

THE ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

Volume III Eighteenth Century

Edited by
Jeremy Black

THE ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE



THE ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

Volume 3

THE ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

THE ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

Volume III Eighteenth Century

Edited by
JEREMY BLACK

First published in 2006 by Ashgate

This edition first published in 2023

by Routledge

4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge

605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2006 Jeremy Black. For copyright of individual articles please refer to the Acknowledgements.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-032-42275-6 (Set)

ISBN: 978-1-032-42367-8 (Volume 3) (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-032-42392-0 (Volume 3) (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-36249-4 (Volume 3) (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003362494

Publisher's Note

The publisher has gone to great lengths to ensure the quality of this reprint but points out that some imperfections in the original copies may be apparent.

Disclaimer

The publisher has made every effort to trace copyright holders and would welcome correspondence from those they have been unable to trace.

The Atlantic Slave Trade

Volume III Eighteenth Century

Edited by

Jeremy Black

University of Exeter, UK

ASHGATE

© Jeremy Black 2006. For copyright of individual articles please refer to the Acknowledgements.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise without the prior permission of the publisher.

Published by
Ashgate Publishing Limited
Gower House
Croft Road
Aldershot
Hants GU11 3HR
England

Ashgate Publishing Company
Suite 420
101 Cherry Street
Burlington, VT 05401-4405
USA

Ashgate website: <http://www.ashgate.com>

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

The Atlantic slave trade

Vol. 3: Eighteenth century

1. Slave trade – Africa – History 2. Slave trade – Europe – History 3. Slave trade – America – History

I. Black, Jeremy

306.3'62

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The Atlantic slave trade / edited by Jeremy Black.

p. cm.

Contents: v. 1. Origins–1600 – v. 2. Seventeenth century – v. 3. Eighteenth century – v. 4. Nineteenth century.

ISBN 0-7546-2571-0 (v. 1 : alk. paper) – ISBN 0-7546-2576-1 (v. 2 : alk. paper) –

ISBN 0-7546-2579-6 (v. 3 : alk. paper) – ISBN 0-7546-2582-6 (v. 4 : alk. paper)

1. Slave trade–Africa. 2. Slave trade–Europe. 3. Slave trade–America. I. Black, Jeremy.

HT 1322.A85 2006

306.3'6209–dc22

2005056910

ISBN 0 7546 2579 6

Printed and bound in Great Britain by TJ International Ltd, Padstow, Cornwall

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	vii
<i>Series Preface</i>	ix
<i>Introduction</i>	xiii
1 David Richardson (1989), 'Slave Exports from West and West-Central Africa, 1700–1810: New Estimates of Volume and Distribution', <i>Journal of African History</i> , 30 , pp. 1–22.	1
2 David Richardson (1991), 'Prices of Slaves in West and West-Central Africa: Toward an Annual Series, 1698–1807', <i>Bulletin of Economic Research</i> , 43 , pp. 21–56.	23
3 Robin Law (1991), 'King Agaja of Dahomey, the Slave Trade, and the Question of West African Plantations: The Embassy of Bulfinch Lambe and Adomo Tomo to England, 1726–32', <i>Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History</i> , 19 , pp. 137–63.	59
4 David Richardson and M.M. Schofield (1992), 'Whitehaven and the Eighteenth-Century British Slave Trade', <i>Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society</i> , 102 , pp. 183–204.	87
5 R.B. Sheridan (1958–59), 'The Commercial and Financial Organization of the British Slave Trade, 1750–1807', <i>Economic History Review</i> , 2nd series, 11 , pp. 249–63.	109
6 J.E. Inikori (1981), 'Market Structure and the Profits of the British African Trade in the Late Eighteenth Century', <i>Journal of Economic History</i> , 41 , pp. 745–76.	125
7 William Darity, Jr (1989), 'Profitability of the British Trade in Slaves Once Again', <i>Explorations in Economic History</i> , 26 , pp. 380–84.	157
8 David Eltis and David Richardson (1995), 'Productivity in the Transatlantic Slave Trade', <i>Explorations in Economic History</i> , 32 , pp. 465–84.	163
9 H.A. Gemery, Jan Hogendorn and Marion Johnson (1990), 'Evidence on English/African Terms of Trade in the Eighteenth Century', <i>Explorations in Economic History</i> , 27 , pp. 157–77.	183
10 Walter E. Minchinton (1989), 'Characteristics of British Slaving Vessels, 1698–1775', <i>Journal of Interdisciplinary History</i> , 20 , pp. 53–81.	205
11 Keith Mason (1993), 'The World an Absentee Planter and his Slaves Made: Sir William Stapleton and his Nevis Sugar Estate, 1722–1740', <i>Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester</i> , 75 , pp. 103–31.	235
12 T.G. Burnard (2001), "'Prodigious Riches": The Wealth of Jamaica before the American Revolution', <i>Economic History Review</i> , 54 , pp. 506–24.	265

-
- 13 Richard B. Sheridan (1990), 'The Condition of the Slaves in the Settlement and Economic Development of the British Windward Islands, 1763–1775', *Journal of Caribbean History*, **24**, pp. 121–45. 285
- 14 Robert Stein (1978), 'Measuring the French Slave Trade, 1713–1792/3', *Journal of African History*, **19**, pp. 515–21. 311
- 15 Robert Stein (1980), 'The French Sugar Business in the Eighteenth Century: A Quantitative Study', *Journal of Business History*, **22**, no. 1, pp. 3–17. 319
- 16 Guillaume Daudin (2004), 'Profitability of Slave and Long-Distance Trading in Context: The Case of Eighteenth-Century France', *Journal of Economic History*, **64**, pp. 144–71. 335
- 17 Johannes Postma (2003), 'A Reassessment of the Dutch Atlantic Slave Trade', in Johannes Postma and Victor Enthoven (eds), *Riches from Atlantic Commerce; Dutch Transatlantic Trade and Shipping, 1585–1817*, **5**, Leiden: Brill, pp. 115–38. 363
- 18 Svend Erik Green-Pedersen (1975), 'The History of the Danish Negro Slave Trade, 1733–1807', *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer*, **62**, pp. 196–220. 387
- 19 Joseph C. Miller (1995), 'Worlds Apart: Africans' Encounters and Africa's Encounters with the Atlantic in Angola, before 1800', *Actas do Seminário Encontro de Povos e Culturas em Angola*, pp. 229–80. 413
- 20 Eugenio Piñero (1988), 'The Cacao Economy of the Eighteenth-Century Province of Caracas and the Spanish Cacao Market', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, **68**, pp. 75–100. 465
- 21 Hilary Beckles and Karl Watson (1987), 'Social Protest and Labour Bargaining: The Changing Nature of Slaves' Responses to Plantation Life in Eighteenth-Century Barbados', *Slavery and Abolition*, **8**, pp. 272–93. 491
- 22 G.S. Rousseau (1973), 'Le Cat and the Physiology of Negroes', *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, pp. 369–86. 513
- Name Index* 531

Acknowledgements

The editor and publishers wish to thank the following for permission to use copyright material.

ADESC for the essay: G.S. Rousseau (1973), 'Le Cat and the Physiology of Negroes', *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, pp. 369–86.

Blackwell Publishing for the essays: David Richardson (1991), 'Prices of Slaves in West and West-Central Africa: Toward an Annual Series, 1698–1807', *Bulletin of Economic Research*, **43**, pp. 21–56; R.B. Sheridan (1958–59), 'The Commercial and Financial Organization of the British Slave Trade, 1750–1807', *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, **11**, pp. 249–63; T.G. Burnard (2001), "'Prodigious Riches": The Wealth of Jamaica before the American Revolution', *Economic History Review*, **54**, pp. 506–24.

Brill Academic Publishers for the essay: Johannes Postma (2003), 'A Reassessment of the Dutch Atlantic Slave Trade', in Johannes Postma and Victor Enthoven (eds), *Riches from Atlantic Commerce; Dutch Transatlantic Trade and Shipping, 1585–1817*, **5**, Leiden: Brill, pp. 115–38.

Cambridge University Press for the essays: David Richardson (1989), 'Slave Exports from West and West-Central Africa, 1700–1810: New Estimates of Volume and Distribution', *Journal of African History*, **30**, pp. 1–22. Copyright © 1989 Cambridge University Press. Reproduced with permission of the publisher and author; Robert Stein (1978), 'Measuring the French Slave Trade, 1713–1792/3', *Journal of African History*, **19**, pp. 515–21. Copyright © 1989 Cambridge University Press. Reproduced with permission of the publisher and author.

Duke University Press for the essay: Eugenio Piñero (1988), 'The Cacao Economy of the Eighteenth-Century Province of Caracas and the Spanish Cacao Market', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, **68**, pp. 75–100.

Guillaume Daudin for the essay: Guillaume Daudin (2004), 'Profitability of Slave and Long-Distance Trading in Context: The Case of Eighteenth-Century France', *Journal of Economic History*, **64**, pp. 144–71.

Elsevier for the essay: William Darity, Jr (1989), 'Profitability of the British Trade in Slaves Once Again', *Explorations in Economic History*, **26**, pp. 380–84; David Eltis and David Richardson (1995), 'Productivity in the Transatlantic Slave Trade', *Explorations in Economic History*, **32**, pp. 465–84; H.A. Gemery, Jan Hagendorn and Marion Johnson (1990), 'Evidence on English/African Terms of Trade in the Eighteenth Century', *Explorations in Economic History*, **27**, pp. 157–77.

Journal of Caribbean History for the essay: Richard B. Sheridan (1990), 'The Condition of the Slaves in the Settlement and Economic Development of the British Windward Islands, 1763–1775', *Journal of Caribbean History*, **24**, pp. 121–45.

The Journal of Interdisciplinary History and the MIT Press, Cambridge Massachusetts for the essay: Walter E. Minchinton (1989), 'Characteristics of British Slaving Vessels, 1698–1775', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, **20**, pp. 53–81. Copyright © 1989 by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and The Journal of Interdisciplinary History Inc.

Taylor & Francis Ltd for the essays: Robin Law (1991), 'King Agaja of Dahomey, the Slave Trade, and the Question of West African Plantations: The Embassy of Bulfinch Lambe and Adomo Tomo to England, 1726–32', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, **19**, pp. 137–63; Robert Stein (1980), 'The French Sugar Business in the Eighteenth Century: A Quantitative Study', *Journal of Business History*, **22**, no. 1, pp. 3–17; Hilary Beckles and Karl Watson (1987), 'Social Protest and Labour Bargaining: The Changing Nature of Slaves' Responses to Plantation Life in Eighteenth-Century Barbados', *Slavery and Abolition*, **8**, pp. 272–93.

Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society for the essay: David Richardson and M.M. Schofield (1992), 'Whitehaven and the Eighteenth-Century British Slave Trade', *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, **102**, pp. 183–204.

Every effort has been made to trace all the copyright holders, but if any have been inadvertently overlooked the publishers will be pleased to make the necessary arrangement at the first opportunity.

Series Preface

Slavery is one of the most emotive issues in history. To point out that it has been a constant for much of human history and that it has been practiced by many societies, is not intended to minimize the suffering and impact of the Atlantic slave trade which had fundamental effects on Africa, the New World and European imperialism. These effects reach to the present day, nowhere more than in the continued relevance of slavery for modern debates over racism and its impact. Historically, there was no necessary relationship between slavery and racism. Indeed, enslavement was frequently a penalty for illegal behaviour. There were white slaves in the period covered by these volumes, most obviously those who manned the oars of the large numbers of galleys that contested the Turkish advance in the Mediterranean. Yet, despite this, there was a deeper identity of racialism and slavery, for enslavement was frequently the response to the 'other': to other peoples (irrespective of their skin colour) and other creatures. Thus, treating conquered peoples and their offspring as slaves seemed as logical to many as treating animals such as horses as slaves. The latter, beasts of burden, were also the creation of God and, therefore, part of the divine plan but, the fact that they could be readily subordinated and trained for service to humans, apparently demonstrated a natural and necessary fate.

Slavery is like war. In one light, enforced servitude, like large-scale, violent conflict, is easy to define but, just as discussion of war frequently overlaps with other aspects of conflict and violence, so the same is true with slavery, with force and servitude being open to varying definitions. It is not necessary to draw attention to the modern term 'wage slave' in order to note that many who are not formally seen as slaves have had little or no choice about work and its character and context, not least in terms of subservience and remuneration. In the nineteenth century, comparisons were drawn between the black slaves in the American South and the workers in many New England company towns.

In advancing a typology of slavery, it is possible to differentiate between societies with slaves, in which slavery was largely a domestic institution, and slave societies, in which slavery was the mode of production on which the dominant group depended for its position and also to focus on two types of the latter: slavery at the disposal of the state and slavery within a private enterprise system. The former tends to receive the least attention but state slaves of various types were important in most pre-modern states. In some cases, indeed, they were key elements in the governmental system, most obviously with the janissary units in the Ottoman (Turkish) army, who played a crucial role in the army and the politics of the state until the 1820s. Certain modern governments, such as North Korea, can be seen to claim so much authority and to wield so much power that their entire population can be regarded as slaves. European political rhetoric in the early-modern period also employed the juxtaposition of liberty and slavery, typecasting the subjects of political systems judged unacceptable as slaves. This was used, for example, by the British against the French and was also to be employed by the American Patriots at the time of the American Revolution.

However, although there were slaves in Christian Europe during the Middle Ages and, in the shape of galley slaves, they continued to exist throughout the early-modern period, a

characteristic of Western slavery was that it was predominantly part of the commercial economy and generally practiced in colonies outside Europe. Slavery in the Western world was a system of servitude driven essentially by free enterprise and this provides the crucial context for the slave trade: it was a response to economic need and a product of the search for economic opportunity.

Western slavery represented an aspect of the commodification of human beings for reasons of labour that is central to economic activity. However, focusing modern concerns, it also reflected particular socio-cultural assumptions and practices in which nationhood, ethnicity and religion all played important, although varying, roles. These assumptions became operative in particular contexts and the key context for the modern world was to be European trans-oceanic expansion. This, however, was not to be the automatic motor of the development of European-controlled slavery and, therefore, of a slave trade to sustain it. European expansion also involved the establishment of bases and colonies in a number of areas, from Newfoundland to Java, in which slavery did not become the pattern, although enforced labour that can be seen as akin to slavery could still be important, as with the Dutch plantation economy on Java from the seventeenth century.

European slavery was focused on the Atlantic world and not the Indian Ocean, the other key area of European expansion from the cusp of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The situation was different in the Atlantic world. There, labour was needed and labour was available but not at the same place. The need for labour sprang from the inherent demographic difference between the Americas and South Asia, from the impact of European expansion and from the specific labour tasks that the colonists required. Thus, the history of the Atlantic slave trade is also that of Atlantic power systems and economies and this emerges repeatedly in this series.

JEREMY BLACK
University of Exeter

To Frank O'Gorman, a much respected fellow eighteenth-centurist



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

Introduction

In his novel *L'An 2440* (1770), the radical French writer Louis-Sébastien Mercier described a monument in Paris depicting a coloured man, his arms extended, rather than in chains, and a proud look in his eye, surrounded by the pieces of 20 broken sceptres and atop a pedestal with the inscription, 'Au vergeur du nouveau monde'. To his readers this would have seemed a utopian prospect and a proof of Mercier's radicalism. Books, however, certainly brought home at least part of the nature of slavery to European readers. In his novel *Candide* (1759), the Enlightenment French writer Voltaire had his protagonist visit Surinam (on the Atlantic coast of South America), which had been colonized by the Dutch as a plantation economy. A Negro told Candide:

Those of us who work in the factories and happen to catch a finger in the grindstone have a hand chopped off; if we try to escape, they cut off one leg. Both accidents happened to me. That's the price of your eating sugar in Europe . . . Dogs, monkeys, and parrots are much less miserable than we are. The Dutch . . . who converted me, tell me every Sunday, that we are all children of Adam. (Voltaire, 1759, ch. 19; see also Postma, 1990)

The final reference to Christian hypocrisy in the above quote was to be echoed in 2003 when, on a visit to Africa, President George W. Bush travelled to the major slave-trading post at Gorée, which had been used by the Netherlands, France and Britain, a choice of destination designed to send a message about his concern for African-Americans. Bush declared that 'Christian men and women became blind to the clearest commands of their faith . . . Enslaved Africans discovered a suffering Saviour and found him as more like themselves than their masters'.

The eighteenth century was the peak period of the slave trade, with about 52 per cent of those shipped from Africa to the Americas between 1450 and 1900 moved in this period alone (Lovejoy, 1982). As before, this involved selling slaves to the colonies of other powers and also to one's own colonies. Both France and Britain sought to profit from demand in Latin America and the wealth of its economies, contributing greatly to the illicit slave flows that challenge the quantification of the slave trade on which so much excellent work has been done (see, for example, Banks, 2005). In order to avoid the potential disruption posed by the Spanish regulatory regime, it was far more desirable, however, to gain permission to trade. In 1701, as a sign of closer Franco-Spanish relations following the accession of the Bourbon Philip V to the Spanish throne the previous year, the French Guinea Company was granted the *Asiento* contract to transport slaves to Spanish America for ten years, a lucrative opening into the protected trade of the Spanish empire. In turn, the victorious British gained the right to trade with Spanish America in 1713 at the close of the War of the Spanish Succession (1702–13), a conflict in which they had defeated the French (Palmer, 1981).

Powers that lacked important colonies were dependent on selling to others. The Dutch had bases on the Gold Coast of West Africa, but, in the Americas, lacked a market comparable to Portuguese Brazil, French Saint-Domingue (modern Haiti) or British Jamaica. Instead, as

discussed by Postma (Chapter 17), they sold to all they could reach through entrepôts in Curaçao and Saint Eustatius, and carried about 350 000 slaves during the century (Austen, 1975).

Being in a weaker position, the Brandenburg (Prussian) and Danish companies were unable to make money this way. In 1717 the two forts that the Brandenburg Company had on the Gold Coast, Fort Dorothea and Fort Friedrichsburg, were sold to the Dutch. In succession, as discussed by Green-Pedersen (Chapter 18), three Danish West Indian companies failed to make the necessary profits; the Danes owned several small islands in the West Indies – St Croix, St John and St Thomas (sold in 1917 to the USA) – but lacked a large market. They carried about 74 000 slaves during the century. The Danish colonial presence on the African Gold Coast had begun in the 1650s, with the acquisition of Christiansborg from Sweden in 1653 and Fort Augustenborg in 1700, but the Danish role in the slave trade only really got underway in the eighteenth century (see also Green-Pedersen, 1971).

More generally, the slave trade was not a constant. Flows varied, as the sources and destinations of slaves changed. The majority of Africans transported in the eighteenth century went to the West Indies and Brazil, and fewer than a fifth to Spanish and North America (Curtin, 1969). The biggest shippers, in order, were Britain, Portugal, France and the Dutch. Anglophone scholarship concentrates on Britain, but, as discussed by Stein in Chapter 15, France was a key supplier to the West Indies. During the century, the French colonies obtained 1 015 000 slaves from French sources, and in 1788 the French West Indies contained 594 000 slaves, many harshly treated. In 1687 Saint-Domingue, the largest French colony in the West Indies (modern Haiti), contained 4500 white and 3500 blacks; by 1789 these numbers had risen to 28 000 whites, 30 000 free blacks and 406 000 slaves. The 1780s was the peak decade for the receipt of slaves by the French West Indian colonies – nearly 30 000 annually. The numbers sent to Saint-Domingue rose from 14 000 annually in 1766–71 to 28 000 annually in 1785–89 (see Dupâquier, 1988, pp. 127–28; Martin, 1931; Robert, 1949; Tarrade, 1972, p. 759; Butel, 1974; Debien, 1974; Stein, 1979; Cohen, 1980; Saugéra, 1995; Roman, 2001). The principal French source of slaves was the basin of the River Senegal, via the slaving ports of Gorée and St Louis. Assinie on the Ivory Coast was only held by the French from 1687 to 1705, while Forcados on the Benin Coast was only held from 1786 to 1792. Large numbers of slaves were also sent to the French West Indian islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique. The French, having established their first base in Louisiana in 1699, imported the first slaves to the colony in 1719, although it never became a major slave society.

As a result of the efforts of the slaves, exports from the Americas boomed, helping to lead to a major rise in European consumption – of coffee in Europe across the century from 2 million to 120 million pounds, of chocolate from 2 million to 13 million pounds, and of tobacco, especially from Virginia, from 50 million to 125 million pounds – in each case, a rise far above that of the increase in the European population (Shammas, 1984). Between 1663 and 1775 the consumption of muscovado sugar in England and Wales increased twentyfold, while British rum consumption rose from the 207 gallons imported in 1698 to an annual average of 2 million gallons in 1771–75. In 1702, visiting the port of Falmouth, John Evelyn had ‘a small bowl of punch made with Brazil sugar’.¹ The French West Indian islands were particularly important for the production of sugar. Bordeaux’s imports of sugar, indigo and cocoa from the French West Indies tripled between 1717 and 1720, heralding a massive increase in re-exports to northern Europe. In 1778 Saint-Domingue exported 1 634 032 quintaux of sugar (100 kilograms to a quintal).

Coffee was another major product and, thanks to slavery, the Europeans took over the bulk of world trade in coffee. Whereas, in 1660, Marseilles, France's leading Mediterranean port, imported only 19 000 quintaux of coffee, which was of Yemeni origin via Egypt, in 1785 it imported 143 310, of which 142 500 quintaux came from the West Indies. Introduced to Martinique and Guadeloupe in 1725, and to Saint-Domingue in 1730, French West Indian coffee was more popular than that produced by the Dutch in the East Indies and it swiftly became the principal global source. From 1722 the French also produced coffee in Cayenne (French Guiana). In 1770, 350 000 quintaux of coffee were produced by the French in the Americas, and in 1790 over 950 000. Most went to France and much was then re-exported – principally from Marseilles to the Ottoman (Turkish) empire, reversing the earlier trade flow. By 1789 Saint-Domingue was probably supplying more than half the Western world's coffee. The Dutch began coffee production in Surinam in 1712, and by 1772 were producing over 12 million pounds per annum there (Goslinga, 1985).

France's production of colonial goods and slave trade were affected by war with Britain and eventually, in the 1790s, by a major, and finally successful, slave rebellion on Saint-Domingue. The British captured Guadeloupe in 1759 and Grenada, Martinique, St Lucia and St Vincent in 1762. The French slave stations in West Africa, St Louis and Gorée were taken in 1758. Under the peace settlement, the Peace of Paris, of 1763, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Gorée and St Lucia were returned. In 1779, during the War of American Independence, Gorée changed hands again. In the war, the French also took Dominica (1778), Grenada (1779), St Vincent (1779), Tobago (1781), Nevis (1782), St Christopher (1782) and Montserrat (1782), although the British captured St Lucia (1778). The British slave trade was hit by the war, as was the profitability of the sugar plantations (O'Shaughnessy, 2000, p. 166). In the eventual peace settlement, the Treaty of Versailles of 1783, France gained Tobago and Senegal. In the French Revolutionary War, which broke out in 1793, the slave trade and the plantation economies of the West Indies were disrupted anew. The British captured Gorée in 1800, having already taken Tobago and St Lucia in the West Indies in 1793 and 1796 respectively.

In contrast, the Portuguese slave trade in the South Atlantic, as discussed by Miller (Chapter 19), did not face a challenge comparable to that mounted by the Dutch in both Angola and Brazil during the previous century. Angola, where the major bases were Luanda and Beneguela, supplied about 2 million slaves during the century, mostly to Brazil, and the Portuguese had more bases further north, especially in Portuguese Guinea at Cacheu, and also traded along coasts where they had no bases. Along the Atlantic coast, the Portuguese had the islands of Annobon, Fernando Póo, Príncipe and Sao Tomé, although Fernando Póo and Annobon were gained by Spain in 1776: this was Spain's sole presence in the African slave world.

Growing demand in Brazil reflected its economic expansion, but also economic change. The sugar plantations of the north-east declined in importance from the 1710s, as sugar production from the West Indies became more important in supplying European markets. Furthermore, gold and diamond extraction from the Brazilian province of Minas Geras grew substantially in significance (Bergad, 1999), producing, at once, a key demand for slaves in a different area and a major new stimulus for the slave trade that, at the same time, helped to fund it. From the late century, in another important geographical shift, sugar and coffee plantations near Rio de Janeiro became prominent.

There was considerable differentiation in the slave trade. The Portuguese bases in Angola supplied Minas Geras and Rio de Janeiro with slaves, while West Africa supplied the sugar

plantations of the north-east (Vergier, 1968), an aspect of the wider specialization of the Atlantic slave trade. The partnership between Europeans and elite Africans was crucial to this trade, with Luso [Portuguese]-African families, who spanned the Portuguese world of the Angola coast and the African world of the interior, also having links into the plantation-owning families of north-east Brazil. Plantation goods exported from Brazil included sugar, tobacco, coffee and, from the 1760s, cotton (Miller, 1988, 1991; Mark 2002). By 1800 there were over 1 million slaves in Brazil.

Export growth from Spanish America was also linked to the intensification of slavery. This was true of the export of sugar and tobacco from Cuba, cacao and sugar from Mexico, and cacao, tobacco, cotton, coffee, sugar and indigo from Venezuela, where, by 1800, about 15 per cent of the 800 000-strong population were slaves working in the plantations. The cacao economy is discussed by Piñero in Chapter 20. The economic importance of slave production in South America is generally underrated due to the fact that the Anglophone literature focuses on the West Indies and on what became the USA.

Brazil was a market for British slave-traders, and there were British and French sales to Spanish America, both legal and illegal, but for British, as for French, merchants, the core trade was that of selling slaves to their own colonies. As discussed by Richardson in Chapter 1, the British were the most prominent in the slave trade. Between 1691 and 1779, British ships transported 2 141 900 slaves from African ports, and British colonial ships took another 124 000. London dominated the trade until the 1710s, when it was replaced by Bristol (Richardson, 1987), while the developing port of Liverpool took the leading position from the 1740s. The regulatory framework that had maintained London's control had been dismantled in 1698, when the African trade was freed from the control of the Royal Africa Company. This legalized the position of interlopers. In 1725, Bristol ships carried about 17 000 slaves and, between 1727 and 1769, 39 slavers were built there; by 1752 Liverpool had 88 slavers with a combined capacity of over 25 000 slaves. In 1750–79, there were about 1909 slave-trade sailings from Liverpool, 869 from London, and 624 from Bristol (Richardson, 1998, p. 446; Inikori, 2002, esp. pp. 479–82). Liverpool had better port facilities than Bristol, not least the only wet dock outside London, and later underwent a major expansion of dock facilities, with the opening of the Salthouse Dock (1753), St George's Dock (1771) and Duke's Dock (1773).

Most slaves were transported by the British to the West Indies, but many also went to British North America. The number of slaves there rose from about 20 000 in 1700 to over 300 000 by 1763, particularly as, first, South Carolina and then Georgia were developed as plantation economies, supplementing those on the Chesapeake. In South Carolina and Georgia rice became an additional plantation crop.

The slave trade was integral to the commercial economy and shipping world of the British Atlantic, and crucial to entrepreneurial circles and the financial world in Britain, and also had a range of influences elsewhere in Britain, particularly, but not only, in the ports. Not only were the large ports of Liverpool, Bristol, Glasgow and London involved in the trade, but also smaller ports, such as Barnstaple, Bideford, Dartmouth, Exeter, Lancaster, Plymouth, Poole, Topsham and Whitehaven, the latter being considered by Richardson and Schofield in Chapter 4 of this volume (see also Richardson, 1998, p. 442). The role of the smaller ports helped spread the impact of the slave trade on the British economy.

Returns from slave-trading ventures were risky, but also sufficiently attractive to keep some existing investors in the trade and to entice new investors to join up; furthermore, the returns

could enable men of marginal status to prosper sufficiently to enter the merchant class. In addition, the triangular pattern of Atlantic trade – goods, both British manufactures and imports, such as East India Company textiles, from Britain to Africa; slaves thence to the New World; and colonial products, such as sugar and tobacco, back to Britain² – was practicable for small-scale operators, as the outlay of funds required was less than for the trade to the more distant East Indies. The triangular trade also offered considerable flexibility: for example, when sugar became harder to obtain from the West Indies, Lancaster's traders found other imports in which to invest their proceeds from slave sales, particularly mahogany, rum and dyewoods, each of which was in demand in Britain. This enabled them to maximize their profits on each leg of their enterprise, which was particularly important for marginal operators trading in a competitive field; also, when competition did eventually make the slave trade less viable at Lancaster, the contracts and experiences forged by the African trade meant that other opportunities were on offer to merchants (Tattersfield, 1991; Elder, 1992). In this volume, the commercial and financial organization of the British slave trade is assessed by Sheridan (Chapter 5) while Minchinton (Chapter 10) discusses the slaving vessels.

In Chapter 16 Daudin considers profitability from the French perspective (see also Daudin, 2002). La Rochelle's colonial trade was affected by the wild fluctuations in slave-trade profits, as well as by wars and attendant colonial losses. As a result, merchant families limited their business endeavours neither to maritime trade, nor to any one branch of it (Clark, 1981). Risk and solvency were also serious problems in the slave trade from Angola to Brazil.

The triangular trade was not the sole commercial system developed to help finance and exploit slavery. Supplying food and other products to the slave plantations was also important, and, for the British, this included the development of a trade in salt cod from Newfoundland, both to the West Indies and to Charleston, the port for South Carolina. Food was shipped from the Thirteen Colonies to the British West Indies. The colonial contribution included slaving from Rhode Island (Coughtry, 1981). There were similar developments in other colonial systems.

The slave trade, nevertheless, involved serious commercial risks, created, for example, by insufficient numbers of slaves or, alternatively, by the glutting of markets – issues affecting productivity considered by Eltis and Richardson in Chapter 8. The trade was expensive to enter, but, on the whole, did not yield great, or even any, profits,³ which may explain why the majority of British ships involved made only one slave-trading voyage and why, for Britain as for other countries, the individual merchant and voyage is a key context for consideration (Yacou, 2001; Damon, 2004). Bristol merchants in the early 1730s were hit by shortages of slaves, falling profits on colonial re-exports as prices dropped, and deteriorating relations with Spain. Whitehaven merchants largely abandoned the trade after 1769. More generally, concern about the profitability of the trade – an issue tackled by Inikori (Chapter 6) and Darity (Chapter 7) – was a major factor in the pronounced variation in the number of voyages per year from individual ports.

Profitability was also hit by the human cost of slavery, in the shape of the frequently (although not invariably) high death-rate on the Atlantic crossing. If, with time, the percentage who died fell appreciably, this was a consequence of shorter journey times, rather than improved conditions. Slaver captains were less concerned with slaves' survival than slave-owners, so there was little interest in costly medical care. Moreover, many of the officers and crew involved in the trade also died, partly as a result of their exposure to tropical disease.

Warfare in Africa continued to provide large numbers of slaves. The intensive nature of warfare in much of the Atlantic hinterland, such as the long civil war in Kongo (Thornton, 1983), and the westward advance of the Lunda empire, fed the slave trade, as did droughts and famines. In the forest zone of West Africa, musketeers had largely replaced archers on the Gold Coast in the seventeenth century, and did so on the Slave Coast in the eighteenth. Asante in the former and Dahomey in the latter were expansionist powers whose conflicts produced slaves (Fynn, 1971). The Europeans remained confined to coastal enclaves, and not always in a satisfactory fashion. In 1729 and 1743 the Dahomians succeeded in capturing the Portuguese fort at Whydah, where Brazilian tobacco was exchanged for slaves. A sense of precariousness was conveyed by Captain William Cornwallis in a report to the British Admiralty about a voyage to the River Gambia in February 1775:

I thought the appearance of a man of war might be of service. I therefore went up the river in the *Pallas* to James's Fort, which I found in great distress for want of stores, and particularly gun-carriages, not having above three or four serviceable ones in the Fort, and most of their guns rendered totally useless for want of them . . . I stayed in the River eight days, during which time we got the king of the country on board, and showed him all the civility we could; he seemed very well pleased, so I hope all will go on well again.

The terms of trade with Africa are considered in this volume by Law (Chapter 3) and Gemery, Hogendorn and Johnson in Chapter 9. The trade was only possible thanks to the active cooperation of African rulers (Law, 1977), who ended up serving the needs of a European-dominated Atlantic economy.⁴ The Atlantic economy pressed on the local, and the local served the global, and vice-versa, with Anglo-African and Franco-African slave-traders matching, and certainly in West Africa, supplanting their Luso-African equivalents (Brooks, 2003). In the Senegal River valley, patterns of trade between the desert and the savannah were annexed to the Atlantic world, as the export of slaves and gum arabic (a product used in textile manufacture that was the other major European-controlled export from this region) reconfigured local economies and interregional trade. Conversely, the West African cloth and metallurgical industries were hit by European imports (Searing, 1993; Wright, 1997).

The European position was far more powerful so far as the slaves in the Americas were concerned, although there were both slave risings and problems created by escaping slaves. In 1739, in the Stono rising in South Carolina, 100 slaves rose and killed 20 colonists, before being defeated by the militia and their Native (Indian) allies. There were also slave risings on Jamaica in 1742, 1760, 1765 and 1776, Montserrat in 1768, and Tobago in the early 1770s; and this is not an exhaustive list. Circumstances, however, did not favour slave risings, as the whites limited the availability of firearms to slaves and made efforts to prevent them plotting (Mullin, 1994). Indeed, slaves were unable to coordinate action, except in very small areas. In Pensacola in West Florida, which was under British rule from 1763 until regained by Spain in 1781, no slave was allowed out without his owner's written permission, and meetings of more than six slaves were forbidden after 9pm (Rea, 1987). Those plotting what was to be known as Gabriel's conspiracy in Richmond in 1800 had first to consider how to acquire guns, horses and swords. In the event, the plan was betrayed by other blacks before the rising could take place (Egerton, 1997; Sidbury, 1997).

Flight was a more common form of resistance. It led, in Jamaica, to unsuccessful expeditions by British forces against the Maroons – runaway slaves who controlled much of the mountainous

interior – the failure of which were followed in 1738 and 1739 by treaties that granted them land and autonomy. In Brazil there were organized communities of fugitive slaves. *The Briton*, a London newspaper, in its issue of 11 December 1762, argued that gaining St Augustine in Florida from Spain would prevent ‘the desertion of our Negro slaves’ from Georgia. Further north, slaves fled to the Dismal Swamp on the Virginia–North Carolina border. As Beckles and Watson show in Chapter 21, slaves who did not flee could also engage in social protest and labour bargaining, matching points made about the degree of peasant autonomy in Europe (see Root, 1987; te Brake, 1998).

The circumstances of slave life varied greatly (Soulodre-La France, 2001), with important consequences for the slave trade. So far as British America was concerned, owing to the varied demands of tobacco and rice cultivation, and to related economic and social characteristics, slaves in the Chesapeake were more affected by white lifestyles, living in close proximity to owners in relatively small farms, whereas in the rice lands of South Carolina there were fewer, but larger, plantations, the percentage of slaves was greater, and the higher death-rate ensured that there were more imported African slaves compared with the American-born slaves who were more important in the Chesapeake. As a consequence, in South Carolina, slaves were more autonomous and more influenced by African culture and material life, and relations between slaves and whites remained more antipathetical than in locations where they lived in closer proximity (Morgan, 1998), although it is not easy to assess slave attitudes. The slave situation in Jamaica, where slaves were also treated harshly, was more similar to South Carolina than to the Chesapeake;⁵ among both slaves and whites in Jamaica, the majority were immigrants. Jamaica’s economy is considered by Burnard (Chapter 12), while the perspective of an individual plantation is offered by Mason in Chapter 11.

The treatment of slaves was related to the racism of the period. Racist attitudes were far from restricted to only the unlearned. Religious and biological explanations of apparent differences between races, whose genesis was traced back to the sons of Adam, with blacks as the children of the cursed Ham, played a significant role. Influential writers argued in favour of polygenism – the different creation of types of humans. This led to suggestions that blacks were not only a different species, but also related to great apes, such as orangutans. This was linked to the argument that, although blacks were inherently inferior, they were particularly adapted to living in the tropics. Physical attributes, particularly skin colour, attracted much attention. Montesquieu and Buffon explained colour as a consequence of exposure to the tropical sun. Blacks’ ability to cope better than whites with diseases in the tropics was held to exemplify an inherent difference that was linked to a closeness to animals that lived there. All this was held to justify slavery. Conversely, the argument that bile was responsible for the colour of human skin, advanced as a scientific fact by ancient writers, was repeated without experimental support by eminent eighteenth-century scientists, including Buffon, Feijoo, d’Holbach and La Mettrie. An Italian scientist, Bernardo Albinus, proved to his own satisfaction in 1737 that Negro bile was black, and in 1741 a French doctor, Pierre Barrère, published experiments demonstrating both this and that the bile alone caused the black pigment in Negro skin. This inaccurate theory won widespread acclaim, in part thanks to an extensive review in the *Journal des Savants* in 1742, and played a major role in the prevalent mid-century belief that blacks were another species of man without the ordinary organs, tissues, heart and soul. In 1765, as G.S. Rousseau shows in Chapter 22, the chief doctor in the leading hospital in Rouen, Claude Nicolas Le Cat, demonstrated that Barrère’s theory was wrong, but he was generally

ignored and Barrère's arguments continued to be cited favourably. They accorded with a hierarchical classification of humanity that served the interests of the slave trade.

The combination of these views with economic interest helped ensure that the cause of freedom in the case of American liberty did not extend to the slaves. Dedicated to the most prominent French radical, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the third edition of Thomas Day's *The Dying Negro* criticized the American Patriots for supporting slavery, a theme he returned to in his *Reflections on the Present State of England and the Independence of America* (1782). The Hessian soldiers sent to fight the Americans felt that the American treatment of their slaves formed a hypocritical contrast with their claims of the equality of man.

Alongside the continuation of slavery, there was also much harsh treatment of other workers that led to comparisons with slavery. Travelling from Füssen in Bavaria to Innsbruck in Austria in 1787, Adam Walker wrote of the women he saw, 'I sincerely pity them, they are such slaves as I have heard the Negroes in the West Indies described. No uncommon sight to see them threshing corn, driving wagons, hoeing turnips, mending the highways' (Walker, 1790, p. 108). Yet, it would not have benefited the slaves to know that they were part of a more dynamic economic system in which consumerism, capital accumulation and investment in industrialization were all linked (Austen and Smith, 1990). For example, profits accumulated in Glasgow from sugar and tobacco trading helped fund the development of the chemical industry in west-central Scotland, and also increased the liquidity of Scottish banks.

Notes

- 1 Evelyn journal, London, British Library, Evelyn papers, vol. 49, fol. 37.
- 2 For the French equivalent see Lemesle (1998).
- 3 See Harris (2002) for an account of a French ship that in 1731–32 sailed from Vannes to Africa and then to Martinique before returning to Vannes.
- 4 For resistance, including both action against African slave hunters and against Westerners, the latter extending to risings on slave ships, see Diouf (2003).
- 5 For a comparative study see Klein (1967).

References

- Austen, R. (1975), 'Dutch Trading Voyages to Cameroon, 1721–1759: European Documents and African History', *Annales de la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines, Université de Yaounde*, **6**, pp. 5–27.
- Austen, R.A. and Smith, W.D. (1990), 'Private Tooth Decay as Public Economic Virtue: The Slave-Sugar Triangle, Consumerism, and European Industrialization', *Social Science History*, **14**, pp. 95–115.
- Banks, K. (2005), 'The Illicit Slave-Trade out of Martinique, 1718–1756', in P.A. Coclanis, *The Atlantic Economy during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Organization, Operation, Practice, and Personnel*, Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press.
- Bergad, L.W. (1999), *Slavery and the Demographic and Economic History of Minas Gerais, 1720–1888*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brooks, G.E. (2003), *Eurafricans in Western Africa: Commerce, Social Status, Gender, and Religious Observance from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, Athens, OH/Oxford: Ohio University Press/James Currey.
- Butel, P. (1974), *Les négociants bordelais, l'Europe et les îles au XVIIIe siècle*, Paris: Calman Lévy.

- Clark, J. (1981), *La Rochelle and the Atlantic Economy during the Eighteenth Century*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Cohen, W.B. (1980), *The French Encounter with Africans: White Response to Blacks, 1530–1888*, Bloomington, IA: University of Indiana Press.
- Coughtry, J. (1981), *The Notorious Triangle: Rhode Island and the African Slave Trade, 1700–1807*, Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Curtin, P.D. (1969), *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census*, Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Damon, R. (2004), *Joseph Crassous de Médeuil: 1741–1793, marchand, officier de la Marine royale et négrier*, Paris: Karthala.
- Daudin, G. (2002), 'Comment calculer les profits de la traite', *Outre-Mers*, **89**, pp. 43–62.
- Debien, G. (1974), *Les Esclaves aux Antilles Française (XVII–XVIII siècles)*, Basse-Terre, Guadeloupe: Société d'histoire de Guadeloupe.
- Diouf, S.A. (ed.) (2003), *Fighting the Slave Trade: West African Strategies*, Athens, OH: Ohio University Press.
- Dupâquier, J. (ed.) (1988), *Histoire de la population française, II: De la Renaissance à 1789*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Egerton, D.R. (1997), *Gabriel's Rebellion: The Virginia Slave Conspiracies of 1800 and 1802*, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- Elder, M. (1992), *The Slave Trade and the Economic Development of Eighteenth-Century Lancaster*, Halifax: Ryburn Publications.
- Fynn, J.K. (1971), *Asante and its Neighbours, 1700–1807*, London: Longman.
- Goslinga, C.C. (1985), *The Dutch in the Caribbean and in the Guianas 1680–1791*, Assen: Van Gorcum.
- Green-Pedersen, S.E. (1971), 'The Scope and Structure of the Danish Negro Slave Trade', *Scandinavian Economic History Review*, **19**, pp. 149–74.
- Harris, R. (2002), *The Diligent: A Voyage through the Worlds of the Slave Trade*, New York: Basic Books.
- Inikori, J.E. (2002), *Africans and the Industrial Revolution in England: A Study in International Trade and Economic Development*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Klein, H.S. (1967), *Slavery in the Americas: A Comparative Study of Virginia and Cuba*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Law, R. (1977), *The Oyo Empire c. 1600–c.1836: A West African Imperialism in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Lemesle, R. (1998), *Le Commerce colonial triangulaire: XVIIIe–XIXe siècles*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Lovejoy, P.E. (1982), 'The Volume of the Atlantic Slave Trade: A Synthesis', *Journal of African History*, **23**, pp. 473–501.
- Mark, P. (2002), *'Portuguese' Style and Luso-African Identity: Precolonial Senegambia, Sixteenth–Nineteenth Centuries*, Bloomington, IA: University of Indiana Press.
- Martin, G. (1931), *Nantesau XVIII^e siècle: L'ère des négriers, 1714–1774*, Paris.
- Miller, J.C. (1988), *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730–1830*, Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Miller, J.C. (1991), 'A Marginal Institution on the Margin of the Atlantic System: The Portuguese Southern Atlantic Trade in the Eighteenth Century', in B.L. Solow (ed.), *Slavery and the Rise of the Atlantic System*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 120–50.
- Morgan, P.D. (1998), *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry*, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- Mullin, M. (1994), *Africa in America: Slave Acculturation and Resistance in the American South and the British Caribbean, 1736–1831*, Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- O'Shaughnessy, A.J. (2000), *An Empire Divided. The American Revolution and the British Caribbean*, Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Palmer, C.A. (1981), *Human Cargoes: The British Slave Trade to Spanish America, 1700–1739*, Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Postma, J.M. (1990), *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trades*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Rea, R.R. (1987), 'Urban Problems and Responses in British Pensacola', *Gulf Coast Historical Review*, 3, p. 56.
- Richardson, D. (ed.) (1987), *Bristol, Africa and the Eighteenth-Century Slave Trade to America. Volume II: The Years of Ascendancy, 1730–1745*, Gloucester: Bristol Records Society.
- Richardson, D. (1998), 'The British Empire and the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1660–1807', in P.J. Marshall (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire. Volume II: The Eighteenth Century*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Robert, H. (1949), 'Les traffics coloniaux du port de La Rochelle au XVIIIe siècle, 1713–1789', *Bulletin de la Société des Antiquaires de l'Ouest*, pp. 135–79.
- Roman, A. (2001), *Saint-Malo au temps des négriers*, Paris: Karthala.
- Root, H.L. (1987), *Peasants and King in Burgundy: Agrarian Foundations of French Absolutism*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Saugéra, E. (1995), *Bordeaux port négrier. XVIIIe–XIXe siècles. Chronologie, économie, idéologie*, Paris/Biarritz: Karthala/Atlantica.
- Searing, J.F. (1993), *West African Slavery and Atlantic Commerce. The Senegal River Valley, 1700–1860*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Shammas, C. (1984), 'The Eighteenth-century English Diet and Economic Change', *Explorations in Economic History*, 21, pp. 254–69.
- Sidbury, J. (1997), *Ploughshares into Swords: Race, Rebellion, and Identity in Gabriel's Virginia, 1730–1810*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Soulodre-La France, R. (2001), 'Socially Not So Dead! Slave Identities in Bourbon Nueva Granada', *Colonial Latin American Review*, 10(1), pp. 87–103.
- Stein, R.L. (1979), *The French Slave Trade in the Eighteenth Century: An Old Regime Business*, Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Tarrade, J. (1972), *Le Commerce colonial de la France à la fin de l'Ancien Régime*, Volume II, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Tattersfield, N. (1991), *The Forgotten Trade, Comprising the Log of the Daniel and Henry of 1700 and Accounts of the Slave Trade from the Minor Ports of England, 1698–1725*, London: Jonathan Cape.
- te Brake, W. (1998), *Shaping History. Ordinary People in European Politics, 1500–1700*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Thornton, J. (1983), *The Kingdom of Kongo: Civil War and Transition, 1641–1718*, Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Vergier, P. (1968), *Flux et reflux de la traite des nègres entre le golfe de Benin et Bahia de Todos os Santos du 17e et 18e siècles*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Voltaire (1759), *Candide*, traduit de l'Allemand de M. le Docteur Ralph.
- Walker, A. (1790), *Ideas Suggested on the Spot in a Late Excursion*, London.
- Wright, D.R. (1997), *The World and a Very Small Place in Africa*, Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.
- Yacou, A. (2001), *Journaux de bord et de traite de Joseph Crassous de Médeuil: de La Rochelle à la côte de Guinée et aux Antilles, 1772–1776*, Paris: Karthala.

[1]

SLAVE EXPORTS FROM WEST AND WEST-CENTRAL AFRICA, 1700-1810: NEW ESTIMATES OF VOLUME AND DISTRIBUTION*

BY DAVID RICHARDSON

DURING the past two decades historians have made major advances in reconstructing the volume and coastal distribution of slave exports by American and European traders from the west coast of Africa during the eighteenth century. The initial breakthrough occurred in 1969 with the publication of Curtin's census, which not only revised downward previous assumptions about the level of the trade during the four centuries of the Atlantic slave trade's existence but also attempted for the first time to establish systematically the coastal distribution of exports for certain periods.¹ Based primarily on published sources of evidence, Curtin's estimates of volume and distribution were necessarily provisional and in part at least were designed to encourage fresh archival work on such matters in order to produce a sounder statistical framework for analysis of the trade and its impact on Africa. In this respect it has succeeded admirably, for since their publication in 1969, the figures proposed in the census have been subject to considerable scrutiny and revision, almost all of it grounded on the discovery and analysis of new archival sources. Much of this work has been concentrated on the eighteenth century, when by all accounts the volume of the trade was at its peak. As a result, there are now fairly firmly based estimates of the level of the eighteenth-century slave trades of each of the various national groups in Europe and America that participated in this business.

The fruits of this collective research and revisionist effort were synthesized in 1982 by Lovejoy in a paper published in this *Journal*; the findings of this paper were subsequently incorporated in a book-length study by the same author on Africa and slavery.² Accepting that Curtin's original global estimates of the trade were too low, Lovejoy's synthesis concluded nevertheless that the various revisions of national levels of slaving, some of which were significant and many of which had already been accepted by Curtin, tended to cancel each other out, producing a new total that fell well within Curtin's own margins of error. Thus, according to Lovejoy's calculations, Curtin's original estimate of slave imports into America and the Atlantic Basin between 1451 and 1867 was only about 2 per cent lower than the figure implied by later research.³ Furthermore, during the peak years of the trade from 1701 to 1810, when perhaps over half the slaves exported from Africa to America reached the New World, Curtin, on Lovejoy's figures, actually overstated American slave

* This article was completed while the author was a Ford Foundation Visiting Scholar, at the W. E. B. DuBois Institute, Harvard. It was first presented at the International Congress on Slavery, held in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in June 1988. Stanley Engerman's comments on an earlier draft are gratefully acknowledged.

¹ Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: a Census* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1969).

² Paul E. Lovejoy, 'The volume of the Atlantic slave trade: a synthesis', *J. Afr. Hist.*, xxiii (1982), 473-501; Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery* (Cambridge, 1983).

³ Lovejoy, 'Volume', 497.

imports from Africa by some 314,000 or about 5.5 per cent. Rather than substantially revising Curtin's original figures, recent work seems, therefore, on Lovejoy's reckoning largely to have confirmed them.

As with any overview of work in a rapidly developing field of research, Lovejoy's synthesis contains a number of apparent deficiencies, particularly with regard to the volume and distribution of the trade in the eighteenth century. Perusal of his sources of data for this period reveals, for instance, that he relies for his estimates of British trade during the first half of the eighteenth century on Curtin's own original figures despite the fact that these have been subject to some criticism from the point of view of both the volume of trade and coastal distribution they suggest.⁴ Curtin's assignment of quite substantial levels of slave exports to the region he defines as the 'Windward Coast' between Cape Mount and Assini has also been the subject of major criticism, and though Lovejoy acknowledges this,⁵ his method of dealing with it is somewhat arbitrary and surprisingly fails to incorporate new findings on the slave trade of Nantes, the major eighteenth-century French slaving port, which were available to him at the time of writing his synthesis.⁶

There remains, therefore, much scope for further refinement of estimates of the volume and distribution of the slave exports from West and West-Central Africa in the eighteenth century. The purpose of this paper is to re-evaluate the scale and pattern of the trade in the period from 1700 to 1810 in the light of new evidence regarding the British, French and North American trades to Africa during these years. In view of the fact that the British and French were two of the largest slave-trading nations in the eighteenth century, with the British alone being responsible for perhaps as many as a half of all the slaves shipped from the west coast of Africa in the century or so after 1700, such evidence is particularly significant. On the whole, it suggests that Lovejoy's re-estimate of the overall volume of the trade in this period is perhaps reasonably accurate but that his assessment of both the temporal and coastal distributions of the trade needs to be modified in several important ways. These modifications may have, in turn, significant implications for our understanding of the burdens of the trade on individual regions, price trends for slaves, and the pattern of European and North American slave trading at the coast.

I

Since the publication of Lovejoy's synthesis, no significant bodies of new data regarding the volume of the Danish, Dutch or Portuguese slave trades have appeared. However, new evidence regarding the British, French and North American slave trades has been published. This evidence modifies in important ways our current understanding of the distribution of the trade over the

⁴ Joseph E. Inikori, 'Measuring the Atlantic slave trade: an assessment of Curtin and Anstey', *J. Afr. Hist.*, xvii (1976), 197-223; Joseph E. Inikori, 'Measuring the Atlantic slave trade', *J. Afr. Hist.*, xvii (1976), 607-27; Adam Jones and Marion Johnson, 'Slaves from the Windward Coast', *J. Afr. Hist.*, xxi (1980), 17-34.

⁵ Lovejoy, 'Volume', 485.

⁶ Jean Mettas, *Répertoire des expéditions négrières françaises au XVIII^e siècle*, Tome 1: Nantes, ed. Serge Daget (Paris, 1978). A second volume of Mettas' material covering ports other than Nantes was published in 1984 and was edited by Serge and Michèle Daget.

NEW ESTIMATES OF SLAVE EXPORTS

3

Table 1. *British slave exports from the west coast of Africa, 1700-1807, by decades*

Decade	Slave exports
1700-9	150,000
1710-19	201,000
1720-9	269,000
1730-9	276,000
1740-9	195,000
1750-9	251,000
1760-9	391,000
1770-9	340,000
1780-9	349,000
1790-9	417,000
1800-7	281,000

Source: David Richardson, 'The eighteenth-century British slave trade: estimates of its volume and distribution', *Research in Economic History*, XII (1988), forthcoming. The figures presented here for 1710-39 are higher than those to be published in the paper mentioned. This reflects the discovery that a significant amount of British exports to Africa in the two decades after 1713 were shipped by way of Madeira. Estimates of slave shipments from Africa have accordingly been amended to take account of this. Figures for exports to Madeira were derived from PRO CUSTOMS 3. All figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand; as a result, totals in this table differ slightly from those suggested by Table 5.

eighteenth century. Quantitatively, the most significant amendments to our current picture of the volume of the trade stem from my own estimates of the British slave trade between 1700 and 1807. These estimates are shortly to be published elsewhere,⁷ and a detailed discussion of the sources upon which they are based is therefore unnecessary here. It should be noted, however, that whereas previous amendments to Curtin's estimates of the British trade relate primarily to the period after 1761, mine cover the whole eighteenth century. Furthermore, unlike Curtin's figures for the first half of the century, which derived from projections based on data regarding cash crop exports from the slave colonies in America, my estimates of British slave exports from Africa rest throughout the century on shipping data, generally accepted as the most reliable basis for such calculations. My findings on the volume of the British slave trade between 1700 and 1807 are summarized in Table 1. According to this table, the British exported from the west coast of Africa some 3,120,000 slaves during the century or so after 1700. This is some 342,700 or 12.3 per cent more than Lovejoy estimated. This relatively modest upward revision of Lovejoy's findings disguises some striking differences in decadal estimates of the trade. In three decades - the 1740s, 1780s and 1790s - my estimates are lower than Lovejoy's, in the 1740s by some 23 per cent, while in the remaining eight decades my estimates are higher, in some instances by substantial proportions. For example, my estimate of the level of British trade in the 1770s

⁷ David Richardson, 'The eighteenth-century British slave trade: estimates of its volume and distribution', *Research in Economic History*, XII (1988).

Table 2. French slave exports from the west coast of Africa, 1700-1809, by decades

Decade	Slave exports
1700-9	30,000
1710-19	52,000
1720-9	77,000
1730-9	93,000
1740-9	129,000
1750-9	93,000
1760-9	130,000
1770-9	152,000
1780-9	224,000
1790-9	67,000
1800-9	5,000

Source: 1700-9, based on P. D. Curtin, *The Atlantic slave trade: a census* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1969), 211; 1800-9, based on Roger Anstey, 'The slave trade of the continental powers, 1761-1807', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd series, xxx (1977), 264; all other decades, based on Jean Mettas, *Répertoire des expéditions négrières françaises au XVIII siècle*, 2 volumes, vol. 1 (Paris 1978), ed. Serge Daget, and vol. 2 (Paris, 1984), ed. Serge and Michèle Daget. All figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand; as a result, totals in this table differ slightly from those suggested by Table 6.

is some 34 per cent greater than Lovejoy's, and my estimate for the 1720s is almost 90 per cent greater. Overall, it appears that Lovejoy's figures underestimate significantly the numbers of slaves carried from Africa by British ships in the first three quarters of the eighteenth century, and overestimate them during the final quarter-century before the trade's abolition in 1807.

Historians working on the eighteenth-century French slave trade owe an enormous debt to the late Jean Mettas whose collection of material on French slaving voyages between 1700 and 1793 has recently been published under the editorship of Serge and Michèle Daget.⁸ A compendium of the known slaving voyages outfitted in French ports in this period, Mettas' data are the most comprehensive and detailed to have been published to date, and supersede the data found in the older works of Gaston Martin and Dieudonné Rinchon upon which Curtin relied as well as the more recent studies of Robert Stein upon which Lovejoy essentially depended.⁹ Despite Mettas' work, evidence on French slaving during the first decade of the eighteenth century remains sparse, but information on ships clearing from French ports for Africa and on slave shipments per vessel is abundant for the period from 1710 to 1793. After the latter date, French slave trading seems to have largely collapsed for several decades. Estimates of French slave exports from the west coast of Africa based on Mettas' data are set out in Table 2. From these it appears that French slave shipments from this area of Africa totalled some 1,017,000 slaves between 1710

⁸ Mettas, *Répertoire*, vols. 1 and 2.

⁹ Robert L. Stein, *The French Slave Trade in the Eighteenth Century: an Old Regime Business* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1979). See also Stein's 'Measuring the French slave trade, 1713-1792/3', *J. Afr. Hist.*, xix (1978), 515-21.

and 1793. As with the British, French exports increased substantially over the century, rising from just over 52,000 in 1710-19 to 225,000 in 1780-9. Assuming shipments of a further 30,000 slaves during the first decade of the eighteenth century and 5,000 during the period from 1800 to 1809,¹⁰ French slave exports from the west coast of Africa thus totalled about 1,052,000 slaves between 1700 and 1809.

Lovejoy's reliance on Stein's work, which sub-divides the eighteenth century not into decades but into four unequal periods - 1713-44, 1748-55, 1763-77 and 1783-93 - and includes exports from East Africa in totals of slave shipments, makes it difficult to compare my estimate of French exports from the west coast of Africa with Lovejoy's total. Lovejoy's total for the French trade between 1700 and 1809 is some 1,185,000 slaves, or 12 per cent more than the figure for exports from the west coast of Africa suggested by Mettas' voyage data.¹¹ As indicated, Lovejoy's total includes slaves exported from East Africa whereas mine does not. French slaving activity at Madagascar and Mozambique during the eighteenth century was not insignificant, particularly during the decade after 1783. According to Stein, the authority upon whom Lovejoy relies, it may have totalled about 125,000 slaves during the century or so up to 1793.¹² Some of these were undoubtedly shipped to America, and should quite properly be included in the Atlantic slave trade. In Stein's view, however, most of them were probably sold at the French islands in the Indian Ocean. Strictly speaking, therefore, as an estimate of the eighteenth-century French Atlantic slave trade, Lovejoy's total is misleading; adjusting his figures to allow for the Indian Ocean trade reduces his total to about 1,060,000 slaves, a figure almost identical to the one implied by Mettas' data.

With regard to the slave-carrying activities of North American ships from West and West-Central Africa, estimates of the volume of this trade made by Curtin were confined essentially to the period from 1761 to 1810; Curtin calculated that North American slave exports from Africa during this period totalled almost 167,000 slaves.¹³ A significant revision was made to Curtin's original estimate by Anstey in 1975. According to Anstey's calculations, some 294,000 slaves were carried from Africa between 1761 and 1810 by North American ships, or 127,000 more than Curtin assumed.¹⁴ Anstey's new figures were incorporated by Lovejoy in his revised total of the whole Atlantic trade from 1701 to 1810; this total, it should be noted, excludes any allowance for

¹⁰ These were the figures assumed by Curtin, *Census*, 211 for 1701-10 and by Roger Anstey, 'The slave trade of the continental powers, 1760-1810', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd series, xxx (1977), 264, for 1801-10.

¹¹ For consistency I have added 5000 to Lovejoy's total for the French slave trade from 1701-93 in order to cover the period from 1794 to 1809. It should be noted that Lovejoy's estimate for the French trade in 1701-13 was 30,000 slaves; Lovejoy, 'Volume', 484.

¹² Stein, *Slave Trade*, 121.

¹³ Curtin, *Census*, 212. It should be noted that available literature largely ignores shipments of slaves from Africa by vessels owned and outfitted in Caribbean ports. I make no attempt to estimate this element in the trade either, but there are signs that in certain periods at least substantial numbers of ships may have embarked on slaving voyages to Africa from Caribbean islands such as Barbados; Elizabeth Donnan (ed.), *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America*, 4 volumes (Washington, D.C., 1930-5), II, 31-2.

¹⁴ Roger Anstey, 'The volume of the North American slave-carrying trade from Africa, 1761-1810', *Revue Française d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer*, LXII (1975), 47-66.

North American slave-carrying before 1761. In reaching his total for the North American portion of the trade, Anstey relied in part on partial shipping evidence, such as published clearance lists of ships for Africa from a number of North American ports and detailed information on North American slave imports into certain key markets, notably Havana from 1790 to 1810 and South Carolina from 1804 to 1807. In addition, he relied on projections of North American slave imports as a whole from 1790 to 1810 derived from an analysis of slave population trends by Fogel and Engerman and on assumptions about the proportion of such imports arriving in North American ships based on the pattern of imports into South Carolina in 1804-8.¹⁵ Given that Fogel and Engerman's projected total of North American slave imports of over 230,000 from 1790 to 1810 was much higher than previous estimates for these years, Anstey's adoption of their findings proved critical to the substantial upward revision in slave-carrying by North American ships that he produced.¹⁶

Computing North American slave exports from Africa from demographic trends in the United States raises several problems. Two points need to be noted here. First, in using Fogel and Engerman's figures, Anstey ignored the possibility of re-exports of slaves from the Caribbean islands to the North American mainland. He implicitly assumed therefore that all the slaves imported into North America after 1790 came directly from Africa. It is evident that some trans-shipment of slaves from the islands to the mainland had long existed before 1790;¹⁷ Anstey's neglect of the possibility that this continued in the period after 1790 may result in some double-counting of slave exports from Africa. Moreover, his approach fails to take into account the possibility of substantial movements of slaves from St Domingue to the mainland as French planters sought to escape from the revolution and war in the island after 1791.¹⁸ Second, given the deficiencies of eighteenth-century American slave population statistics, estimates of slave exports from Africa made on the basis of American demographic data are usually regarded as inferior to estimates derived from other sources, notably shipping records.¹⁹ In this respect, it is worth noting that major discrepancies exist between Fogel and Engerman's decadal projections of slave imports into North America for the twenty years after 1760 and import estimates for the same period based on

¹⁵ The Cuban data are to be found in Herbert S. Klein, 'The Cuban slave trade in a period of transition, 1790-1843', *Revue Française d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer*, LXII (1975), 72-3, 75; the South Carolina data in *Annals of Congress*, 16th Congress, 2nd Session, 1820-1, 73-8; and the projection of slave imports into North America in Robert W. Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, *Time on the Cross: the Economics of American Negro Slavery* (Boston, 1974), 24-5.

¹⁶ Anstey, 'North America', 63-4.

¹⁷ W. Robert Higgins, 'The geographical origins of Negro slaves in Colonial South Carolina', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, LXX (1971), 34-47; Herbert S. Klein, 'Slaves and shipping in eighteenth-century Virginia', *J. Interdisciplinary Hist.* v (1975), 383-412; Susan Westbury, 'Slaves of colonial Virginia: where they came from', *William and Mary Quarterly*, xxxii (1985), 228-37; Herbert S. Klein, 'New evidence on the Virginia slave trade', *J. Interdisciplinary Hist.* xvii (1987), 871-77. Based on material published in Walter Minchinton, Celia King and Peter Waite (eds), *Virginia Slave Trade Statistics* (Richmond, Virginia, 1984), Klein indicates that some 13.2 per cent of the slaves recorded as arriving in Virginian ports between 1727 and 1769 had come from the British West Indies or other colonies in North America.

¹⁸ Dunbar Rowland (ed.), *Official Letter Books of W. C. C. Claiborne, 1801-1816*, 6 volumes (Jackson, Mississippi, 1917), II, 245-6, 257.

¹⁹ Curtin, *Census*, 73, 139.

shipping data. According to Fogel and Engerman, North American slave imports totalled over 60,000 in the 1760s and about 15,000 in the 1770s. In contrast, slave imports, according to shipping data, were about 35,000 slaves in 1760-9 and about 42,000 in 1770-9.²⁰ Such radically different pictures of imports indicate that projections of slave imports based on population data may not only distort the distribution of slave imports through time but also be, in Curtin's words, 'a very bad indicator of the numbers imported'.²¹

Some of the difficulties surrounding estimation of the North American slave-carrying trade may be resolved by a recent study by Coughtry of the eighteenth-century Rhode Island slave trade.²² Following detailed archival research and relying solely on information regarding 'authenticated slaving voyages',²³ Coughtry estimated that Rhode Island merchants shipped some 106,500 slaves from Africa between 1709 and 1807. Of these slaves, he estimates that some 24,300 were shipped before 1760 and 80,200 in the remaining half century before the trade was outlawed by the federal authorities in 1808. Given that both Coughtry and Anstey accept that Rhode Island merchants were the most important single group of North American slave traders, Coughtry's findings reinforce the doubts about the reliability of Anstey's estimates of the North American carrying trade based on demographic projections. At the same time, however, provided one can establish Rhode Islanders' share of the North American slave trade, Coughtry's figures may offer a reasonable basis upon which to estimate its total volume. The issue to be resolved, then, is, what proportion of the slaves shipped from Africa in North American vessels was carried by the Rhode Island vessels included in Coughtry's study?

According to Coughtry, Rhode Island merchants 'soon surpassed Massachusetts as the chief colonial carrier' of slaves in the eighteenth century; by 1770, he claims, they controlled 70 per cent of the trade and, after the Revolution, held 'a virtual monopoly' of it.²⁴ Adopting such assumptions about Rhode Island's share of the traffic produces an estimated total North American slave-carrying trade of some 144,000 slaves between 1720 and 1809; this includes 43,000 before 1760, 46,000 between 1760 and 1779, and 55,000 between 1780 and 1809. Given that the projected totals before 1779 are relatively small and grounded on detailed investigation of shipping records, it seems reasonable to accept them as fairly reliable estimates of the North American slave-carrying trade before the Revolution. The projected total of 55,000 for the United States trade after 1780 is, however, more questionable,

²⁰ Fogel and Engerman, *Time on the Cross*, 25. My shipping-based estimates of slave imports are derived primarily from evidence relating to Georgia, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, South Carolina and Virginia. The main sources of data are PRO Colonial Office papers, Naval Office shipping lists; Minchinton, King and Waite (eds), *Virginia Slave Trade*; advertisements of slave sales in Georgia, South Carolina and Virginia listed in Donnan, *Documents*, IV, *passim*; Darold Wax, 'Negro imports into Pennsylvania, 1720-66', *Pennsylvania History*, xxxii (1965), 254-87; James G. Lydon, 'New York and the African slave trade, 1700-74', *William and Mary Quarterly*, xxxv (1978), 375-94; Westbury, 'Slaves of Virginia'; James F. Shepherd and Gary M. Walton, *Shipping, Maritime Trade and the Economic Development of Colonial North America* (Cambridge, 1972), 141-4.

²¹ Curtin, *Census*, 73.

²² Jay Coughtry, *The Notorious Triangle: Rhode Island and the African Slave Trade 1700-1807* (Philadelphia, 1981).

²³ *Ibid.* 25.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

not least because Rhode Island, in common with other New England states, sought to abolish slave-trading in the 1780s. Legislation by individual states against the slave trade was subsequently reinforced by federal legislation in 1794 and 1800.²⁵ For the period after 1783, therefore, it is difficult to accept uncritically Coughtry's general claim that the trends he identifies 'conform close to historical reality'.²⁶ It is, of course, commonly agreed that state and federal enactments against the trade were usually ineffective, but by encouraging traders 'to cover their tracks', as Anstey put it,²⁷ legislation almost certainly helped to reduce the amount of hard documented evidence about the trade. As Coughtry's study shows, substantial quantities of information about United States slaving voyages after 1783 can still be unearthed. It is apparent nonetheless that some post-revolutionary Rhode Island slaving voyages escaped Coughtry's attention.²⁸ Moreover, it is possible that the relative richness of surviving evidence regarding the involvement of Rhode Island ports in the trade during the two decades before 1808 reflected the influence exerted by slave merchants in those ports over local politics and trade administration more than their actual dominance of United States slaving.²⁹ Simply to compute the level of the North American slave-carrying trade on the basis of the figures compiled by Coughtry would almost certainly understate the United States slave trade between 1780 and 1810. An alternative method of estimating the trade in this period is therefore required.

One method of resolving this problem is to examine the slave trade of United States ships with certain major markets after 1783 and to calculate the contribution of the Rhode Island ships listed by Coughtry to such trade. Information for two such markets after 1783 is available. Research by Klein has yielded considerable amounts of data about slave deliveries by United States ships to Havana from 1790 onwards, while a detailed, though apparently incomplete, list of slave deliveries to South Carolina from 1 January 1804 to 31 December 1807 by American and other ships was presented to the United States Senate in 1820.³⁰ According to Klein's figures, 853 United States ships delivered slaves to Havana between 1790 and 1809. The numbers of slaves delivered per ship varied substantially, but, assuming that ships carrying 75 slaves or more were involved in transporting slaves from Africa, it appears that some 177 American ships delivered about 25,000 slaves to Havana directly from the coast between 1790 and 1809.³¹ Coughtry identifies only 90 Rhode

²⁵ William E. B. DuBois, *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade to the United States of America 1638-1870* (Milwood, New York, 1973 ed.), 80-5.

²⁶ Coughtry, *Notorious Triangle*, 26.

²⁷ Anstey, 'North America', 55.

²⁸ It appears that Coughtry's listing of ships (Coughtry, *Notorious Triangle*, appendix) does not include all the Rhode Island slavers listed by Donnan (*Documents*, iv, 504-22) as entering Charleston in 1804-7.

²⁹ For the influence of leading slave merchants such as the deWolfe family over the customs service at Bristol - the port which, on Coughtry's evidence, overshadowed Newport as Rhode Island's premier slaving centre from the mid-1790s onwards - see George Howe, *Mount Hope* (New York, 1959), 108-10.

³⁰ Klein, 'Cuban slave trade'; *Annals of Congress*, 16th Congress, 2nd Session, 1820-1, 73-8.

³¹ In using a minimum figure of 75 slaves per ship to identify United States ships arriving in Cuba directly from Africa, I differ from Klein, who defines direct shippers as those 'carrying over 200 slaves'. It is apparent that the average number of slaves delivered by Rhode Island ships from Africa was considerably lower than Klein's figure, and that many reached America with no more than 75 slaves; hence the use of this figure in my calculations.

NEW ESTIMATES OF SLAVE EXPORTS

9

Table 3. *The North American slave-carrying trade from the west coast of Africa, 1700-1809, by decades*

Decade	Slave exports
1700-9	—
1710-19	—
1720-9	2,000
1730-9	15,000
1740-9	9,000
1750-9	17,000
1760-9	28,000
1770-9	18,000
1780-9	12,000
1790-9	44,000
1800-9	63,000

Sources: see text. Totals are rounded to the nearest thousand. There was evidently some slave-carrying from Africa by North American vessels before 1720, but the numbers of shipments were apparently very small; see W. B. Weedon, 'The early African slave-trade in New England', *American Antiquarian Society Proceedings*, new series, v (1887-8), 112.

Island ships delivering approximately 11,000 slaves to Havana during the same period. On this reckoning, therefore, Coughtry's list accounts for only 44 per cent of United States ships that carried slaves from Africa to Havana in 1790-1809.³² Similar calculations reveal that ships listed in Coughtry accounted for a slightly smaller share of slave deliveries by American ships from Africa to Charleston in 1804-7, the figure on this occasion being 38 per cent. Since the great majority of the slaves shipped from Africa by American vessels after 1783 were by all accounts delivered to Cuba and the southern states of the United States, it appears from these findings that Coughtry's list of ships may cover no more than perhaps 40 per cent of United States vessels involved in carrying slaves from Africa in the period after the American Revolution. Accordingly, the totals for the Rhode Island slave trade after 1783 suggested by Coughtry's study may need to be inflated by 150 per cent in order to estimate the United States slave trade from West and West-Central Africa during the three decades after 1780. The global and decadal totals for the eighteenth-century North American slave-carrying trade that flow from this and earlier procedures are set out in Table 3.

These new estimates of the volume of the British, French and North American slave trades from West and West-Central Africa may be combined with existing estimates of the Portuguese, Dutch and Danish slave trades in order to produce global estimates of slave exports from the west coast of Africa in the period from 1700 to 1810. These global figures, broken down by decades, are set out in Table 4. From the table, it appears that between 1700 and 1809 some 6,686,000 slaves were shipped from West and West-Central Africa by European and North American traders. Lovejoy's total for the

³² There was also a trade in slaves in this period to ports in Cuba other than Havana, and American ships were probably involved in this. David R. Murray, *Odious Commerce* (Cambridge, 1980), 17-19.

10

DAVID RICHARDSON

Table 4. *Estimated total slave exports from the west coast of Africa, 1700-1809, by decades ('000s)*

Decade	British	French	Portuguese		Dutch	American	Danish	Total
			Angola	Mina				
1700-9	150·0	30·0	70·0	86·0	24·0	—	—	360·0
1710-19	201·0	52·0	59·0	67·0	24·0	—	—	403·0
1720-9	269·0	77·0	73·0	63·0	33·0	2·0	—	517·0
1730-9	276·0	93·0	116·0	49·0	48·0	15·0	4·0	601·0
1740-9	195·0	129·0	119·0	39·0	55·0	9·0	5·0	551·0
1750-9	251·0	93·0	131·0	34·0	51·0	17·0	5·0	582·0
1760-9	391·0	130·0	131·0	36·0	63·0	28·0	4·0	783·0
1770-9	340·0	152·0	131·0	30·0	40·0	18·0	7·0	718·0
1780-9	349·0	224·0	154·0	33·0	10·0	12·0	15·0	797·0
1790-9	417·0	67·0	168·0	53·0	4·0	44·0	8·0	761·0
1800-9	281·0	5·0	188·0	73·0	—	63·0	3·0	613·0
Totals	3,120·0	1,052·0	1,340·0	563·0	352·0	208·0	51·0	6,686·0

Sources: for the British, French and American figures see Tables 1, 2, and 3. For Portuguese exports from Mina, I relied on Patrick Manning, 'The slave trade in the Bight of Benin, 1640-1890', 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), 136-8. Manning in turn relied on Pierre Verger, *Flux et reflux de la traite des nègres entre le Golfe de Benin et Bahia de Todos os Santos du 17 et 18 siècles* (The Hague, 1968), 653-4, 666. As Verger's title suggests, his figures relate only to imports into Bahia rather than Brazil as a whole. The figures used here are therefore lower (by 7·5 per cent) than those used by Curtin (*Census*, 207) and based on Mauricio Goulart, *Escravidão Africana no Brasil* (Sao Paulo, 1950), 209-17. For Portuguese exports from Angola, which included Luanda and Benguela, I used Curtin's figures (*Census*, 207) for 1701-10, Herbert Klein's figures (*The Middle Passage* (Princeton, 1978), 27) for 1711-60, and Joseph Miller's figures ('Legal Portuguese slaving from Angola. Some preliminary indications of volume and direction, 1760-1830', *Revue Française d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer*, LXII (1975), 161) for 1761-1810. It should be noted that Miller's figures exclude slaves shipped by the Portuguese from Ambriz, Cabinde and the River Congo. They are also slightly lower than Klein's figures for the same period. None of the Portuguese sources used includes slaves shipped from Bissau and Cacheu on the northern Guinea coast; these were apparently relatively small but not insignificant (Curtin, *Census*, 208; Klein, *Middle Passage*, 44; Walter Rodney, *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast 1545-1800* (Oxford, 1970), 240-8). For Dutch exports I have used Johannes Postma, 'The origin of African slaves: the Dutch activities on the Guinea Coast, 1675-1795', in Stanley L. Engerman and Eugene D. Genovese (eds), *Race and Slavery in the Western Hemisphere* (Princeton, 1975), 49. For the Danish trade I relied solely on Svend E. Green-Pedersen, 'The history of the Danish negro slave trade, 1733-1807', *Revue Française d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer*, LXII (1975), 201; cf. Lovejoy, 'Synthesis', which used projections of Danish exports made by Anstey ('Continental powers', 267) for the period 1761-1800. It should be noted that no allowance is made in this table for slave shipments from Africa by vessels owned in the British Caribbean colonies. Due to rounding some of the totals in this table differ slightly from those suggested in the original sources and from those presented in Tables 5 to 7 below.

NEW ESTIMATES OF SLAVE EXPORTS

II

Atlantic slave trade for the same period is 6,750,000, or 64,000 higher. Allowing for the fact that Lovejoy's figure includes some East African slaves who were sold in the Indian Ocean, the two totals are almost identical. In view of the fact that my estimate of the British trade was almost 350,000 greater than Lovejoy's, this may appear surprising. However, my higher estimates for the British trade are largely counterbalanced by lower estimates for the French and North American trades than Lovejoy adopts. One result of this re-assessment of the trades of these three groups of carriers is that the British share of the trade in 1700 to 1809 rises from 44.8 per cent to 46.7 per cent.

It is also apparent from Table 4 that the level of slave exports grew substantially over the century, rising from about 36,000 a year in 1700-9 to a peak of almost 80,000 a year in the 1780s. This rise in the annual rate of exports is similar to that indicated by Lovejoy. Nevertheless, the general distribution of slave exports revealed in Table 4 differs significantly from that indicated by earlier research. Because Lovejoy's estimates of decadal exports are incomplete, a detailed comparison between his findings and mine is not possible, but it is evident that historians have tended to underestimate the level of slave exports from the west coast of Africa during most of the first three-quarters of the century, and to exaggerate the level of exports during the following quarter-century. As a result, whereas previous studies suggested that exports in the 1780s and 1790s were considerably higher than in the immediately preceding decades, it now seems that slave exports in the 1760s at least were only marginally below the level in the 1780s and were greater than in the 1790s. Overall, therefore, although the trade undoubtedly grew substantially during the course of the eighteenth century, it was rather more evenly distributed over the period than has generally been assumed.

II

As with the volume of the trade, there has been no new evidence since Lovejoy's synthesis to suggest a revision of our understanding of the coastal distribution in West and West-Central Africa of the Portuguese, Dutch and Danish slave trades. As research by Brazilian and other historians has demonstrated, the majority of the slaves carried by Portuguese ships to Portuguese America were loaded at the coasts of Angola and Benguela in West-Central Africa, with most of the rest being obtained at ports in the Bight of Benin.³³ Similarly, Postma's work has exposed the changing coastal distribution of eighteenth-century Dutch slaving activity, with its initial focus at the Bight of Benin and its later concentration at Angola, the Gold Coast and the Windward Coast,³⁴ while research by Norregaard and Green-Pedersen has indicated that the majority of the slaves carried by Danish ships were probably loaded at their

³³ Pierre Verger, *Flux et reflux de la traite des nègres entre le Golfe de Benin et Bahia de Todos os Santos du 17 et 18 siècles* (The Hague, 1968); Mauricio Goulart, *Escravidão Africana no Brasil* (Sao Paulo, 1950), 202-17; Herbert S. Klein, *The Middle Passage* (Princeton, 1978), 23-50; Joseph C. Miller, 'Legal Portuguese slaving from Angola. Some preliminary indications of volume and direction, 1760-1830', *Revue Française d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer*, LXII (1975), 135-76.

³⁴ Johannes Postma, 'The origins of African slaves: the Dutch activities on the Guinea Coast, 1675-1795', in Stanley L. Engerman and Eugene D. Genovese, *Race and Slavery in the Western Hemisphere* (Princeton, 1975), 33-49.

forts and trading factories at the Gold Coast and Bight of Benin.³⁵ On the whole, therefore, the coastal origins of Portuguese, Dutch and Danish slave exports from the west coast of Africa during the eighteenth century seem reasonably well established.

Whereas Curtin attempted in his *Census* to indicate the coastal origins of British and French eighteenth-century slave shipments and subsequent revisions by Anstey for the British trade after 1750,³⁶ the same cannot unfortunately be said for the British, French and North American slave trades. No attempt has been made, in fact, to estimate the coastal distribution of the North American trade, while estimates for the British trade before 1750 and the French trade throughout the century still rest on questionable evidence. In the case of the British trade, Curtin based his projections of the coastal origins of slave exports on the distribution of the Royal African Company's exports of trade goods to the coast and on lists of the intended African destinations of British ships for five separate years between 1752 and 1799; in the case of the French trade, he relied heavily on the trading destinations in Africa of eighteenth-century Nantes ships reported in the work of Gaston Martin.³⁷ A recent paper by Jones and Johnson has questioned the reliability of Gaston Martin's data on trading destinations, and indicated that a thorough review of the coastal origins of French slave shipments is needed.³⁸ With regard to the British trade, research by Anstey uncovered detailed annual clearance lists of ships in Board of Trade accounts as well as Parliamentary papers and has resulted in significant revisions of Curtin's findings for the second half of the century. Even so, estimates of the coastal distribution of British exports for the 1780s and 1800s still depend largely on projections from immediately adjacent decades, while Curtin's original calculations for the first half of the century, despite their flimsy base, remain as yet essentially unrevised.³⁹

In a paper to be published shortly, I use some new sources of shipping data in order to re-examine the coastal distribution of the British slave trade for 1700-49, 1780-9 and 1800-7.⁴⁰ By integrating these sources with those unearthed by Anstey it is thus possible to reconstruct the coastal origins of British slave exports from Africa for the whole eighteenth century on the basis of shipping evidence. The results are summarized in Table 5. Given the imperfections of shipping records for this period, it would be inappropriate to read too much into the precise estimates of the coastal distributions of trade set out in this table. It is also possible that these estimates exaggerate the level of

³⁵ Georg Norregaard, *Danish Settlements in West Africa, 1658-1850* (Boston, 1966); Svend E. Green-Pedersen, 'The scope and structure of the Danish negro slave trade', *Scandinavian Econ. Hist. Rev.*, XIX (1971), 147-97; Svend E. Green-Pedersen, 'The history of the Danish negro slave trade, 1733-1807', *Revue Française d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer*, LXII (1975), 196-220.

³⁶ Curtin, *Census*, 149-53, 163-203; Roger Anstey, 'The volume and profitability of the British slave trade, 1761-1807', in Engerman and Genovese (eds), *Race and Slavery*, 12-14.

³⁷ For the French trade in the second half of the eighteenth century, Curtin also used evidence about the African origins of slaves in the French Caribbean compiled by George Debien and other researchers. Curtin, *Census*, 183-203.

³⁸ Jones and Johnson, 'Windward Coast'.

³⁹ Curtin largely accepted Anstey's findings, though he proposed a different distribution of exports in the 1780s. Philip D. Curtin, 'Measuring the Atlantic Slave trade', in Engerman and Genovese (eds), *Race and Slavery*, 107-28.

⁴⁰ Richardson, 'Volume'.

NEW ESTIMATES OF SLAVE EXPORTS

13

Table 5. *The regional distribution of British slave exports from the west coast of Africa, 1700-1807, by decades*

Decade	Senegambia	Sierra Leone	Gold Coast	Bight of Benin	Bight of Biafra	West-Central Africa
1700-9	18,150 (12.1)	33,900 (22.6)	27,600 (18.4)	17,550 (11.7)	19,350 (12.9)	33,600 (22.4)
1710-19	29,150 (14.5)	5,230 (2.6)	35,180 (17.5)	20,900 (10.4)	44,820 (22.3)	65,730 (32.7)
1720-9	39,000 (14.5)	6,990 (2.6)	47,080 (17.5)	27,980 (10.4)	59,990 (22.3)	87,960 (32.7)
1730-9	39,880 (14.5)	7,150 (2.6)	48,130 (17.5)	28,600 (10.4)	61,330 (22.3)	89,930 (32.7)
1740-9	18,680 (9.6)	7,200 (3.7)	43,200 (22.2)	15,180 (7.8)	75,880 (39.0)	34,240 (17.6)
1750-9	16,590 (6.6)	47,250 (18.8)	27,900 (11.1)	18,350 (7.3)	104,050 (41.4)	36,190 (14.4)
1760-9	16,430 (4.2)	125,590 (32.1)	32,860 (8.4)	35,600 (9.1)	134,980 (34.5)	45,780 (11.7)
1770-9	10,190 (3.0)	103,580 (30.5)	27,850 (8.2)	34,300 (10.1)	151,120 (44.5)	12,230 (3.6)
1780-9	350 (0.1)	53,100 (15.2)	31,090 (8.9)	25,500 (7.3)	211,000 (60.4)	25,150 (7.2)
1790-9	2,920 (0.7)	50,850 (12.2)	57,520 (13.8)	7,090 (1.7)	170,070 (40.8)	128,390 (30.8)
1800-7	2,250 (0.8)	42,970 (15.3)	30,050 (10.7)	2,250 (0.8)	123,000 (43.8)	80,320 (28.6)
Totals	193,590 (6.2)	483,810 (15.5)	408,460 (13.1)	233,300 (7.5)	1,155,590 (37.1)	639,520 (20.5)

Note: figures in brackets refer to percentage shares of exports.

Source: Richardson, 'Volume and distribution'.

British trade with Senegambia in the early part of the century. Nevertheless, the broad trends in the pattern of British trade depicted in Table 5 are reasonably clear, and modify in significant ways the picture presented by Curtin and Anstey. Specifically, it appears that the level of British trade with the Bight of Benin was probably much smaller than they suggested, while trade at the Bight of Biafra and Angola was much greater than they assumed. The discovery that British trade at the Bight of Biafra was substantial from the beginning of the eighteenth century is particularly striking, and confirms Northrup's suggestion that Curtin underestimated British trade in this region in the early part of the century.⁴¹ Overall, about 40 per cent of the slaves

⁴¹ David Northrup, *Trade without Rulers: Pre-Colonial Economic Development in South-Eastern Nigeria* (Oxford, 1978), 54. There is also evidence of English trading in slaves at Old Calabar in 1685-92. See David Buisseret, 'Slaves arriving in Jamaica, 1684-92', *Revue Française d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer*, LXIV (1977), 85-8.

Table 6. *The regional distribution of French slave exports from the west coast of Africa, 1700-1799, by decades^a*

Decade	Sene- gambia	Sierra Leone	Gold Coast	Bight of Benin	Bight of Biafra	West- Central Africa
1700-9 ^b	4,080 (13·6)	660 (2·2)	—	18,840 (62·8)	3,780 (12·6)	2,610 (8·7)
1710-19	7,110 (13·6)	1,150 (2·2)	—	32,840 (62·8)	6,590 (12·6)	4,550 (8·7)
1720-9	12,860 (16·7)	1,460 (1·9)	390 (0·5)	48,200 (62·6)	—	14,090 (18·3)
1730-9	12,330 (13·3)	2,500 (2·7)	8,340 (9·0)	46,540 (50·2)	930 (1·0)	22,060 (23·8)
1740-9	13,320 (10·3)	6,080 (4·7)	20,560 (15·9)	40,600 (31·4)	910 (0·7)	47,970 (37·1)
1750-9	7,840 (8·4)	5,780 (6·2)	3,360 (3·6)	31,260 (33·5)	2,050 (2·2)	42,920 (46·0)
1760-9	1,820 (1·4)	12,600 (9·7)	9,090 (7·0)	24,160 (18·6)	7,660 (5·9)	74,690 (57·5)
1770-9	8,210 (5·4)	2,890 (1·9)	6,540 (4·3)	43,350 (28·5)	9,280 (6·1)	81,980 (53·9)
1780-9	11,890 (5·3)	12,340 (5·5)	14,140 (6·3)	54,980 (24·5)	14,360 (6·4)	116,460 (51·9)
1790-9	4,400 (6·6)	3,270 (4·9)	2,730 (4·1)	10,470 (15·7)	11,670 (17·5)	34,080 (51·1)
Totals	83,860 (8·0)	48,730 (4·7)	65,150 (6·2)	351,240 (33·5)	57,230 (5·5)	441,410 (42·1)

Note: figures in brackets refer to percentage shares of exports.

^a No attempt was made to apportion slaves in 1800-9. All estimates are based on recorded shipments of slaves; where the loading of a ship is not given, I assumed it loaded the average number of slaves loaded in same region and decade. Slaves whose origins are unrecorded have been distributed on the basis of the overall regional pattern of exports in the appropriate decade.

^b The distribution pattern in this decade is assumed to have been the same as that in the following decade.

Sources: Mettas, *Répertoire*, ed. Daget, vol. 1 and 2.

carried from the west coast of Africa by British ships between 1700 and 1807 were loaded in the Bight of Biafra, with a further 20 per cent being loaded in Angola.

The recent publication of Mettas' voyage data makes it possible to compile new estimates of the coastal distribution of the French slave trade during the eighteenth century. These are set out in Table 6. As anticipated by Jones and Johnson, French slaving activity at the Windward Coast was, according to Mettas' figures, much smaller than Curtin indicated. In general terms, it appears that the majority of the slaves shipped by French vessels from the west

coast of Africa came during the early decades of the eighteenth century from the Bight of Benin and from the 1740s onwards from Angola. Interestingly, unlike the British, French traders seem to have acquired relatively few slaves from the Bight of Biafra during the eighteenth century.

Compared to the coastal distribution of slave exports of other traders, that of North American slave carriers has received very little attention. Neither Curtin nor Anstey attempted to discuss the coastal origins of slaves shipped by North American vessels. Similarly, Coughtry's recent study fails to investigate in any systematic way the distribution of Rhode Island trading activity on the African coast. The apparent lack of detailed clearance lists of ships from North American ports for Africa for most of the eighteenth century and the fact that, after 1783, much of American slaving activity was technically illegal and therefore 'invisible', may go some way towards explaining this neglect.

Although the paucity of evidence makes it unlikely that historians will be able to estimate with great confidence the coastal distribution of the North American slave trade, it is still possible to offer some estimates of the coastal origins of North American slave shipments for certain periods and to project the pattern of shipments for other years on the basis of these. The most abundant evidence found to date relates to the period just prior the federal abolition of the United States slave trade in 1808. Thus scattered information for some 85 American slavers in newspapers from South Carolina and elsewhere shows that in 1804-7 just over a third of American ships traded at this time at Sierra Leone, just under a quarter at Senegambia, and a fifth each at the Gold Coast and at Angola in West-Central Africa.⁴² On this evidence, North American merchants neglected trade at the Bight of Benin and the Bight of Biafra during the first decade of the nineteenth century, preferring instead to purchase their slaves for the most part on the more westerly stretches of the coast. In this respect, the general distribution of their trade at this time differed substantially from that of other major slave-trading nations such as the British and Portuguese.

Whether or not the distribution of American trade in earlier periods was similar to that in 1804-7 is unclear. There is, as yet, little evidence of any significant American trade with West-Central Africa before this time. However, it is claimed by Curtin that North American traders were 'especially active' in Senegambia from the late 1780s through to the legal abolition of the trade in 1808, though he is unable to quantify the scale of the trade.⁴³ Furthermore, there are indications that American ships were regular visitors to the Gold Coast, Windward Coast and Sierra Leone during most of the second half of the eighteenth century. For instance, a report from Jamaica in 1787 suggested that 'trade both to the Gold and Windward coasts of Africa, is carried on with vigour from Charleston, South Carolina, altho' on a contracted scale, the vessels being now smaller than usual'.⁴⁴ Such suggestions are supported by other evidence at this time.⁴⁵ Similarly, in his recent study, Coughtry argues that the forts of the Gold Coast were 'the most frequently

⁴² Based on *Annals of Congress*, 16th Congress, 2nd Session, 1820-1, 73-8 and customs and other data in Donnan (ed.), *Documents*, IV, 504-22.

⁴³ Philip D. Curtin, *Economic Change in Pre-Colonial Africa: Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1975), 161.

⁴⁴ Donnan (ed.), *Documents*, IV, 490n.

⁴⁵ PRO C 107/14, 18 December 1791, Thomas Walker to James Rogers.

designated destination' for Rhode Island ships, New England rum being traded with British officials at the forts for slaves.⁴⁶ Coughtry fails unfortunately to try to specify what proportion of their slaves Rhode Island ships procured in this way, but a comparison of estimates of North American clearances for Africa with recorded shipments of slaves from the Gold Coast in 1755-68 and 1775 indicates that a third of North American trade was perhaps focused on the Gold Coast during the third quarter of the eighteenth century.⁴⁷ Sadly, the coastal destinations of the remaining North American ships during these years are as yet unknown, but given the relatively small size of North American slave ships one is inclined to assume that most purchased their slaves either in Senegambia or in Sierra Leone and the Windward Coast.⁴⁸

In estimating the coastal distribution of the North American slave trade, therefore, I have assumed that before 1780 the purchases of slaves by North American ships were equally divided between the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone and Senegambia. For the three decades after 1780, I have somewhat arbitrarily adopted the distribution pattern revealed by the data for 1804-7. If the coastal distribution of the North American slave trade suggested by these assumptions is reasonably accurate, then it seems that North American traders purchased a comparatively high proportion of their slaves from areas between Senegambia and the Gold Coast during the second half of the eighteenth century.

Integrating these new estimates of the coastal distribution of the British, French and North American slave exports with previously published figures on the Danish, Dutch and Portuguese trades produces the regional patterns of slave shipments from the west coast of Africa shown in Table 7. In considering the data set out in this table, it should be noted that these regional figures disguise some substantial shifts in the distribution of exports among the various trading localities grouped together in each region. Within the Bight of Biafra, for instance, there occurred a growth in trade at Bonny relative to New Calabar and Old Calabar, while within West-Central Africa exports of slaves from the Loango coast and the Congo river tended to expand relative to Luanda and Benguela further south.⁴⁹ Shifts in the coastal distribution of slave exports were, therefore, even more marked than the regional aggregates adopted in Table 7 would suggest.

A comparison of Table 7 with Lovejoy's estimates of the coastal origins of eighteenth-century slave shipments reveals important similarities between the patterns of slave exports described. In particular, Table 7 underlines the wide disparities between regional contributions to the trade, with the major supplier of slaves - West-Central Africa - providing over seven times as many slaves to the eighteenth-century Atlantic traffic as the smallest region, Senegambia. At the same time, it confirms that patterns of exports by regions varied considerably. Thus regions such as the Bight of Biafra and West-Central Africa evinced relatively steady decadal growth in export levels of slaves over long periods, whereas regions such as Sierra Leone and the Bight of Benin exhibited rather more volatility in interdecadal export levels. As Jones and Johnson have

⁴⁶ Coughtry, *Notorious Triangle*, 105.

⁴⁷ PRO T 70/1263; BT 6/3, f. 84.

⁴⁸ On the tonnages of Rhode Island ships see Coughtry, *Notorious Triangle*, appendix.

⁴⁹ There is also evidence of shifts in the loading points of slaves in the Bight of Benin; see Patrick Manning, *Slavery, Colonialism and Economic Growth in Dahomey, 1640-1960* (Cambridge, 1982), 36.

NEW ESTIMATES OF SLAVE EXPORTS

17

Table 7. *The regional distribution of slave exports from the west coast of Africa by all carriers, 1700-1809, by decades*

Decade	Sene- gambia	Sierra Leone	Gold Coast	Bight of Benin	Bight of Biafra	West- Central Africa
1700-9	22,230 (6.2)	34,560 (9.6)	31,650 (8.8)	138,590 (38.5)	23,130 (6.4)	109,780 (30.5)
1710-19	36,260 (9.0)	6,380 (1.6)	37,540 (9.3)	138,690 (34.4)	51,410 (12.8)	132,590 (32.9)
1720-9	52,530 (10.2)	9,120 (1.8)	65,110 (12.6)	150,280 (29.1)	59,990 (11.6)	179,620 (34.8)
1730-9	57,210 (9.5)	29,470 (4.9)	74,460 (12.4)	135,220 (22.6)	62,260 (10.4)	240,890 (40.2)
1740-9	35,000 (6.4)	43,350 (7.9)	83,620 (15.2)	97,830 (17.8)	76,790 (13.9)	214,470 (38.9)
1750-9	30,100 (5.2)	83,860 (14.4)	52,780 (9.1)	86,620 (14.9)	106,100 (18.2)	222,430 (38.2)
1760-9	27,590 (3.5)	178,360 (22.8)	69,650 (8.9)	98,390 (12.6)	142,640 (18.2)	266,570 (34.0)
1770-9	24,400 (3.4)	132,220 (18.4)	54,370 (7.6)	111,550 (15.5)	160,400 (22.3)	234,880 (32.7)
1780-9	15,240 (1.9)	74,190 (9.3)	57,650 (7.3)	121,080 (15.3)	225,360 (28.4)	300,340 (37.8)
1790-9	18,320 (2.4)	70,510 (9.3)	73,960 (9.7)	74,600 (9.8)	181,740 (23.9)	340,110 (44.8)
1800-9	18,000 (3.0)	63,970 (10.6)	44,150 (7.3)	75,750 (12.5)	123,000 (20.3)	280,900 (46.4)
Totals	336,880 (5.0)	725,990 (10.9)	644,940 (9.7)	1,228,600 (18.4)	1,212,820 (18.2)	2,522,580 (37.8)

Note: figures in brackets refer to percentage shares of exports.

Sources: for Portuguese, Dutch and Danish exports, see the sources referred to in Table 4; for British and French exports, see Tables 5 and 6; for North American exports, see text. It should be noted that no account is taken here of the small Portuguese exports from northern Guinea.

reminded us,⁵⁰ such variations in export patterns may reflect to some extent deficiencies in the underlying sources of data, but the growing wealth of evidence now being made available suggests that wide differences in export patterns existed and were not simply a product of unreliable sources.

In addition to confirming some of our current impressions about regional patterns of slave exports from the west coast of Africa, Table 7 modifies our understanding of the relative importance of certain regions as suppliers of slaves to the Atlantic trade. Take, for example, slave exports from the Bight of

⁵⁰ Jones and Johnson, 'Windward Coast'.

Benin and Bight of Biafra. Existing studies suggest that the Bight of Benin supplied half as many slaves again as the Bight of Biafra during the eighteenth century, the former region supplying over 23 per cent and the latter just under 15 per cent of the slaves exported from the west coast of Africa in this period. By comparison, Table 7 suggests that each region's share of exports was more or less identical, averaging just over 18 per cent over the whole period from 1700 to 1810. The shift in the relative importance of these two regions implied by Table 7 largely reflects the discovery of evidence indicating much higher levels of British trade with the Bight of Biafra, particularly during the early part of the century, than had previously been assumed. Similar changes in the relative standing of other regions as slave exporters are also implicit in Table 7. Thus, while earlier studies have suggested that the Gold Coast probably supplied as many slaves over the eighteenth century as Senegambia and Sierra Leone combined, the figures in Table 7 indicate that exports from Sierra Leone alone outstripped those from the Gold Coast, and when combined with Senegambia's exports, were 50 per cent higher. The enhancement of Sierra Leone's role as a slave exporter implied by Table 7 mirrors to some degree the rise of North American slave carrying during the second half of the century, a factor largely ignored in previous analyses of the coastal distribution of the trade. The same factor may also help to explain the rather higher level of slave exports from Senegambia in the two decades before 1809 than earlier work has suggested.⁵¹

These findings point towards some significant amendments to the overall pattern of eighteenth-century slave exports that Lovejoy describes. For purposes of comparison, estimates of the coastal distribution of slave exports based on Table 7 and Lovejoy's synthesis are presented in Table 8 for three separate twenty-year periods: 1710-29, 1750-69 and 1790-1809. Lovejoy's figures suggest that regions west of the Bight of Biafra dominated slave exports during the early part of the eighteenth century, with the Bight of Benin alone supplying 44.1 per cent and together with the regions further west accounting for over 70 per cent of exports. However, according to Lovejoy's data, a major southward drift occurred in the coastal distribution of the trade over the next eighty years as exports from Senegambia, the Gold Coast and the Bight of Benin declined while exports from the Bight of Biafra and West-Central Africa grew substantially. As a result, by the end of the eighteenth century less than 30 per cent of the slaves exported from the west coast of Africa came, on Lovejoy's reckoning, from the regions from Senegal to the Bight of Benin compared to over 70 per cent from the Bight of Biafra and West-Central Africa.⁵²

My own figures certainly support the suggestion that slave exports from Senegambia, the Gold Coast and the Bight of Benin tended to fall over the eighteenth century and that the Bight of Biafra and West-Central Africa dominated exports after 1780. However, a closer examination of my data in Table 8 also shows that Lovejoy's figures greatly exaggerate the scale of the southward movement in slave exports over the course of the century. There are two main reasons for this. The first is that Lovejoy fails to appreciate the

⁵¹ As noted earlier, Curtin acknowledged the possibility of significant North American slaving in the region after 1783 but did not attempt to quantify it.

⁵² It should be noted that whereas my figures cover all significant carriers, Lovejoy's estimates of the coastal distribution of slave exports are based only on British, Dutch, French and Portuguese data.

NEW ESTIMATES OF SLAVE EXPORTS

19

Table 8. *A comparison of estimates of the percentage shares of regions in total slave exports from the west coast of Africa for selected periods, 1700-1809*

Periods	Senegambia to Gold Coast	Bight of Benin	Bight of Biafra	West-Central Africa
1710-1729	22.6 (28.9)	31.4 (44.1)	12.1 (1.9)	34.0 (25.1)
1750-1769	32.4 (27.5)	13.6 (17.3)	18.2 (19.5)	36.0 (35.7)
1790-1809	21.3 (16.4)	11.0 (12.1)	22.3 (22.5)	45.5 (49.0)
1700-1809	25.6 (23.7)	18.4 (22.6)	18.2 (15.2)	37.8 (38.5)

Note: Lovejoy's decades run from 1701 and are therefore slightly different from my own. Moreover, his estimates of coastal distributions are based only on British, Dutch, French and Portuguese data; these account for about 95 per cent of his estimated total slave shipments from Africa between 1701 and 1810. Lovejoy's estimates of regional shares of exports are given in brackets; figures outside the brackets are my own estimates of regional shares of exports.

Sources: Table 7; Lovejoy, *Slavery*, 50, 141.

relative buoyancy of slave exports from some of the more northern stretches of the coast, particularly Sierra Leone, in the second half of the century. Stimulated in part by the presence of large numbers of North American ships, slave exports from Sierra Leone in the half-century after 1760 were substantially higher than at the beginning of the century and helped to compensate for some of the decline in exports that occurred in adjacent regions.

The second and more important reason for the overstatement of the southward drift in slave exports implied in Lovejoy's figures lies in his underestimation of trade at both the Bight of Biafra and West-Central Africa in the early part of the century. Encouraged primarily by traders from British outports such as Bristol and Liverpool entering the trade after 1698,⁵³ exports of slaves from the Bight of Biafra were, according to my figures, over seven times greater in 1710-29 than Lovejoy assumed, while exports from West-Central Africa were over 66 per cent greater. As Portuguese exports from Luanda in this period seem to be fairly well documented, most of these additional exports from West-Central Africa presumably came from areas further north along the Loango coast where Portuguese control was much weaker. Previously largely unnoticed,⁵⁴ this early and mainly British slave-

⁵³ On Bristol's prominent role in the early eighteenth century trade to the Bight of Biafra, see David Richardson (ed.), *Bristol, Africa and the Eighteenth-Century Slave Trade to America*, Volume I: *The Years of Expansion, 1698-1729*, Bristol Record Society Publications, xxxviii (1986), introduction.

⁵⁴ See, for instance, Joseph C. Miller, 'Slave prices in the Portuguese Southern Atlantic, 1600-1830', in Paul E. Lovejoy (ed.), *Africans in Bondage: Studies in Slavery and the Slave Trade* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1986), 69, where Miller suggests that 'the Dutch, followed by the French and eventually the British, advanced south to Loango and toward Luanda' in the early part of the eighteenth century (italics added).

trading activity at Loango meant that, contrary to Lovejoy's estimates, exports of slaves from West-Central Africa were perhaps only marginally below those from the Bight of Benin in the second decade of the century and may well have exceeded them during the 1720s. Triggered primarily by new entrants into the trade from Britain, a major southward shift in the distribution of slave shipments from the Atlantic coast of Africa thus seems to have occurred in the early decades of the eighteenth century. According to my estimates, over 45 per cent of the slaves loaded on the west coast of Africa came from the Bight of Biafra and the West-Central region in 1710-29. This was certainly a smaller share of the trade than these two regions were to hold later in the century, but it was nevertheless almost double the share of exports in 1710-29 that Lovejoy attributes to them.

III

Over the last twenty years there has been a major growth in literature on the volume and coastal distribution in Africa of the Atlantic slave trade. This paper has offered a new synthesis of the eighteenth century trade based largely on research published since Lovejoy's synthesis for the whole trade appeared in 1982. Although it essentially confirms Lovejoy's estimate of the overall volume of the eighteenth century trade, the paper modifies in significant ways his description of the decadal and coastal distributions of the trade. In particular, it suggests that the scale of slave exports was noticeably higher before the American Revolution than historians have assumed, and in the 1760s and 1770s reached levels which were probably only slightly below those attained in the two decades after 1783. Furthermore, the indications are that the Bight of Biafra and West-Central Africa played much larger roles early in the century in meeting external demands for slaves than has traditionally been supposed.

These findings raise some interesting questions for some current areas of research about the trade and also open up some new lines of enquiry. I will confine myself to three observations here. First, in terms of the volume of the trade, the surges in exports between the 1710s and 1730s and again in the 1760s and early 1770s are particularly striking. In view of the fact that, on available figures, Portuguese shipments of slaves during these two periods seem to have been either relatively stable or even in decline, these surges in slave exports largely reflected expansions in the trades of the other major eighteenth-century traders, the British and the French. Since these were primarily suppliers of slaves to their own colonies in the Caribbean as well as the Spanish territories in America, these decadal variations in slave exports from Africa underline the importance of recent work on the Spanish American market for slaves before 1739.⁵⁵ They also suggest that the relationship of Brazilian, Caribbean and North American plantation production to the growth of markets for sugar and other agricultural staples in Europe in the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century perhaps deserves further attention.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Colin A. Palmer, *Human Cargoes: the British Slave Trade to Spanish America, 1700-1739* (Urbana, Illinois, 1981); Colin A. Palmer, 'The company trade and the numerical distribution of slaves to Spanish America, 1703-1739', in Lovejoy (ed.), *Africans in Bondage*, 27-43.

⁵⁶ For a discussion of sugar consumption in Britain, see Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: the Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York, 1985), 74-151; Richard B. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery* (Baltimore, 1973), 18-35.

Second, while they further refine our estimates of the coastal origins of slave exports, these new data also confirm the essentially uneven distribution of such exports among the various slave-supplying regions. Equally importantly, however, they indicate that certain regions carried even larger burdens of exports than has usually been assumed. This is particularly evident in the case of the Bight of Biafra and West-Central Africa. The discovery that the latter region was responsible for exporting much larger numbers of slaves in the early eighteenth century than Lovejoy and others calculated is especially significant, for it tends to reinforce the claim of several historians that the trade had severe demographic repercussions for the region.⁵⁷ Moreover, the apparently substantial level of exports by British and other traders from the Loango coast in the early eighteenth century raises some questions about Miller's heavy reliance on the demand for slaves arising from the goldmining boom in the hinterland of Rio de Janeiro in 1690-1720 in order to explain the sharp rise in slave prices at Luanda in the same period.⁵⁸

Finally, close examination of the data reveals major variations over time in the coastal origins of slave exports by certain national groups of carriers as well as some pronounced and persistent differences in the regional distributions of exports among the various groups of carriers. These complex patterns of slave exports may have been determined in part by the political and military influence exerted by some national groups of carriers over local African societies or by the blatant use of force by one group of traders against another. But the indications are that they were determined primarily by market processes. In shaping the outcome of these processes, African preferences for trade goods and the ability of external traders to satisfy them were apparently significant factors. Eighteenth-century distributions of slave trading along the west coast of Africa reflected, therefore, not only African influences on the trade but also changes in the availability and cost of essential trade goods for Africa at the various ports in America and Europe that participated in the trans-Atlantic shipment of enslaved Africans to the New World.

SUMMARY

Using new evidence on the British, French and North American slave-carrying trades, this article seeks to revise Lovejoy's recently published estimates of the levels of slave exports from West and West-Central Africa in the eighteenth century. The figures suggest that Lovejoy's estimate of the total volume of slave exports from the west coast of Africa to America between 1700 and 1810 was probably reasonably accurate, being only 8 per cent lower than the total indicated here. However, the new data reveal temporal and coastal distributions of slave exports that differ substantially from those proposed by Lovejoy. In particular, they suggest that previous work significantly understated levels of slave exports

⁵⁷ Roger Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition 1760-1810* (London, 1975), 82; John Thornton, 'The slave trade in eighteenth century Angola: effects on demographic structures', *Canadian J. African Studies*, xiv (1980), 425-6.

⁵⁸ Miller, 'Slave prices', in Lovejoy (ed.), *Africans in Bondage*, 56-7. Similarly, the surge in slave exports from Sierra Leone in 1750-80 also helps to explain the sharp rise in adult male slave prices in the region that Jones observes between 1763 and 1775; see Adam Jones, *From Slaves to Palm Kernels: a History of the Galinhas Country (West Africa) 1730-1890* (Wiesbaden, 1983), 30-1.

between 1713 and 1740, and again in the 1760s and 1770s. Contrary to earlier findings, in fact, it appears that slave exports from the west coast of Africa to America in the decade prior to the War of American Independence were very similar to levels attained after 1783. Furthermore, in terms of coastal distributions, it seems that the Bight of Biafra and West-Central Africa, particularly the Loango coast, contributed much more substantially to the slave traffic to America during the early decades of the century than was previously assumed. These revisions of Lovejoy's figures have important implications for movements in slave prices in Africa and for assessing the demographic effects of the trade on the slave-supplying regions. In addition, they help to improve our understanding of the relationship between the slave trade and changes in sugar and other commodity production in America during the eighteenth century.

[2]

PRICES OF SLAVES IN WEST AND WEST-CENTRAL AFRICA: TOWARD AN ANNUAL SERIES, 1698-1807

David Richardson

ABSTRACT

Currently available price series for slaves during the eighteenth century need to be treated with much caution, and it seems unlikely that large quantities of new evidence will be unearthed. Further progress toward the creation of more reliable price series will thus require new methods of estimation. In this paper, a new price series for slaves at the African coast is calculated using data relating to the number of slaves shipped from the coast by British traders and the value of trade goods bartered for them.

Although historians of Africa acknowledge that the possibilities for using quantitative methods to investigate most aspects of African history are very limited, impressive progress has been made in recent decades in quantifying one of the more infamous aspects of African history, namely, the trans-Atlantic traffic in slaves. Most of the research in this area has centred on the numbers, sex, and coastal origins of the slaves shipped from Africa to America (Curtin, 1969; Lovejoy, 1982, 1989; Eltis, 1987; Geggus, 1989; Richardson, 1989a, 1989b). As a result, we now have apparently reasonably reliable data on these aspects of the trade, particularly for the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries, when by all accounts the trade in slaves to America was at its height. Progress in quantifying the slave trade has not been confined solely, however, to these aspects of the trade, for significant amounts of data relating to slave prices at the African coast have also been published in recent years. The first systematic analysis of slave prices at the African coast was undertaken by Bean (Bean, 1975). Relying solely on 'published historical materials' and using 'almost every observation on slave prices available', he created a series of semi-decadal prices for adult male slaves for West and West-Central Africa that focused primarily on the period between the Stuart Restoration in 1660 and the American Revolution in 1775. This price series was subsequently revised slightly by Bean following the discovery of

additional data (Wattenberg, 1976, p. 1174). It has also been supplemented by other studies of slave prices based on discoveries of new data in original sources (Johnson, 1966; LeVeen, 1975, 1977; Curtin, 1975; Stein, 1979; Renault, 1982; Jones, 1983; Bathily, 1986; Miller, 1986; Postma, 1990). These have been particularly important in expanding our knowledge of coastal prices for slaves beyond the American Revolution and in providing more detailed information on price trends in particular regions or localities, notably Senegambia, the Windward Coast, the Gold Coast, and Luanda in Angola. Using currently available price series it is thus possible to trace the general trend in slave prices at the west coast of Africa throughout the period from 1660 to the early nineteenth century.¹

Close examination of these various price series shows that most depend on relatively small numbers of price observations. Some series are based, in fact, on no more than a few price observations scattered unevenly over the century, and even the more substantially documented series, such as Bean's, tend to rely mainly on one or two price observations a year distributed unevenly through time and across trading centres on the African coast. Moreover, the surviving price data relate to groups of slaves that vary greatly in number and in terms of age and sex composition; weighting observations to allow for variations in the number or character of the slaves they cover is normally impossible. At the same time, prices are frequently reported in African units of account, such as the bar, copper, ounce or piece, rather than in sterling or other European currencies.² Faced with such materials, most historians have simply presented their evidence on prices in its original form, but some, notably Bean (1975), have sought to adjust the raw data in order to create time-series of prices for specific categories of slaves in European currencies. Thus, in constructing his price series, Bean adjusted all price observations to their adult male equivalents by a standard formula and converted prices expressed in African currencies into sterling by use of an appropriate exchange rate.³ As evidence on the prices of adult male slaves relative to other slaves at the African coast is slender and the value of African currencies relative to their European counterparts seems to have varied quite considerably over time or even from one transaction to another,⁴ such adjustments are naturally subject to potentially wide margins of error. Even the more sophisticated price series of slaves in Africa, such as Bean's, need, therefore, to be treated with much caution.

Some of the shortcomings of existing slave price series for eighteenth-century Africa may be alleviated by the discovery of additional data in

¹ A series of slave prices in Africa in the nineteenth century is also available in Eltis (1987).

² For a discussion of the 'ounce', see Johnson (1966).

³ Details of the formula and exchange rates used by Bean are to be found in Bean (1975) appendix A.

⁴ On variations in exchange rates see Johnson (1966) and Richardson (1979).

PRICES OF SLAVES IN WEST AND WEST-CENTRAL AFRICA 23

primary sources. It seems unlikely, however, that large quantities of new evidence on slave prices in Africa covering the whole eighteenth century will be unearthed, though, as Postma's (1990) study reveals, it is possible to find data relating to certain periods or areas of the coast. In the absence of large amounts of new price materials, further progress toward the creation of a more reliable slave price series for Africa for the eighteenth century will require new methods of estimating slave prices at the African coast. In this paper, I attempt to calculate such prices by using data relating to the number of slaves shipped from the coast by British traders and the value of the trade goods bartered for them. This method is very similar to one used by Curtin (1975) for calculating prices of slaves in the lower Gambia in 1683–88 and 1727–41. In his case, Curtin relied on evidence in the Royal African Company's accounts of purchases of small numbers of slaves at the coast and the original invoice values in England of the goods exchanged for them. He thus produced estimates of slave prices at the Gambia based on the 'prime cost' of goods in England. Here, instead of using information from the Royal African Company's records, I calculate slave prices in Africa by combining evidence on the value of British exports to Africa provided by eighteenth-century records of British overseas trade, notably Customs 3 and 17, with recently published estimates of the numbers of slaves shipped each year from Africa in British vessels.⁵ By this means, it is possible to extend the method adopted by Curtin in order to estimate slave prices throughout the whole coast of West and West-Central Africa from 1698 to 1807.

This method allows one to construct a series of slave prices at the African coast free from the problems that surround reliance on price observations concerning variable numbers of slaves or the conversion of prices reported in African units of account into European currencies. At the same time, however, it should be noted that, while the estimates of slave prices made in this paper relate to the whole British trade, they mask changes in both the regional origins of slaves shipped and their sexual and age composition. In particular, certain regions such as the Bight of Biafra proved increasingly attractive to British traders over the eighteenth century, but also tended to supply higher proportions of women and, perhaps, children among the slaves exported than other regions. It is likely, therefore, that the series produced in this paper marginally distorts the general movement in prices of a 'standard' slave unit over the eighteenth century. In addition, it would be misleading to assume that data used in this paper for calculating slave prices are wholly devoid of problems and that price trends of slaves at the African coast derived from them are wholly

⁵ Customs 3 and 17 are held at the Public Record Office; a summary of the official values of commodity exports from England to Africa each year from 1701 to 1807 is given in Inikori (1976b) appendix 1. I am grateful to the late Marion Johnson for advice and help in using these records. The data on shipments of slaves from Africa by the British are based on Richardson (1989a, 1989b).

reliable. Nevertheless, it is believed that the estimates of slave prices in the British trade produced in this paper are as solid as one can expect with the materials currently available, and that any further adjustments to allow for changes in the composition of slave shipments are unlikely to alter significantly the broad patterns in slave prices revealed here.

In part I of the paper, I describe the statistics of British exports to Africa and of British slave shipments at the African coast in the eighteenth century and examine their limitations. Part II is a discussion of the trends in slave prices paid by British traders at the African coast revealed by these data and compares my findings with other recent price series. Since the trend in slave prices suggested by my series differs significantly from that suggested by several of these other series, I seek, in part III, to assess the reliability of my findings by presenting additional evidence relating to slave prices at the African coast derived from merchants' papers and other sources. Finally, in part IV, I note briefly some of the implications of my price series for recent research on the eighteenth-century Atlantic slave trade.

I

The price series of slaves at the African coast produced in this paper derives essentially from a comparison of the estimated numbers of slaves shipped from the African coast each year from 1698 to 1807 by British traders with the annual value of British exports to Africa over the same period. Direct evidence on British slave shipments in Africa in the eighteenth century is, unfortunately, scarce, and the figures used in this paper are therefore estimates of annual British slave exports that I have compiled on the basis of evidence regarding annual clearances of ships from British ports in Africa and average loadings of slaves per ship in Africa between 1698 and 1807. Details of these estimates of annual British slave shipments in Africa and the various sources upon which they depend are to be found in a recently published paper (Richardson, 1989b). The figures used in this paper are a slightly amended version of these estimates.⁶ It would be misleading to pretend that the figures on annual clearances of British ships to Africa are comprehensive and that the estimates of average loadings of slaves per ship in Africa are wholly reliable. The figures of annual British slave shipments in Africa used in this paper are, nevertheless, based on a thorough investigation of available shipping records and the largest quantity of eighteenth-century data

⁶The amendments arise from the discovery that a large proportion of the British ships bound for Africa for slaves in 1713-30 cleared out from Britain for Madeira rather than Africa. This necessitates a revision of the estimates of slave shipments given in Richardson (1989b).

PRICES OF SLAVES IN WEST AND WEST-CENTRAL AFRICA 25

regarding slave shipments so far uncovered. Future research may lead to further refinement of our estimates of British slave shipments between 1698 and 1807, but the figures used in this paper are almost certainly the most reliable estimate of British slave exports from West and West-Central Africa in this period currently available.⁷

My primary source of data on British exports to Africa is British customs records, notably Customs 3 and 17. Held at the Public Record Office, these records are well known and have been widely used by historians to investigate British overseas trade in the eighteenth century. From them it is possible to obtain detailed information on the total values of exports from Britain to Africa for each year, except 1705 and 1712, between 1698 and 1807. The figures given distinguish between domestically and foreign produced goods as well as London's trade and that of the outports. Though some attempt was made by customs officials to adjust the prices of goods they recorded in accordance with market prices, the values attached to the great majority of exports reported in these customs accounts are 'official' values based mainly on prices prevailing around 1700.⁸

Using the data on exports to Africa found in these records as an indicator of the value of goods exchanged by the British for slaves in Africa presents a number of problems. Several questions about these export data need to be addressed. First, how reliable are customs accounts as a record of exports to Africa from British ports? Second, to what extent did British slave traders obtain trade goods for Africa at ports outside Britain? Third, what proportion of the goods exported to Africa was actually used to buy slaves? And, finally, to what extent did the official values attached to goods in customs accounts accord with their market prices?

Since much of Britain's trade in the eighteenth century was subject to high duties, customs accounts have often been seen to provide a highly imperfect record of British overseas trade in this period. There is little doubt that, in some respects, such a view is well justified, for smuggling of certain goods such as tea and tobacco was evidently rife during much of the century (Cole, 1958; Nash, 1982). Criticism of customs records has, however, been directed mainly toward their accounting of imports rather than exports, and is, therefore, largely irrelevant in the current context. On the specific question of exports to Africa, there are nevertheless indications that the customs accounts may have slightly understated exports to

⁷ A critique of my estimates of British shipments of slaves, which acknowledges their general reliability, is to be found in Lovejoy (1989).

⁸ For a discussion of these official values see Clark (1938), Schumpeter (1960) and Davis (1979). The view that the vast majority of English exports to Africa in this period was priced in official values has been questioned by Eltis (1989), who claims that '[a]bout 44 per cent of exports were given current values' (p. 209). This statement appears to rest on a misreading of the classification of certain goods 'at value' in the customs records. Scrutiny of the values attached to these goods indicates that, with very few exceptions, they were priced at official or constant prices not current prices.

the African coast from British ports in certain years in the eighteenth century (Woodward, 1973). At the same time, it is evident that ships leaving British ports for Africa occasionally supplemented their cargoes by illicitly taking in additional goods at the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man.⁹ Perhaps most seriously of all, however, it seems that substantial numbers of British slave ships between 1713 and 1730 cleared out for Madeira rather than Africa. As a result, their exports of goods were recorded, for customs purposes, as destined for Madeira, not Africa. The scale of the shipment of trade goods to Africa through Madeira is impossible to measure exactly, but it seems that in certain years more than half of exports from Britain to Africa may have followed this route and that over the whole period from 1713 to 1730 about 20 per cent of British exports to Africa reached the coast via Madeira.¹⁰ In using customs statistics to calculate slave prices at the African coast, I have adjusted the official figures on British exports to Africa in 1713–30 to allow for shipment of goods through Madeira. I have made no allowance, however, for goods which may have been obtained illicitly at, say, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man.¹¹

Another, and perhaps more serious, deficiency in customs records for my purpose lies in the fact that they exclude British shipments of trade goods to Africa from ports outside Britain. According to some early eighteenth-century writers, supplies of trade goods for Africa were often cheaper at European continental ports than in Britain. This was particularly the case at Dutch ports, where, it was suggested, trade goods were as

⁹ For trade at the Isle of Man, see University of Keele Archives, Letter and Bill Book of William Davenport 1748–61, 26 July 1753, William Davenport & Co. to Samuel Sacheverall; 20 August 1754, William Davenport & Co. to Isaac Hyde. For trade at Guernsey in the Channel Islands, see Public Record Office, C 107/10, 1792(?), R. P. Le Marchant to James Rogers. In each case the goods to be supplied were Dutch.

¹⁰ An assessment of the trade to Africa via Madeira in 1713–30 was made by taking the average annual level of English exports to Madeira in 1707–11 and 1731–39, as given in Customs 3, and deducting this from the annual exports to Madeira in 1713–30. Exports to Madeira from England averaged £15,425 a year in 1707–11 and £15,232 a year in 1730–39. For the purpose of estimating English exports to Africa through Madeira each year between 1713 and 1730, therefore, I assumed that some £15,000 of exports a year were normally retained in Madeira, and that goods entered out from England to Madeira in excess of this figure eventually found their way to Africa.

¹¹ Eltis and Jennings (1988) have recently drawn attention to the possibility that customs accounts largely failed to record exports of arms from England to Africa in the eighteenth century, despite the fact that merchants' papers show that large quantities of guns were shipped to the coast. Information gleaned from the Port Books of Bristol indicates, however, that firearms were normally classed as 'wrought iron' at the time of export; this becomes apparent in wartime when the export of arms required a licence. In recording exports of guns to Africa in wartime, the Bristol Port Books reported both the numbers of guns shipped by individual vessels and their weight as 'wrought iron'. Furthermore, goods other than arms classed as wrought iron were specifically noted as being 'not arms' (Public Record Office, E190/1220/2). Since Customs 3 and 17 both record large amounts of wrought iron as being exported each year from England to Africa, there is no need, therefore, to adjust the data given in customs accounts to allow for the export of guns to the coast.

PRICES OF SLAVES IN WEST AND WEST-CENTRAL AFRICA 27

much as 30 per cent cheaper than at British ports in the early eighteenth century.¹² The reliability of these claims is difficult to judge, but there is clear evidence that some British merchants directed their African-bound vessels to Dutch ports in order to acquire supplies of trade goods for the coast. Thus, for instance, in the 1720s Humphry Morice of London, recently described by Rawley (1989) as the 'foremost London slave merchant of his time', seems to have obtained, wholly or in part, at least five cargoes of African trade goods in Holland. Similarly, in the following decade, Thomas Hall, also of London, dispatched several of his ships to Holland where they loaded quantities of trade goods before sailing to Africa (Gill, 1961). In both instances, the amount of goods bought seems to have been substantial. According to Rawley's figures, the average value of five cargoes known to have been exported from Holland by Morice's ships was over 27,000 guilders or some £770, compared to an average value of cargoes loaded in London of just over £3,000. Evidence relating to voyages fitted out by Thomas Hall suggests that up to a quarter of the trade goods sent to Africa in his ships in the 1730s was brought directly from suppliers in Holland.

It is clear that Morice and Hall's shipments of trade goods directly to Africa from Holland were not isolated instances of such practices; examples of similar shipments of trade goods for Africa by other British merchants at continental ports are to be found at other times during the eighteenth century.¹³ British customs accounts obviously understate, therefore, the total quantity of trade goods shipped to Africa by British merchants in this period. The problem is to assess the scale of shipments of goods from ports outside Britain. Inikori (1976a) has argued, largely on the basis of Hall's accounts, that substantial proportions of the goods bartered for slaves by British traders were shipped directly to the African coast from continental ports. From the limited evidence currently available, it is difficult to make a detailed assessment of this argument, but some doubts about its validity are raised by the fact that Bristol and Liverpool's share of Britain's trade to Africa grew rapidly in the early eighteenth century while the share of London, the port closest to the continent, declined, particularly from the 1720s (Richardson, 1989b). Moreover, inspection of British customs accounts shows that during the first half of the century up to 60 per cent of the goods exported from British ports to Africa consisted of re-exported foreign goods (Richardson, 1979). East India textiles constituted the largest single category of such goods, but they

¹² On the competitiveness of Dutch goods see Public Record Office, CO 388/12, K52; CO 388/30, V75.

¹³ South Carolina Historical Society, Letterbook of John Guerard, 25 August 1753, John Guerard to William Jolliff; University of Keele Archives, Accounts and papers, 25 August 1764, William Davenport & Co. to Joseph Caton, master of *Sisters*; Public Record Office, C 107/7, part 1, 21 March 1792, Ostend, John Kirkpatrick & Co. to James Rogers; Hogendorn and Johnson (1986).

also included Swedish iron, German linens, Italian beads, and Dutch fire-arms, hardware and liquor. Such evidence tends to confirm the competitiveness of continental suppliers of trade goods for Africa at this time and helps to explain why, when such goods were unavailable at home, British merchants sometimes directed their vessels toward Dutch or other continental ports before they sailed finally to Africa. Perhaps what it also suggests is that sufficient supplies of Dutch and other foreign goods were normally available in Britain to enable the great majority of British merchants to complete the lading of their African-bound vessels with trade goods without having to divert them to continental ports. In my calculations, therefore, I have assumed that British shipments of trade goods from continental ports to Africa were exceptional, and that, adjusted to account for trade via Madeira, British customs records are a reliable indicator of the general trend in shipment of trade goods to Africa by British merchants in the eighteenth century. Since it is clear that some purchases of trade goods at continental ports took place, this assumption will tend to lower to some extent my estimate of slave prices at the African coast.

The trade goods that British merchants shipped to Africa were bartered not only for slaves but also for a range of other African products. These included ivory (or 'elephant's teeth'), wax, gum, Guinea grains, dyestuffs (notably camwood and redwood), and gold. It is evident that the level of trade in these African products varied between individual trading centres at the coast as well as over time (Bean, 1974; Curtin, 1975). Nevertheless, the trade in such goods was sufficiently large throughout the eighteenth century to permit some British ships each year to engage in bilateral or 'produce' voyages to the coast.¹⁴ British customs accounts record imports directly from Africa in such ships. At the same time, masters of slave ships were normally advised to purchase some quantity of African products. Accounts of merchants as well as official sources reveal that very few slave ships returned home without some African produce.¹⁵ In order to estimate slave prices at the coast, therefore, it is necessary to adjust the value of British exports of trade goods to Africa to allow for purchases of these products.

According to some studies, about 5 per cent of British shipping tonnage in the African trade was employed in the produce trade during the second half of the eighteenth century, whether bilaterally or via America (Anstey, 1975; Inikori, 1976a; Drescher, 1977). It may seem appropriate therefore simply to discount the value of British exports to Africa by 5 per cent to allow for those goods used to purchase African produce in the eighteenth

¹⁴ For evidence on bilateral voyages to Africa before 1745, see Richardson (1986, 1987b); for 1789-95, see Public Record Office, T 64/286.

¹⁵ Figures compiled by the late Marion Johnson from Customs 3 and 17 show that imports into England from Africa via the New World were often equivalent to a third or more of the value of total English imports of African goods. I am grateful to Marion Johnson for supplying this information.

PRICES OF SLAVES IN WEST AND WEST-CENTRAL AFRICA 29

century. However, Gemery, Hogendorn and Johnson (1990) have shown on the basis of customs accounts that the percentage of non-slave to slave exports from Africa in British ships varied from as low as 3 per cent in the 1770s to as high as 16 to 21 per cent in the 1720s and averaged probably over 10 per cent over the eighteenth century as a whole. Their figure for the 1720s may be exaggerated since, as noted earlier, significant amounts of British exports to Africa at this time were officially entered out for Madeira, but, in general, the proportions of non-slave to slave exports from Africa in British ships seem to have been higher in the first half of the eighteenth century than in the second. To construct a price series for slaves, therefore, we need to take account of the varying levels of trade in produce by British merchants at the African coast over the course of the eighteenth century.

Customs accounts suggest that most African produce reached Britain directly from Africa rather than on slave ships returning from America. Consequently, the simplest method of calculating the value of the goods British merchants bartered for slaves is to deduct the annual values of British imports from Africa given in customs records from the corresponding values of British exports to the African coast. Since some African goods reached Britain via America, this procedure will tend to bias upward the estimates of slave prices at the coast, but this may be counter-balanced by the under-recording of British exports to Africa noted earlier. A more serious problem, arguably, may arise from discounting exports to Africa by the whole value of imports from the coast, for exports are normally valued f.o.b. and imports c.i.f. Evidence on transport and distribution costs for African produce is sparse, but there are indications that British exports were usually marked up by as much as 100 per cent at the coast in order to cover their cost of transport from Britain.¹⁶ Thus one should perhaps discount the value of British imports from Africa by some 50 per cent to allow for such costs. Close examination of the records shows, however, that eighteenth-century British customs officials adopted the rather unusual practice of pricing imports f.o.b., not c.i.f. (Davis, 1979). The values placed by these officials on African goods reaching Britain no doubt differed from their actual purchase price abroad, but, in the absence of a price series for African produce, it seems not unreasonable when attempting to estimate the value of British exports bartered for slaves sim-

¹⁶ Information on mark-ups, relating mainly to the nineteenth century, is in Eltis (1989). For evidence relating to the eighteenth century, see Public Record Office, CO 267/6, ff. 195-6, where it was reported in September 1752 that £600 in goods at prime cost in England were worth £1400 in trade at the Gold Coast, a mark-up of 133 per cent. For other eighteenth-century evidence on mark-ups, see Bristol Central Library, Southwell papers. Vol. 8, 12 September 1744, Richard Henvill to Board of Trade; Public Record Office, CO 388/43, Bb 85, 14 September 1744, Richard Henvill to Board of Trade; Public Record Office, BT 6/3, ff. 58-9, Advances to Governor Mill, 1774; Considerations (1763, p. 45); Curtin (1975, pp. 174, 255).