to South Africa but also, as noted earlier, to Mauritius in 1803 and twice during 1804, and that would do so yet again in 1806. Sobhachand would also purchase two slavers at Port Louis in 1806 and 1807 in partnership with Portuguese merchants.¹⁷⁴ In so doing, he demonstrated that the worlds of the Indian and Atlantic oceans could intersect during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in ways that we are only beginning to appreciate.

¹⁷⁴ Machado, 'Gujarati Indian merchant networks', 212, 223, 225.