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LICENTIOUS AND UNBRIDLED PROCEEDINGS: THE ILLEGAL SLAVE TRADE TO MAURITIUS AND THE SEYCHELLES DURING THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY*

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ABSTRACT: Census and other demographic data are used to estimate the volume of the illegal slave trade to Mauritius and the Seychelles from Madagascar and the East African coast between 1811 and *c.* 1827. The structure and dynamics of this illicit traffic, as well as governmental attempts to suppress it, are also discussed. The Mauritian and Seychellois trade is revealed to have played a greater role in shaping Anglo-Merina and Anglo-Omani relations between 1816 and the early 1820s than previously supposed. Domestic economic considerations, together with British pressure on the trade's sources of supply, contributed to its demise.

KEYWORDS: Mauritius, Seychelles, Madagascar, Eastern Africa, slave trade, economic.

ON 19 September 1830, Sir Charles Colville, the governor of Mauritius, informed the Secretary of State for the Colonies in London of 'the state of consternation and dismay bordering … on despair' among the island's proprietors.[1] The source of their alarm were newly arrived reports of purported plans to introduce legislation in Parliament to emancipate the slaves who had been imported illegally into the colony between 1814–21. The crisis of confidence precipitated by these allegations remained unchecked two weeks later when Colville reported 'the recent alarms have caused such a shock to credit, as almost entirely to stagnate the money market'.[2] The memorandum from a committee of local notables illustrated the concern this news had created: not only was any such proposal unjust and impractical, thundered these memorialists, but it was also guaranteed to cause such disorder that the colony would be ruined forever![3]

This virulent response to even the hint that slaves who had been imported illegally into the colony might be emancipated came as no surprise to the many colonial officials who were openly sympathetic to planters' interests. Anyone familiar with the island's history could also have predicted that its white residents would not take kindly to such a proposal. Slaves had

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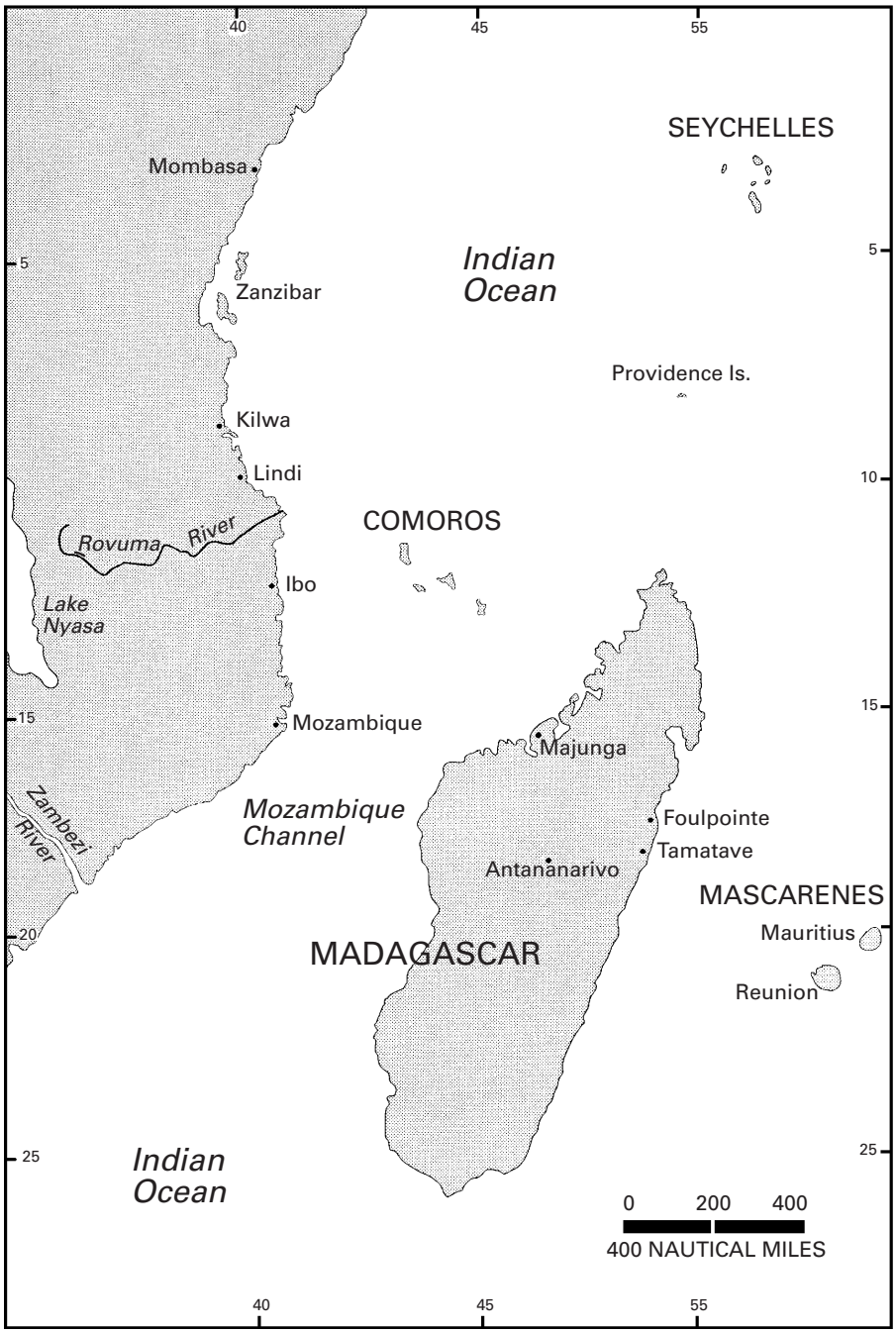
[1] Public Record Office (PRO), CO 167/149, Despatch no. 60, Sir Charles Colville to Sir George Murray, 19 Sept. 1830.

[2] PRO, CO 167/150, Despatch no. 63, Sir Charles Colville to Sir George Murray, 1 Oct. 1830.

[3] PRO, CO 167/150, 'Mémoire' from Committee of Inhabitants. Enclosure no. 1 in Despatch no. 63, Sir Charles Colville to Sir George Murray, 1 Oct. 1830.



Map 1. The south-western Indian Ocean.

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accompanied the first French settlers in the Mascarenes,[4] and the local reaction to the French National Assembly's abolition of slavery in 1793 demonstrated how important this institution had become. The residents of the Iles de France et de Bourbon not only ignored the assembly's dictum, but also forcibly expelled the commissioners sent in 1796 to implement it, an act which inaugurated an era of *de facto* independence from Paris. Metropolitan control was re-established peacefully in 1803 only because Napoleon's decision to legalize slavery again assuaged local public opinion on the issue.[5]

Britain's seizure of the Mascarenes in 1810 set the stage for renewed conflict between the islands' colonists and the forces of abolitionism. A desire to alleviate the economic distress caused by the Royal Navy's blockade of the islands prior to their capture and to placate the restive white population in his charge led Robert T. Farquhar, the first British governor, to petition London early in 1811 to exempt the islands from the 1807 statute prohibiting British subjects from engaging in the slave trade, a request that was promptly denied.[6] Less than nine months later, Farquhar reported the first cases of a 'suspected unlawful commerce in slaves' that had come to his attention.[7] The nascent clandestine trade to which he referred would soon prove to be a fount of endless frustration for British officials and a source of constant friction between an imperial government and its subjects, the repercussions of which would resonate as far away as London, Antanarivo, Mombasa, Muscat and Calcutta.

THE MASCARENE SLAVE TRADE

Scholarly interest in the Mascarene slave trade dates to the 1960s when French slave trading along the East African coast during the late eighteenth century became a subject of inquiry.[8] Only J.-M. Filliot, however, attempted to gauge the volume of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century trade to

[4] Arab or Swahili seamen may have visited Mauritius and Réunion before Portuguese explorers reached the Mascarenes early in the sixteenth century, but the islands remained uninhabited until 1638 when the Dutch East India Company made the first of several attempts to colonize Mauritius. Abandoned by the Dutch in 1710, Mauritius, now renamed Ile de France, was colonized in 1721 by settlers from the neighboring Ile de Bourbon (Réunion), which had been occupied by the French Compagnie des Indes in 1670. The Iles de France et de Bourbon remained a French colony until their capture by the British in 1810, during the Napoleonic wars. The Treaty of Paris in 1814 ceded Mauritius, Rodrigues (settled in 1750), the Seychelles (colonized in 1770) and other minor dependencies to Britain while restoring Bourbon to French control.

[5] Auguste Toussaint, *Histoire des îles Mascareignes* (Paris, 1972), 114–17; Raymond d'Unienville, *Histoire politique de l'Isle de France (1791–1794)* (Port Louis, 1982), 110ff., and *Histoire politique de l'Isle de France (1795–1803)* (Port Louis, 1989), 13–38, 131–43.

[6] R. T. Farquhar to Earl of Liverpool, 15 Feb. 1811; Earl of Liverpool to R. T. Farquhar, 2 May 1811 (British Parliament Sessional Papers [hereafter PP] 1826 XXVII [295], 6–7).

[7] R. T. Farquhar to Earl of Liverpool, 1 Feb. 1812 (PP 1826 XXVII [295], 10).

[8] 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.

Mauritius and Réunion, a task complicated by the apparent absence from the archival record of many of the kinds of sources that have permitted others to continue refining Philip Curtin's classic census of the Atlantic slave trade.[9] Filliot estimated that 160,000 slaves reached the islands from Africa, Madagascar and South Asia between 1670 and 1810. More specifically, he projected that 45,000 slaves reached the Mascarenes between 1670 and 1768 (mostly after 1721), while 80,000 arrived between 1769 and 1793 at an average rate of 3,000 a year, except for 1791–3 when imports rose to 5,000 a year. Despite the disruptions caused by the almost continuous warfare between France and Britain that began in 1793, Filliot concluded that another 35,000 slaves reached the islands before the British conquest of 1810.[10] His estimates give substance to Edward Alpers' argument that the dramatic expansion of the Malagasy and East African slave trades during the late eighteenth century may be traced in large measure to the demand for servile labor in the Mascarenes.[11]

The Mascarene slave trade after 1810, on the other hand, has elicited little scholarly interest. Auguste Toussaint proffered only general observations about its scope, duration and impact, as did the participants at a 1985 conference sponsored by the Mahatma Gandhi Institute in Mauritius.[12] Moses Nwulia and Anthony Barker both acknowledged that the illegal trade had repercussions far beyond these islands' shores, but neither came to grips with it in a meaningful way.[13] Neither have Deryck Scarr or Vijaya Teelock in their recent monographs.[14] Despite its role in shaping early nineteenth century European relations with Madagascar and East Africa, historians of the Grande Ile and the Swahili coast have likewise either paid little attention to the illegal trade or discounted its importance.[15]

To date, only Hubert Gerbeau has attempted to describe the clandestine

[9] Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade : A Census* (Madison, 1969).

[10] J.-M. Filliot, *La traite des esclaves vers les Mascareignes au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris, 1974), 55, 67–8, 96. According to Filliot, 45 per cent of these imports came from Madagascar, while 40 per cent arrived from Mozambique and East Africa, 13 per cent originated in India, and 2 per cent came from West Africa.

[11] Alpers, 'The French slave trade', 82–4.

[12] Toussaint, *Histoire des îles*, 180; U. Bissoondoyal and S. B. C. Servansing (eds.), *Slavery in South West Indian Ocean* (Moka, Mauritius, 1989).

[13] Moses D. E. Nwulia, *The History of Slavery in Mauritius and the Seychelles, 1810–1875* (Toronto, 1981), 38ff.; Anthony J. Barker, *Slavery and Antislavery in Mauritius, 1810–33* (London, 1996), 16ff.

[14] Deryck Scarr, *Slaving and Slavery in the Indian Ocean* (London, 1998); Vijaya Teelock, *Bitter Sugar : Sugar and Slavery in 19th Century Mauritius* (Moka, Mauritius, 1998).

[15] Cf. Hubert Deschamps, *Histoire de Madagascar* (Paris, 1961); Mervyn Brown, *Madagascar Rediscovered : A History from Early Times to Independence* (London, 1978); Abdul Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory in Zanzibar* (London, 1987); Françoise Raison-Jourde, *Bible et pouvoir à Madagascar au XIX^e siècle* (Paris, 1991). A notable exception is Gwyn Campbell: '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 structure of trade in Madagascar, 1750–1810', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 26 (1993), 111–48.

slave trade in the south-western Indian Ocean in any detail.[16] Gerbeau's account of the illicit trade to the Ile de Bourbon (Réunion) between 1817, when the French slave trade was formally abolished, and slave emancipation in 1848 is important for several reasons. Firstly, he discerns three phases to the Réunionnais trade of potential relevance to understanding the Mauritian and Seychellois trade: an initial period (1817–25) during which local authorities generally failed to control the importation of slaves into the island; a second phase (1826–31) during which the illicit trade began to wane in the face of pressure from humanitarian and abolitionist groups in Europe, British diplomatic initiatives and various economic considerations; and the years after 1832, when the illegal importation of slaves continued, but only intermittently and on a small scale. Secondly, he reminds us that while the Treaty of Paris in 1814 surrendered political control of Mauritius and the Seychelles to Britain, the close social and economic ties that had bound the white inhabitants of the Iles de France et de Bourbon together since 1721 remained intact for some time after the advent of British rule. As he rightly notes, reconstructing the illegal trade's history must take developments on both Mauritius and Réunion into account. Finally, Gerbeau reminds us that determining the illegal trade's volume is central to assessing its local, regional and international impact. His estimate that 45,000 slaves reached Réunion illicitly between 1817 and 1848 (mostly between 1817 and 1831) underscores the importance of doing so, as do contemporary abolitionist assertions that Farquhar tolerated, if not actually facilitated, the trade and Gwyn Campbell's reassessment of when and why the Merina court adopted autarkic policies.[17]

THE ILLEGAL SLAVE TRADE

The nineteenth-century Mauritian archival record, unlike that for the eighteenth century, is seemingly replete with the kinds of information that should make it possible to determine the volume of the illegal trade without too much difficulty. As early as 1815, the colonial government conducted a census of the local slave population in an attempt not only to gauge the illicit trade's magnitude, but also to hasten its demise by making it more difficult for owners to conceal illegally imported slaves among their legally held bondmen. However, this exercise failed miserably because of colonists' reluctance to submit the required returns and the inability of officials to verify the returns they did receive.[18] Attempts to conduct similar censuses in 1819, 1822 and 1825 met with more success, but authorities still had to

[16] Hubert Gerbeau, 'Quelques aspects de la traite illégale des esclaves à l'Ile Bourbon au XIX^{e} siècle', in *Mouvements de populations dans l'océan indien* (Paris, 1979), 273–308. See also Marina Carter and Hubert Gerbeau, 'Covert slaves and coveted coolies in the early nineteenth-century Mascareignes', *Slavery and Abolition*, 9 (1988), 194–208.

[17] Gwyn Campbell, 'The adoption of autarky in imperial Madagascar, 1820–1835', *Journal of African History*, 28 (1987), 395-409.

[18] R. T. Farquhar to Earl Bathurst, 20 Oct. 1816 (PP 1826 XXVII [295], 110); Thomas Bradshaw to Sir Lowry Cole, 23 June 1824 (PP 1826 XXVI [339], 19). See also R. R. Kuczynski, *Demographic Survey of the British Colonial Empire* (2 vols.) (London, 1949), II, 713–31, on the various problems with the Mauritian slave censuses.

Table 1. *Slave population of Mauritius and the Seychelles, 1806–35*

Year	Mauritius: census returns	Mauritius: tax rolls	Mauritius: other sources	Seychelles	Colony total[a]
1806	60,646	—	—	2,233	—
1807	60,509	—	58,728	2,414	65,367
1808	58,728	—	60,509	2,674	—
1809	60,905	60,010	60,000	2,533[b]	—
1810	—	—	—	2,760[c]	63,281
1811	59,734	61,918	—	—	—
1812	—	60,817	—	—	—
1813	—	61,365	—	—	—
1814	—	62,927	64,874	—	78,102
1815	—	—	80,046	6,950	87,352
1816	—	—	79,863	—	85,423
1817	—	—	79,493	—	—
1818	—	80,019	—	7,323	[87,342]
1819	—	79,968	70,624–72,728	7,129	80,185
1820	—	71,279	66,660–67,699	—	—
1821	—	—	66,162–66,660	—	—
1822	63,769	65,823	62,899–63,099	6,740	77,478
1823	—	64,709	61,188–63,277	—	—
1824	—	65,264	62,501–65,037	6,352	—
1825	—	62,114	61,187–63,432	6,133	76,539
1826	69,472	62,634	62,588–69,076	6,525	76,774
1827	69,264	—	63,432–69,201	6,520	76,566
1828	—	—	68,344–69,315	—	—
1830	66,183	—	64,919–67,121	4,698	69,476
1832	63,161	—	63,056	—	—
1834	—	—	—	4,673	—
1835	—	—	—	—	66,613

Notes: [a] Mauritius, the Seychelles and minor dependencies.
[b] Or 2,742.
[c] Or 3,015.

Sources: British Parliament Sessional Papers (PP) 1823 XVIII [89], 27, 129; PP 1825 XXV [361], 2; PP 1825 XXV [512]; PP 1826 XXXVII [295], 5, 22; PP 1828 XXV [147], 4–5; PP 1828 XXV [204], 109; PP 1829 XXV [237]; PP 1835 XLIV [53], 101.

Mauritius Archives (MA), B1B, Statement shewing the Compensation granted by the Imperial Government for the slaves emancipated in Mauritius and its Dependencies; MA, ID 14, Return of the slave population [1827].

Public Record Office (PRO), CO 167/10, Etat Général de la population de L'Ile Maurice pour L'année 1811. Extrait de Recensemens fournis par les habitans de cette Ile. Enclosure A in a despatch of 28 July 1812, R. T. Farquhar to Earl of Liverpool; PRO, CO 167/86, Abstract of the Slave Population Returns for the Seychelles. Enclosure in Despatch no. 82, Sir Lowry Cole to Earl Bathurst, 2 Nov. 1826; PRO, CO 167/141, Return no. 4 – Return of Slaves Registered in Mauritius between the 6th of October 1826 and the 16th of January 1827…; PRO, CO 167/148, Statement Shewing the number of Slaves recensed at the Original Census 1826 in Port Louis, Suburbs & Country districts; Statement Shewing the number

of Slaves at the Biennial Census of 1830 in Port Louis, Suburbs and Country Districts. Enclosure no. 5 in Despatch no. 29, Sir Charles Colville to Sir George Murray, 20 May 1830; PRO, T 71/1556, Abstracts of biennial census returns, 1832.

Baron d'Unienville, *Statistique 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. (3 vols.) ([Ile] Maurice, 1885–86), II, 230, and III, tableaux 19, 37, 51.

R. R. Kuczynski, *Demographic Survey of the British Colonial Empire* (2 vols.) (London, 1949), II, 758, 761, 767–73, 906–13.

M. J. Milbert, *Voyage pittoresque à l'Ile de France, au Cap de Bonne-Espérance et à l'Ile de Ténériffe* (2 vols.) (Paris, 1812), II, 233 bis, terce.

Report of the Commissioners of Inquiry Upon the Slave Trade at Mauritius (PP 1829 XXV [292], 10, 11, 23, 25).

Auguste Toussaint, *Histoire des îles Mascareignes* (Paris, 1972), 337.

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acknowledge that these returns remained far from reliable.[19] At the heart of this problem was the continuing propensity of colonists to submit incomplete or fraudulent returns, a practice in which Slave Registry clerks actively colluded.[20]

Other contemporary records are equally problematic. Tax rolls, for example, regularly undercounted slaves and frequently failed to specify whether the slaves tallied in a given year reflected the number of bondmen in the colony as a whole (that is Mauritius, the Seychelles and other minor dependencies) or only in Mauritius. In other instances, government officials reported widely varying slave population figures for the same year (Table 1). Problems such as these have dissuaded historians from focusing upon certain aspects of the Mauritian and Seychellois slave experience because, as R. R. Kuczynski observed more than half a century ago, these extraordinarily abundant statistics are difficult to interpret.[21] A careful review of these data suggests, however, that the volume of the illegal slave trade to Mauritius and the Seychelles can still be estimated with a certain degree of precision. Doing so requires looking beyond this sea of problematic specifics to the broader pattern of the slave population's growth and decline between 1810–35 and acknowledging that contemporary reports about the total number of slaves in the islands, although imprecise, nevertheless have some basis in fact and are indicative of the minimum number of bondmen in the colony at specific points in time.

British officials never doubted that large numbers of slaves were reaching the colony during the 1810s, or that the illegal trade was driven by a strong demand for servile labor and the proximity of well-established markets capable of satisfying that demand. Governor Farquhar observed in 1812 that

[19] Maj.-Gen. Hall to Earl Bathurst, 16 June 1819 (PP 1826 XXVII [352], 97); Maj.-Gen. Darling to Henry Goulburn, 17 Dec. 1819 (PP 1826 XXVII [352], 122); Sir Lowry Cole to Earl Bathurst, 28 July 1825 (PP 1826 XXVI [339], 21).

[20] *Report of the Commissioners of Inquiry Upon the Slave Trade at Mauritius* (hereafter Slave Trade Report), especially 13, 16, 19, 23–4 (PP 1829 XXV [292]).

[21] Kuczynski, *Demographic Survey*, II, 762.

a high rate of slave mortality since 1806 had left the colony with only one third of the workforce it needed.[22] He repeated these observations a year later, adding that 'the facility and cheapness with which slaves can be transported from Madagascar and the West Coast of Africa, *in the absence of any naval means of prevention* [original emphasis], are ... irresistibly strong'.[23] Little had changed six years later when the acting governor, Major-General Ralph Darling, noted 'the activity and ardour with which the Slave Trade is pursued by the dealers, and the avidity with which new negroes are purchased, by all descriptions of the community, when once introduced into the colony'.[24] Farquhar reportedly estimated that at least 30,000 slaves had reached the colony between 1811 and early 1821.[25] Other contemporary observers also subscribed to this figure, while still others put the number at 50,000 or more.[26] Even those who were reluctant to offer a more precise estimate of the trade's volume readily characterized it as 'vast'.[27]

The dramatic increase in the size of the Seychellois slave population between 1810 and 1815 and in the number of bondmen appearing on Mauritian tax rolls between 1814 and 1818 (Table 1) support contemporary claims that thousands of slaves began to arrive in the colony shortly after the advent of British rule. However, these figures also understate the trade's true magnitude since they make no allowance for the slaves who had to be imported simply to compensate for manumissions and high rates of slave mortality. While the number of manumissions during this era can be determined with some accuracy, slave mortality is much more problematic. One contemporary observer, Baron d'Unienville, estimated that the Mauritian slave population declined by an average of 0·33 per cent each year between 1764 and 1824.[28] Kuczynski argues that d'Unienville seriously underestimated these rates and that, at least between 1827 and 1834, the slave population declined by 1·2 per cent a year.[29] Comparable information on government slaves and Mauritian freedmen after emancipation suggests that these rates of net decline were even higher. The number of 'apprentices' and

[22] PRO, CO 167/10, R. T. Farquhar to Earl of Liverpool, despatch of 28 July 1812. Farquhar reported that the slave population had declined by 5 per cent a year because of famine brought about by the interruption of commerce and the neglect of agriculture.

[23] R. T. Farquhar to Rear-Adm. Tyler, 20 Nov. 1813 (PP 1826 XXVII [295], 27).

[24] Maj.-Gen. Darling to Henry Goulburn, 17 Dec. 1819 (PP 1826 XXVII [352], 122).

[25] Nwulia, *History of Slavery*, 46. Nwulia does not cite this estimate's provenance.

[26] PRO, CO 172/38, Three Years Administration of the Isle de France (otherwise called Mauritius) and particularly in those Parts in which the Commissary of Police (Byam) has been connected with some Reference to the whole Administration of Sir R. Farquhar since the Commencement of his Government, 344; Sadasivam Reddi, 'Aspects of slavery during the British administration', in Bissoondoyal and Servansing, *Slavery*, 108; Gerbeau, 'Quelques aspects', 292.

[27] Capt. Fairfax Moresby, R.N., before the Select Committee on the Mauritius Slave Trade, 22 May 1826 (PP 1826–27 VI [90], 67).

[28] PRO, CO 172/42, Tableau no. 17 – Mouvements de la Population Esclave depuis 1767 Jusqu'en 1825; Kuczynski, *Demographic Survey*, II, 869, 879. D'Unienville was appointed the colony's archivist in 1813. During the 1820s he compiled considerable statistical information on the colony, much of which was published in his *Statistique de l'île Maurice et ses dépendances suivie d'une notice historique sur cette colonie et d'un essai sur l'île de Madagascar* (3 vols.) (Paris, 1838; 2nd ed., [Ile] Maurice 1885–86).

[29] Kuczynski, *Demographic Survey*, II, 869, 879.

ex-apprentices[30] in the colony declined by an average of 1·74 per cent each year between 1835 and 1846, while the rate of net decline among government slaves averaged 2·54 per cent between 1814 and 1832.[31]

B. W. Higman's work on the British Caribbean has revealed that the rate at which slave populations declined during the early nineteenth century could fluctuate widely over relatively short periods of time, that these rates of decline could be quite high at times, and that it was not unusual for high rates to prevail over several consecutive years. He reports, for example, annual rates of net decline in Grenada between 1817 and 1819 that ranged from 1·5 to 2·43 per cent, while those on Tobago varied from 2·31 to 3·25 per cent between 1819 and 1821.[32] Figures such as these indicate that the rates of net decline among Mauritian government slaves, although disturbingly high at times, are neither out of line with other parts of the slave plantation world nor excessive for a slave régime that even contemporary observers considered to be harsh.[33] This fact, together with their sensitivity to local conditions (e.g. the 1819–20 cholera epidemic), suggest that these rates are a more accurate indicator of demographic trends within the colony's slave population than the other figures at our disposal.

These data on government slave mortality, together with those on the number of manumissions in the colony and the colony's total slave population in given years, provide the basis for the projections presented in Table 2.[34] These estimates confirm that colonists quickly took matters into their own hands following the Colonial Secretary's refusal to exempt Mauritius from the 1807 ban on British slave trading, and the clandestine trade was soon funneling thousands of new slaves into the colony. This trade generally flourished until early 1818, when Major-General Gage Hall, acting governor

[30] Although Mauritian slaves were formally emancipated on 1 Feb. 1835, the act of abolition required these new freedmen, now legally designated as 'apprentices', to continue working for their masters for a maximum of six years. The apprenticeship system in Mauritius ended on 31 Mar. 1839.

[31] Kuczynski, *Demographic Survey*, II, 774, 777, 852.

[32] B. W. Higman, *Slave Populations in the British Caribbean, 1807–1834* (Baltimore, 1984), 308–10.

[33] PRO, CO 415/3/A.3, Statement by Catherine Ryder Nichols, 17 Oct. 1823; PRO, CO 167/79, Despatch no. 48, Sir Lowry Cole to Earl Bathurst, 12 Sept. 1825; A Lady [Lady Robert Bertram], *Recollections of Seven Years Residence at the Mauritius, or Isle of France* (London, 1830), 151. See also Barker, *Slavery and Antislavery*, 94–100.

[34] These projections are based upon the premise that any estimate of the illegal trade's volume must make allowance for the number of slaves who had to be imported to compensate for those who died or were manumitted each year. Since reliable contemporary figures on slave mortality do not exist, the net decline in the size of the colony's slave population in any given year(s) was calculated using the total population figures presented in Table 1 and the data on government slave mortality during the year(s) in question. When the slave population experienced a net increase in its numbers, the volume of illegal imports was estimated by adding the number of manumitted slaves and projected slave deaths during the year(s) in question to the net increase in the size of the colony's slave population during the same period. When the slave population experienced a net decrease in its numbers, the volume of imports was estimated by subtracting the net population decline during the year(s) in question from the total number of manumissions and deaths during the same period on the assumption that if the net population decline was smaller than the number of manumissions and deaths combined, the difference between these two sets of figures could be attributed to the importation of slaves.

Table 2. *Projected slave imports into Mauritius and the Seychelles, 1811–30*

Year(s)	Change in total slave population[a]	Manumissions[b]	Slave mortality		Projected slave imports
			Rate of net decline (per cent)[c]	Number of deaths	
1811–14	+14,821	897	−3·08	7,443	23,161
1815	+9,250	28	−3·99	3,116	12,394
1816	−1,929	49	−3·08	2,673	793
1817–18	+1,919	214	−2·76	4,385	6,518
1819	−7,157	107	−9·01	7,870	820
1820–22	−2,707	297	−1·56	3,698	1,288
1823–25	−939	175	−2·65	6,005	5,241
1826	+235	31	−1·18	903	1,169
1827	−208	—	−1·79	1,374	1,166
1828–30	−7,090	—	−1·23	2,791	—
Total	—	2,931[d]	−2·54[e]	40,258	52,550

Notes: [a] From previous total slave population figures (see Table 1).

[b] Reported manumissions, 1 Jan. 1811–1 June 1826.

[c] Annual rate of net population decline among Mauritian government slaves. The rate for multiple-year periods is an average of the relevant annual rates. Since no annual rates exist for 1811–13, the rate for these years was projected on the basis of the average rate of decline from 1814 through 1818.

[d] The number of manumissions made during the last seven months of 1826 and during each of the years 1827, 1828 and 1829 are not recorded. However, the slave census of 1830 reported a total of 1,164 manumissions between 1 Jan. 1826–31 Dec. 1829.

[e] Average for 1814–32.

Sources: PRO, CO 167/148, Statement shewing the number of Slaves recensed at the Biennial Census of 1830 in Port Louis, Suburbs and Country Districts. Enclosure no. 5 in Despatch no. 29, Sir Charles Colville to Sir George Murray, 20 May 1830.

PP 1823 XVII [89], 125; PP 1828 XXV [204], 58–74.

Kuczynski, *Demographic Survey*, II, 852.

during Farquhar's absence from the colony, issued a series of draconian regulations designed to put an end to the illicit importation of slaves once and for all. Major-General Darling, Hall's successor as acting governor, attested to the apparent success of these measures, noting in July 1819 that as soon as Hall had left the colony, 'the terror occasioned by his summary mode of proceeding, seems to have subsided, and the dealers resumed the Trade with recruited vigour'.[35] Their effrontery left Darling with no other option than to rescind his earlier relaxation of Hall's regulations in an attempt to curtail the renewed trade.

Any such curtailment was only temporary, however, and the trade soon resumed, although on a more modest scale. The need to replace the

[35] Maj.-Gen. Darling to Earl Bathurst, 19 July 1819 (PP 1826 XXVII [352], 90).

thousands of slaves who died during the cholera epidemic that racked Mauritius during late 1819 and early 1820 helped to spur this resurrection,[36] which was also reportedly encouraged by Farquhar's resumption of his governorship in July 1820 and his subsequent relaxation of Hall and Darling's regulations.[37] The appointment of the Commission of Eastern Enquiry to investigate allegations that colonial officials had countenanced, if not actually facilitated, the trade, and the commission's subsequent arrival in Mauritius on 1 October 1826 heralded the end of large-scale illicit slave trading in the colony.[38] The archival record indicates that slaves continued to reach Mauritius and the Seychelles after *c.* 1827, but that there is little reason to believe that these importations, like those on Réunion after 1831, were anything but small in scale and intermittent in nature.

Table 2 indicates that contemporary estimates of 30,000–50,000 slaves reaching the colony between 1811 and the early 1820s were not unfounded, pointing as they do to some 43,600 importations during the trade's initial phase (1811–19). While some of these figures can only be characterized as problematic – the projection for 1815 clearly stretches the limits of credulity – the general sustainability of these estimates is suggested by the fact that the average annual volume of imports during this nine-year period (4,850) is consistent with Filliot's figures on the size of the legal trade during the early 1790s and with the Commission of Eastern Enquiry's determination that 'considerable numbers' of slaves had reached the colony before 1818.[39] References to specific instances of illegal trafficking during this period likewise suggest that this estimate is not excessive. In January 1814, for example, Lieutenant-Colonel Henry S. Keating, the lieutenant governor of Bourbon during its occupation by British forces, asserted that 9,000 slaves had been landed on that island since 1811.[40] Four years later, Major-General Hall avowed that not a week passed without slave vessels appearing off the Mauritian coast.[41] The scale and intensity of this activity is attested to in other ways: by the seizure and subsequent condemnation of 45 slave ships between 1812 and 1819, by a report in February 1820 that 700–800 slaves had been landed in Rivière du Rempart district since the preceding November,[42] and by the Commission of Eastern Enquiry's finding that one ship, *Le Coureur*, had landed an average of 150–200 slaves on the island during each of six voyages from Madagascar in 1819 and 1820.[43]

During the mid-1820s, various officials held that no slaves had been landed in the colony (or at least on Mauritius itself) after *c.* 1821, assertions with which the Commission of Eastern Enquiry ultimately concurred.[44] The fact

[36] Farquhar put the number of such deaths at 7,000 (PP 1829 XXV [337], 5). See also Kuczynski, *Demographic Survey*, II, 874.

[37] PRO, CO 172/38, Three Years Administration of the Isle de France…, 254.

[38] The Commission remained in Mauritius until June 1828 (Toussaint, *Histoire des îles*, 179).

[39] Slave Trade Report, 27.

[40] PRO, CO 167/23/E, no. 66, Lt.-Col. Henry S. Keating to R. T. Farquhar, 8 Jan. 1814.

[41] Maj.-Gen. Hall to Earl Bathurst, 16 Apr. 1818 (PP 1826 XXVII [352], 26).

[42] Cha[s] Stokes to Maj.-Gen. Darling, 19 Feb. 1820 (PP 1826 XXVII [352], 352).

[43] Slave Trade Report, 22–3.

[44] PRO, CO 167/73, Despatch no. 72, Sir Lowry Cole to Earl Bathurst, 18 Nov. 1824; PRO, CO 167/78, Capt. W. F. W. Owen to Sir Lowry Cole, 4 Aug. 1825. Enclosure in Despatch no. 40, Sir Lowry Cole to Earl Bathurst, 20 Aug. 1825; Capt. Fairfax Moresby, R.N., before the Select Committee on the Mauritius Slave Trade, 22 May 1826 (PP

that the colony was beginning to come under abolitionist scrutiny at this time suggests, however, that at least some of these officials had a vested interest in glossing over what was really happening by land and sea. Governor Sir Lowry Cole's carefully worded statements about slave trading in the region are striking cases in point.[45] Table 2's projections contradict these claims about the illegal trade's early demise and indicate that it continued until *c.* 1827, albeit on a much more modest scale of only 1,100 imports on average each year after 1820. The trade's vitality at the beginning of this second phase (1820–7) is suggested by Captain Fairfax Moresby's claim that 1,300 slaves were headed for Mauritius from Zanzibar in April 1821.[46] Scattered reports of slave traders operating in or near the Seychelles, if not Mauritius itself, between 1823 and 1828 likewise indicate that this trade continued well past 1821.[47]

The financial incentives to do so were a powerful spur to the trade's continuance. Papers recovered from the captured brig, *Le Succès*, reveal how lucrative such undertakings could be. The 226 men, women and children who survived the ship's first crossing from Zanzibar to Bourbon were sold in October and November 1820 for an apparent profit of $20,054,[48] or a 210 per cent return on what may have been invested in the voyage.[49] High rates of

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1826–27 VI [90], 63); PRO, CO 167/83, Memorandum by Lt. Cole. Enclosure no. 5 in Despatch no. 36, Sir Lowry Cole to Earl Bathurst, 4 June 1826; PRO, CO 325/33/p. 71, extract from a letter from Thomas Alexander, 29 Nov. 1826; PRO, CO 167/100, Sir Lowry Cole to W. Huskisson, 19 June 1828; Slave Trade Report, 27.

[45] Late in 1824, for example, the governor asserted that the slave trade to Mauritius had 'entirely ceased', but conceded in almost the same breath that 'a few may still be taken to the Seychelles from the African Coast, but this can neither be well ascertained nor prevented until a small vessel shall be constantly stationed at that Dependency…' (PRO, CO 167/73, Despatch no. 72, Sir Lowry Cole to Earl Bathurst, 18 Nov. 1824). The following month, when he reported that the trade to Bourbon was continuing 'to a very great extent', Sir Lowry took care to add he had 'great satisfaction in being able to state that there is no reason to suppose that *any Vessel under the British Flag* [emphasis added] is at all connected with the above proceedings, no[r] do I hear of any one being engaged in the Slave Trade' (PRO, CO 167/74, Despatch no. 83, Sir Lowry Cole to Earl Bathurst, 31 Dec. 1824).

[46] Capt. Fairfax Moresby, R.N., before the Select Committee on the Mauritius Slave Trade, 22 May 1826 (PP 1826–27 VI [90], 65). Moresby also alleged that another 20,000 slaves were waiting at Zanzibar for ships to be fitted out to carry them away.

[47] PRO, CO 167/11, Despatch no. 11, Sir Lowry Cole to Earl Bathurst, 8 Oct. 1823; PRO, CO 167/72, Despatch no. 13, Sir Lowry Cole to Earl Bathurst, 8 Apr. 1824; PRO, CO 167/73, Despatch no. 72, Sir Lowry Cole to Earl Bathurst, 18 Nov. 1824; Sir Lowry Cole to Earl Bathurst, 20 Aug. 1825 (PP 1826 XXVI [331], 4); PRO, CO 167/100, Statements by Augustin Ribaud and Roquelaure Louis at Port Louis, 6 June 1827. Enclosure no. 14 in Despatch no. 19, Sir Lowry Cole to W. Huskisson, 16 May 1828; PRO, CO 167/101, W. M. G. Colebrooke and W. Blair to Sir Charles Colville, 31 July 1828. Enclosure no. 3 in Despatch no. 7, Sir Charles Colville to W. Huskisson, 1 Aug. 1828.

[48] Although the British pound sterling (£) became the official currency of account in Mauritius on 1 January 1826, the Spanish piastre or dollar ($) served as the colony's regular currency during much of the nineteenth century. Its value was fixed in 1826 at four shillings, or £1 = $5 (PP 1835 XLIX [53], 105).

[49] PRO, CO 167/92, Compte de la première traite, du brick Le Succès… fait à la côte orientalle D'Afrique, isle Zanzibard, commencé le 28 juin & fini le 30 Août 1820; Tableau de 220 Negres & Negresses de la Cargaison du Brick le succès… introduite à L'Isle de

return were also common for slaves imported into Mauritius and its dependencies. In 1821, one source held that Mozambican slaves who might sell for $150 on Réunion were worth $300–400 in the Seychelles.[50] The Commission of Eastern Enquiry reported in turn that slaves purchased for $20–25 on the African coast sold readily for $100–200 in Mauritius, a price 'calculated to cover the expenses and the losses, and to afford a profit adequate to the risks incurred'.[51] The composition of these cargoes further underscores their profitability. A survey of 2,998 prize slaves landed in Mauritius between 1813 and 1827 indicates that three males were carried for every female, while more detailed information on 1,343 of these individuals suggests that three-fifths of the slaves caught up in this traffic were the kind of 'prime' hands of 15–24 years of age who regularly commanded high prices.[52]

Financing for these voyages came from various sources. As the case of *Le Succès* illustrates, metropolitan French interests were clearly involved in the trade; the ship's owner resided in Nantes, a port long associated with the French slave trade.[53] French involvement was both substantial and far-flung.[54] Farquhar noted as much in 1816 when he observed that French

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Bourbon à l'addresse de M^rs. Lory & Gamin & vendue comme suite; Compte de vente & net produit de la Cargaison du brick le succès … vendu à Bourbon pour compte des interressés à L'Armature du dit navire. The price paid for these slaves at Zanzibar is not reported, but it was probably much the same as those paid early in 1821 when the same vessel acquired a cargo of 309 slaves at a cost of $18–28 for men, $18–22.50 for women and $17–21 for *caports* or youths (PRO, CO 167/92, Compte courant de la deuxième traite de noirs du brick le succès à zanzibard …). Men from the 1820 cargo sold for $150–200 (usually $200), while women sold for $140–170, *caports* for $130–180 and children for $130.

[50] PRO, CO 167/57, Extracts from the Secret records of Governor Farquhar's private office relative to the intended formation of Depots of Slaves in the Archipelago of the Seychelles, 8 Apr. 1821. Enclosure no. 5 in Despatch no. 46, R. T. Farquhar to Earl Bathurst, 11 June 1821.

[51] Slave Trade Report, 42.

[52] PRO, CO 167/43, Returns of Prize Negroes condemned by the Court of Vice Admiralty in the Colony, 1 June 1816 to 28 January 1828; PRO, CO 167/71, Detailed Statement of Blacks Seized Since the Last Return dated 31^st December on board different vessels, or on Shore in the Island of Mauritius and Dependencies … Children 14 years of age and under accounted for 21·5 per cent of the 1,343 persons in question. Individuals aged 15–24 comprised 61·4 per cent of the sample, while those 25 years of age and older accounted for 17·1 per cent of the sample.

[53] Robert Louis Stein, *The French Slave Trade in the Eighteenth Century: An Old Regime Business* (Madison, 1979), 61–6, 131–5.

[54] Serge Daget puts the number of illegal slavers outfitted in French metropolitan and colonial ports between 1814–31 at 763 ('British repression of the illegal slave trade: Some considerations', in Henry A. Gemery and Jan S. Hogendorn (eds.), *The Uncommon Market: Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (New York, 1979), 421–2). Scarr asserts that at least 53 of these vessels were bound for Bourbon between 1821–33 (*Slaving and Slavery*, 113). French slave traders also sought cargoes as far away as West Africa, Malaya and the Indonesian archipelago (PRO, CO 167/74, Despatch no. 83, Sir Lowry Cole to Earl Bathurst, 31 Dec. 1824; PRO, CO 415/7/A.164, Memorandum for Captain Ackland from Mr. Finniss, n.d. [but after 13 Sept. 1826]; PRO, CO 415/1/Private and Confidential Letter Book, W. M. G. Colebrooke and W. Blair to Earl Bathurst, 25 Oct. 1826). See also Hubert Gerbeau, 'Les esclaves asiatiques des Mascareignes au XIX^e siècle: enquêtes et hypothèses', *Annuaire de l'océan indien*, 7

vessels were more heavily engaged in the trade than those of any other nation.[55] Five years later, the scale of this activity prompted him to inform London that he was 'most anxious' to prevent French ships 'from throwing their Slaves upon our Coasts, or from forming Depôts' in any of the colony's outlying dependencies.[56] Reports by officers of the Royal Navy demonstrate that French slave trading remained a subject of concern well into the 1820s.[57]

This concern reflected a keen awareness that Réunion's proximity afforded Mauritians with numerous opportunities to participate in the illicit trade themselves or at least to benefit from the labors of others. Their ability to do so stemmed in no small measure from the inability and/or unwillingness of officials on Bourbon to suppress slave trading after France formally abolished the trade in 1817. This problem remained the subject of correspondence between Mauritian governors and their opposite number on Bourbon, and of gubernatorial dispatches to London. In June 1821, for instance, Farquhar charged that the Réunionnais trade continued unabated in part because the island's government lacked the means to suppress it, and its chief naval officer actively colluded with slave traders.[58] Three and a half years later, Governor Cole reported that although his French counterpart wanted to stop the trade, 'nothing is done to effect this purpose'.[59] This state of affairs would not begin to change until after 1826.

Réunion's allure was economic as well as political. As was noted earlier, the socio-economic ties that had bound colonists on the Iles de France et de Bourbon remained largely intact after 1814, a fact of life readily appreciated by Mauritian officials such as Edward Byam. Byam, chief of police between 1815 and 1823, described the 'regular and well concerted scheme' by which some colonists financed their participation in the illegal slave trade:

> By it, such as had Properties in the Mauritius capable of furnishing a Supply of Goods for the market of that island were to send a Cargo thereof to Bourbon where Metallic Money (which alone is received in Madagascar & on the neighbouring Coasts of Africa) was to be had without that immense Loss at which only it was to be procured in this Island, and where indeed (Bourbon) it was readily to be had. Those who were unable to find Goods of this description were to take French or other European manufactures with them from Mauritius to Bourbon, and there at a Rate only which just ensured them from Loss, the Venders were to convert these Goods into Metallic Money – when[ce] they were to proceed to the ulterior Object of their Voyage.[60]

The Commission of Eastern Enquiry confirmed that the intimate commercial and familial relations existing between the two islands had 'exposed the

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(1980), 169–97; 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 der Kraan, 'Bali: Slavery and slave trade', in Reid, *Slavery*, especially 329–37.

[55] R. T. Farquhar to Capt. Curran, 9 Sept. 1816 (PP 1826 XXVII [295], 105).

[56] PRO, CO 167/57, Despatch no. 46, R. T. Farquhar to Earl Bathurst, 11 June 1821.

[57] Capt. W. Owen to Sir Lowry Cole, 4 Aug. 1825 (PP 1826 XXVI [331], 5).

[58] See n. 55.

[59] PRO, CO 167/74, Despatch no. 83, Sir Lowry Cole to Earl Bathurst, 31 Dec. 1824. Cole reported that 1,800 slaves had allegedly been introduced into Bourbon during the preceding month.

[60] PRO, CO 172/38, Three Years Administration of the Isle de France…, 256–7.

inhabitants of this island to the imputation of an indirect interest in the slave trade known to be carried on at Bourbon'.[61] Evidence of this intimacy included numerous transactions between Port Louis merchants and their correspondents on Bourbon, the transfer of specie to Bourbon and the large number of suspected French slavers that had been repaired at Port Louis.[62]

Evidence also exists of Mauritian colonists' overt involvement in the trade. In some instances, their participation became a matter of public record as the story of this era's most notorious slave trader, Charles Dorval, illustrates.[63] Other, often circumstantial, evidence is equally compelling. During most of the eighteenth century Mauritius relied heavily upon rice and cattle from Madagascar to feed itself;[64] the continuing need for such imports was met by a fleet of luggers and schooners that plied to and from the Grande Ile. Many of these craft were admirably suited to slaving; those used to carry bullocks were described specifically as being 'fitted out in a manner that renders it difficult to distinguish them from those equipped for the slave trade'.[65] Fifty-five such vessels were registered with the government in 1825. The volume of this coastal trade was substantial; an average of 150 colonial ships reportedly cleared Port Louis each year between 1815–21, mostly for Madagascar and Réunion.[66] According to Byam, the attendant opportunities to run slaves were such that the cargoes of only 39 of 100 return voyages from Madagascar and the Seychelles in 1822 for provisions did not include slaves.[67]

Slavers made frequent use of these luggers and schooners because they aroused less suspicion than larger ships when they appeared off the Mauritian coast, and because their size and shallow draught made them easier to handle among the reefs that shielded the remote landing areas favored by many traffickers. Byam noted that slavers operating from Madagascar and East Africa frequently transferred their cargoes to such ships at Providence Island north and east of Madagascar. The vessels in question then either sailed directly to Mauritius or proceeded to the Seychelles where new slaves could undergo a modicum of acculturation before being forwarded to the Ile Maurice, either surreptitiously or openly under government license.[68] As Major-General Hall informed the Colonial Secretary, these vessels' small size was also no impediment to carrying large cargoes:

[61] Slave Trade Report, 37.
[62] Slave Trade Report, 37–8.
[63] Barker, *Slavery and Antislavery*, 31; Scarr, *Slaving and Slavery*, 96–7.
[64] 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'Ile 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.
[65] Slave Trade Report, 32.
[66] Slave Trade Report, 23.
[67] PRO, CO 167/38, Three Years Administration of the Isle de France…, 259.
[68] PRO, CO 167/38, Three Years Administration of the Isle de France…, 257–8. The transfer of legally held slaves from the Seychelles to Mauritius was permitted by an Act of Parliament. Abuse of this act to conceal the importation of illegal slaves into Mauritius was a subject of considerable concern among officers of the Royal Navy (PRO, CO 415/3/A.33 [No. 10], Capt. C. R. Moorsom to Commodore Joseph Nourse, 21 June 1823; PRO, CO 415/3/A.24, Capt. C. R. Moorsom to Sir Lowry Cole, 17 Nov. 1823; PRO, CO 167/73, Sir Lowry Cole to R. Wilmot Horton, private letter of 20 Nov. 1824).

The manner in which those unfortunate Negroes are stowed away in the small craft, which is employed in this Trade is dreadful to reflect upon. The hight [*sic*] of the Deck from the Water Casks is only two feet, and those unhappy people are obliged to lay down with the head of one between the thighs of the other, who is placed behind him, and so on to the extremity of the Vessel when a new range is again commenced, and thus the numbers stowed in a small compass can exceed any calculations which Your Lordship can form.[69]

The high slave/tonnage ratio on some of the ships seized by the Royal Navy underscore the willingness, if not the propensity, of slavers to pack their holds as tightly as possible.[70]

This industry's ability to land thousands of illegal slaves on the islands' shores was facilitated by the presence of a local white population that demonstrated time and again that it was not only deeply committed to the institution of slavery, but also willing to circumvent attempts to suppress the trade or to punish those who participated in it. The archival record is replete with reports of armed parties of colonists escorting newly arrived slaves ashore, of grand juries refusing to indict slave traders who had been caught *in flagrante delicto*, of these men escaping from the jail cells in which they had been lodged and of local judges actively subverting the law. The Commissioners of Eastern Enquiry appreciated the extent and depth of this resistance, observing in their final report of 12 March 1828:

it may safely be affirmed that nothing but a general disposition in the inhabitants in favour of the slave trade, and the negligence or connivance of the civil authorities in the districts, and great inefficiency, if not culpability in the police department, could have enabled bands of negroes to be landed and carried through so small an island and disposed of without detection.[71]

The trade also flourished because the colonial government frequently lacked the necessary means to suppress it. In July 1813, Governor Farquhar advised the commander of British naval forces in the region of the need for several fast cutters to intercept slave ships on the high seas.[72] Four and a half months later, Farquhar observed that the Royal Navy's continued absence from Mauritian waters was frustrating his attempts to suppress the trade, sentiments that he would repeat again in September 1814 and October 1817.[73] As events subsequently demonstrated, the presence of determined Royal Navy patrols could have a marked impact. Between August and mid-October 1816, *H.M.S. Tyne* seized five slavers on the high seas and one at Tamatave, while *H.M.S. Mosquito* captured three other such ships. Three years later, *H.M.S. Liverpool* similarly distinguished itself, capturing four slave ships in the space of two months.

The consequences that flowed from the absence of these patrols were appreciated by all concerned. Major-General Darling observed angrily in January 1820 that *H.M.S. Topaze*'s recent departure from the colony had

[69] PRO, CO 167/44, Despatch no. 18, Maj.-Gen. Hall to Earl Bathurst, 20 Apr. 1818.

[70] In some instances, these ratios exceeded 4:1 and even 5:1. See PP 1826 XXVII [295], 99, 105, 116, 120, 131–4.

[71] Slave Trade Report, 14–15.

[72] R. T. Farquhar to Rear-Adm. Tyler, 7 July 1813 (PP 1826 XXVII [295], 27).

[73] R. T. Farquhar to Rear-Adm. Tyler, 20 Nov. 1813; R. T. Farquhar to Vice-Adm. Tyler, 30 Sept. 1814; R. T. Farquhar to Earl Bathurst, 15 Oct. 1817 (PP 1826 XXVII [295], 27, 98, 122, respectively).

been 'the signal for the most unbridled and licentious proceedings on the part of the slave dealers'.[74] Later that same year, Farquhar appealed yet again for small men of war to be stationed off the Mauritian and Malagasy coasts, without which, he argued, the slave trade in this part of His Majesty's dominions could not be extinguished.[75] The continuing need for armed cruisers to patrol the colony's waters would be the subject of gubernatorial dispatches again during 1823–5.[76]

The intermittent nature of these patrols not only illustrates some of the problems colonial authorities faced as they sought to suppress the clandestine trade to Mauritius and the Seychelles, but also raises questions about the depth of the British commitment to its destruction. This issue became a subject of vigorous debate in Britain during the mid-1820s and remains a source of contention more than a century and a half later. At the center of this maelstrom, then and now, stands Robert Farquhar. Charges that Farquhar had tolerated, if not actually encouraged, the illegal slave trade became common after British abolitionists became interested in Mauritius,[77] charges that he denied vigorously until his death in 1830.[78] More recent assessments of his career are equally contentious. Gerald Graham and Mervyn Brown hold that the governor's opposition to the trade cannot be doubted and that his cautious approach to this problem was dictated by the peculiar circumstances with which he had to contend.[79] Barker and Scarr, on the other hand, argue that he had a corrupt personal stake in the local slave régime, if not in the trade itself.[80] R. W. Beachey, Christopher Lloyd and Teelock have adopted more nuanced stances, acknowledging that while Farquhar may have been sympathetic to local interests for practical political and economic reasons, he nevertheless did his best to suppress this illicit commerce, even if only after being pressured to do so by London.[81]

A striking feature of the modern debate is the failure of all concerned to come to grips with the trade itself. Equally important has been the failure to reconstruct governmental efforts to suppress the trade or to review these efforts in their totality. As Table 3 demonstrates, careful attention must also be paid to how these efforts varied over time as local economic and political conditions and the nature of the trade changed. Government expenditure to suppress the trade during the first years of British rule, for instance, must be evaluated in light of the priorities imposed on the colonial government by the

[74] Maj.-Gen. Darling to the President of the Commune Générale, 15 Jan. 1820 (PP 1826 XXVII [352], 126).

[75] R. T. Farquhar to Adm. Lambert, 25 July 1820 (PP 1825 XXV [244], 9).

[76] PRO, CO 167/67, Despatches nos. 4 and 11, Sir Lowry Cole to Earl Bathurst, 14 Aug. and 8 Oct. 1823, respectively; PRO, CO 167/73, Despatch no. 72, Sir Lowry Cole to Earl Bathurst, 18 Nov. 1824; PRO, CO 167/78, Despatch no. 40, Sir Lowry Cole to Earl Bathurst, 20 Aug. 1825.

[77] Barker, *Slavery and Antislavery*, ch. 2.

[78] Sir Robert Farquhar to the Colonial Department on certain charges in 'The Anti-Slavery Reporter, No. 42,' 3 Feb. 1829 (PP 1829 XXV [337]); Sir Robert Farquhar to the Secretary of State, 10 June 1829 (PP 1829 XXV [355]).

[79] Gerald S. Graham, *Great Britain in the Indian Ocean: A Study of Maritime Enterprise, 1810–1850* (Oxford, 1967), 58, 61; Brown, *Madagascar Rediscovered*, 134–6.

[80] Barker, *Slavery and Antislavery*, 25–30; Scarr, *Slaving and Slavery*, 65, 93, 109.

[81] Christopher Lloyd, *The Navy and the Slave Trade: The Suppression of the Slave Trade in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1968), 197–8; R. W. Beachey, *The Slave Trade of Eastern Africa* (New York, 1976), 28; Teelock, *Bitter Sugar*, 49–51.

Table 3. *Government suppression of the illegal slave trade to Mauritius and the Seychelles, 1811–29*

Year	GOM Expenditure[a]			Slaves seized on shore	Condemnations for slave trading[e]		Slave transfers[f]	
	Annual total[b] (£)	Percentage TESM[c]	Percentage TGE[d]		Vessels	Slaves	Licensed	Rejected/ Seized
1811	3,526[g]	—	0·3	—	—	—	—	—
1812	5,238	—	0·5	—	1	373	—	—
1813	9,266	6·6	2·3	—	4	622	—	—
1814	9,332	7·8	3·6	63	1	104	—	—
1815	8,728	15·5	2·1	1	10	1,000	—	—
1816	12,247	40·5	2·9	9	7	368	—	—
1817	12,229	68·8	3·2	24	9	743	—	—
1818	4,150	9·9	2·6	216	9	361	13[h]	—
1819	3,473	—	2·0	73	4	153	67	3
1820	5,937	14·3	3·7	77	—	—	166	1
1821	17,534	43·4	5·6	57	1	507	265	—
1822	24,430	61·8	11·9	2	—	—	434	5
1823	17,101	46·6	7·1	—	—	—	390	35
1824	8,906	33·9	2·8	—	—	—	508	26
1825	14,053	59·1	4·5	6	2	295	231	7
1826	12,370	42·1	4·8	—	—	—	191	—
1827	17,665	16·3	10·1	12	—	—	1,293	—
1828	9,120	34·1	5·5	—	—	—	—	—
1829	9,631	46·7	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total/ Average	204,936	36·3	3·0[i]	540	48	4,526	3,558	77

Notes: [a] Government of Mauritius expenditure to suppress the illegal slave trade.

[b] Amount spent each year to suppress the illegal slave trade, including the costs of purchasing and repairing vessels, slave registration, legal expenses and the secret service. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole pound.

[c] Percentage of annual expenditure to suppress the illegal slave trade spent on Madagascar.

[d] Percentage of total government expenditure (fixed civil and military expenditure, plus extraordinary and extraneous payments) devoted to the suppression of the illegal slave trade.

[e] By colonial and Vice-Admiralty courts.

[f] Licensed transfers of slaves to Mauritius from the Seychelles and other minor dependencies.

[g] For the period Dec. 1810 through Dec. 1811.

[h] From 10 July–31 Dec.

[i] Annual average, 1811 through 1828.

Sources: PRO, CO 167/141, Return of the Vessels & Negroes captured at Sea, and Negroes seized on Shore, and condemned in the Vice Admiralty Court at the Cape of Good Hope, and the Colonial and Vice Admiralty Courts at Mauritius from 1808 to 1827; Return of the Number of Prize Negroes Apprenticed in the Colony of Mauritius From the Year 1813 to 1827 inclusive; Abstract of the Returns of Certificates granted for the transfer of Plantation and Domestic Slaves to Mauritius from its Dependencies and from Madagascar, from the 10th of July 1818…to the 10th July 1825, and of Licenses for such Transfers from the 27th August 1825 to the 26th November 1827.

PRO, CO 167/149, N. J. Kelsey, Auditor General, to Hon. Col. Barry, Chief Secy. to Govt, 30 July 1830, Return no. 1 – Statement of every description of Expence in the Colony of Mauritius and discharged from the funds thereof with a View to the Suppression of the Slave Trade or the Repression of Illicit Proceedings connected therewith from the Capture of the Island until the end of 1829. Enclosure in Despatch no. 47, Sir Charles Colville to Sir George Murray, 30 Aug. 1830.

PRO, CO172/43, Return no. 1 – Return of the Amount of Revenue and Expenditure of the Colony of Mauritius in each year from 1810 to 1826 Inclusive [with the subsequent addition of returns for 1827 and 1828].

continuing state of war between Britain and France and the attendant uncertainties about the colony's ultimate fate. By 1814, however, it was clear that Mauritius would remain a British possession, a political fact of life that mandated a hardening of official attitudes toward this illicit traffic. A heightened determination to suppress the trade was, of course, no guarantee of success. A powerful Franco-Mauritian community's willingness to protect its vested interests, coupled with the continuing demand for servile labor, the proximity of familiar and established markets capable of satisfying that demand, and the colonial government's dependence upon intermittent Royal Navy support meant that any such undertaking would be a difficult one even under the best of circumstances.

THE ILLEGAL TRADE'S IMPACT

When viewed in its totality, the available evidence leaves little doubt about the dynamic nature of the illegal slave trade to Mauritius and the Seychelles. The vigor with which it was pursued and the avidity with which its cargoes were consumed suggest that larger rather than smaller numbers of slaves reached the islands between 1811 and 1827. This robust flow of servile labor required the export of even larger numbers from Madagascar and East Africa. Unfortunately, the archival record contains only scattered references to slave mortality during the passage to the Mascarenes. However, these reports, together with high slave/tonnage ratios and the appalling conditions endured by slaves while in transit, indicate that high death rates were probably not uncommon, even during crossings of relatively short duration. *Le Succès*, for example, lost 8 per cent of its human cargo during its five and a half week voyage from Zanzibar to Bourbon in 1820. Substantially higher mortality rates prevailed on other ships engaging in the trade. The *Hélène* lost one-fifth of its human cargo to smallpox during a 66-day voyage from Kilwa to Mauritius early in 1818, while later that year 19 per cent of the *St. Jean*'s cargo perished during a three-and-a-half week voyage from Tamatave to the former Ile de France.[82]

These mortality rates are generally in line with those reported before 1810. According to Toussaint, 12 per cent of the slaves on 27 vessels sailing from Madagascar to the Mascarenes between 1775 and 1807 died en route, while 21 per cent of 64 such cargoes shipped from the East African coast between 1777 and 1808 died on the high seas.[83] Calculations using Toussaint's figures suggest that the introduction of 52,550 slaves into Mauritius and the Seychelles between 1811–27 required the export of at least 57,700 and perhaps as many as 66,500 men, women and children from Madagascar and East Africa. The proportion of slaves from each of these major catchment areas allows us to refine this estimate further. A census of 892 prize slaves taken between 1816 and 1818 and a sample of 1,000 of the 3,423 slaves

[82] Deposition of the slave Laviolette before D. Virieux, 22 Oct. 1818 (PP 1826 XXVII [352], 66); PRO, CO 167/44, Deposition of Jean Bordelais before Sir Robt. Barclay, Bart., 17 Feb. 1818.

[83] Auguste Toussaint, *La route des îles: contribution à l'histoire maritime des Mascareignes* (Paris, 1967), 451, 454.

identified by the Mauritian government as probable illegal imports indicate that the Grand Ile supplied approximately three-fourths and East African comptoirs one-fourth of the slaves exported to the islands after 1810.[84] Further calculations using this ratio and Toussaint's average mortality rates for Malagasy and East African cargoes suggest that some 43,250 slaves were exported from Madagascar to Mauritius and the Seychelles between 1811 and 1827, while East African exports to the islands during the same period numbered about 16,600.

These projections, coupled with the manifold difficulties of suppressing the trade in and around the islands themselves, make the British desire to throttle this 'infernal traffic' at its source all that much more comprehensible. The years between 1816 and 1822 witnessed several well-known diplomatic initiatives in which the trade's destruction was an integral part of the British agenda. The first such initiative began in April 1816, when Farquhar announced his intention of securing a treaty banning slave exports from the expanding Merina kingdom on Madagascar. The Merina ruler, Radama I, was induced to sign such a treaty in October 1817, and he subsequently agreed to a second such treaty in October 1820 after the first was abrogated unilaterally by Major-General Hall in 1818.[85] Shortly thereafter, Farquhar reported that the inability of a well-known slave trader to obtain cargoes at Tamatave and Foulpointe late in 1820 could be attributed to 'the efficacy of the treaty with Radama'.[86] Several months later, the governor reported that the treaty had forced slave traders to shift the center of their operations from Madagascar to the East African coast.[87] The Commission of Eastern Enquiry subsequently concurred that Radama's decree prohibiting the exportation of slaves had been effective wherever Merina rule held sway.[88]

If the 1820 Anglo-Merina accord closed Tamatave, Foulpointe and other ports under Merina control to European slavers,[89] East African comptoirs remained willing and able to supply the desired cargoes.[90] Admitting that he

[84] PRO, CO 167/43, Returns of Prize Slaves condemned by the Court of Vice Admiralty in the Colony, 1 June 1816 to 28 January 1818; PRO, T 71/1520, Extracts from the Returns furnished by Slave proprietors at the Census of 1826 by which it would appear from the ages then given, that the undermentioned Individuals must have been illegally imported into this Colony [prepared by C. A. Mylius, Office of the late Slave Registry, 1 May 1835].

[85] Brown, *Madagascar Rediscovered*, 134–46.

[86] R. T. Farquhar to Earl Bathurst, 12 Mar. 1821 (PP 1825 XXV [244], 33).

[87] PRO, CO 167/57, Despatch no. 46, R. T. Farquhar to Earl Bathurst, 11 June 1821.

[88] Slave Trade Report, 20.

[89] Exports continued from Madagascar's northern and western coasts, including Tintinque [*sic*] on Antongil Bay, Bembatoc or Bambatook [*sic*], Manaive [*sic*], and especially Majunga, into the 1820s (PRO, CO 415/3/A.33 [No. 10], Capt. C. R. Moorsom to Commodore Joseph Nourse, 21 June 1823; PRO, CO 167/67, Capt. C. R. Moorsom to Sir Lowry Cole, 1 Dec. 1823. Enclosure in a private letter, Sir Lowry Cole to Wilmot Horton, 17 Dec. 1823; PRO, CO 415/3/A.24, Sir Charles Stuart to Vicomte de Chateaubriand, 1 June 1824; PRO, CO 415/7/A.164, Memorandum for Captain Ackland from Mr. Finniss, n.d. [but after 13 Sept. 1826]).

[90] Captain Owen reported in 1825 that the ports in question were Zanzibar, Kilwa, Kessooharra [*sic*], Lindi, Monghon [*sic*], Mitimdancy [*sic*], Mizimbaily [*sic*], Hambosezy [*sic*], Tonghy [*sic*], Ibo, and Mozambique (PRO, CO 167/78, Capt. W. Owen to Sir Lowry Cole, 4 Aug. 1825. Enclosure in Despatch no. 40, Sir Lowry Cole to Earl Bathurst, 20 Aug. 1825). Charles Dorval reported about Sept. 1827, that slaves could be obtained

lacked the means to close these markets by himself, Farquhar again resorted to diplomacy. In April 1821, he signaled his intention to secure an agreement with the Sultan of Oman, nominal ruler of Zanzibar and other portions of the East African coast, similar to his treaty with Radama.[91] In mid-1822, the governor dispatched Captain Fairfax Moresby to negotiate such an accord, a task that Moresby completed later the same year when the sultan agreed to ban the external traffic in slaves from his dominions and to prohibit his subjects from selling slaves to any Christian.[92] Two years later, Captain W. F. W. Owen added another chapter to this story when, on his own initiative, he established a British protectorate over Mombasa that would last until 1826. Abolition of the local slave trade was a key provision of the convention that ceded control of this port city to Britain.[93]

While studies of these initiatives often concede that the British officials who undertook them were motivated by a genuine desire to destroy the illegal slave trade, their desire to do so is generally regarded as a factor of only secondary importance in shaping the course of these events. Farquhar's interest in Madagascar, for instance, is frequently viewed as being driven less by his eagerness to suppress the illegal trade than by his desire to limit, if not undermine, French influence on the Grande Ile.[94] Both his opening to Oman and Owen's actions at Mombasa are usually seen as part of a concerted effort to extend British influence and trade in the region, although Owen's behavior has also been interpreted as a frustrated abolitionist's response to the Moresby Treaty's shortcomings.[95]

The argument that these initiatives sought primarily to weaken French interests and extend British influence throughout the western Indian Ocean makes eminent sense given the long rivalry between Britain and France for dominance in this part of the world and Britain's interest in opening new markets for its manufactured goods. However, this emphasis upon the primacy of geo-political considerations is troubling on several counts. The

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at the following locations south of Kilwa: Lagoa [*sic*] a.k.a. Rivière des Anglais, Inhambane, Sofala (which supplied only 300–400 slaves each year), Quelimane (the most important such comptoir), Mozambique, Ibo, the Missimbaly [*sic*] River (28 leagues north of Ibo), Mikindani, the Mongalle [*sic*] River and Lindi (PRO, CO 415/9/A.238 [No. 1], Copies of Notes furnished to the Comsrs. by Dorval relative to the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa).

[91] R. T. Farquhar to Earl Bathurst, 14 Apr. 1821 (PP 1825 XXV [244], 37).

[92] Sir John Gray, *The British in Mombasa, 1824–1826* (London, 1957), 24–9; R. W. Beachey, *A History of East Africa, 1592–1902* (London, 1996), 17–22.

[93] Gray, *The British*, 33–53; Graham, *Great Britain*, 186–95. Although Owen's protectorate was not formally sanctioned, officials on the scene readily appreciated that possession of Mombasa could be a powerful check on the East African slave trade (PRO, CO 167/72, Despatch no. 41, Sir Lowry Cole to Earl Bathurst, 19 June 1824; PRO, CO 167/83, Commodore H. H. Christian to J. W. Croker, 9 May 1826. Enclosure in Despatch no. 34, Sir Lowry Cole to Earl Bathurst, 30 May 1826).

[94] Graham, *Great Britain*, 66; Toussaint, *Histoire des îles*, 155; Phares M. Mutibwa, *The Malagasy and the Europeans: Madagascar's Foreign Relations, 1861–1895* (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey, 1974), 22; Ludvig Munthe, Charles Ravoajanahary and Simon Ayache, 'Radama I et les anglais: les négoçiations de 1817 d'après les sources malgaches ('Sorabe' inédits)', *Omaly Sy Anio*, 3–4 (1976), 22.

[95] Raymond Howell, *The Royal Navy and the Slave Trade* (London, 1987), 5–8.

timing and order of Farquhar's initiatives, for example, make little sense when examined strictly in such terms. However, his openings to Radama in 1816–17 and again in 1820, and then to Oman in 1822 make more sense if they are considered in light of the illegal trade's volume during this era, the source of most of the slaves who reached the islands before and after *c.* 1820, and the demonstrated ability of slave traders to adapt quickly to the new economic and political realities mandated by the Anglo-Merina agreement of 1820.

The illegal trade's role in shaping these developments also becomes apparent when attention is paid to the financial dimensions of Merina and Omani responses to these initiatives. Radama's concern in 1817 that Farquhar's proposed treaty would compromise royal finances suggests that the slave trade was a significant source of his revenue; by most accounts the capitation tax on slaves exported from Tamatave added almost $33,000 to the royal coffers in 1821.[96] The trade's economic importance is underscored by Campbell's argument that the 1820 treaty's failure to compensate the Merina court adequately for this lost revenue led Radama to adopt autarky well before Queen Ranavalona I, the reputed author of this policy, ascended the throne in 1828. Campbell notes specifically that royal revenues from this export tax fell by one-third between 1821 and 1822, and that the treaty deprived Radama of large sums he would have otherwise enjoyed from the export of royal slaves.[97] The Moresby Treaty's financial impact was also sizable and, according to Abdul Sheriff, persuaded Sultan Seyyid Said to become interested in the developing clove industry on Zanzibar as a way to recoup his lost revenues.[98]

THE ILLEGAL TRADE'S DEMISE

While the Anglo-Merina and Moresby treaties helped to staunch the flow of slaves to Mauritius and its dependencies, the illegal trade nevertheless continued well into the mid-1820s. The reasons for this are not hard to fathom. There can be little doubt about the continuing demand for servile labor in the islands, especially as the Mauritian sugar industry began to develop in earnest during the late 1810s and early 1820s.[99] Nor can there be any doubt about the Franco-Mauritian commitment to the institution of slavery. Governor Colville appreciated the depth of the local *mentalité esclavagiste*, noting in 1829 that the reaction to an ordinance ameliorating slaves' living and working conditions was one of widespread ill-will.[100] Three

[96] Munthe, Ravoajanahary and Ayache, 'Radama I', 55; Campbell, 'Madagascar and the slave trade', 208, and 'The adoption of autarky', 400. According to Scarr, Mauritian officials calculated that Radama realized $40,000 a year from the slave trade (*Slaving and Slavery*, 132).

[97] Campbell, 'The adoption of autarky', 400.

[98] Beachey puts this loss at £11,250 each year (*History of East Africa*, 22), while Scarr reports losses of not more than $30,000 a year (*Slaving and Slavery*, 132). Sheriff notes that the sultan claimed a loss of 40,000–50,000 Maria Theresa dollars (MT$) each year, a sum equal to £8,421–£10,526 at the exchange rate of £1 = MT$4.75 that prevailed during the first half of the nineteenth century (*Slaves*, xix, 50).

[99] William Kelleher Storey, *Science and Power in Colonial Mauritius* (Rochester, New York, 1997), 26–7.

[100] PRO, CO 167/107, Despatch no. 24, Sir Charles Colville to Sir George Murray, 11 Apr. 1829.

years later, this mentality, coupled with the appointment of a known abolitionist as the colony's attorney general and the attendant suspicion that his appointment heralded slave emancipation, precipitated an insurrection that would hasten the end of slavery throughout the British empire.[101]

Under such circumstances, it is clear that the illegal trade's demise cannot be attributed to changing colonial attitudes toward slavery, and that the reason(s) for its cessation lie elsewhere. It is tempting to trace its destruction largely to the impact of imperial initiatives: the Anglo-Merina accords, the Moresby Treaty and the Commission of Eastern Enquiry's arrival in the colony at the same time that the Réunionnais trade was coming under greater pressure.[102] However, the long history of local resistance to metropolitan interference suggests that the trade's demise cannot be explained only in such terms. Teelock has argued accordingly that its end was closely linked to proposals made during the early 1820s and implemented in 1825 to equalize the duty paid on Mauritian and West Indian sugar entering Britain. More specifically, she holds that local attitudes toward the trade *per se* began to change as planters realized that access to the credit they needed to finance the sugar industry's expansion would be facilitated if they were perceived in England as supporting the ban on slave trading.[103]

Teelock's argument, while interesting, remains largely unsubstantiated. Her failure to come to grips with the trade itself has already been noted, while she also fails to document local financial conditions in adequate detail or to consider important demographic changes in the colony's slave population at this same time. In the first instance, the archival record reveals that the entire period under consideration, not just the early 1820s, was one of considerable economic hardship for a colony that remained dependent upon domestic capital.[104] Significant capital flight after the British conquest, coupled with the colony's subjugation to the Navigation Acts in 1815, undercut the commercial foundations upon which the local economy had rested since the 1770s. The 1810s and 1820s in turn witnessed a succession of large negative balances of trade, frequent shortages of specie and occasional credit crises.[105] These conditions, together with the maintenance until 1825 of the discriminatory tariff against Mauritian sugar, precluded significant British investment. At the same time, the colony's legitimate commerce consumed considerable amounts of coined money,[106] as did the slave trade, and the massive influx of slaves into the islands during the 1810s can only have stretched capital liquidity still further.

Under these circumstances, there is good reason to argue that the illegal slave trade began to wane after 1820 in part because of the unrelenting drain it placed upon the colony's limited capital resources. The cholera epidemic

[101] Peter Burroughs, 'The Mauritius rebellion of 1832 and the abolition of British colonial slavery', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 4 (1976), 243–65.

[102] Gerbeau, 'Quelques aspects', 282–5.

[103] Teelock, *Bitter Sugar*, 52.

[104] Richard B. Allen, *Slaves, Freedmen, and Indentured Laborers in Colonial Mauritius* (Cambridge, 1999), 6.

[105] PRO, CO 167/50, Despatch no. 28, Maj.-Gen. Darling to Earl Bathurst, 20 Apr. 1820; PRO, CO 167/107, Messrs. Kelsey, Laing and Callot to G. A. Barry. Enclosure no. 3 in Despatch no. 37, Sir Charles Colville to Sir George Murray, 1 June 1829; Allen, *Slaves*, 19–22, 28–9.

[106] PRO, CO 167/73, Despatch no. 41, R. T. Farquhar to Earl Bathurst, 11 Oct. 1816.

of 1819–20 probably brought this simmering financial crisis to a head. Conservative projections suggest that the death of a reported 7,000 slaves during this epidemic represented an irretrievable capital loss of at least $1,200,000, a sum equal to about 17 per cent of an estimated $7,200,000 that had already been paid out for the 46,600 slaves imported into the colony between 1811 and 1819. The need to staunch this financial hemorrhage may also explain significant demographic changes in the local slave population at about this same time. More specifically, a census completed early in 1827 reveals that half the island's bondmen were now described as Creole (locally born), compared to 27·6 per cent in 1806.[107] Of even greater interest is the fact that individuals under the age of seventeen accounted for almost 55 per cent of all Creole slaves, and that no fewer than 9,050 Creole slave children six years of age or younger had been enumerated. Figures such as these suggest that despite their vocal disdain for imperially inspired amelioration, many Mauritian colonists had come to realize during the 1810s that natural reproduction was the only way they could hope to maintain their servile work force over the long term and had taken steps accordingly.

CONCLUSION

The intensity of the colonial experience with slavery in the south-western Indian Ocean underscores the need to come to terms with the nature and dynamics of the illegal slave trade to Mauritius and the Seychelles during the early nineteenth century. Doing so is important not just because of the trade's relevance to Mascarene history, but also because it bears directly on our understanding of the African slave trades in general and the wider African diaspora. The importation of perhaps as many as 106,500 bondmen into Mauritius, Réunion and the Seychelles between 1811 and the early 1830s suggests not only that the early nineteenth century Malagasy and East African slave trades were far more vigorous than previously supposed, but also that they exerted a greater influence upon the region's political and economic life than some historians have been willing to concede. Lastly, the illegal trade's significance is underlined by the connection between the date of its demise and Mauritian planters' first attempts to secure indentured laborers from India and elsewhere to work their fields.[108] Historians of indentured labor systems have long appreciated that Mauritius was the crucial test case for the use of such contractual labor,[109] and that the success

[107] Mauritius Archives, ID 14, Return of the slave population of Mauritius [1827]; PRO, CO 167/141, Return of Slaves Registered in Mauritius between the 16th of October 1826 and the 16th of January 1827… For the 1806 census figures, see M. J. Milbert, *Voyage pittoresque à l'Ile de France, au Cap de Bonne-Espérance et à l'Ile de Ténériffe* (2 vols.) (Paris, 1812), II, 233 bis.

[108] Huguette Ly-Tio-Fane Pineo, *Lured Away : The Life History of Indian Cane Workers in Mauritius* (Moka, Mauritius, 1984), 14, 17. The first attempts to import free Indian workers into Réunion date to the same period (André Scherer, *Histoire de La Réunion* [Paris, 1974], 68; Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery : The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830–1920* [London, 1974], 61).

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

of the Mauritian experiment led to more than 2,000,000 Indian, Chinese and other non-European workers being scattered throughout the tropical plantation world between the 1830s and the early twentieth century.[110] As both contemporary observers and modern students of these systems have appreciated, life for many of the men, women and children who participated in these new labor trades would be one in which many of slavery's traditions continued to prevail.

[110] See David Northrup, *Indentured Labor in the Age of Imperialism, 1834–1922* (Cambridge, 1995), for an overview of the indentured labor trades during the nineteenth century.