

2016

A Culture Of Commodification: Hemispheric And Intercolonial Migrations In The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, 1660-1807

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A CULTURE OF COMMODIFICATION: HEMISPHERIC AND INTERCOLONIAL
MIGRATIONS IN THE TRANS-ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE, 1660-1807

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in

History

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2016

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It has been a long journey to this point, and along the way I have received the assistance of many people. First and foremost, I thank my parents Peter and Jill Polhemus for instilling in me the important values of hard-work, sacrifice and determination.

At the College of Charleston, I was fortunate to take several courses with Robert Crout. As an undergraduate, Robert introduced me to the Atlantic World, taught me the rigors of documentation and the secrets to navigating overseas archives. While completing my MA, I was fortunate to learn from several talented historians. Tim Coates introduced me to early modern Portuguese and Brazilian history. Jason Coy's seminar on European religion and culture was a model of excellence. David Preston agreed to shepherd my thesis and improved it tremendously. A semester working with Nic Butler and the Mayor's Walled City Task Force allowed me to dig deeply through South Carolina's colonial records.

Any apprehension I had about moving to Columbia and pursuing a doctoral degree at the University of South Carolina was alleviated after my initial meeting with Matt Childs. Matt's willingness to take on an Atlanticist was both revealing and reassuring. At the same time, Matt encouraged me to pursue my own research interests that, until the final stages of writing my dissertation, seldom overlapped with Cuban history. Matt's weekly seminars taught me how to interrogate books and primary sources with a surgeon's precision and the importance of clearly stating my ideas. Seminars with

Dan Littlefield introduced me to the history of colonial American society and slavery. Coursework with Martine Jean and visiting scholar David Roediger taught me to think critically about race and racial construction. Although I never took a course with Woody Holton, upon arriving at USC, he took a keen interest in my project. I was also fortunate, through Woody's intervention, to discuss a chapter of my dissertation with Peter Wood.

The University of South Carolina's Atlantic History Reading Group has been a source of inspiration throughout my doctoral studies. Through the years, many fellow graduate students have read and critiqued conference papers and chapter drafts. I am particularly grateful to Chaz Yingling, Tyler Parry, Andrew Kettler, Rachel Monroy, Erin Holmes, Robert Greene II, Antony Keane-Dawes, and Mitch Oxford. I would also like to thank scholars that I have met at conferences and during visits to campus for Matt's Atlantic history seminar: Jane Landers, Ugo Nwokeji, Alexander Byrd, Leslie Harris, John Garrigus, John Thornton, Linda Heywood, James Sweet, Herman Bennett, Roseanne Adderley, Vernon Burton, Sylviane Diouf, Michelle Reid-Vasquez, and João José Reis.

In the process of completing my dissertation, I was privileged to work at a number of archives with diligent librarians and archivists. I thank the archivists at the British Library, the Bank of England, the Bristol Record Office, the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich, the Bodleian Library, the British National Archives, the Biblioteca Nacional De España, the South Carolina Historical Society, the South Caroliniana Library, the South Carolina Department of Archives and History, the Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, the Hispanic Society of America, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania,

the William C. Clements Library and the Mel Fisher Maritime Heritage Society. I thank the Lapidus Center for the Historical Analysis of Transatlantic Slavery at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, a Jacob M. Price Visiting Research Fellowship from the William C. Clements Library, the Institute for African American Research, a SPARC Graduate Research Grant from the Office of the Vice President for Research at the University of South Carolina, and a Russell J. and Dorothy S. Bilinski Dissertation Fellowship provided financial and institutional support for the research and writing of this dissertation.

I would not have been able to complete this dissertation without the enduring support and steadfast encouragement of my wife Jill. Her love and commitment to our relationship provided a foundation to persevere through the muck and mire.

ABSTRACT

Beginning in the sixteenth century, as large quantities of produce were unloaded at ports throughout Northern Europe, consumer consumption of West Indies commodities drove demand for captive African labor. As a result, from 1556 to 1867, Europeans transported some 12 million West Africans to the Americas. Based on primary sources from over three countries and more than thirty archives, this study explores the structure and organization of the transatlantic slave trade to analyze the transformation of relationships and the commercial operation of the trade in West Africa, the circum-Caribbean, and more broadly the Atlantic world. This study of the transatlantic slave trade from the seventeenth to the eighteenth centuries is framed through the analytical concept of "Labor Wars" between rival empires (Spain vs Britain); between merchants (European, African, and New World merchants) and between masters and slaves themselves on plantations, ships, and slave dungeons. The geographic terrain of this study connected West and Central Africa to the Greater Caribbean, but also moved beyond the familiar terrain of Atlantic history to include Madagascar in the Indian Ocean and North Africa in the Mediterranean. The operation of the transatlantic slave trade was guided by the politics of power, war, violence and greed that directly impacted the flow of captives to the coast and the Americas.

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INTRODUCTION

In early April 1727 slave trader William Snelgrave arrived at Whydah, the most important and largest commercial port on the Slave Coast. A few days later he was summoned by Dahomey King Agaja to come and meet with him at Ardah. Having invaded Whydah only a few weeks earlier, all commercial transactions, especially those involving slaves, would start with King Agaja before all others. Snelgrave had never met Agaja, but over the past decade he developed important relationships with trading elites of the Kingdoms of Allada and Whydah. King Agaja's conquest of these two kingdoms brought them under the control of the Kingdom of Dahomey. The militarized state of Dahomey grew as a direct response to the transatlantic slave trade and the increasing volume of European ships arriving at Whydah to purchase captive Africans. From Snelgrave's recently rediscovered diary, we hear the voice of a powerful African elite speaking at the height of the trade on the eighteenth-century Slave Coast.¹ What King Agaja said to Snelgrave informs several important themes analyzed in this dissertation.

Snelgrave finally met King Agaja face to face on 10 April 1727. An impatient and shrewd capitalist, Snelgrave quickly got to the business at hand, negotiating the amount of customary tribute to be paid and the prices for slaves. In the negotiations, Snelgrave

¹ William Snelgrave, "A Diary of my Journey to Ardra, 8-12 April 1727," 10A61/3, Bank of England Archives, London.

vastly underestimated Agaja. Snelgrave opened with a bit of flattery, hoping that since Agaja was a “great King...he would moderate” the high customs required by King Hufon before the invasion. Snelgrave informed Agaja that Hufon “never took more than 17 tubs of Cowries for himself which was not quite 5 slaves.” He then followed up by stating that since Agaja “exceeded him so much in greatness he would take less.”² Agaja interrupted abruptly and “turned the argument on me” Snelgrave confessed, “and fixt it at 8 [slaves] for himself and 2 [slaves] for his chief captains.”³ Flattery proved futile.

Snelgrave’s frustration was not an anomaly. For example, in 1734 ship captain George Hamilton wrote that even if a ship “was to lye on the coast 12 months...the assortment of negroes [wanted] from the coast is impossible to be had.”⁴ Gold Coast governor John Tinker stated that it was impossible to load a specific “number of boys and girls” because the “markets for slaves are not at all times alike.”⁵ Europeans applied numerous strategies in developing relationships with trading elites. Royal African Company (RAC) agents in Sierra Leone recommended a small standing army and a fortified factory because “nothing else will keep the blacks in awe. They are not to be ruled by love but fear.”⁶ Such displays of European military power and violence would never “preserve the company’s interest” with trading elites at Whydah. According to William Hicks, only the “company’s factor being in good understanding and friendship

² In 1726, a grand cabess (4,000 cowries) was worth £1 sterling or a quarter ounce of gold. Marion Johnson, “The Cowrie Currencies of West Africa. Part I,” *Journal of African History* 11–1 (1970), 17–49, 43.

³ William Snelgrave, “A Diary of my Journey to Ardra, 8-12 April 1727,” 10A61/3, Bank of England Archives, London.

⁴ George Hamilton to Thomas Hall, 20 August 1734, C 103/130, BNA, Kew.

⁵ John Tinker, Nathaniel Rice, John Wingfield, 11 August 1724, T 70/7, f. 38-9, BNA, Kew.

⁶ John Freeman and Henry Glynn, 29 April 1704, T 70/14, f. 65, Kew, BNA.

with the natives” would accomplish long-term commercial goals.⁷ To understand the operation of the transatlantic slave trade, we must factor in the African side of the trade where the politics of power, war, violence and greed directly impacted the flow of captives to the coast.

In 1887, Karl Marx wrote that the “turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins” signaled “the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production.”⁸ Beginning in the sixteenth century, as large quantities of produce were unloaded at ports throughout Northern Europe, consumer consumption of West Indies commodities drove demand for captive African labor. As a result, from 1556 to 1867, Europeans transported some 12 million West Africans to the Americas. Moreover, despite popular mythology, prior to 1820 four Africans arrived in the Americas for every one European. Dispatched thousands of miles from their homelands, slaves were set to work on plantations where they generated large quantities of produce – none of which was vital to the nourishment, clothing, or shelter of the consumers who devoured it. The settlement of the Americas was not a triumph of European ingenuity or technology; it was a large-scale human catastrophe that resulted in the Africanization of the New World.

The reason why some 12 million Africans were taken from West Africa in the early modern era is well-established – profits. Historians have produced a voluminous historiography supporting this thesis and the associated wealth extracted from African labor.⁹ At the heart of the plantation regime that stretched from the shores of Brazil to

⁷ William Hicks, 15 March 1711, T 70/5, f. 78, Kew, BNA.

⁸ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (London: S. Sonnenschein, Lowrey, 1887), 527.

⁹ Some of the early writers to reach this conclusion included, W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade to the United States of America, 1638-1870* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co,

Virginia, was the morbid intermingling of the marketplace with the violent extraction of labor. In contrast to the African experience, European migration to the Americas in the early modern Atlantic world was generally voluntary and transpired within distinctly identifiable family units with kinship networks intact. Or put another way, Europeans did not arrive in colonial settlements as commodities. As Joseph Miller posits, for captive Africans, at the moment of enslavement the fundamental feature of slavery was a radical and intense alienation. The slave experience was driven by ongoing efforts to reintegrate oneself into new social networks and the rebuilding of stable communities.¹⁰ This dissertation investigates the nature of the commodification process and how the transformation of African bodies into transferable goods influenced the reformulation of West African cultures in the early modern Atlantic world.

My dissertation examines the structure, organization, and commercial operation of the transatlantic slave trade to the Greater British Caribbean and Spanish America from 1660 to 1807. As the largest entrepôts for slaves arriving in the British New World, Jamaica, Barbados, and South Carolina were the cultural epicenters for some 1.5 million captive West Africans. My research is guided by three important questions: (1) How did the British transatlantic slave trade adjust to fluctuating labor demands across the Caribbean and North America?; (2) How did slave trading merchants respond and adapt to changing political circumstances in West Africa that impacted the supply of slaves?; and (3) How was the marketplace structured in the British Caribbean and North America for the reception, landing, and dispersion of enslaved Africans?

1896); Frederic Bancroft, *Slave Trading in the Old South* (Baltimore: J.H. Furst Company, 1931); Eric Eustace Williams, *Capitalism & Slavery* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1944); Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington: Howard University Press, 1972).

¹⁰ Joseph C. Miller, *The Problem of Slavery as History: A Global Approach* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

In the 1550s, Portuguese and Spanish traders began the greatest drama in human history – the transatlantic slave trade. Based on primary sources from over three countries and more than thirty archives, this study explores the structure and organization of the transatlantic slave trade to analyze transformations of relationships and the commercial operation of the trade in West Africa, the circum-Caribbean, and more broadly the Atlantic world. This broad primary source base will serve as a foundation for analyzing the African side of the slave trade where the politics of power, war, violence and greed directly altered the flow of captives to the coast.

First, my dissertation examines how interactions between West African elites and British imperial administrators shaped trading practices and the nature of cultural transactions to accommodate consumer demands in West Africa. Failing to recognize these cultural dynamics would have ultimately led to the collapse of the burgeoning Caribbean plantation regime. This project makes a compelling argument to reconsider the facile arguments advanced by some scholars such as James Rawley and Hugh Thomas that Europeans dictated the terms of trade for West African slaves. These conclusions are based upon examining the slave trade only from the perspective of Europeans, rather than analyzing the slave trade from an African historical perspective. A detailed examination of the African side of the slave trade demonstrates that elite groups of African merchants engaged in discourses on consumption, trade and finance that directly impacted the evolving forms of the early modern marketplace.

Secondly, I argue that the market for enslaved Africans in British Atlantic destinations was structured in such a way that it reinforced middle passage traumas, creating additional hurdles for cultural retention amongst nascent slave communities.

When the British Empire abolished the transatlantic slave trade in 1807, the Atlantic marketplace had fully mastered the commodification process of turning a person into a piece of property as 7.4 million Africans had already been transported across the Atlantic. However, enslaved Africans in British colonies managed to successfully retain elements of ethnically distinct cultural practices by subtly struggling, and, at times, violently resisting the very marketplace that commercialized their humanity. In order to understand the culture of commodification within the Atlantic marketplace, we must place West Africans, Europeans, and colonials in dialogue with each other to explain the violent processes that gave meaning to their economic, servile and propertied relationships.

The transatlantic slave trade was the largest transoceanic forced migration in human history. It was a highly-specialized, technologically advanced, and coerced mass movement that connected people across four continents resulting in the destruction of numerous ancient societies and the creation of new cultures and identities. The historiography analyzed as background for this dissertation centers on three primary issues: (1) the role of the slave trade in the rise of the American plantation complex and the European economy; (2) the impact and the consequences of the slave trade on African societies; and (3) the volume of the forced migration to the Americas.

In 1944, Eric Williams, a Trinidad-born scholar and doctoral graduate of Oxford University, published one of the first social science studies of slavery, *Capitalism and Slavery*.¹¹ Williams argued for a causal relationship between the rise of industrial capitalism within the mines and factories of England and the abolition of slavery by the British government. Building from scholarship of another Trinidad historian C.L.R.

¹¹ Colin Palmer, *Eric Williams & the Making of the Modern Caribbean* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

James, Williams produced one of the early Atlantic studies demonstrating the impact of the slave trade on Caribbean colonies, and more specifically, the central role of captive African labor and productivity in building the British Empire.¹² Williams' argument came under scrutiny in the 1960s just as scholars began thinking more deeply about the broader connections between Europe, Africa and the Americas. Critics of Williams' scholarship emerged from practically every shadow of the academy, but none more so than British and intellectual historians who argued vehemently against the notion that African slavery contributed meaningfully to Britain's economy.¹³ Imperialism, morality, colonialism, and most importantly wealth, either those with capital or those without it, are categories inextricably woven within Williams thesis and the detractors of his scholarship.¹⁴

Given that the volume of people removed from coastal and inland communities was so large, historians have asked to what degree the trade impacted African societies. In 1969, J.D. Fage published an important essay arguing that the Atlantic slave trade was a catalyst for economic developments already in operation across the continent and

¹² Eric Eustace Williams, *Capitalism & Slavery* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1944); C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins; Toussaint Louverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York: The Dial Press, 1938).

¹³ K. G. Davies, "Empire and Capital," *The Economic History Review* 13, no. 1 (1960): 105–10; Roger T. Anstey, "Capitalism and Slavery: A Critique," *The Economic History Review* 21, no. 2 (1968): 307–20; Stanley L. Engerman, "The Slave Trade and British Capital Formation in the Eighteenth Century: A Comment on the Williams Thesis," *The Business History Review* 46, no. 4 (1972): 430–43; Seymour Drescher, *Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977). Despite the barrage of attacks on Williams' scholarship, his influence has been more meaningful and lasting than his detractors. Barbara L. Solow and Stanley Engerman, eds., *British Capitalism and Caribbean Slavery: The Legacy of Eric Williams* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Heather Cateau and Selwyn H. H. Carrington, eds., *Capitalism and Slavery Fifty Years Later: Eric Eustace Williams - A Reassessment of the Man and His Work* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000); Tanya L Shields, *The Legacy of Eric Williams: Into the Postcolonial Moment* (Jackson: University of Mississippi, 2015).

¹⁴ Williams' scholarship has recently surfaced in globalization studies. Pomeranz thesis on global economic divergence is a sophisticated revival of the Williams thesis. Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

generally had little impact on Africa.¹⁵ In contrast, Guyanese historian Walter Rodney powerfully argued for the destructive impact of the slave trade on African societies positing that in the long-term, the exploitative external trade caused the ‘underdevelopment’ of West Africa.¹⁶ Nigerian historian Joseph Inikori made similar connections between the demographic repercussions and the economic backwardness of some parts of Africa in comparison to more developed Western parts of the world.¹⁷ Building on Rodney’s scholarship, Paul Lovejoy advanced the thesis that slavery became more important as an institution and to the political economy of African societies in response to the disastrous demographic impact of the slave trade.¹⁸ While acknowledging the human cost, David Eltis’ counterfactual assault on the Rodney thesis contends that the slave trade did not cause any significant damage, marginal at most, on sub-Saharan demographics or economy, nor any lasting repercussions on the political economy of African societies.¹⁹ Ultimately an argument for West African stasis, Eltis suggests, primarily through his methodology and quantitative amassing of evidence, that much of Africa remained unchanged overtime whereas the societies in the Americas, changed dramatically from the population shifts inherent to the slave trade. However, sweeping generalizations of Africa do not hold water when applied to specific regions where European ships carried away millions of slaves. Robin Law’s scholarship on the Slave Coast, particularly his work on the militarized Kingdoms of Dahomey and Oyo,

¹⁵ J. D. Fage, “Slavery and the Slave Trade in the Context of West African History,” *The Journal of African History* 10, no. 3 (1969): 393–404.

¹⁶ Walter Rodney, *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast, 1545-1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970); *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington: Howard University Press, 1972).

¹⁷ J. E. Inikori, ed., *Forced Migration: The Impact of the Export Slave Trade on African Societies* (London: Hutchinson, 1982).

¹⁸ Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa*, Third Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

¹⁹ David Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

demonstrates unequivocally the negative impact the slave trade had on local politics and demographics.²⁰

Directly related to the two previously discussed themes of the relationship between the slave trade, the British economy and its consequences on African societies, is the challenge historians took up to measure the volume of captive Africans that departed on European ships. This scholarship was born out of Philip Curtin's groundbreaking *The Slave Trade: A Census*, published in 1969. Curtin's methodology applied modern demographic and statistical analysis to the available published data, which demonstrated the potential reliability of quantitative techniques for measuring the scope of the slave trade. At the same time, Curtin's new estimate of 9.5 million slaves drastically lowered previous assumptions by upwards of 30 percent.²¹ Perhaps the most important critique of Curtin's census was produced by Joseph Inikori who, aside from his methodological criticism, supplied new estimates on the volume of the British slave trade based on archival evidence.²² Inikori's assessment provided more reliable assumptions on unavailable data and measured up, rather than down, the total volume of exports. Further reassessments by Robert Stein on the French slave trade, David Eltis on the mid-nineteenth century, and Roger Antsey on the American slave trade each produced upward revisions on Curtin's estimates.²³ As for Spanish America, Colin Palmer produced

²⁰ Robin Law, *The Oyo Empire, C.1600-C.1836: A West African Imperialism in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977); *The Slave Coast of West Africa, 1550-1750: The Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on an African Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). Robin Law, *The Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade Upon Africa* (Zürich: Lit, 2008).

²¹ Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade; A Census* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969).

²² J. E. Inikori, "Measuring the Atlantic Slave Trade: An Assessment of Curtin and Anstey," *The Journal of African History* 17, no. 2 (1976): 197–223.

²³ Robert Stein, "Measuring the French Slave Trade, 1713-1792/3," *The Journal of African History* 19, no. 4 (1978): 515–21; David Eltis, "The Export of Slaves from Africa, 1821-1843," *The Journal of Economic History* 37, no. 2 (1977): 409–33; Roger Anstey, "The Volume of the North-American Slave-Carrying Trade from Africa, 1761-1810," *Revue Française D'histoire D'outre-Mer* 62, no. 226 (1975): 47–66.

upward revisions for the late sixteenth and eighteenth century.²⁴ This outpouring of research culminated in the *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* published in 1999, which contained information on over 27,000 transatlantic slave voyages.²⁵ However, this first version of the database heavily underrepresented Latin American slaving expeditions. In 2008, the estimates were again revised further upwards to 34,850 voyages accounting more accurately for previous gaps in the study of the Brazilian slave trade.²⁶ The scholarship on the volume of captives carried to the Americas remains vibrant. Consequently, the estimated demographics of the slave trade continue to climb to troubling new heights.²⁷ The legacy of the voyages database has yet to be decided as a turning-point for modern historiography, yet its influence has been significant as it continues to be the starting point for many historians investigating the African Diaspora, dots the footnotes of almost all recent scholarship on the slave trade, and will be found in this dissertation as well.

The temporal focus of this project runs from the 1660s through 1807 when the British slave trade legally ended. During this period, British ships were the largest carriers by volume of Africans to the Americas. In an era when European competition for

²⁴ Colin A. Palmer, *Slaves of the White God: Blacks in Mexico, 1570-1650* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976); *Human Cargoes: The British Slave Trade to Spanish America, 1700-1739* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981).

²⁵ David Eltis et al., eds., *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A Database on CD-ROM* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). In 2001, a special issue of *The William and Mary Quarterly* was devoted to the findings of the first transatlantic slave trade database. Contributors included Ralph Austen, Bernard Bailyn, Steven Behrendt, David Brion Davis, David Eltis, Stanley Engerman, David Geggus, and Lorena Walsh.

²⁶ David Eltis and David Richardson, eds., *Extending the Frontiers: Essays on the New Transatlantic Slave Trade Database* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); David Eltis and David Richardson, *Atlas of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); David Richardson and Filipa Ribeiro da Silva, eds., *Networks and Trans-Cultural Exchange: Slave Trading in the South Atlantic, 1590-1867* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2015).

²⁷ Alex Borucki, David Eltis, and David Wheat, "Atlantic History and the Slave Trade to Spanish America," *The American Historical Review* 120, no. 2 (2015): 433–61.

slaves was at its height, Anglophone ship captains formed commercial alliances throughout much of West Africa. The captive Africans carried in British ships were destined for colonies in the Caribbean and North America, the majority disembarking in Jamaica, Barbados, and South Carolina. From this immense migration, a large paper trail was constructed and fortunately, much of it, though certainly not all of it, was preserved and accessible for consultation. For example, the organizational records of the RAC, provide detailed accounts of the early organizational structure of the company, trading relationships in West Africa, the various types of goods and products required for trading, diplomatic treaties with West African monarchs, depictions of West African political cultures, and the intended destinations of Africans leaving the coast. The business papers of merchants and traders in the Americas that consigned the African cargos demonstrate fluctuations in labor demands in response to the Atlantic marketplace. To understand the operation of the transatlantic slave trade, we must factor in the African side of the trade where the politics of power, war, violence and greed directly impacted the flow of captives to the coast.

This dissertation approaches the archive of slavery as a mortuary, a solemn space where the living are once again able to view the dead, a scholarship pioneered by João José Reis.²⁸ This project revisits those archives in order to reexamine the paper trail that follows Africans to the slave ships. Rather than losing Africans as they disappeared beneath the ship's deck, I follow them into the cramped quarters where death permeated. I pick up their trail as they depart from the ships and cross over a threshold into a new

²⁸ Reis' innovative work was first published in 1991 as *A Morte é Uma Festa: Ritos Fúnebre e Revolta Popular No Brasil Do Século Xix* (São Paulo, SP: Companhia das Letras, 1991). A translated version appeared in 2003 as *Death Is a Festival: Funeral Rites and Rebellion in Nineteenth-Century Brazil* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

terrain where traversing the gangway between life and death took on new meaning.²⁹

Since the majority of the records used in this dissertation were created by colonists invested in the preservation and expansion of British hegemony in all parts of the Atlantic world, this project approaches archival source material by reading against the grain and listening for the silences within the documents for what is not written as much as the actual textual remnants.³⁰

How enslaved Africans adapted to their new surroundings in the Americas to forge new communities and the extent to which those communities were founded on African cultures, identities, languages, and religions has been the subject of a long and intense debate among historians. It has been thirty years since sociologist Orlando Patterson posited a metaphorical 'social death' as the basic condition of slavery, however, a number of recent studies have demonstrated how this academic artifact remains an important concept.³¹ Stephanie Smallwood reimagines the concept of social death as an experience of self to demonstrate how captives' responses shaped the kind of world the survivors were able to create in the Americas.³² Vincent Brown's work on the politics of mortuary rituals in Jamaica - a milieu where death was pervasive for both European and West African populations - is a testament to how slavery destroyed individuals, but also generated American societies rich in West African cultural traditions.³³ Igbo identity was

²⁹ Saidiya V. Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007); Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (2008): 1–14.

³⁰ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, 1995); Michel Foucault, "Lives of Infamous Men," in James D. Faubion, ed., *The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984* (New York, 1997), vol. 3: 157–175.

³¹ Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

³² Stephanie E Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).

³³ Vincent Brown, *The Reaper's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2008).

a by-product of dislocation and European violence in the transatlantic slave trade from the Bight of Biafra to the Americas.³⁴ This dissertation engages with Brown's call for more studies addressing the 'politics of survival' by considering the various responses, strategies, and coping mechanisms Africans applied as they encountered the marketplace through Atlantic slavery.³⁵

In coastal West Africa, where for centuries Europeans and elite West Africans maintained relationships, the opportunities for captives to regain their freedom were much more likely than in the Americas. Nation-state boundaries and academic specialization have overshadowed the fluidity of commercial, cultural, and social exchange parameters that defined coastal West Africa. Rebecca Scott and Jean M. Hébrard have shown that for both enslaved and free Africans the nature of freedom throughout the Atlantic world was a highly contingent phenomenon.³⁶ During the trek to the slave ship, and beneath the ship's decks waiting for a captain to complete his allotment of captives, the window for returning to one's community could be seized if opportunity afforded and circumstances aligned. Victor Turner's notion of liminal spaces and more recently Kevin Dawson's work on African pilots in the Atlantic world, will also serve as a framework to examine how coastal West Africa and Sullivan's Island, South Carolina were liminal spaces where enslavement, freedom, life and death were tenuous and highly contested.³⁷

³⁴ Alexander X. Byrd, *Captives and Voyagers: Black Migrants across the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008).

³⁵ Vincent Brown, "Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery," *American Historical Review* 114, no. 5 (December 2009): 1231–49.

³⁶ Rebecca J. Scott and Jean M. Hébrard, *Freedom Papers: An Atlantic Odyssey in the Age of Emancipation* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2012).

³⁷ Victor Turner, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites of Passage," in *The Forest of Symbols* (Ithaca, 1967); Kevin Dawson, "Enslaved Ship Pilots in the Age of Revolutions: Challenging Notions of

In organizing this dissertation, I have resisted the temptation to tightly link a single exporting region of West Africa with a single importing region of the Americas as other scholars have done because the transatlantic slave trade was not as neatly organized as this approach suggests. The geographical focus of my dissertation is broad and diverse because the organization and operation of the transatlantic slave trade was constantly changing. As established professional traders trafficking human beings across the Atlantic Ocean, organizers of the commerce responded directly to human behavior such as political uprisings, famine, drought or wars occurring in West Africa, Europe and the Americas. Consequently, the slave trade was an evolving, carnivorous serpentine hydra that consumed nearly as many lives as it subjected to coerced migration. Major exporting regions fluctuated across the nearly four hundred years of the slave trade. For example, prior to 1600, Senegambia, the northern most region of West Africa, was the primary destination for European ships carrying captives to the Americas. However, beginning in the early seventeenth century, an intensification of Portuguese colonization in Angola transformed West Central Africa into the largest exporter of captives. Just as the major exporting regions of West Africa fluctuated, so too did the markets in the Americas where captives disembarked. For example, in the 1630s, the largest English colony was Providence Island.³⁸ However, with the introduction of sugar cane to Barbados in the 1640s, the volume of captive Africans disembarking on the island increased dramatically. European wars and the treaties that resolved them were another important factor that impacted the organization of the transatlantic slave trade. In sum, to understand the

Race and Slavery between the Boundaries of Land and Sea,” *Journal of Social History* 47 (Fall 2013), 71-100.

³⁸ For the colony’s labor strategies see Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Providence Island, 1630-1641: The Other Puritan Colony* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 149-180.

operation of the slave trade it is necessary to apply an Atlantic perspective that incorporates the various African, European and colonial factors shaping the serial dislocation of captive Africans.

In chapter one, I introduce and use the term “labor wars” as an organizing and analytical tool to explain the nature of England’s conflicts with Spain in the first half of the eighteenth century. Traditionally referred to as the War of Spanish Succession (1701-1712), this conflict was in fact one of England’s first labor war. Perhaps not as well-known as the fights over the enclosure of the commons studied by neo-Marxist social historians Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, among others, it was, however, an international war over access to disciplined labor regimes with several labor-centered imperial goals in mind.³⁹ Of utmost importance was wresting away the *asiento* from France and protecting the slave trading interests of Jamaican merchants. Just ten days after Spain awarded the *asiento* to France, officials in London and Amsterdam formed their own alliance. While fears of a unified Bourbon empire loomed, the primary reason why London allied with Amsterdam was because Spain awarded the *asiento* contract to French promoters of the *Compagnie de Guinée*. The pact between England and the Dutch, signed in September 1701, clearly indicates the centrality of commerce related to the slave trade and the control of labor channels as dual imperial pursuits. The treaty stated that the introduction of French slave ships would “utterly destroy...the free intercourse of navigation and commerce which the English and Dutch” enjoyed in the

³⁹ Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000). According to Marx, “the robbery of the common lands... and its transformation into modern private property... made the soil part and parcel of capital.” Marx, *Capital*, Volume 1, chapter 27. In addition to Marx, Linebaugh and Rediker draw inspiration from Christopher Hill’s scholarship. Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down; Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (London: Temple Smith, 1972).

Indies. The Caribbean lobby was most adamant “that the French shall never get possession” of Spanish markets where English slaves were sold at increasing prices.⁴⁰ At the conclusion of the first labor war in 1712, Spain awarded the *asiento* to the South Sea Company (SSC). With battlefield victories strewn across the globe, England succeeded in attaining its most important imperial goal during the conflict; wrestling the *asiento* from the French for its own.

For a quarter of a century, SSC ships delivered captive Africans to Spanish American markets. However, by the mid-1730s Spanish authorities, ever more suspicious that increasing amounts of wealth were being siphoned off from reaching Madrid, refused to make full restitution for claims against English shipping. England’s second labor war erupted in 1739 and the *asiento* trade to Spanish America came to an abrupt conclusion. This labor war, much like the first, would draw on for over a decade. Richard Pares and other historians have characterized the war that erupted in 1739 as a “war for trade” but this oversimplification minimizes the role of the slave trade to merely an extension of the general commercial conflicts between European powers in the Caribbean.⁴¹ When Spain granted the *asiento* to France in 1701, Madrid officials indicated unequivocally to rival nations that the only legal course for breaking Spain’s monopoly on the Indies was through the slave trade. England’s imperial goal during the labor wars of the eighteenth century was to achieve control over the flow of captive Africans to Spanish markets in the Americas. In essence, the slave trade was the key that opened the door to the Spanish

⁴⁰ Charles Jenkinson, *A Collection of All the Treaties of Peace, Alliance, and Commerce, Between Great-Britain and Other Powers, from the Treaty Signed at Munster in 1648, to the Treaties Signed at Paris in 1783* (London: Printed for J. Debrett, 1785), 40-5.

⁴¹ Richard Pares, *War and Trade in the West Indies, 1739-1763* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1936); Stanley J. Stein and Barbara H. Stein, *Silver, Trade, and War: Spain and America in the Making of Early Modern Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000); Henry Kamen, *Spain’s Road to Empire: The Making of a World Power, 1492-1763* (London: Allen Lane, 2002).

Indies. England fought two labor wars known as the War of Spanish Succession (1701-1713) and the War of Jenkins Ear (1739-1748) in the first half of the eighteenth century to get those keys and retain them for as long as possible.

The contradictions of free and coerced migration to the Americas has produced widely differing interpretations of the settlement of the Americas. Chapter one examines the convergence of the slave ship *Tryal* and the *Lydia*, a ship that carried white settlers from Rotterdam in 1744, to reveal how the two migratory streams more often overlapped and converged as opposed to occurring in isolation of each other. The two voyages collided in a spectacular fashion because of legislation passed in South Carolina in the wake of the 1739 Stono Rebellion that was designed to decrease the enslaved African population and at the same time, increase the volume of white settlers on the colony's fringes. By interrogating the specific political events and cultural factors in Carolina, this chapter demonstrates how paying close attention to locality informed larger migratory patterns of the transatlantic slave trade and influenced outcomes for captive Africans disembarking in the Americas.

The debate regarding whether Europeans or West Africans controlled commercial aspects of the transatlantic slave trade is taken up in chapter two. By the mid-seventeenth century, Whydah, located in the region of West Africa known as the Slave Coast, was an important embarkation point for the transatlantic slave trade where governing elites formed political and commercial relationships within expansive hemispheric networks that bridged the ocean. This chapter focuses on middling traders of the RAC to understand the nature of political authority and the formation of power relationships in the operation of the slave trade within the Kingdom of Whydah, and the Slave Coast

more broadly. While studies of the slave trade generally emphasize the necessity of working relationships between Africans and Europeans to operate and function efficiently, this chapter focuses on a particularly remarkable incident when these relationships collided in a most destructive and violent manner. In 1714 a violent confrontation resulted in the eviction of Joseph Blaney, governor of Whydah, and the consolidation of the RAC's factories on the Slave Coast. This chapter argues that Blaney was unable to successfully manage the factory because he did not implement the model of commercial diplomacy outlined by his predecessors, nor adhere to company directives for engaging with European trade representatives. It is a telling example of the dynamic political, commercial, and military power that elites wielded on the Slave Coast.

In 1713, as a result of shrewd negotiating tactics, Spain reluctantly awarded the highly coveted *asiento* contract to the SSC. It was an event that marked a major transition in Spanish colonial policy and in the operation of the transatlantic slave trade to the Americas. The RAC's monopoly in West Africa meant that the SSC had to contract with Royal African Company for slaves. Chapter three charts the rise and fall of the *asiento* trade in Southeast Africa with the eventual return to Loango in West Central Africa. It focuses on the operation of the *asiento* trade to Buenos Aires, the only Spanish market to receive captive Africans directly from Africa. This chapter argues that the SSC looked to Madagascar as a practical alternative for captives because the RAC failed to produce the promised volume of slaves as a result of its limited access to West African labor supply centers. The SSC's search for captives was directly related to Joseph Blaney's terrible mismanagement of the RAC's factories on the Slave Coast, which I discussed in detail in chapter two. The consequences of the Blaney incident at Whydah sent shockwaves across

the Atlantic and beyond as societies in Madagascar would feel the effects as well in the coming years. The Madagascar strategy was informed by the perception that the island was more accessible and less competitive market where slaves could be purchased cheaply. The attempt to exploit Indian Ocean labor markets and connect them with the plantation zones of the Americas was a calculated, yet risky maneuver with potentially high financial rewards for the company. This chapter argues that the company's strategy was unsuccessful because of the political structure of Malagasy society, cultural characteristics of the Malagasy people, and the limited supply of the Madagascar market.

In the post-1763 Atlantic world, a new form of colonialism born out of the violent collision between British ambition and European competition for accumulation of international capital, was no longer constrained in North America by geographical limitations or rival claims. British success in the Seven Years' War had a radical effect on the geography of slave arrivals to Caribbean plantation zones. Chapter four examines the organization and operation of the circum-Caribbean intercolonial slave trade from the 1680s-1780s, with particular attention paid to the decades after the Seven Years' War. As imperial warfare engulfed the Atlantic basin in the eighteenth century, the intercolonial slave trade was an important strategy in the rise of Britain as the undisputed leader in overseas colonization. Caribbean plantation productivity was the driving force behind commercial booms and personal fortunes. However, in British East Florida new commercial innovations and imperial strategies fell short in supplying the necessary capital and enslaved laborers to transform the sub-tropical lands into a profitable overseas possession. Britain attempted to implement a more centrally administered empire based on Spanish models, but the streamlining of imperial institutions did not unravel the

problems associated with supplying captives directly from West Africa to East Florida. This chapter shows how the organizational limitations of the transatlantic slave trade, resulting in a labor-shortage problem in East Florida, was resolved locally with the assistance of like-minded colonists in neighboring settlements.

The function of the transatlantic slave trade was the transformation of captive Africans into transferable commodities for the Atlantic marketplace. As the largest port in colonial South Carolina, Charleston was the most important entrepôt for ships in the transatlantic and intercolonial slave trades to British North America. On Sullivan's Island, the spit of sand at the mouth of Charleston's harbor, enslaved people from West Africa disembarked for inspection. Chapter five re-examines Sullivan's Island as a formative commodification terminal in the lives of involuntary African migrants. It argues that for captive Africans the island was a liminal space where whites attempted to rejuvenate the bodies that ship captains violently oppressed. Upon arriving in South Carolina, quarantine was the first phase in the commodification process that continued the transformation African bodies into transferable products. The quarantine process directly impacted the volume of enslaved Africans arriving in South Carolina in several important ways. First, it decreased the rate at which slaves could be processed, sold and put to work. Second, as arriving slave cargoes were delayed from landing at a ready market, revenue streams slowed and would be creditors became outstanding debtors. Third, the loss of captive bodies during the quarantine stage deterred some British merchants from sending their ships to Charleston; instead seeking out Caribbean markets where regulations were less stringent or unenforced. Lastly, the quarantine process had

immediate and enduring consequences for the Africans arriving in Carolina by severing bonds and relationships forged in crossing the Atlantic.

In colonial South Carolina, the ethnic origins of enslaved Africans was very important to slave owners intent on transforming the landscape into a profitable resource, as has been intensely studied for over 40 years. Perhaps the best example indicating the importance of ethnicity in the colony is the 1739 Stono Rebellion that quickly became synonymous with Africans originating from the Congo and Angola regions in West Central Africa. Chapter six examines the slave sales account of some 3,359 captive Africans disembarking in Charleston between 1750 and 1760. It pays particularly close attention to the purchasing patterns of St. Paul Parish planters, the location of the Stono Rebellion. Based on the assumption that the violent uprising led by Congolese slaves was witnessed and remembered by residents of St. Paul Parish, some historians have suggested that potential buyers from that parish would not seek out Congolese captives in the Charleston marketplace.⁴² However, this chapter argues that St. Paul planters actively purchased captive Congolese when alternative laborers of different ethnic origins were readily available from the city's slave dealers. Furthermore, by identifying the parishes in which planters resided, and thus African migratory patterns across the region, this chapter shows that St. Paul planters preferred Congolese laborers to Upper Guineans embarking from Senegambia and Sierra Leone.

⁴² Margaret Washington Creel, *A Peculiar People: Slave Religion and Community-Culture Among the Gullahs* (New York: New York University Press, 1988); Michael Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Jason R. Young, *Rituals of Resistance: African Atlantic Religion in Kongo and the Lowcountry South in the Era of Slavery* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007).

For the overwhelming majority of the captive Africans snared in the slaver's dragnet, freedom was a dream that never became reality. This final chapter examines how captive Muslims exploited state institutions within Caribbean societies to test the limits of freedom and bondage. Abel Conder and Mahamut were Muslim men from Northern Morocco. They were not elites nor of noble birth. Rather they were informed literate soldiers, capable sailors, willing contractual servants, and reluctant slaves. Their petition for freedom offers up a rare testimony into the multivalent world of subaltern populations traversing Atlantic shipping lanes destined for the deadly sugar and rice fields that dominated the Torrid Zone. This chapter utilizes Abel Conder and Mahamut's petition and their story to challenge discursive notions on the slave trade, enslavement, and how people valued by the amount of labor that could be extracted from their bodies contested and transformed the institutions that held them captive. Their neglected petition is an important example illustrating how captive Africans resisted against European imperialism, negotiated the uncertainties of freedom and captivity, and adapted to the challenges they confronted in crossing imperial boundaries. By excavating Abel Conder and Mahamut's freedom petition and bringing it to light, we recover a small fragment of their captive narrative and contest the pervasiveness of colonial erasures.

The broad geographical focus of this dissertation is a reflection of the organization and operation of the transatlantic slave trade that evolved over time and adapted to various contingencies and variables across the Atlantic world. This approach informs the historical operation of the trade because, as Alexander Byrd has proposed, in "important ways - in time and in the minds of their protagonists - this was how they

unfolded.”⁴³ That it lasted nearly four hundred years is a testament to its flexibility and profitability. The impact of the slave trade was not limited to the coastal communities where West African elites negotiated and exchanged captive Africans for firearms and other manufactured goods. The lasting repercussions were felt far into the interior of Africa where the kidnapping raids occurred. Perhaps most deeply the impact of the slave trade was felt in the Americas, specifically in the communities where enslaved people attempted to reformulate the human bonds and relationships that were so savagely severed. That the origins of capitalism and racism were born from similar processes that overlapped with the height of the transatlantic slave trade was not a coincidence. By paying close attention to the African side of the trade in shaping these modern historical processes, this dissertation speaks to those larger themes by explaining how the transformations that took place during the transatlantic slave in the conversion of human beings into commodities are not relegated to a frozen past, but relevant and present today.

⁴³ Alexander X. Byrd, *Captives and Voyagers: Black Migrants across the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008), 4.

CHAPTER 1

BRITISH AND SPANISH LABOR WARS: THE CHALLENGES AND CONTINGENCIES OF ORGANIZING MIGRATION IN THE TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

As the captive Igbo men climbed down the rope ladder draped over the side of the ship and into the longboat, they could hear the people on shore speaking a different language than those that held them captive. Their captors were English sailors of the ship *Tryal* that had arrived off the northern coast of Cuba in December 1744. On shore were residents of Matanzas, an important Spanish port on the island. Also in the longboat were several large bundles of British manufactured goods highly coveted by island consumers because of Spain's restrictive commercial policies towards her colonies. Similarly, the demand for captive Africans on the island and the profits reaped from the sales, compelled English traders to test the effectiveness of Spanish contraband efforts. The risks and dangers of participating in illicit trade with Spanish colonies were palpable as were the consequences for getting caught. Capt. William Jefferis kept an eye out for approaching Spanish *guarda costas* that plied the Cuban shores for illegal traders. The number of Igbo captives sold that day is unclear. Shortly after making contact with Matanzas residents, a Spanish war ship appeared on the horizon and quickly seized the *Tryal*, the ship's cargo and the Igbo captives on board. The politics of power, war and violence fueled by an

increasingly monetized, capitalist Atlantic world ignited large-scale social upheaval in every part of the hemisphere. The voyage of the *Tryal* and the captive Igbo on board illustrates the ways in which the uncertainties of locality and contingency shaped transatlantic migration in the early modern era.

The sequence of events that led to the *Tryal*'s capture off the coast of Cuba in December 1744 were just as sophisticated in their origin as they were in their outcome. The selling of captive Igbo slaves was not the primary purpose of the *Tryal*'s voyage to Havana. To be sure, the voyage of the *Tryal* was organized by Richard Hill, a Charleston merchant, and several London investors to purchase captives at Calabar, a port in the Bight of Biafra and carry them to South Carolina. But the redirecting of the ship south towards Cuba was a response to shifting Atlantic currents guided by increasing levels of violence between Britain and Spain that overlapped with colonial legislation to control the volume of Africans sold in Carolina. Most planters and merchants in Carolina were elated when they heard that Britain and Spain were at a state of war.¹ Many believed this was an opportunity to secure provincial borders and eliminate the influence that the promise of Spanish freedom held over the colony's enslaved Africans.² However, the outbreak of the Stono Rebellion in September 1739 caused many white colonists to check their premature elation over war with Spain and recalibrate the extent of domestic unrest that imperial conflicts could generate.³ Legislation passed in response to the Stono uprising enacted harsh penalties on new Africans disembarking in the colony. In addition to limiting the number of new Africans in the province, the statute established a fund

¹ Robert Pringle to John Richards, 26 September 1739, in Walter B. Edgar, ed., *The Letterbook of Robert Pringle* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1972), 174-75

² Thomas Burton to Richard Burton, 21 October 1740, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston.

³ Joel S. Berson, "How the Stono Rebels Learned of Britain's War with Spain," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 110, no. 1/2 (2009): 53-68.

designed to prevent future “fatal mischiefs” by “introducing a proportionable number of white inhabitants...for better settling the frontiers.”⁴ The legislation lapsed in July 1744 and the organizers set the voyage in motion so that the *Tryal* would arrive soon thereafter to avoid the punitive taxes. At the same time, the capture of a ship, the *Lydia* that departed from Holland with several hundred new white settlers in route to South Carolina, was the stimulus for the *Tryal*’s capture off the coast of Cuba.

The convergence of the *Tryal* and the *Lydia* is a remarkable example of the twisted fortunes cast from the shadows of voluntary and forced migration in the early modern era. The contradictions of free and coerced migration to the Americas has produced widely differing interpretations of the settlement of the Americas. As David Eltis has shown the “tendency to write of the two immigrants flows...in isolation” has left a void in the historiography. However, the two groups shared at least two common features. Industrialization stimulated both movements and the desire to own land was a central motive for free migrants and emancipated Africans.⁵ The voyages of the *Tryal* and the *Lydia* provide evidence of the value of such an approach and illustrate how the two migration streams more often overlapped and converged as opposed to occurring in isolation of each other. For example, the same legislation designed to decrease the enslaved African population in Carolina and increase the volume of white settlers on the colony’s fringes collided in spectacular fashion. The potential colonists on board the *Lydia* were captured as a result of Britain’s war with Spain and no more than a handful ever made it to the colony. As for the captive Africans on board the *Tryal*, less than half

⁴ The statute was entitled “An act for the better strengthening of this province by granting to His Majesty certain taxes and impositions on the purchasers of negroes imported.” Thomas Cooper and David McCord, eds., *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina* (Columbia: Printed by A. S. Johnston, 1836), vol. 3:556-68.

⁵ David Eltis, “Free and Coerced Transatlantic Migrations: Some Comparisons,” *The American Historical Review* 88, no. 2 (1983), 251 (quote), 267.

disembarked in Charleston while the rest were scattered by the merciless winds of fortune to the shores of the Bahamas and Cuba. Factors at the local level in Carolina stimulated the organization of the *Tryal* and the *Lydia*, yet both voyages were entangled with larger Atlantic-wide commercial networks and migratory patterns.⁶ Both enterprises failed to meet their objectives because imperial diplomacy collapsed, combined with an insatiable appetite for private profits at the local level resulting in a renewal of hostilities between Spain and Britain.⁷ The politics of power, war, violence and greed whipped the vortex of the Atlantic economy into a turbulent frenzy with little regard for the people swept up in its wake.

One of the challenges of Atlantic history and transatlantic slave trade studies is the emphasis on generalizations about various national and imperial processes.⁸ Indeed, processes of cultural and ethnic “uprootings and regroundings” were Atlantic in scope.⁹ However, these processes were driven by local variables, specifically micro-politics, contingency, geography, demography and other material conditions that varied across space and time.¹⁰ Migration, free and coerced, was the lifeblood that gave form and function to the Atlantic world economy, its rhythmic fast-paced pulsing heart. As

⁶ Eliga H. Gould, “Entangled Histories, Entangled Worlds: The English-Speaking Atlantic as a Spanish Periphery,” *The American Historical Review* 112, no. 3 (2007): 764–86.

⁷ Sean Kelley has suggested that by stressing the “connective qualities of the Atlantic, we risk overlooking important complicating factors. Researchers in the field frequently encounter frayed connections in otherwise smooth-running transoceanic networks. All of this highlights a central tension in the Atlantic World: commercial networks that were efficient for their time were simultaneously riddled with seemingly inefficient disjunctures.” Sean M. Kelley, *The Voyage of the Slave Ship Hare: A Journey into Captivity from Sierra Leone to South Carolina* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 10.

⁸ Alison Games, “Atlantic History: Definitions, Challenges, and Opportunities,” *The American Historical Review* 111, no. 3 (2006): 741–57.

⁹ Sara Ahmed, Claudia Castañeda, Anne-Marie Fortier, Mimi Sheller, “Uprootings/regroundings: questions of home and migration,” in Sara Ahmed, ed., *Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration* (Oxford: Berg, 2003), 1-19.

¹⁰ James Sidbury and Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, “Mapping Ethnogenesis in the Early Modern Atlantic,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 68, no. 2 (April 2011): 184.

Alexander Byrd has shown migration was not the transplantation of a particular society from place to place but rather the “vehicle whereby societies were transformed between” those places.¹¹ The politics of power and violence fueled the dislocation and the scattering of millions of West Africans across the Atlantic world. Far too often the celebratory retellings of cultural hybridity within enslaved communities of the Americas succumb to indolence and haphazardly mute the violence foregrounding these processes.¹² This chapter attempts to “bring order to the seemingly chaotic series of histories” that diverged, collided and materialized in the transatlantic slave trade by paying close attention to the local variables specific to each story.¹³ In particular, this chapter asks how fluctuating factors at the local level influenced the development of commercial relationships in West Africa, Atlantic migratory outcomes and settlement patterns in the Caribbean. How were the politics of power, violence and greed entangled with larger Atlantic processes? These questions and the answers provided, will illustrate the challenges of transporting enslaved Africans to the Americas, the inherent dangers of hemispheric migration between and across empires and the countless variables each voyage confronted along the way.

The organizers of the *Tryal* dispatched the ship to the Bight of Biafra because of the regions sophisticated supply networks that reached far into the interior.¹⁴ The ports of

¹¹ Alexander X. Byrd, *Captives and Voyagers: Black Migrants across the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008), 7. The story of the slave trade from the Bight of Biafra to South Carolina and the story of the journeys made by free German migrants need to be told together “because in important ways—in time and in the minds of their protagonists—this was how they unfolded.” (p4.)

¹² James H. Sweet, “The Quiet Violence of Ethnogenesis,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 68, no. 2 (2011): 209–14.

¹³ James Sidbury and Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, “On the Genesis of Destruction, and Other Missing Subjects,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 68, no. 2 (2011): 242.

¹⁴ In his memoir, Equiano wrote that after he was kidnapped and carried to the coast he “saw many convenient well-built sheds along the roads, at proper distances, to accommodate the merchants and

the Bight of Biafra quickly rose to a place of prominence for British ships in the 1740s because of its reputation for quickly dispatching ships; turnaround time was by far the most important factor for a voyage's success.¹⁵ Cutoff from slave supply networks for over three years, slave dealers and planters in Carolina were more than eager for new Africans. By interrogating the specific political events and cultural factors in Carolina, this chapter demonstrates how paying close attention to locality informed larger migratory patterns of the Atlantic slave trade to Americas and influenced outcomes for captive Africans disembarking in the Greater Caribbean.¹⁶ Far too often, too great an emphasis is placed on the role of the metropole in guiding colonial endeavors, relegating subjects residing in the Americas and West Africa to passive observers in early modern events and outcomes.¹⁷ By incorporating elements of colonial history with methodologies of African Diaspora studies, this chapter demonstrates the active role ambitious British subjects, Biafran elites and captive Africans played in shaping the structure and outcomes in the transatlantic slave trade.

travelers." Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (London: Printed for and sold by The Author, 1789), 56.

¹⁵ Ugo Nwokeji made an important methodological contribution to our understanding of the slave trade at the Bight of Biafra by analyzing for the first time the average rate of the daily number of captives loaded per vessel. This was important because it accounted for the unevenness of the data across differing ship sizes and days spent at ports. G. Ugo Nwokeji, *The Slave Trade and Culture in the Bight of Biafra: An African Society in the Atlantic World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 22- 52, esp. 40-42.

¹⁶ Historians utilizing a single voyage to re-create the experience of the slave trade have made important contributions to our understanding of how captives responded to enslavement and the operation of the slave trade in West Africa. These works borrow important microhistory methodologies while maintaining the contextual framework of the Atlantic world to explain the processes at work. Sean M. Kelley, *The Voyage of the Slave Ship Hare: A Journey into Captivity from Sierra Leone to South Carolina* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016); Robert W. Harms, *The Diligent: A Voyage Through the Worlds of the Slave Trade* (New York: Basic Books, 2002); Bruce L. Mouser, ed., *A Slaving Voyage to Africa and Jamaica: The Log of the Sandown, 1793-1794* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).

¹⁷ On the need for contextualized colonial histories see, Jack P. Greene, "Comparing Early Modern American Worlds: Some Reflections on the Promise of a Hemispheric Perspective," *History Compass* 1, no. 1 (2003).

“No other way of increasing their estate.” Promoting the Slave Trade at Home and Abroad

In settlements across the Greater Caribbean, political stability was directly linked to the tenuous relationship between the captive African community and the larger white population.¹⁸ This relationship often teetered like an unstable powder keg. Moreover, this relationship was entangled with larger migratory patterns of the transatlantic slave trade. The 1739 Stono Rebellion sent shockwaves across South Carolina and Georgia as colonists frantically mobilized to putdown the armed insurgents. Led by a group of well-trained Congolese from West Central Africa, the insurgents killed nearly two dozen whites and burned several plantations in their attempt for freedom.¹⁹ In the aftermath of the uprising, the colonial assembly passed two distinct pieces of legislation; the first directly impacted the governance of the enslaved population and the second placed a chokehold on the volume of new Africans arriving in the colony.²⁰ The anti-slave trade bill restricting new Africans was passed in April 1740 and commenced in July 1741 for three years. By placing an additional tax of £100, an amount ten times higher than before the uprising on incoming slaves, the colony’s legislative elites sent a strong message to slave trading firms in Britain; no more slaves. Charleston merchant Robert Pringle noted

¹⁸ Matthew Mulcahy, *Hubs of Empire: The Southeastern Lowcountry and British Caribbean* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014); David Barry Gaspar, *Bondmen & Rebels: A Study of Master-Slave Relations in Antigua, with Implications for Colonial British America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985).

¹⁹ The Stono rebels as insurgents was a panel theme at a 2011 symposium “War by another Means: Perspectives on Insurgencies” held at the South Carolina Department of Archives and History. On the ethnic origins of the rebels see, John K. Thornton, “African Dimensions of the Stono Rebellion,” *The American Historical Review* 96, no. 4 (1991): 1101–13.

²⁰ “An Act for better ordering and governing Negroes and other slaves in this province,” Thomas Cooper and David McCord, eds., *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina* (Columbia: Printed by A. S. Johnston, 1836), vol. 7:397-417.

that the new tax on captive Africans was “equal to a prohibition” but supported the new legislation because it buttressed white hegemony in the colony.²¹

The slave trade was big business in Carolina. In the decades leading up to the Stono Rebellion, Carolina merchants specializing in the slave trade grew rich as the colony’s increasing demand for enslaved Africans coalesced with British imperial interests in West Africa.²² During the 1720s and 1730s, the brothers Samuel and Joseph Wragg were by far the leading slave merchants associated with the colony.²³ From London, Samuel Wragg organized the voyages; in Charleston Joseph was responsible for selling the slaves and collecting debts.²⁴ From 1722 to 1727, Samuel Wragg contracted with the Royal African Company to transport four cargoes of slaves from Senegambia to Carolina.²⁵ From 1735 to 1739, when the volume of slaves disembarking in Charleston peaked, Joseph Wragg consigned 20 cargoes of captives from West Africa.²⁶ Also active in the 1730s were Paul Jennys and John Baker who consigned about a dozen shipments from West Africa.²⁷ However, the slave dealers overextended their accounts and, as local

²¹ Robert Pringle to John Erving, 30 August 1740, *Pringle Letterbook*, 242.

²² Daniel C. Littlefield, “The Slave Trade to Colonial South Carolina: A Profile,” *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 91, no. 2 (1990): 68–99; David Richardson, “The British Slave Trade to Colonial South Carolina,” *Slavery & Abolition* 12, no. 3 (1991): 125–72.

²³ At the time of his death in 1751 Joseph Wragg’s estate was valued at £13,643. An estate inventory for Samuel Wragg’s estate has been lost. However, at the time of his death he owned more than 19,000 acres of land in South Carolina. SC Estate Inventories, vol. R (1751-1753), 72-81, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, (hereafter as SCDAH); PROB 11/785/260-62, Kew, BNA.

²⁴ Wragg lived in Charleston for about a decade but in 1719 he moved to London permanently. In 1727, the Commons House hired Wragg as their official agent and lobbyist. In 1726, Samuel Wragg was the owner of 5 London slave ships active in the trade to West Africa; the *Africa*, *Cleveland*, *Mary Anne*, *Ruby* and *Samuel*. CO 388/25, f. 371-73, Kew, BNA.

²⁵ Samuel Wragg was listed as a ship-owner for 14 voyages. For Wragg’s contracts with the RAC see, T 70/7, f. 80; T 70/959, f. 114 (*Samuel*); T 70/959, f. 9-11 (*Cape Coast Frigate*); T 70/7, f. 87 (*Ruby*); T 70/958, f. 81 (*Lady Rachel*); T 70/1225, f. 57, 84, 95, 97, Kew, BNA.; Donnan, *Documents Relating*, vol. 2:268-72; SC Transcripts BPRO, vol. 11:242-43.

²⁶ W. Robert Higgins, “Charles Town Merchants and Factors Dealing in the External Negro Trade 1735-1775,” *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 65, no. 4 (1964), 206, 209.

²⁷ Higgins, “Charles Town Merchants,” 207; Donnan, *Documents Illustrative*, vol. 2: 278-79.

planters delayed making timely payments, the firm folded.²⁸ Much of the firm's troubles originated from debt-ridden colonists who had only a few years earlier, prevented officials from serving arrest warrants and threatened to form an "association to pay no taxes."²⁹ Benjamin and John Savage relied on strong commercial ties with Bristol for slave consignments.³⁰ Early Huguenot migrant Benjamin Godin mentored his nephew John Guerard on the business end of slave trading and when Godin retired, Guerard joined forces with Richard Hill.³¹ Trading for about a decade as Hill & Guerard, the firm consigned eleven slave cargoes organized from London and Bristol.³² For Carolina, the 1730s began as a boom as the volume of enslaved Africans arriving in the colony steadily climbed and ended in a devastating uprising that temporarily busted the colony's linkages with West Africa.³³ With the colony's prohibitory legislation on slave imports set to end

²⁸ On the problems and difficulties in collecting the debts owed to Jennys estate see, Graffin Prankard to Thomas Jennys, 5 January 1740; Benjamin Savage to Graffin Prankard, 9 May 1743; Benjamin Savage to Graffin Prankard, 24 July 1747, *The Papers of Graffin Prankard* (Dickinson Papers) 1712-1757, Somerset Record Office, Taunton. Further complicating debt collection in the wake of the firms collapse was Baker's death in August 1736 and Jennys' less than a year later in July 1737. James Pearce to Thomas Hall, 26 October 1736, C 103/130, Kew, BNA.

²⁹ Extract from South Carolina merchant to London Merchant, 25 April 1727, CO 5/387, f. 253, Kew, BNA.

³⁰ From 1730 to 1750, Bristol merchant Joseph Iles (d. 1750) organized 20 voyages to West Africa of which 13 disembarked captives in South Carolina consigned to Benjamin and John Savage. The importance of Iles relationship to the Savages commercial wealth is illustrated in his will. Upon his death, Iles requested that the Savages take on his son John as an apprentice stating that it was the "only thing they can do for a deceased friend who has established and promoted the said house and co-partnership." PROB 11/778/201-02; Richardson, *Bristol, Africa and Slave Trade* (1986) vol. 2: 28, 41, 51, 56, 60, 65, 68, 73, 77, 88, 96, 100-01, 108, 129, 136

³¹ On Benjamin Godin's early trading activities see, Denise I. Bossy, "Godin & Co.: Charleston Merchants and the Indian Trade, 1674-1715," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 114, no. 2 (2013): 96-131.

³² In February 1735, John Guerard married Elizabeth Hill, Richard Hill's sister. When Hill traveled to England in 1736, he appointed Guerard as his attorney to collect debts and transact business. The following year Hill & Guerard advertised the sale of the captives that arrived on the *Pearl*. In December 1741, Hill & Guerard purchased Brewton's Wharf, one the port's largest. *SCG* 22 May 1736; 6 August 1737; 26 December 1741.

³³ The collapse of West Indies sugar prices and the declining demand in Spanish markets contributed to the upsurge of imports to Carolina in the 1730s. David Richardson, "The British Slave Trade to Colonial South Carolina," *Slavery & Abolition* 12, no. 3 (1991), 131.

in 1744, Hill & Guerard mobilized to re-Africanize the colony's seasoned slave community.

Slave consignments were big business in Charleston and the reopening of the slave trade to the colony signaled a renewal of intense competition among the city's merchant class. In early March 1743 Richard Hill departed for England to recruit slave consignments and reestablish the colony as a critical market for British slave ships.³⁴ As a member of the Governor's Council, Hill and other select elites served as an advisory board on matters of diplomacy, Indian affairs and public security.³⁵ Hill's intimate knowledge of the Charleston slave market as well as the attitudes of planters were powerful tools of persuasion for soliciting potential investors. Local planters "who are sensible" to the advantages of the slave trade Hill wrote, knew the "law prohibiting negroes" was harmful because "they have no other way of increasing their estate."³⁶ Many of the colony's rice planters had reserved "the surplus of their annual profit or produce to purchase [slaves] when the trade" resumed. Several of "our best customers" Hill noted "privately wish for the revival of the trade."³⁷ Arriving in England in early June 1743, Hill contacted a handful of London and Bristol merchants active in the slave trade.

³⁴ Hill departed on the *Danzig Merchant*, Captain William Jefferies. *SCG*, 28 February 1743.

³⁵ Hill was recommended to the Board of Trade for a seat on the Council in July 1741. *Journals of the Board of Trade and Plantations, Volume 7, January 1735 - December 1741*, ed. K. H. Ledward (London, 1930), 390-96. *SCG*, 9 January 1742. Hill served on an Upper House committee in October 1741. Easterby, *Journals of the Commons House of Assembly, 18 May 1741-10 July 1742* (Columbia: Historical Commission of South Carolina, 1951), 273; M. Eugene Sirmans, "The South Carolina Royal Council, 1720-1763," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 18, no. 3 (1961): 373-92.

³⁶ Hill & Guerard to James Pearce, 16 June 1743, South Caroliniana Library.

³⁷ Richard Hill to Richard Taunton, 23 June 1743, Richard Hill Letterbook, 1743, Duke University (hereafter RHLB). The Richard Hill letter book has by and large been neglected by historians. Dan Littlefield and Kenneth Morgan have cited only a few letters. No historian has interrogated its content or placed Hill's recruiting trip to Britain within the context of the transatlantic slave as I have done in this chapter.

In London, Hill met with some difficulty in attracting potential investors. Longtime slave trade financier James Pearce was Hill's primary target.³⁸ By 1744, Pearce, a former private slave ship captain and for a time employed by the South Sea Company, had retired from active service at sea but remained a steadfast investor.³⁹ From 1725 to 1747, Pearce was a ship-owner of 13 vessels that carried slaves to Jamaica, Buenos Aires and South Carolina.⁴⁰ However, several factors conspired against Hill and his efforts to collect investors willing to consign ships to Charleston. Most pressing was the active war Britain was engaged in against France and Spain. Each nation encouraged privateers to roam the Caribbean and beyond for prey.⁴¹ Second was the weakness of the Carolina market compared to other Caribbean markets, primarily Jamaica, which were more attractive for several reasons. As Pearce explained it, Jamaica planters paid better for slaves even though the best specimens were quickly carted off the island because the "demand for the Spanish trade" remained steady.⁴² Third, investors were leery of sending slaves to Charleston because of the unstable rice market. In the late 1730s, when five of Pearce's ships carried slaves to the colony, he wrote that the "Carolina trade is chiefly carried on by many people of small fortunes who are obliged to sell [rice] for ready

³⁸ A 1740 London Directory listed Pearce as one of the directors of the London Assurance Company. The intimate relationship of Pearce's wealth to the Atlantic slave trade is indicated in his will. Pearce appointed as executors of his estate Thomas Hall, kingpin financier of the East India Company and the largest private contractor of the South Sea Company; William Snelgrave, a favorite ship captain of London slave trade magnate Humphrey Morice; and Onesiphorus Tyndall who founded Bristol's first bank from the profits of the slave trade. *London Directory; The Gentleman's Magazine* (1744), 53; PROB 11/731/154-57. For Snelgrave see, Neal D. Polhemus, "A Dialogue with King Agaja: William Snelgrave's 1727 Ardra Diary and the Contours of Dahomian-European Commercial Exchange," *History in Africa* 43 (2016): 29–62.

³⁹ In 1729, Pearce was captain of the *Mermaid* that disembarked 647 captives at Buenos Aires. C 103/130, Kew, BNA.

⁴⁰ For the Pearces the slave trade was a family affair. Two of James' brothers were slave ship captains. John Pearce died at Whydah in 1729. His brother Jeremiah Pearce (d. 1735) was one of Humphrey Morice's favorite ship captains. PROB 11/674/276; PROB 11/644/259, Kew, BNA.

⁴¹ David J. Starkey, *British Privateering Enterprise in the Eighteenth Century* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1990); Howard M. Chapin, *Rhode Island Privateers in King George's War, 1739-1748*, (Providence: Rhode Island Historical Society, 1926).

⁴² Richard Hill to John Guerard, 21 June 1743, RHLB.

money which occasions a rise in that commodity of ten or twenty percent between the months of May and October.”⁴³ The “uncertainty of our market” as Hill explained to Guerard, made Carolina “the worst in the English dominions.”⁴⁴ Also working against Hill & Guerard was the fact that Carolina planters delayed making payments as long as possible which quite naturally frustrated local merchants as well as London and Bristol investors.⁴⁵ In contrast, Jamaica planters tended to make their returns sooner. Hill admitted reluctantly, that as long as the conditions continued in Jamaica “that place will make the eclatt and be preferred to all other markets.”⁴⁶ There was little Hill could do to overcome the active war raging across the Atlantic or the weakness of the Carolina market. Merchants across the British Atlantic relied on the relationships they forged over many years of trading to promote trade during periods of commercial decline.

London investors held a large share in the ships that carried slaves to Carolina for much of the early eighteenth century.⁴⁷ Hill hoped to tap into those resources while in the capital.⁴⁸ London merchants Edward Lascelles, Richard Taunton, Charles Holzendorf and Edward Heylyn pledged their support to Hill in his efforts to collect slave ships.⁴⁹

⁴³ James Pearce to Thomas Hall, 22 March 1736, C 103/130, Kew, BNA. On the volatility of rice prices in Charleston see, Watson & McKenzie to Graffin Prankard, 20 June 1742, Graffin Prankard Papers.

⁴⁴ Richard Hill to John Guerard, 9 June 1743, RHLB.

⁴⁵ Pearce appended his name to a 1737 petition of London merchants protesting the issue of paper money in Carolina. CO 5/366, f. 24-6, Kew, BNA.

⁴⁶ Richard Hill to John Guerard, 9 June 1743, RHLB. At the time Gold Coast slaves were selling for £43 Jamaica currency.

⁴⁷ CO 388/25, f. 371-73, Kew, BNA; Add. MSS, 22676, f. 41-2, British Library.

⁴⁸ Nuala Zahedieh, *The Capital and the Colonies: London and the Atlantic Economy, 1660-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

⁴⁹ Richard Hill to John Guerard, 9 June 1743; Richard Hill to Edward Heylyn, 14 September, 27 October 1743; Richard Hill to Richard Launton, 9 June 1743; Richard Hill to John Guerard, 16 and 22 September 1743, RHLB. Edward Lascelles was an investor in the *Girlington* that disembarked slaves at Charleston in 1735. Richard Taunton was an investor in the *Faulcon* that disembarked slaves at Charleston in 1736. Edward Heylyn was an investor in the *Scipio* that disembarked captives at Charleston in 1733, 1734, and 1736. Voyage ID 76895, 76580, 16775, 16808, 16840. Charles Holzendorf was William Stanhope’s secretary as Britain’s ambassador to Spain. In 1732, Holdendorf petitioned for naturalization. Parliamentary Papers. HL/PO/JO/10/6/406.

Measures taken to arrange a meeting with James Brydges, the Duke of Chandos, who attempted a structural reorganization of the Royal African Company in the 1720s, proved unsuccessful.⁵⁰ However, Hill found better luck with David Godin, a close relative of John Guerard.⁵¹ In addition to family ties, Hill & Guerard were the consignment agents for the ships David's father sent to Carolina. The commercial success of those voyages was an advantage for Hill in convincing Godin to invest in a ship. Hill wrote that "your cousin David Godin" seemed "well-disposed to take part with us in...the Callabar trade."⁵² In his conversations with Godin, Hill offered the same terms as those established with "your late worthy father;" the terms were "1/4 of the commissions" to be remitted in a "reasonable time after each account is closed and without any deduction for bad debts"⁵³ Time was working against Hill & Guerard. Several Charleston merchants were recently in London trying to "push their interest in the African way."⁵⁴ The potential profits from slave sales, especially after a three year prohibition, were a tasty morsel few Charleston merchants could pass up.

Despite the growing competition locally and abroad for shares in the Charleston slave trade, Hill continued his promotional efforts and expanded his field of recruitment.

⁵⁰ Richard Hill to Duke of Chandos, 4 October 1743; Richard Hill to Richard Taunton, 1 October 1743, RHLB. For Brydges' efforts to recapitalize the RAC see, Matthew David Mitchell, "'Legitimate Commerce' in the Eighteenth Century: The Royal African Company of England under the Duke of Chandos, 1720–1726," *Enterprise & Society* 14, no. 3 (2013): 544–78. During his trip to London, Hill actively promoted the general economic and military interest of the colony. For Hill's relationship with James Abercrombie, South Carolina Attorney General 1733–1742, and other colonial affairs see, James Abercrombie Letterbook, 1743–1750, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh.

⁵¹ David Godin (d. 1763) was John Guerard's first cousin. Benjamin Godin (d. 1748), John Guerard's uncle and mentor, was also David's uncle. His father David Godin (d. 1740) sent five ships to West Africa but only four disembarked slaves in South Carolina. *London Directories*; PROB 11/704/356; PROB 11/884/101, Kew, BNA.

⁵² Richard Hill to John Guerard, 15 July 1743, RHLB.

⁵³ Richard Hill to David Godin, 10 September 1743, RHLB.

⁵⁴ Richard Hill to John Guerard, 16 September 1743, RHLB. The merchants were Benjamin Stead and Richard Lambton.

“Our chief attention should be to the African trade” Hill told Guerard, reassuring him that “as we have found by experience that our whole stock kept employed in that service is not too much to conduct it with reputation and punctuality.”⁵⁵ Hill departed London in mid-August 1743 and traveled to Liverpool and Bristol to meet with potential investors. John Hardman, co-owner of the Liverpool ship *Pineapple* that carried slaves to Charleston in 1735 and 1737, listened to Hill’s pitch but could not promise any of his ships.⁵⁶ On the whole, the meetings in Liverpool proved unsuccessful because merchants there were “quite strangers to the Carolina trade.”⁵⁷ Hill’s recruiting strategies proved more favorable in Bristol.⁵⁸ From William Jefferies, one of Bristol’s premier financiers in the African trade, and investor in the ship *Jason*, Hill & Guerard were assured that the ship was “destined for our house” after purchasing slaves in Angola.⁵⁹ Next Hill set about shoring up the voyage with David Godin in London.

Over the ensuing six weeks, Richard Hill and David Godin reached an agreement to outfit a voyage to the Bight of Biafra and Charleston. All efforts were exercised to send the ship off in time to reach Charleston as the anti-slave trade legislation elapsed. Hill estimated that an investment of about £2,000 was needed; £1,400 for the cargo and

⁵⁵ Richard Hill to John Guerard, 16 September 1743, RHLB.

⁵⁶ Richard Hill to William Jefferis, 9 August 1743; Richard Hill to James Pearce 24 September 1743, RHLB. Hardman was one of the first Liverpool merchants to send slave ships to Carolina. Beginning in the 1750s, Liverpool’s share of the slave trade to Carolina increased drastically.

⁵⁷ Richard Hill to John Guerard, 10 August 1743; Richard Hill to David Godin, 24 September 1743, RHLB.

⁵⁸ In 1723 Richard Hill’s father Charles Hill was the consignment agent for the *Pearl*, co-owned by William Jefferis that disembarked captives in Charleston. In 1730, Charles Hill was an investor in the *Pearl* with Jefferis and George Lewis that carried slaves to Charleston. Charles Hill to Isaac Hobhouse and Isaac Perry, 27 February 1723; Charles Hill to Isaac Hobhouse, 17 April 1723, The Hobhouse Papers, 1722-1755. Letters and other papers of Isaac Hobhouse & Co. Bristol merchants in Bristol Central Library and Bristol Record Office (hereafter Hobhouse Papers).

⁵⁹ Richard Hill to James Pearce, 24 September 1743, RHLB; Account Book of the Jason Galley, Bristol Record Office.

£600 to purchase the ship.⁶⁰ Hill & Guerard committed £600 to purchasing the ship, supplies and cargo for the vessel allowing them a 3/8ths share in the voyage.⁶¹ To sail the *Tryal* to Calabar, Godin hired William Jefferis a “good sailor young vigorous and acquainted with the...Bite [Bight of Biafra] trade.”⁶² Hill cautioned Godin not to purchase a very large ship because they brought too many slaves at once.⁶³ “A cargo of 200-250 slaves” Hill implored, works “best for our market.”⁶⁴ The size of the ship was critical not only for the number of slaves that disembarked but also because larger ships were more difficult to load.⁶⁵ “When there have been large importations” Hill stated “after the first and second day of sale the prices have flagg’d and run low at the close.” However with a more manageable “middling cargo” the sales tended to end “much sooner and...in a better manner.” Hill concluded that the volume of slaves disembarking in Charleston was not necessarily proportional to the profits gained. Hill stated that he preferred “two small ships for, 500 slaves” rather than “one for 400, for the sake of dispatch from the least and the sales at Carolina.”⁶⁶ Having pooled all his capital and available resources, Hill successfully recruited the consignment of two British ships; the *Jason* and the *Tryal*.⁶⁷ Over the course of five months, Richard Hill crisscrossed Britain recruiting potential investors to send their ships to Charleston. Considering the factors that worked against him, Hill’s success demonstrates the depth of his long-term

⁶⁰ Richard Hill to John Guerard, 9 September 1743; Richard Hill to David Godin, 20 September 1743, RHLB.

⁶¹ Richard Hill to William Jefferis, 17 October 1743; Richard Hill to William Jefferis, 10 November 1743, RHLB.

⁶² Richard Hill to John Guerard, 24 September 1743, RHLB.

⁶³ Richard Hill to Captain William Jefferis, 17 October 1743, RHLB.

⁶⁴ Richard Hill to David Godin, 19 October 1743, RHLB.

⁶⁵ Richard Hill to Captain William Jefferis, 17 October 1743, RHLB.

⁶⁶ Richard Hill to David Godin, 19 October 1743, RHLB.

⁶⁷ Joseph Iles promised Hill his ship the *Amoretta* but the ship arrived too early, before the legislation lapsed, and instead went to Virginia. Richard Hill to David Godin, 12 November 1743, RHLB. Voyage ID 17091.

relationships, the scope of his commercial networks, and a savvy business acumen on par with any merchant in the British Atlantic.

Hill arrived back in South Carolina in early February 1744 and waited for the arrival of the *Jason* and the *Tryal*.⁶⁸ When Hill returned to Charleston, little had changed. From St. Augustine, the Spanish persisted in their claims north of the St John's River, a Jamaica ship with smallpox aboard was quarantined at Sullivan's Island, and Carolina slaves continued to defy owners in search of freedom.⁶⁹ In May 1744, a quarantine bill was circulating in the legislature. Richard Hill attempted to add a clause to the legislation designed specifically to protect his private interest at the expense of the public. Hill motioned that a "clause be added that if during the ten days detention of any ship or vessel from Africa with negroes, a loss of such ship or vessel or cargo should happen from hurricane or enemy that in such case the public will make good the value on proof of being made of the said loss and value in case the insurers do not." The clause was unsurprisingly supported by slave dealer Joseph Wragg but when the question was considered by the body it passed in the negative.⁷⁰ Unwilling to allow nature's mercilessly unpredictable season storms or a predatory ship steal out from under him the past ten months of work, Hill acted boldly to secure his own estate.⁷¹ Hill was well aware that many factors far beyond his reach often decided the outcome of African voyages. His attempt to manipulate local statutes was a strategy to mediate some of those factors.

⁶⁸ Hill arrived in Charleston from Bristol on the *Friends Adventure*. SCG 13 February 1744.

⁶⁹ John Fenwicke to Colonel Vanderdussen, 3 March 1743, CO 5/388, part 2, f. 177, Kew, BNA; SCG 13, 20 and 27 February 1744.

⁷⁰ Upper House Journal, No. 12, f. 61, SCDAH.

⁷¹ In 1744, nine British slave ships were captured by enemy vessels and four more were lost in an October hurricane off the coast of Jamaica. Richardson, *Bristol, Africa and Slave Trade* (1986) vol. 2: 136, 138-40.

Many of the most influential elements on slave voyages originated within coastal and inland communities of West Africa. For six months, the *Tryal* anchored off Calabar in the waters of the Cross River Estuary waiting for the delivery of her captive cargo. The next part of this narrative turns to West Africa and the organization of the slave trade in the Bight of Biafra to understand how factors specific to the regions dynamic cultures and people influenced outcomes of slave voyages.

“Profess great friendship for me knowing my father and brother:” Calabar-Anglo relations in the Bight of Biafra Slave Trade

The slave trade at the Bight of Biafra was unlike neighboring regions where coastal factories provided established spaces for purchasing captives. In the Cross and Niger River deltas, the shipment of slaves tended to take place along estuaries, on islands in rivers or lagoons. Ships were loaded from beaches; local mariners ferried slaves in coastal vessels out to larger European ships.⁷² From the 1530s to the 1830s, the Bight of Biafra was a major source of enslaved Africans, probably involving the departure of some 1.6 million people.⁷³ In the seventeenth century, New Calabar was the primary shipping center in the Bight of Biafra but by the eighteenth century, Bonny and Old

⁷² On the coastal vessels of Accra in 1931, Melville Herskovits wrote that “the men there are ten to a boat, sang as they paddled stroking together in perfect time.” West Africa Diary, 1931, Box 9, Melville J. and Frances S. Herskovits Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York; David Eltis, Paul E. Lovejoy, and David Richardson, “Slave-Trading Ports: Towards an Atlantic-Wide Perspective, 1767-1832,” in Robin Law and Silke Strickrodt, eds., *Ports of the Slave Trade (Bights of Benin and Biafra): Papers from a Conference of the Centre of Commonwealth Studies, University of Stirling, June 1998* (Stirling UK: Centre of Commonwealth Studies, University of Stirling, 1999), 17-18.

⁷³ Carolyn A. Brown and Paul E. Lovejoy, “The Bight of Biafra and Slavery,” in Carolyn A. Brown and Paul E. Lovejoy, eds., *Repercussions of the Atlantic Slave Trade: The Interior of the Bight of the Biafra and the African Diaspora* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2011), 3.

Calabar emerged as primary embarkation centers.⁷⁴ Igbos were the largest single ethnic group of Africans carried to the Americas on British ships.⁷⁵ The majority of the captives departing from Biafra ports were of more varied backgrounds and were secured through sophisticated kidnapping troupes, raiding, pawnship defaults, and judicial conviction rather than warfare, although warfare was a factor.⁷⁶ The expansion of the people leaving from the Bight of Biafra was spearheaded by Bristol merchants beginning in the 1730s and rapidly expanded in the 1740s. At Bonny, Liverpool ships dominated and the rise of the Merseyside metropole as Britain's preeminent slave port coincided directly with the expansion of the slave trade in the Bight of Biafra.⁷⁷ Longtime resident of the Slave Coast Archibald Dalzel reported that at "Bonny and Callabar there are many negroes who speak English; and that there is rarely a period that there are not at Liverpool, Callabar negroes sent there expressly to learn English."⁷⁸ By the end of the 18th century, slave trading elites at the Bight of Biafra had developed intimate cross-cultural relationships with British merchants and were well-versed in modern commercial conventions.⁷⁹

English commerce with the Bight of Biafra got off to a slow start in the seventeenth century. It was not until 1668 that the *Peach Tree* reached Calabar and trade

⁷⁴ Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa*, Third Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 58-9.

⁷⁵ David Richardson, "Through a Looking Glass: Olaudah Equiano and African Experiences of the British Atlantic Slave Trade," in Philip D. Morgan and Sean Hawkins, eds., *Black Experience and the Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 66.

⁷⁶ Toyin Falola and Matthew M. Heaton, *A History of Nigeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 56-7.

⁷⁷ Carolyn A. Brown and Paul E. Lovejoy, "The Bight of Biafra and Slavery," in Carolyn A. Brown and Paul E. Lovejoy, eds., *Repercussions of the Atlantic Slave Trade: The Interior of the Bight of the Biafra and the African Diaspora* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2011), 21.

⁷⁸ Robin Hallett, ed., *Records of the African Association, 1788-1831* (London: T. Nelson, 1964), 195.

⁷⁹ Paul E. Lovejoy and David Richardson, "The Slave Ports of the Bight of Biafra in the Eighteenth Century," in Carolyn A. Brown and Paul E. Lovejoy, eds., *Repercussions of the Atlantic Slave Trade: The Interior of the Bight of the Biafra and the African Diaspora* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2011), 23.

was irregular until the 1680s.⁸⁰ The rise of Calabar as an important market for British slave ships originated from political upheaval and region-wide migration shifts. A civil war between the Igbo and Ibibio led to the migration of the Akpa who intervened on the behalf of the Igbo faction. Akpa intercession was decisive because of the introduction of firearms. As a result, the Igbo-Akpa alliance coalesced into the Arochukwu confederacy which controlled the major inland slave market Bende, about three or four days from the coast.⁸¹ The region of 'Biafra' was first codified in 1663 by Anne Seile, widow of cartographer Henry Seile, and indicates the importance of the region to Britain's expanding influence in West Africa.⁸² [Fig. 1. Biafra] Violence in the region increased as English traders attempted to displace the rival Dutch. The Dutch monopoly of the cowrie trade was detrimental to English commerce because the shells "pass for money without which the negroes will not trade." Without cowries "they [traders] go away and never ask what other sort of goods we have."⁸³ A well-sorted cargo of linens of various sorts and qualities, pewterware, iron bars, glass beads alcohol and firearms were trade goods required to successfully barter for captives at Biafra ports.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ John Watts, *A True Relation of the Inhumane and Unparallel'd Actions and Barbarous Murders of Negroes or Moors Committed on Three English-Men in Old Calabar in Guinny* (London: Printed for Thomas Passinger ... and Benjamin Hurlock, 1672).

⁸¹ G. Ugo Nwokeji, *The Slave Trade and Culture in the Bight of Biafra: An African Society in the Atlantic World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 23-32.

⁸² Anne Seile, *Cosmographie in Foure Books Contayning the Chorographie & Historie of the Whole World and All the Principall Kingdomes, Provinces, Seas, and Isles, Thereof* (London: To be sold at her shop over against St. Dunstons Church in Fleet-street, 1663). The region known as the Bight of Biafra was first identified by Venetian cartographer Paulo Forlani in 1562 and rendered as "Belafra." The first English translation and publication of Leo Africanus' *A Geographical Historie of Africa* in 1600 rendered the region as "Biafar." The region was generally referred in English cartography as "Biafara" until Seile's publication. Richard L. Betz, *The Mapping of Africa: A Cartobibliography of Printed Maps of the African Continent to 1700* ('t Goy-Houten: Hes & de Graaf, 2007), 101, 189, 241-2, 332.

⁸³ MS Tanner 89, f. 14, Bodleian Library, Oxford University.

⁸⁴ For the cargo of the *Henrietta Marie* that traded at Calabar in 1699/1700 see Nigel Tattersfield, "An Account of the Slave Ship *Henrietta Marie* of London, 1697-1700," (Unpublished manuscript in the archives of the Mel Fisher Maritime Heritage Society, Key West, Florida, 1994). The *Henrietta Marie* is the only complete slave ship in the Americas to be recorded, examined and preserved.



Figure 1.1. The Kingdom of Biafra. Anne Seile, *Cosmographie in Foure Books Contayning the Chorographie & Historie of the Whole World and all the Principall Kingdomes, Provinces, Seas, and Isles, Thereof*, (1663).

As the volume of English ships departing for West Africa increased in the early 1700s, ships unaffiliated with the Royal African Company (RAC) flocked to the Bight of Biafra. However, the company did not turn a blind eye to the region. In August 1702 the King of Bandi's nephew arrived in London. While in the capital, the Duke was said to have "carried himself with prudence and ingenuity" in his conversations with company officials. The king offered to build a "fortification...and land sufficient to maintain" a

permanent RAC settlement. However, the RAC did not pursue the king's proposals.⁸⁵ In 1722, perhaps realizing they had made a mistake in not advancing their interest in the region, RAC officials recommended sending an agent to see "if an alliance cannot be made with the princes of the Country in the Bight."⁸⁶ The Company's lip service to Biafra elites opened up the region for private traders to dominate commerce in the coming decades.

The climate and geography of the Bight of Biafra was renowned for its negative effect on Europeans. Visitors described the flora and fauna and remarked on its beauty as well as the destructive toll extracted on foreign bodies. Sailing up the Cross River in late 1714, a mariner on the ship *Florida* described Parrot Island, so named for the "prodigious sort of...green and grey birds" adjacent to Calabar.⁸⁷ Frenchman Jean Barbot wrote that Calabar was "seated in a marshy island often overflowed by the river, the water even running between the houses."⁸⁸ David van Nyendael wrote that while the Cross River was "pleasant" to the eye it was on the whole "very unwholesome... occasioned by the continual contagious exhalations which hover" stagnating the air.⁸⁹ The "very hot weather" characteristic of equatorial West Africa wrote an English seaman, prompted many of his comrades to walkabout as "thin cloathed as possible."⁹⁰ Many sailors employed on slave ships trading at the Bight of Biafra suffered from irregular sleep

⁸⁵ RAC to the King of Bandie, 15 September 1702, T 70/51, f. 150, Kew

⁸⁶ Donnan, *Documents Illustrative*, vol. 2:251.

⁸⁷ Parrot Island was a sacred space for the Efik people living at Calabar. The serpent-like god Ndem Efik (King Calabar) lived in the water near the island and men sacrificed albino or light-colored girls to Ndem Efik by throwing them in the water. Stephen D. Behrendt, A. J. H. Latham, and David Northrup, eds., *The Diary of Antera Duke, an Eighteenth-Century African Slave Trader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 28. Barbot wrote that blue parrots lived on the island. Hair et al., *Barbot on Guinea*, 694.

⁸⁸ Hair et al., *Barbot on Guinea*, 693.

⁸⁹ David van Nyendael, "A description of Rio Formosa, or the River of Benin, (1702)," in Willem Bosman, *A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea* (London: J. Knapton, 1705), 428

⁹⁰ Add MSS 39946, British Library (hereafter as BL).

patterns. No less dangerous than the heat were the “innumerable millions of gnats” that pestered “especially in the nights.”⁹¹ “If we could get 2 hours sleep at a night” a sailor lamented “it was a happy turn.”⁹² The crew had to remain alert at all times. Sailors “sleeping in their watch” was often “fatal and many a good voyages...entirely ruined.”⁹³ Plagued by the “contagion of the climate” sailors cast dice to see “who should die or live to come out of the river.”⁹⁴ It was not uncommon for ships sailing to the Bight of Biafra to lose a third or more of their crew.⁹⁵ Despite the unpleasantness of the hot mosquito infested mangrove swamps of the Niger and Cross River deltas, European slave ships continued to visit the region regularly.

The Bight of Biafra’s particularly inhospitable climate lent itself to a myriad of trading experiences and encounters between local traders and Europeans. From time to time local traders took advantage of European lethargy brought on by the inclement weather and seasonal rains. Ships trading at Calabar tended to lash ropes around trees in absence of a quay.⁹⁶ According to a London sailor, at night traders rowed stealthy out into the river and using the ropes that hung along the side of the ship stole captives “out of the portholes that they had sold us the day before and sell them again to other ships.” In the darkness, white sailors were especially vulnerable as they took turns as sentries keeping watch over the ship. One night as a sailor stood sentry on the quarterdeck of the *Florida*, his “cutlass” was stolen out of his hand and “thrown overboard by one of the Negroes.”⁹⁷ However, negative experiences in the Bight of Biafra were not necessarily the norm. For

⁹¹ Nyendaël, “A description of Rio Formosa,” 429

⁹² Add. MSS, 39946, BL.

⁹³ Donnan, *Documents Illustrative*, v. 2:327-28.

⁹⁴ Nyendaël, “A description of Rio Formosa,” 429

⁹⁵ MSS Rawlinson C. 255. Bodleian Library, Oxford University.

⁹⁶ Hair et al., *Barbot on Guinea*, 672.

⁹⁷ Add. MSS, 39946, BL.

example, when a fire broke out onboard the *Lenox*, forcing Capt. Wilkins to put about 200 captives on shore, the ship would have been lost were it not for the assistance of the local people who “helped him in the quenching the fire, and did honestly deliver him again all his Negroes.”⁹⁸ Local traders at Bonny and Calabar tended to reciprocate the fair dealings they had with Europeans because such interactions formed the foundation for future mutually beneficial enterprises.

The captive Africans purchased at Biafra ports underwent tremendous physical and psychological adversities before embarking. Captives arriving at the coast from inland supply zones suffered terrible physical hardships as they traversed complex forest trails, cave tunnels and flooded ravines in their journey.⁹⁹ Moreover, captives in their journey to the Biafran littoral “were *used* as slaves as well as *traded* as slaves.”¹⁰⁰ An Igbo survivor of the Atlantic crossing, recalled that he was resold several times in the journey toward the coast which lasted about six months.¹⁰¹ Overland coffles tended to number several dozen captives or more. The men had a “yoke or great piece of wood” fastened about their necks to prevent escape.¹⁰² More often captives arrived on large canoes or heavily armed barges via the many waterways that bisected the region. After settling the trade with the king, Barbot wrote that “40 great canoes” departed from Calabar and headed upriver to trade for slaves.¹⁰³ With the rise of the Arochukwu

⁹⁸ Journal of Arthur, 1677, T 70/1213, Kew.

⁹⁹ J. Akuma-Kalu Njoku, “Before the Middle Passage: Igbo Slave Journeys to Old Calabar and Bonny, in Carolyn A. Brown and Paul E. Lovejoy, eds., *Repercussions of the Atlantic Slave Trade: The Interior of the Bight of the Biafra and the African Diaspora* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2011), 57-69.

¹⁰⁰ Byrd, *Captives and Voyagers*, 26 (emphasis in original).

¹⁰¹ Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (London: Printed for and sold by The Author, 1789), 56.

¹⁰² Add. MSS, 39946, British Library.

¹⁰³ Hair et al., *Barbot on Guinea*, 691. Pereira reported that canoes at Calabar were “large enough to hold eighty men.” Duarte Pacheco Pereira, *Esmeraldo De Situ Orbis*, ed. George H. T. Kimble, vol. 79, 2nd series (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1937), 132.

confederacy in the mid-seventeenth century, the volume of suffering people traveling through the region increased dramatically.

Many of the captives purchased at Bight of Biafra ports participated in cultural rituals that set them apart in their physical appearance from ethnic groups in neighboring regions of West Africa. For example, a mariner onboard the *Florida* noted that the captives “make holes in their lips noses and ears to hang beads. Their teeth are after fil’d and made sharp like dog teeth.” In addition, “on many parts of their body they have several marks lanc’d in regular figures.”¹⁰⁴ Portuguese mariner Duarte Pacheco Pereira noted that the inhabitants of the region were “branded with a line above the eyebrows; it is their distinguishing mark.”¹⁰⁵ Alonso de Sandoval, a Jesuit living in Cartagena, described the ritual markings of the Igbo captives arriving from the Bight of Biafra. The “Caravalis” Sandoval wrote, have “marks between their eyebrows. Others are strangely beautiful with three or four deep lines on their faces... some have some long broad deep lines encircling their entire face on both sides.” Spanish buyers were reluctant to purchase captives from Igboland because “these markings look brutal and shocking when one is not used to them.” Spanish fear of Igbo culture meant that slaves from the Bight of Biafra were often sold “at lower prices” than others.¹⁰⁶ Moravian missionary Christian Oldendorp described the enslaved Igbo he encountered in the Danish Caribbean. A “Kalabari” man’s “upper and lower [teeth] were filed to points like a saw. He had a both terrifying appearance and tremendous strength.” Several of the Igbo “nation bear incisions around the eyes” Oldendorp noted “which radiate from focal points to an outer

¹⁰⁴ Add. MSS, 39946, BL.

¹⁰⁵ Duarte Pacheco Pereira, *Esmeraldo De Situ Orbis*, ed. George H. T. Kimble, vol. 79, 2nd series (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1937), 127.

¹⁰⁶ Alonso de Sandoval, *Treatise on Slavery: Selections from De Instauranda Aethiopum Salute*, ed. Nicole von Germeten (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co, 2008), 47.

circumference.”¹⁰⁷ Igbo cultural rituals differed in important ways from their Christian captors and as a result left an indelible mark on the minds of whites and the communities they formed in the Americas.

A great deal of logistical planning and financial commitment was necessary to outfit a ship for the Bight of Biafra. In preparation for such voyages, Bristol merchants provided ship captains with specific guidelines for trading with local elites and the expected behavior of the crew in route to Caribbean plantation zones. British merchants were aware of local elite authority and their control over captive supply zones.¹⁰⁸ For this reason, Capt. John Fowler was instructed to take “all possible care in your purchase that you are not imposed on with old infirm creatures...or little children.” In selecting which Biafran port to stop at, Fowler was to slave at the port that had the fewest European competitors.¹⁰⁹ The owners of the ship *Africa* recommended that Capt. George Merrick keep “fires frequently in the Negro rooms as we think it healthy.”¹¹⁰ Several iron kettles were shipped specifically for that purpose. The cook on board the *Molly* was instructed to keep the “kettle and furnace very clean” in preparing the captives meals. In addition, Fowler was told “not let the Negroes come on deck in a great sweat.” However, “if they must let the sweat be very well dried off them with a cloth.”¹¹¹ The line between keeping the crew safe and maintaining the physical health of the captives was never absolute. Several sailors on the *Africa* were appointed to “feed them [captives] by hand by which

¹⁰⁷ C. G. A. Oldendorp, *C. G. A. Oldendorp's History of the Mission of the Evangelical Brethren on the Caribbean Islands of St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John*, ed. Johann Jakob Bossart (Ann Arbor, Mich: Karoma Publishers, 1987), 160, 170, 184.

¹⁰⁸ For a work on elite authority in neighboring Bight of Benin see, Robin Law, “‘Here Is No Resisting the Country’: The Realities of Power in Afro-European Relations on the West African ‘Slave Coast,’” *Itinerario* 18, no. 2 (1994): 50-64.

¹⁰⁹ Accounts of the Molly, 1750-1753, Bristol Record Office, (BRO).

¹¹⁰ Account Book of the Snow Africa, 1774, BRO.

¹¹¹ Accounts of the Molly, 1750-1753, BRO.

means they will be preserved and keep in good order.”¹¹² Capt. Barry was instructed to make sure the “sailors don’t abuse” the captives “which has often been done to the prejudice of the voyage.”¹¹³ A successful outcome for Bristol investors rested on a delicate balance of market luck, shrewd negotiations, and the selective application of instruments of coercion and torture.

In preparation for sending a ship to the Bight of Biafra, financiers amassed several tons of trade goods. However, the items collected had to match the specific market in which a ship would conduct the majority of its commerce for slaves. Although Bonny on the Niger River and Calabar in the Cross River delta were separated by less than 90 miles, each market was distinct in the trade goods demanded from European slave traders. Bristol organizers noted that it was “essential” to know the “patterns...for Old Callabar and Cameroons to what [sic] what will do at Bonny.”¹¹⁴ In October 1791, Liverpool firearms dealer John Parroson sold James Rogers “800 Calabar guns” for the ship *African Queen’s* voyage.¹¹⁵ The consequences for not sending well-made firearms and other Biafra-specific market products were most often disastrous. For example, upon arriving at Calabar in March 1792, Capt. Samuel Stribling reported that his trade was hindered by several barrels of powder short of weight.¹¹⁶ In addition, the dozen or so ships in the Cross River were driving up prices which local traders were using to their advantage.¹¹⁷ After Stribling’s death in May 1792, second mate Hamet Forsyth took command of the ship. Forsyth informed the “principle [Calabar] traders” of his

¹¹² Account Book of the Snow Africa, 1774, BRO.

¹¹³ Donnan, *Documents Illustrative*, v. 2:327-28.

¹¹⁴ Samuel and Thomas Taylor to James Rogers, 17 June 1785, C107/8, James Rogers Papers, Kew.

¹¹⁵ John Parroson to Rogers, 6 October 1791, C 107/13, James Rogers Papers, Kew.

¹¹⁶ Samuel Stribling to James Rogers, 17 March 1792, C 107/13, James Rogers Papers, Kew.

¹¹⁷ Samuel Stribling to James Rogers, 6 May 1792, C 107/13, James Rogers Papers, Kew.

misfortune who “profess great friendship for me knowing my father and brother...they have continued it.”¹¹⁸ However, Forsyth “was obliged to stop trade five weeks [for] not having proper assortment of cloth” and other goods. At the same time, Forsyth had to deal with neighboring markets drawing coffles away from Calabar. He lamented the fact that he could not “procure more male slaves” because inland traders were “marching them [slaves] through the country for the Camaroons where they receive a greater price.”¹¹⁹ By the time the *African Queen* departed Calabar more than six months after arriving, the third mate James Lloyd was in command of the 330 captives on board.¹²⁰ Shipping the appropriate trade goods to Biafra ports provided a platform for potentially successful commerce. However, there was little organizers could do to prepare for sudden shifts in political regimes, consumer demands or market volatility.

As in most regions of West Africa, ship captains trading at the Bight of Biafra had to establish with local elites the nature of their business, typically a king or landlord prior to conducting any transactions. The consequences for failing to pay customs often resulted in the taking of hostages or seizure of goods. English traders that visited Biafra regularly developed mutually beneficial relationships with local elites. Capt. Samuel Payne purchased captives from King Ambo (Efik) and King Aquaw (Qua) that he traded with on previous visits to Calabar. Familiarity tended to ease the tension associated with

¹¹⁸ Hamet Forsyth to James Rogers, 11 June 1792, C 107/13, James Rogers Papers, Kew. John Forsyth, Robert Forsyth and Alexander Forsyth were ship captains that traded at the Bight of Biafra. Voyages database. Brother was John Forsyth and Robert Forsyth was his father, who also died at Calabar in 1771. Richardson, *Africa and Bristol* (1986), vol. 4:21.

¹¹⁹ Hamet Forsyth to James Rogers, 9 July 1792, C 107/13, James Rogers Papers, Kew. Hamet Forsyth married Ann Doyle in November 1791 less than two months before departing on the *African Queen*. He died on 1 October 1792.

¹²⁰ Frank and Robert Smyth to James Rogers, 10 January 1793, C 107/13, James Rogers Papers, Kew.

initial contact.¹²¹ At Andony in October 1727, Capt. David Montgomery paid customs to King Solomon, Grandie Jo, Grandie Will, General Gregory and six other elites identified by name. Montgomery purchased captives at Andony for about a month; 96 percent of the captives (262) were purchased in the first twenty days indicating that the local market was capable of supplying large numbers of captives over a short period of time.¹²² Before departing, Montgomery made an additional payment to King Solomon for the house used during trade.¹²³ However, obtaining permission from local elites at Andony to trade did not necessarily result in a productive voyage. For example, in January 1723, while the *Saint Christopher Gally* was a few miles upriver from Andony, Capt. Robert Elston murdered two sailors after the men carelessly damaged some trade goods.¹²⁴ At Andony and other Biafra ports, establishing and maintaining relationships with local elites was a prerequisite to buying captives or bartering with local traders.

The surviving correspondence of Calabar elites demonstrate that some traders were literate, with considerable command of English, and confirm that a creole English was commonplace in Cross River delta trading communities. However, the adoption of an English pidgin at Calabar took decades to develop.¹²⁵ Barbot noted that the king at Andoni spoke “Portuguese and seems to have been instructed by Romish priests” from

¹²¹ The author stated that the elites that “we usually trade with” were the two kings suggesting that he had been to Calabar on a previous voyage. Add. MSS, 39946, BL. Captain Payne sailed the *Dolphin* to the Bight of Biafra in 1711. Voyage ID 15232.

¹²² The turnaround time of the ship *Castle* far outpaced the average time ships spent at Biafra ports. Throughout the 18th century, ships spent on average 3.5 months at Calabar and neighboring ports. As scholars have noted the consistency of the turnaround time at Calabar was remarkable as it demonstrated the complexity of the regions inland trade networks. Hair et al., *Barbot on Guinea*, 701.

¹²³ Ship *Castle* Day Book, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, AMS/4.

¹²⁴ Trial of Robert Elston, June 1725. *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (t17250630-58). Elston’s murderous reputation had no bearing on future employment. Less than five months after his conviction he was hired to sail the *Commerce* to the Bight of Biafra. Voyage ID 16402.

¹²⁵ On the investment of personal relations between Liverpool and Calabar see, Paul E. Lovejoy and David Richardson, “Trust, Pawnship, and Atlantic History: The Institutional Foundations of the Old Calabar Slave Trade,” *The American Historical Review* 104, no. 2 (1999): 333–55.

Brazil.¹²⁶ A 1714 account suggested that “none of the Negroes” at Calabar could “speak more than 2 or 3 common words in English.”¹²⁷ The concentration of British ships trading at Biafra ports in the 1730s and 1740s hastened the formation of a creole dialect. Many of the letters illustrate the overlapping nature of commercial relationships that often took on a personal tone because of the long periods that ship captains resided at Old Calabar. For example, in 1761 William Earle wrote to Duke Abashi apologizing for Captain Hind of the *Industry* for carrying off “Cobham Ashby & your two boys” who Earle acknowledged were “all Freeman & No slaves.” Earle pledged his efforts to retrieve the stolen men but if he was unsuccessful reminded Duke Ashby that “You know very well I love all Calabar.”¹²⁸ Grandee Ephraim Robin John requested that Liverpool merchant Thomas Jones send him a walking cane with his name inscribed on it. The inscription of gifts and other goods consumed by Calabar elites was rather common. Grandy King George reminded Ambrose Lace to “Please to have my name put on Everything that you send for me.”¹²⁹ Calabar elites regularly updated Liverpool merchants of the goods in demand by inland traders. As a result, they set the tone of commerce and the terms of negotiation. In 1773, Otto Ephraim informed Ambrose Lace that “I want 2 Gun for every Slave I sell”

¹²⁶ Hair et al., *Barbot on Guinea*, 695.

¹²⁷ Add. MSS, 39946, BL.

¹²⁸ William Earle to Duke Abashi, 10 February 1761, William Earle Letterbook, 1760-61, Merseyside Maritime Museum, Liverpool. English ships frequently stole free Africans in their haste to depart the coast. In 1702, RAC officials promised the King of Bandie liberty to appoint a representative “to go on board to see if any free people not legally purchased are confined on board our ships.” RAC to the King of Bandie, 15 September 1702, T 70/51, f. 150, Kew.

¹²⁹ Grandee Ephraim Robin John to Thomas Jones, 16 June 1769; Grandy King George to Ambrose Lace (nd circa 1773), in Paul E. Lovejoy and David Richardson, “Letters of the Old Calabar slave trade, 1760-1789,” in Vincent Carretta and Philip Gould, eds., *Genius in Bondage: Literature of the Early Black Atlantic* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 103, 107.

and two years later Ephraim Robin made a similar mandate to Lace.¹³⁰ Lastly, as the *Jupiter* departed Calabar in 1789, Duke Ephraim reminded the ship's owners of his central role in loading the ship quickly and full of captives, stating "I been very good freend for that Ship."¹³¹ Calabar elites played a crucial part in the growth of the slave trade in the region. The relationships British merchants cultivated with Calabar elites formed the bedrock for the wealth they reaped as financiers and traffickers of human cargoes.

The nature of commercial exchange and cross-cultural negotiation in the Bight of Biafra comprised a complex series of rituals and ceremonial cultural courtesies often initiated by subtle gestures, posturing or boisterous laughter but always lubricated by the consumption of alcohol. David van Nyendael observed that the Calabar trading elite "are very prompt in business and will not suffer any of their ancient customs to be abolished." However, such formalities were not a hindrance to commerce "if we comply with them, they are very easy to deal with."¹³² Early Portuguese mariner Duarte Pacheco Pereira visited Niger Delta and may have traded at Bonny, a "very large village of some 2,000 inhabitants."¹³³ The trading accounts recorded by Capt. William Jenkins for the owners of the *Molly* in 1759 indicate the intricacies of commerce and texture of trade at Bonny. One of the first entries in Jenkins' trade book was for "the King of Bonny's Trust" that

¹³⁰ Otto Ephraim to Ambrose Lace, 19 July 1773; Ephraim Robin Jon to Ambrose Lace, 24 December 1775, in Gomer Williams, *History of the Liverpool Privateers and Letters of Marque, with an Account of the Liverpool Slave Trade* (Liverpool, 1897), 547-48.

¹³¹ Duke Ephraim to Messrs. Rogers and Lroach, 16 October 1789, in Paul E. Lovejoy and David Richardson, "Letters of the Old Calabar slave trade, 1760-1789," in Vincent Carretta and Philip Gould, eds., *Genius in Bondage: Literature of the Early Black Atlantic* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 111.

¹³² David van Nyendael, "A description of Rio Formosa, 433.

¹³³ Pereira, *Esmeraldo De Situ Orbis*, 132.

amounted to goods valued at 289 bars which equaled about ten male slaves.¹³⁴ The transaction ensured that the King would enforce any credits and debts accrued by local traders while trading at Bonny. Approximately fifty traders sold Jenkins 286 slaves; on average about six captives per trader. Six traders sold Jenkins more than ten slaves but only three traders sold more than twenty captives. The primary suppliers of captives were Jemmy Sharpe, Embassie, and Duke York. Firearms and gunpowder were required indispensable trade items at Bonny and nearly every transaction included at least one or both. All of the firearms, (600) muskets and (80) blunderbusses, shipped from Bristol were traded for by Jenkins and including the dashees paid to several dozen traders, represented 76 percent of all the transactions recorded in the *Molly's* trading accounts.¹³⁵ In addition, about two thousand gallons of brandy, several types of cotton linens, glass beads, and copper bars were listed in the ship's invoice.¹³⁶ In terms of purchasing power, 80 percent of the *Molly's* cargo was used to purchase 286 slaves and over 4 tons of ivory.¹³⁷ All accounts indicate that Jenkins was a capable mariner and shrewd negotiator. Given that he traded at Bonny at least seven times from 1754 to 1767, it seems clear that Jenkins was able to develop mutually beneficial relationships with commercial elites residing there.¹³⁸

Over the course of the eighteenth century the principal traders and commercial houses in the Bight of Biafra fluctuated with shifting political currents and variations in

¹³⁴ Trade book of the *Molly*, 1759, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, MS 76/027.

¹³⁵ Trade book of the *Molly*, 1759, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, MS 76/027.

¹³⁶ On arriving in Virginia, the captives on board the *Molly* reportedly sold "very well." Richard Meyler to Jeremiah Meyler, 16 November 1760 in Kenneth Morgan, ed., *The Bright-Meyler Papers: A Bristol-West India Connection, 1732-1837* (Oxford: Published for the British Academy by Oxford University Press, 2007), 360.

¹³⁷ Jenkins paid 9,166 bars for the slaves (65%) and 2,116 bars for the ivory (15%). For the voyage of the *African Queen* (1792) James Rogers, the sole owner invested £10,650 of which £5,120 represented trade goods.

¹³⁸ Voyage IDs 17356, 17441, 17493, 17599, 17626, 17635, 17531.

market adaptability. Arriving at Bonny in January 1793, Capt. Goodrich complained that trade was slow due to the “death of two of their kings.”¹³⁹ Three months later trade conditions had changed little. Only 130 captives were onboard the *Jupiter*. Only “one fair” had been held since Goodrich arrived, “there being no King the trade is much stagnated here.”¹⁴⁰ Further impeding commerce was the poor quality of the trade goods shipped from Bristol. Goodrich informed the ship’s owner that the manillas (open-ended copper bracelets or rings) were “made of such base metal and [so] badly molded that I cannot get the natives to take one of them.”¹⁴¹ In amassing the 368 captives on board the *Jupiter*, Goodrich traded with over 40 local suppliers. The primary brokers were ‘JuJu House’ ‘Boniface’ ‘JuJu boy’ and ‘King Stu’ who supplied about 32 percent of the ships human cargo.¹⁴² Also enumerated in the list of traders were the names of several political elites, specifically King Pepple and his two sons. While Bonny elites were directly involved in the slave trade, others were heavily involved too.¹⁴³

The principal commercial houses at Bonny varied with shifting political regimes. However, a comparison of the *Molly* (1759) and the *Jupiter* (1792) trading accounts provide compelling evidence of the continuity within Bonny’s trading circles. Both trading accounts indicate that slaves were purchased from Prince Will and Prince Frederick, sons of King Pepple. In addition, both ships were supplied with slaves from “Juju” and “Juju House” and “Juju boy.” Captain Jenkins of the *Molly* traded with a “Yalloe Andrew” whereas Capt. Goodrich of the *Jupiter* bartered with a trader named “Yalloe.” Other possible matches across the accounts include “Robin Norfolk” “Jack

¹³⁹ John Goodrich to James Rogers, 24 January 1793, C107/59, Kew.

¹⁴⁰ John Goodrich to James Rogers, 4 April 1793, C107/59, Kew.

¹⁴¹ John Goodrich to James Rogers, 24 January 1793, C107/59, Kew.

¹⁴² *Juju* was a deity or shrine. *Juju men* were priests.

¹⁴³ *Jupiter* trade book, 1792, C 107/59, Kew.

Norfolk” and “Young Norfolk.” The trading accounts of the *Molly* and *Jupiter* also reveal how European demand for enslaved Africans impacted slave prices and the quantity of goods exchanged in the Bight of Biafra. In 1759, Jenkins paid on average 32 bars per slave. Thirty years later in 1792, Goodrich paid on average 145 bars per slave; indicating that the price of slaves had more than quadrupled.¹⁴⁴ As European demand for slaves steadily rose, the most active sellers and suppliers of captives at Bonny continued to hold a large share of the market. Recent studies have rightly shown that the rise of Bonny as principal port of embarkation for slaves in the Bight of Biafra was due in large part to local political structures and credit protection regimes.¹⁴⁵ In addition, the relationships Bonny elites formed with British merchants and ship captains that continued to trade at the port for several decades or more, may have influenced their command of the market.

Consumers in the Caribbean and British North America were acutely attuned to the ethnic origins of captives disembarking from West Africa.¹⁴⁶ Early on in the slave trade, planters attached negative stereotypes to specific ethnic groups and some of the most undesirable traits were shackled to Africans disembarking from the Bight of Biafra.¹⁴⁷ The region’s unhealthy climate took a morose toll on the bodies trapped below the ship’s deck and those above walking freely. In early 1723 Capt. Hallden of the

¹⁴⁴ Trade book of the *Molly*, 1759, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, MS 76/027; *Jupiter* trade book, 1792, C 107/59, Kew.

¹⁴⁵ Paul E. Lovejoy and David Richardson, ““This Horrid Hole’: Royal Authority, Commerce and Credit at Bonny, 1690-1840,” *The Journal of African History* 45, no. 3 (2004): 363–92.

¹⁴⁶ Lorena Walsh, *From Calabar to Carter’s Grove: The History of a Virginia Slave Community* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997); Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992); Vincent Brown, *The Reaper’s Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2008).

¹⁴⁷ Journal of the ship *James*, 1676, T 70/1211, Kew. For a compelling account of the Igbo Diaspora see, Michael Gomez, “The Anguished Igbo response to enslavement in the Americas,” in Carolyn A. Brown and Paul E. Lovejoy, eds., *Repercussions of the Atlantic Slave Trade: The Interior of the Bight of the Biafra and the African Diaspora* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2011), 103-118.

Greyhound departed the coast having purchased 339 captives at Bonny. However, only 214 reached Barbados. As Hallden elucidated, it was unexplainable how “jolly likely men slaves to eat their diet over night and the next morning dead 2 & 3 in a night for several days” after leaving Bonny.¹⁴⁸ Captain Hunt blamed the death of 61 captives on board the *Rodney* to the “heavy rains which fell turning out [departing]” from Calabar. The wet conditions, according to Hunt, caused an outbreak of the flux among the slaves positing that the “stronger” captives “quickly recovered.” However, “the weaker ones on being taken ill always fell into a melancholy languor.”¹⁴⁹

It was common for ship captains to briefly stop at Barbados, a strategy known as refreshing, to purchase fresh provisions and provide a brief reprieve for the prisoners on board. However, some slave dealers in Jamaica claimed that the strategy was ineffective for captives embarking from the Bight of Biafra. For example, in 1729 the *Aurora* stopped at Barbados before departing a few days later for Kingston. However, upon arrival the slave dealers professed that the Igbo captives “were vastly worse” for it “being of a country...that don’t easily recover again.”¹⁵⁰ Slave dealers Tyndall and Assheton suggested that the “Bite [Calabar] trade was overdone” and because “too many” ships were sent there the quality of slaves rapidly depreciated.¹⁵¹ At the sales of the *John and Betty* in November 1729, the Jamaica slave dealers claimed that the 150 Igbo captives that survived the passage “were so bad could not sell 10 to the planters.” They managed to sell a large lot 105 captives to “£18.10 per head” but the “remainder are so very bad

¹⁴⁸ Edward Hallden to Isaac Hobhouse, 30 April 1723, Hobhouse Papers.

¹⁴⁹ J. Hunt to James Rogers, 11 May 1793, C 107/59, Kew.

¹⁵⁰ Tyndall & Assheton to Isaac Hobhouse, 13 October 1729, Hobhouse Papers.

¹⁵¹ Tyndall & Assheton to Isaac Hobhouse, 13 March 1729; Tyndall & Assheton to Isaac Hobhouse, 13 October 1729, Hobhouse Papers.

cannot get £3 per head for them.”¹⁵² The negative perceptions Caribbean buyers had for Igbo captives is most telling in the sale transactions rendered by slave dealers. Barbados slave dealers Crump and Hasell sold the “Bite negroes” that disembarked from the *Norman* at “£22.6 round. The same day was a sale of Gold Coast [slaves] which came out at £29.10.”¹⁵³ For profit conscious organizers in Britain, the difference of nearly thirty percent was significant and associating the financial deficit with the ethnic origins of the captives sold went hand in hand with the racial ideologies forming insidiously across the Atlantic world.

Thus far this chapter has explored the organization of a slave voyage from the perspective of British merchants and Carolina slave dealers. In addition it has analyzed the commercial operation of the slave trade at the Bight of Biafra, the region in West Africa where Capt. Jefferis of the *Tryal* purchased slaves in the summer of 1744. In absence of the trading accounts recorded by Jefferis at Calabar, supplementary records were used to explain how commerce was transacted between Calabar elites and British traders. As the discussion thus far has shown the commercial connections that undergirded Atlantic Africa with the Atlantic World were riddled with logistical hurdles and limitless inefficiencies. Some solutions were considered beforehand while others required spur of the moment quick thinking. Even the most well thought out enterprise rarely prepared for every contingency. The next section examines the third stage of the *Tryal's* voyage to the Americas and considers some of the unforeseen hurdles, challenges and opportunities confronted by the ship's owners and the Igbo captives.

¹⁵² Tyndall & Assheton to Isaac Hobhouse, 13 November 1729, Hobhouse Papers.

¹⁵³ Crumpe & Hasell to Isaac Hobhouse, 5 January 1723, Hobhouse Papers.

“Rob and plunder or they will not live:” The trials of the ship *Tryal*

The ‘labor wars’ of the eighteenth century were driven by a lust for commercial expansion, a general disregard for colonial politics and contempt for international treaties. The Caribbean was a theatre of so many colonial conflicts between the Spanish and British empires because of the shared interest in the region as a major source of economic power. From 1713-1721, supposed peace years established by the Treaty of Utrecht, a resident of Jamaica claimed that Spanish ships had seized forty-seven British ships during that time.¹⁵⁴ The seizures continued in the 1730s with little prospect of ceasing on the horizon.¹⁵⁵ Britain’s imperial policymakers believed that “as long as the King of Spain suffers ships...to be fitted out and armed as guard de costas at private expense they must and will rob and plunder or they will not live.”¹⁵⁶ Many of the seizures were a result of private colonists’ illicit activities who acted as though the *asiento*, a trade license granted exclusively to the South Sea Company in 1713, transformed Spanish ports into open markets for all British subjects. By not seizing illegally traded slaves *asiento* officials actually encouraged the commerce by offering “too great encouragement to the private traders.”¹⁵⁷ Spanish authorities in Madrid remained frustrated because it was well-known that alleged “vast sums of money remitted to Spain by way of England some of it must always stick to British fingers and sometimes the whole.”¹⁵⁸ In response, privateers from Cuba ranged as far as New England for prey. Between 1743 and 1745,

¹⁵⁴ A. B, *The State of the Island of Jamaica: Chiefly in Relation to Its Commerce and the Conduct of the Spaniards in the West-Indies: Address’d to a Member of Parliament* (London: Printed for H. Whitridge, 1726), 49-51.

¹⁵⁵ *Gentleman’s Magazine*, (March 1738), 163.

¹⁵⁶ Charles Wager to Benjamin Keene, 20 September 1730 in Richard Lodge, ed., *The Private Correspondence of Sir Benjamin Keene* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), 3.

¹⁵⁷ Donnan, *Documents Illustrating*, vol. 2:307.

¹⁵⁸ James Houstoun, *A True and Impartial Account of the Rise and Progress of the South Sea Company* (London: Printed for T. Cooper, 1743), 21.

Spanish authorities in Havana and Santiago de Cuba commissioned 130 letters of marque; no less than 77 British and North American vessels were taken. Ships originating from Carolina or in route to the colony were prime targets for Spanish corsairs.¹⁵⁹

Much like Richard Hill's recruiting trip to Britain, *Lydia's* departure for South Carolina was a result of legislation born out of the Stono uprising. The new taxes collected from the arrival of captive Africans was allocated towards the recruitment of white Protestants in Germany and Switzerland. Less than two years before the Stono revolt, the funds appropriated for providing tools and provisions for white immigrants were discontinued.¹⁶⁰ Charleston elites hoped the new legislation would address the colony's overwhelming black majority. The "encouragement of strangers" was a matter of public safety as "nothing" was needed more in Carolina "so much as Protestant settlers."¹⁶¹ However, there is little evidence the funds diverted to attract new settlers was successful in the years after the legislation was passed. Swiss agent John Jacob Riemensperger attempted in 1740 to bring a group of settlers to the colony but few ever made it alive to Carolina.¹⁶² It was not until 1744, that two ships, the *Lydia* and *St. Andrew* loaded with German immigrants departed from Rotterdam for Carolina. The timing of their departure could not have been more poorly coordinated. It was no secret that French ships stationed at Brest often harassed and seized British vessels. In late May 1744 as the *Lydia* sailed through the Channel, a Dunkirk privateer with "14 carriage

¹⁵⁹ Leví Marrero, *Cuba, Economía y Sociedad* (Río Piedras, P.R: Editorial San Juan, 1972), vol. 6:110-111.

¹⁶⁰ J. H. Easterby, ed., *The Journal of the Commons House of Assembly Nov. 10, 1736-June 7, 1739* (Columbia: Historical Commission of South Carolina, 1951), 3 February 1738.

¹⁶¹ Richard Hill to Perguine Fury, 14 September 1743, RHLB. Hill and other slave dealers represented a conflict of interest to the colony. While the governor wanted to increase white migration in order to pacify the black majority, the importation of new Africans continued to offset the desired racial balance.

¹⁶² Riemensperger published a Swiss pamphlet in 1740 entitled "True and Fully Dependable Good News from the English Royal Province Carolina." Lee R. Gande Papers, South Caroliniana Library.

guns” bore down on the ship and came within gunshot, frightening many of the passengers on board. Rather than engage the French vessel, Capt. Abercrombie simply fired a cautionary shot and wisely steered off.¹⁶³ The early stages of the *Lydia*’s voyage to Carolina eerily foreshadowed its demise.

For the passengers on board the *Lydia* the westward voyage across the Atlantic was particularly dangerous because of the ongoing war between Europe’s leading imperial powers. During the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-1748) privateers aggressively targeted ships of rival nations in every corner of the Atlantic.¹⁶⁴ In early September 1744, news reached Charleston that the *Lydia* was plundered of “some thousand Guineas (there being several rich passengers on board)” by six French ships but was fortunately “allowed to proceed on her voyage.”¹⁶⁵ For a second time, the *Lydia* successfully outmaneuvered, or perhaps with a little luck, a hostile enemy ship. However, Capt. Abercrombie’s good fortune was running desperately low.¹⁶⁶

As Abercrombie looked towards the safe embrace of Charleston’s harbor, the *Lydia* was taken by a Spanish corsair a “few leagues east” of the bar and “sent to the Havana.” Governor Glen reminded the assembly that “as every accession of able and industrious white persons is an addition to the strength and riches of this province” the loss of the passengers on the *Lydia* was a direct blow to the colony’s attempt to right the racial imbalance. The migrants were “men of consequence in their own country and had brought many thousands pounds sterling in gold” with them to settle in province. Carried off to Havana were 265 settlers “one hundred of which were men well trained and

¹⁶³ *Lloyd’s List*, 1 June 1744.

¹⁶⁴ Carl E. Swanson, *Predators and Prizes: American Privateering and Imperial Warfare, 1739-1748* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991).

¹⁶⁵ *SCG*, September 17, 1744

¹⁶⁶ PROB 11/867/246, July 1761. [Abercrombie’s Will]

acquainted with the use of [fire] arms.”¹⁶⁷ At a time when enslaved Africans outnumbered whites 2:1 in the province, combined with the colony’s depleted coffers, what appeared like a godsend quickly devolved into a migratory catastrophe.¹⁶⁸ Glen requested funds for sending a flag of truce ship to Havana. The assembly agreed to send a “small vessel” to recover the passengers captured on the *Lydia*.¹⁶⁹ Little else was mentioned about the vessel or procedures for recovering the German immigrants; that was left up to Glen and the Council. The small discretionary window left open by the assembly was all that Richard Hill and John Guerard needed to pounce on an opportunity to visit the shores of Cuba.



Figure 1.2. Havana. This highly fictionalized rendering of Havana was published shortly after Admiral Edward Vernon’s siege of Porto Bello in 1739 during the War of Jenkins Ear (1739-48). Henry Overton, *A New & Correct Map of the Trading Part of the West Indies* (London: Printed for and sold by Henry Overton, at the White Horse without Newgate, 1741).

¹⁶⁷ Council Journal, no. 11, p. 475, 5 October 1744, SCDAH.

¹⁶⁸ A 1720 census identified only 1,305 taxpayers in the province and 11,828 enslaved Africans. James Moore to Townsend, 21 March 1721, CO 5/387, f. 80.

¹⁶⁹ J. H. Easterby, ed., *The Journal of the Commons House of Assembly 20 February 1744 – 25 May 1745* (Columbia: Historical Commission of South Carolina, 1955), 246-48; The *Lydia* was reported captured and carried to Havana in early November 1744. *Lloyd’s List*, 6 November 1744.

In order to sustain and support imperial ambitions during times of war, it was often necessary to craft false dehumanizing narratives about declared enemies.¹⁷⁰ Although Spain and Britain were at war, the commercial relationships established between colonists in St. Augustine and Charleston remained strong and as a result, the volume and frequency of ships between the two ports increased.¹⁷¹ Prisoner exchange was the primary reason for enemy ships visiting unfriendly harbors but illicit trade flourished during these rare moments that required a temporary cessation of hostilities.¹⁷² Spanish flag of truce ships at Charleston waited until officials made their last search of the ship and then loaded illicit goods under cover of night.¹⁷³ In mid-July 1744, Capt. John Webster of the *St. Andrew* departed Charleston for Havana with 47 Spanish prisoners on board.¹⁷⁴ As an officially sanctioned flag of truce, the captain was expected to drop off Spanish prisoners and return with prisoners held in Havana. Webster returned to Charleston in October 1744 with 68 English prisoners.¹⁷⁵ Capt. James Abercrombie of

¹⁷⁰ On the importance of maintaining popular support on the home front see, Extracts from a paper of Lord C. on the present posture of affairs, December 1744, Hardwicke Collection, volume 77, New York Public Library, New York.

¹⁷¹ Copy of a pass given to 17 Spaniards for their return from Carolina to St. Augustine, 10 August 1722, CO 5/382, part 2, f. 113; Joyce Elizabeth Harman, *Trade and Privateering in Spanish Florida, 1732-1763*. (St. Augustine, Fla.: St. Augustine Historical Society, 1969).

¹⁷² Richard Pares, *War and Trade in the West Indies, 1739-1763* (London: F. Cass, 1963), 113-27. The 1740s, especially during the war, the Spanish-Jamaica trade prospered and flourished.

¹⁷³ Council Journal, no. 14, pp. 95-6, SCDAH.

¹⁷⁴ SCG, 16 July 1744. The 20-ton sloop *St. Andrew* was a Spanish prize taken by the HMS *Rose* in February 1744. It was condemned in April 1744 and registered as the *St. Andrew*. It is ironic that Webster would return to Havana carrying Spanish prisoners on their own ship flying a Union Jack. R. Nicholas Olsberg, "Ship Registers in the South Carolina Archives 1734-1780," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 74, no. 4 (October 1973), 262.

¹⁷⁵ SCG, 29 October 1744.

the *Lydia* was one of the prisoners that arrived but nothing was mentioned of the two hundred odd Germans.

In the same issue of the *Gazette*, slave dealers Hill & Guerard advertised the sale of the *Tryal*. At the sale, Charleston buyers could expect to purchase a “cargo of very likely slaves” bartered for on the Calabar coast.¹⁷⁶ Just as Hill & Guerard had planned, the *Tryal* made it to Charleston after the prohibitory legislation had lapsed; they did not have to pay the punitive tax. However, in the months since the legislation had lapsed two British ships disembarked about 400 captives.¹⁷⁷ Complicating the sale for Hill & Guerard was the fact that rival dealer John Savage advertised the sale of the *Nancy* for the same day.¹⁷⁸ However, there is little evidence the Charleston market was oversaturated or that local demand was waning. The owners of the Bristol ship *Jason* that arrived in early August indicated to Hill & Guerard that the sales were to their “satisfaction.”¹⁷⁹ Robert Pringle reported the four ships that disembarked slaves since the “expiration of our Negro Act...have all sold at very good rates and very quick sales.”¹⁸⁰ In the fall of 1744 the war with Spain and its highly effective *guarda costas* had cost Carolina several hundred white settlers. At the same time, the conflict created a precariously narrowing window in the

¹⁷⁶ *SCG*, 29 October 1744.

¹⁷⁷ The *Jason* arrived from Cabinda on 6 August and the *Africa* from Bonny on 10 September 1744. Voyage IDs, 17108, 17090.

¹⁷⁸ The number of slaves that disembarked from the *Africa*, *Nancy*, and *Tryal* is unclear. None of the newspaper advertisements indicate how many captives were available. The account book of the *Jason* indicates that Hill & Guerard sold 202 captives and paid £2005 in duties. John Savage paid £2115 in import duties on the *Africa* and £1520 on the *Nancy*. Hill & Guerard paid £1070 in duties on the *Tryal* but at least 98 were not landed. Account Book of the Jason Galley, BRO; Public Treasurer’s Journal A, 1735-48, SCDAH.

¹⁷⁹ Account Book of the Jason Galley, BRO. The owners of the *Jason* told Hill & Guerard in June 1744 that they expected “£20 round” per slave. The sales of the 202 captives totaled £25, 956. On average each captive sold for £18.4. However, the total account sales of the *Jason* which included the proceeds from the sale of returned Guinea goods and the ship’s longboat, totaled £27, 801 bringing the average price for each captive to £19.6. Regardless, the ship-owners made a nice haul for the minimal effort invested.

¹⁸⁰ Robert Pringle to Andrew Pringle, 19 November 1744; Robert Pringle to Gegney Clarke, 6 December 1744, *Pringle Letterbook*, 763, 775.

porous but potentially caustic imperial border. Hill's social standing as a member of the Governor's Council provided him and his partner with inside information and an opportunity to volunteer the *Tryal* as the appointed ship to rescue the stranded German migrants from Havana.

Hill, Guerard and their associates worked quickly to outfit the *Tryal*. The flag of truce trade was a common means of exchange across imperial boundaries generally restricted during peace time. Officially these ships returned captured prisoners but it also served as "convenient excuses for smuggling."¹⁸¹ Jefferis received the appropriate credentials from Gov. Glen indicating that he was the commander of a flag of truce ship sent to recover the German settlers.¹⁸² However, the *Tryal's* shield of altruism was only a cloak vaguely camouflaging the true purpose of the voyage. Regardless of the guise, the slave dealer's compass always pointed towards opportunism and exploitation. Three days after the sale of the *Tryal's* captives, Hill & Guerard sent a letter to James Crockatt in London requesting his assistance in securing an insurance policy for the voyage.¹⁸³ Joining Jefferis on the *Tryal* were John Cooper, a Havana resident with ties to Charleston, and Jemmitt Copley an "old Spanish trader and speaks the language well."¹⁸⁴ The amount

¹⁸¹ Proprietors to Colonel Tynte, 23 Mar 1711, CO 5/290, f. 1; Kenneth J. Banks, "Official duplicity: the illicit slave trade of Martinique, 1713-1763," in Peter A. Coclanis, ed., *The Atlantic Economy during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Organization, Operation, Practice, and Personnel* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005), 239.

¹⁸² The flag of truce was subject to abuse. During the War of Spanish Succession English and Irish ships traded with the French at St. Martin's, Rochelle and Bordeaux. Investigating officials collected depositions suggesting that the trade goods were used to aid in outfitting the French navy. Great Britain, ed., *The Manuscripts of the House of Lords* (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1912), vol. 6:111-115.

¹⁸³ For Crockatt's career see, Huw David, "James Crockatt's 'Exceeding Good Counting House': Ascendancy and Influence in the Transatlantic Carolina Trade," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 111, no. 3/4 (2010): 151-74.

¹⁸⁴ For Cooper as a resident of Havana see, Miscellaneous Records, vol. 2I, p.147, SCDAH. Jemmitt Copley (d. 1750) was a mariner before settling at Beaufort in the 1730s with ties to the Spanish Caribbean. In the 1740s, he operated a store in Charleston and owned two small coastal schooners. In 1744, Copley purchased two mulatto girls (most likely his children) named Mary and Franke. Miscellaneous Records, vol. 2F, p.84, SCDAH; Olsberg, "Ship Registers," 212, 223; S. Salley, ed., *Minutes of the Vestry of St.*

of trade goods and human cargo assembled on the *Tryal* in just over two weeks required the mobilization of a small army of laborers and the collaboration of the larger part of local trading community. According to the manifest submitted by comptroller Robert Austin, on board the *Tryal* were “6 1/2 pipes Madeira wine, in quarter casks, 98 Negroes imported in the said ship, 138 bales, trunks and other packages of sundry sorts of goods.”¹⁸⁵ Over 30 merchants or trading firms were listed in the invoice. Altogether the “merchandise manufactured in Great Britain and Germany” and captive Africans was valued at £71, 507 SC currency or about £10,215 pounds sterling.¹⁸⁶ The 41 men, 45 women, 9 girls and 2 boys purchased at Calabar along with provisions for the captives put on the *Tryal* by Hill & Guerard constituted 23 percent of the value of the cargo. They clearly had the most to lose, at least financially, but the boldness of the adventure was buttressed by recent history. During the past twelve months, three flag of truce ships that departed Charleston for Havana returned home bragging of “success” and wealth.¹⁸⁷ Hill, Guerard and their associates just wanted a share of the loot.

The local investors in the *Tryal*’s intercolonial slave trade voyage were well aware of the risks associated with the venture, but the chance to trade with Spanish customers was too inviting.¹⁸⁸ The *Tryal* departed for Providence on 16 November

Helena’s Parish, South Carolina, 1726-1812. (Columbia, S.C.: HCSC, 1919), 24, 28, 47, 48; *SCG*, 4 August 1746; 2 July 1750. Stumpf, “South Carolina Importers of General Merchandise” *SCHM* (1983), 6; “St. Helena’s Parish Register (Continued),” *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 23, no. 2 (1922): 47.

¹⁸⁵ Easterby, ed., *The Journal of the Commons House of Assembly 20 February 1744 – 25 May 1745* (Columbia: Historical Commission of South Carolina, 1955), 287.

¹⁸⁶ Manufactured cloth and linens – calicoes, cambricks, chintz, Hollands, ozenbrigs, checks – represented the lion’s share of the goods loaded on the *Tryal*. In addition, several hundred pairs of men’s and women’s shoes, hats, gold buttons, rum, madeira and claret wine, a travel writing desk, book case and a harpsichord were shipped.

¹⁸⁷ Spencer vs. Guerard, 1747, C 11/1618/26, Kew, BNA.

¹⁸⁸ The value of illicit trade, specifically British manufactured goods, was not lost on the island’s population or officials. Shortly after arriving in Havana in 1734, new Governor Güemes y Horcasitas

1744.¹⁸⁹ According to local statutes all ships sailing out of Charleston were required to stop at Fort Johnson, display official paperwork and submit a percentage of the powder on board (a powder tax) to the commander.¹⁹⁰ However, Jefferis did not stop at the fort which raised the suspicion of several parties in town.¹⁹¹ On 7 December, the *Tryal* arrived at Providence where Jefferis planned to hire a pilot down to Havana.¹⁹² Before departing from Charleston Hill & Guerard appointed Cobley as the ship's supercargo and instructed him to "discharge part of the said Negroes" at Providence; he "left 76" of the enslaved Igbo there.¹⁹³ Ten days later, with about 20 odd slaves on board, the *Tryal* sailed along the coast of Cuba looking for a safe place to anchor. However, the *Tryal* was captured by Capt. Don Pedro Gauricocchia on the "coast between Matanzas and Havana" for selling slaves to Spanish customers.¹⁹⁴ Since the *Tryal* was a flag of truce ship sent to recover the German migrants, Havana Gov. Güemes y Horcasitas was initially reluctant to condemn the ship as a prize "but the privateer's people think that any flag of truce trading in the manner represented is a breach of the law of nations." Spanish officials were in a pickle; overlook the illicit transgressions and let the Germans depart or enforce international mandates. Any hope of leniency was extinguished once the governor learned that one of

cracked down on illegal trade and as a result the prices soared as much as 25 percent. Roland D. Hussey, *The Caracas Company, 1728-1784; A Study in the History of Spanish Monopolistic Trade* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934), 208; G. Earl Sanders, "Counter-Contraband in Spanish America: Handicaps of the Governors in the Indies," *The Americas* 34, no. 1 (1977): 59–80.

¹⁸⁹ SCG, 26 November 1744.

¹⁹⁰ Thomas Cooper and David McCord, eds., *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina* (Columbia: Printed by A. S. Johnston, 1836-1841), vol. 2:20-21, An Act for the raising of a public store of Powder, for the defence of this Province (1687).

¹⁹¹ J. H. Easterby, ed., *The Journal of the Commons House of Assembly 20 February 1744 – 25 May 1745* (Columbia: Historical Commission of South Carolina, 1955), 261, 264, 272, 287-89.

¹⁹² Naval Officer Shipping Lists, Bahamas, CO 27/12, (NOSL).

¹⁹³ Spencer vs. Guerard, 1747, C 11/1618/26, Kew, BNA.

¹⁹⁴ In March 1744, Gov. Güemes y Horcasitas seized the French sloop *Borole* for smuggling slaves. "Digest of Documents in the Archives of the Indies, Seville, Spain, Bearing on the Negroes in Cuba and Especially Those Employed in the Minas De Cobre," *The Journal of Negro History* 14, no. 1 (1929): 82.

his city's transients was involved. Gov. Güemes y Horcasitas was reportedly "very angry with Mr. Cobley for having sold Negroes on the coast."¹⁹⁵ After a "long litigation," despite several attempts by Cooper and Cobley to prevent the ship from being condemned, the cargo was sold for £17,000.¹⁹⁶ Five months later in May 1745, Gov. Güemes y Horcasitas permitted Jefferis to depart from Havana and return with 44 English prisoners to Charleston.¹⁹⁷

The seizure of the *Tryal* as an illicit trading vessel as opposed to a pardonable flag of truce ship was rooted in decades of British ships trading illegally with Spanish subjects on the island. For example, in exchange for captive Africans, English traders received cattle, mules and other livestock.¹⁹⁸ Spanish vigilance for illegal trade reached new levels in the 1730s. Reports from Havana indicated that Gov. Güemes y Horcasitas' patience for Anglo "trading subjects" was ebbing and would "not fail to condemn all sorts of prizes brought in here by his privateers."¹⁹⁹ The owners of vessels seized by Spanish privateers had little recourse for recovering ships condemned by Havana authorities.²⁰⁰ The "chicanery of Spanish affairs" coopted legal processes.²⁰¹ Restitution for a condemned ship was just a grim. Leonard Cooke informed Samuel Bonham that "it is not likely that you'll ever recover anything" and pursuing the matter further was a waste of "our time

¹⁹⁵ Council Journal, no. 14, pp. 47-49, 15 February 1745, Deposition of Don Francisco Castilla, SCDAH.

¹⁹⁶ Spencer vs. Guerard, 1747, C 11/1618/26, Kew, BNA.

¹⁹⁷ Spencer vs. Guerard, 1747, C 11/1618/26, Kew, BNA.

¹⁹⁸ Add. MSS, 12409, BL

¹⁹⁹ Anthony Wellden to Richard Fitzwilliam, 6 February 1737, CO 5/388, part 1, f. 81, Kew, BNA.

²⁰⁰ As McNeill explains, the "difference between *guarda costas* and privateer, between legal and illegal trade, and sometimes between war and peace, often escaped those involved-thus the endless international litigations." John Robert McNeill, *Atlantic Empires of France and Spain: Louisbourg and Havana, 1700-1763* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 89.

²⁰¹ Jonathan Dennis and Leonard Cocke to Messrs. Hayman and Hines, 10 May 1732, CO 5/12, f. 75, Kew, BNA.

and your money.”²⁰² The groans of Jamaica merchants echoed loudest at Whitehall. According to one petition, “vain will be our labor and vain will the success of that labor” if the “unjustifiable captures” of British vessels continue unchecked.²⁰³ However, Havana officials were well-versed in the commercial treaties between the two nations. Güemes y Horcasitas informed Jamaica Gov. Edward Trelawny that local merchants had lied to him and hinted not too subtly that he was complicit in the illicit trade. When the ship *Union* was seized for selling slaves at Bajan Manzanillo, the captain “brought no letters from the South Sea Company’s factor to authorize” his voyage.” Moreover, coastal residents stated that Bennet “is well-known if not better than by the people of Jamaica to carry on this commerce which has always been his occupation.”²⁰⁴ The sheer volume of British ships trading illegally with Cuba made the seizure of the *Tryal* and its official status as flag of truce ship that much more difficult to discover for Spanish officials.

Transatlantic migrants were often the victims of circumstance during the labor wars that defined the eighteenth century. For example, in 1741 four Spanish missionaries of the Order of Merced were captured by a Jamaican privateer in route to Peru. A petition submitted on their behalf stated that since they were “not officers but passengers” their imprisonment was unjustified.²⁰⁵ Gov. Glen was vigilant in his efforts to recover the German migrants. His argument for their return echoed those of his Spanish counterparts. Their detention as “prisoners of war” was unfounded because they were “not subjects of any prince or state at war with Spain.”²⁰⁶ Glen claimed that because none of the Germans

²⁰² Leonard Cocke to Captain Bonham, 20 July 1733, CO 5/12, f. 72, Kew, BNA.

²⁰³ Merchant petition, 14 September 1737, CO 137/48, f. 30, Kew, BNA.

²⁰⁴ Juan Francisco de Güemes y Horcasitas to Trelawny, 29 November 1738, CO 137/56, ff. 170-74, Kew, BNA.

²⁰⁵ Don Sebastian de Eslava to Edward Vernon, 30 June 1741, CO 5/12, f. 93, Kew, BNA.

²⁰⁶ Council Journal No. 14, p. 20-3, SCDAH.

had ever stepped foot in any part of the British Empire Güemes y Horcasitas should release them to Cobley.²⁰⁷ In October 1745, as the facts of the *Tryal*'s capture unfolded, Glen revealed the complexity of ship's seizure and the overlapping problem of the German migrants. Admittedly, it was "contrary to Spanish policy and law to permit any other nation to trade to her colonies," Glen acknowledged but his recommendations in the "strongest terms to the proprietors" of the *Tryal* proved unconvincing. Regrettably "those admonitions and prohibitions proved too weak against the more powerful temptation of Spanish money." While it was clear the *Tryal* had violated established policies for trading with the enemy, Glen argued that the flag of truce was "sacred and inviolable as the person of an ambassador." Even the "Turks and other barbarous nations" upheld the necessary "reverence" for flag of truce ships during times of war. Regardless, Glen proclaimed even if the *Tryal* did violate commercial policies it was not in Güemes y Horcasitas authority to condemn the vessel.²⁰⁸ Instead Güemes y Horcasitas should have put the Germans on the *Tryal* and returned them to Charleston with official depositions on the matter so Glen could punish the "guilty" parties.²⁰⁹ Glen's attempts to explain the complexities surrounding the seizure of the *Tryal* and the *Lydia* fell on deaf ears. The confiscation of the two ships reveal the underlying inefficiencies of diplomacy and seething commercial competition that so often drove Britain and Spain to renew the labor wars of the eighteenth century.

²⁰⁷ James Glen to Guemes, 2 February 1745, CO 5/388, pt. 2, f. 132-33, Kew, BNA; SCG, 19 November 1744.

²⁰⁸ Glen denied vehemently that the *Tryal* broke no laws. Glen's claims of ignorance about the ship's cargo are doubtful. Had the *Tryal* been successful, Jefferis would have returned with a very large sum of cash that would have been recirculated into Charleston's depressed economy and into local coffers.

²⁰⁹ Council Journal No. 14, p. 356-59, SCDAH.

As Glen attempted through diplomatic channels to recover the Germans, Güemes y Horcasitas and other Spanish officials tried to sort out the seizure of the *Tryal* and the legality of the case. The seizure of the *Tryal* occurred in the waters off Havana but the ramifications of the event reverberated across the Atlantic to the halls of Madrid and London. Prior to departing Charleston in November 1745, Hill & Guerard had the *Tryal* insured for £10,000.²¹⁰ The investors took precautions in case a zealous corsair like Garaicoechea decided to seize the ship. Once word got back to London about the proceedings in Havana, the policyholders attempted to collect.²¹¹ However the underwriters balked and the resulting litigation found in favor of the Hill, Guerard and their Charleston associates.²¹² Around that same time in May 1747, the Council de Indias in Madrid was alerted to the proceedings and the potential political and financial fallout. From the outset in late 1745, Havana officials questioned the legality of Garaicoechea's seizure of the *Tryal*. Once Jefferis presented his official paperwork demonstrating that the *Tryal* was a flag of truce ship, Güemes y Horcasitas instructed Garaicoechea to recognize the ship on its official mission to recover the captured Germans. Garaicoechea received a "severe reprimand" from Madrid officials for his actions against the *Tryal*. However, there was another matter that concerned the Council. The official receipts submitted by Güemes y Horcasitas for the sale of the *Tryal*'s cargo were suspicious because the proceeds exceeded more than 70 percent of its actual value. In addition to the suspicious

²¹⁰ Spencer vs. Guerard, 1747, C 11/1618/26, Kew, BNA.

²¹¹ In April 1747, Robert Pringle was commissioned by Richard Shubrick to prepare the answer for the investors of the *Tryal*. Robert Pringle, "Journal of Robert Pringle, 1746-1747 (Continued)," *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 26, no. 2 (1925), 108.

²¹² Hill departed for London in May 1746 to push the suit against the underwriters. CO 5/455, f. 100, Kew, BNA; Richard Hill et. al vs. Adam Spencer, tried at Guildhall, by a special jury. Wyndham Beawes, *Lex Mercatoria Rediviva, Or, the Merchant's Directory* (London: Printed for the author, by J. Moore, and sold by E. Comyns, 1752).

accounts, some of the goods on the *Tryal*, as indicated by the ship's paperwork, were destined for residents of Havana but these items were also confiscated.²¹³

Ships like the *Tryal* were a diplomatic nightmare for Güemes y Horcasitas and other Spanish Caribbean officials. Yet at the same time because Hill & Guerard attempted to test the limits and enforcement of international laws in Cuba, the sales from the highly lucrative cargo, especially the Igbo captives, remained on the island and not in Carolina.

Conclusion

As for the fate of the Germans on the *Lydia* taken prisoner and carried to Havana, the politics of power and commercial violence that engulfed the Caribbean shaped every stage of their journey. Much like the Igbo captives on the *Tryal*, Spanish intervention radically altered the course of their voyage. Information of the outcomes for some of the German immigrants are provided in a deposition from Spanish official Don Francisco Castilla.²¹⁴ According to Castilla, the women were “all disposed of and taken into the houses of the principal Lady's” of Havana and “used with great humanity.” As for the men, their labor was farmed out across the city and received a subsistence pay of four reals per day.²¹⁵ In July 1746, about 25 of the German migrants landed in Charleston.²¹⁶ A soldier named Parke Pepper hired a flag of truce ship from Havana finding the “poor

²¹³ Antonio del Valle Menéndez, *Juan Francisco de Güemes y Horcasitas: primer conde de Revillagigedo Virrey de México: la historia de un soldado (1681-1766)* (Santander: Librería Estudio, 1998), 201-202. Menéndez's summary of case was drawn from Consulta del Consejo de Indias. Madrid, 4.V.1747. AGS, Consejo Supremo de Hacienda, Led. 191, no. 3.

²¹⁴ In January 1745, the *situado* ship in route from Havana to St. Augustine, carrying about 47,000 in specie, ran into a violent storm and while off the Bahamas was captured by an English privateer. The prize ship was towed to Providence where Castilla took a ship to Charleston and eventually St. Augustine. In 1737, Castilla was appointed secretary to the Gov. of St Augustine. John J. TePaske, *The Governorship of Spanish Florida, 1700-1763* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1964), 31, 102-03.

²¹⁵ Council Journal, no. 14, pp. 47-49, 15 February 1745, Deposition of Don Francisco Castilla, SCDAH.

²¹⁶ SCG, 28 July 1746. According to the newspaper report, Parker arrived on the *Georgia Packet* with “upwards of 40 prisoners, mostly Palatines and Irish, who had been some years in confinement at Havana.”

prisoners, after so long a confinement” at the hands of the Spanish.²¹⁷ One of the migrants that arrived with Pepper later reported that he had “fallen into Spanish imprisonment and had lain in shackles and chains for 23 months.”²¹⁸ Additional evidence of the German migrants arriving in Carolina is drawn from petitions submitted for land. For example, in 1749 Michael Gaylank and Michael Steigler indicated that they were taken by a Spanish ship in route to Charleston and held prisoner in Havana for two years.²¹⁹ Battis Affrey stated that he was taken “prisoner once by the French and once by the Spaniards who carried him to Augustine and the Havana” where he was detained for five years.”²²⁰ Lastly is the lone German woman to submit a petition. In August 1754, a decade after her capture, Mary Periot explained that she had “lived at the Havana from whence she got to Augustine and then in a Spanish ship to this port.”²²¹ That so few petitions were submitted indicates how disruptive the Spanish seizure of the *Lydia* was for the immigrants on board.

As for the fate of the Igbo on the *Tryal*, their outcome is much harder to track down. When Jefferis departed Calabar in September 1744, about 240 captives were on board. About half were sold in Charleston and those that remained, endured another voyage to the Caribbean. Copley ‘left 76’ in Providence during the ship’s short layover in the Bahamas. As many as twenty or more were captured when the *Tryal* was seized near Matanzas. The Spanish sources indicate that the Igbo captives were condemned along with the rest of the cargo and sold off to Havana residents and rural planters. Despite the

²¹⁷ CO 5/455, f. 144-45, Kew, BNA. Pepper submitted a memorial requesting reimbursement for transporting the Germans from Havana to Charleston. State Papers 36/86/2, f. 182, Kew.

²¹⁸ Julian Kelly, “Ott of Orangeburg, South Carolina: The Early Generations” (1994), 11, Unpublished Manuscript. Copy in author’s possession.

²¹⁹ Council Journal, no. 17, pt. 2. p. 517; CO 5/462, 3 March 1750, SCDAH.

²²⁰ Council Journal, no. 17, pt. 2. p. 619, SCDAH.

²²¹ Council Journal, no. 23, p. 367-68. SCDAH.

finicky nature of Spanish planters, there is evidence that the Igbo captives may have been quickly integrated with the captive African population responsible for Cuba's expanding sugar enterprise. In 1748, Kingston merchant Edward Manning reported that he had the "contract...during the war" to supply slaves to Havana and other Spanish markets.

Apparently the war had tempered Spanish sentiments towards captives from the Bight of Biafra. Manning stated that "we have brought the Spaniards to accept of Angola and Calabar Negroes without the mixture of the Gold Coast."²²² The degree to which Spanish planters would have been more accepting of Igbo slaves is unclear. Alonso Sandoval observed that Spanish buyers were reluctant to purchase Igbo captives because their cultural "markings look brutal and shocking when one is not used to them."²²³ But what remains indisputable is the captives that departed on the *Tryal* were scattered across at least three Greater Caribbean markets and likely faced greater difficulty in identifying enslaved Africans of similar ethnic origins. As a result of the manner in which they were distributed across British and Spanish settlements, locating former shipmates to aid in cultural retention was more challenging for the Igbo captives that embarked on the *Tryal*. The politics of power, war and violence shaped the outcome for the Igbo captives at every stage of their journey, beginning with their capture and enslavement. That a war was raging in the Caribbean between Spain and Britain increased the inherent risks of migration exponentially.

The voyage of the *Tryal* is illustrative of the ways in which colonial politics and local market dynamics were interwoven with larger European political conflicts that

²²² Edward Manning to Directors, 4 October 1748, Shelburne Papers, vol. 44, 683-84, Clements Library.

²²³ Alonso de Sandoval, *Treatise on Slavery: Selections from De Instauranda Aethiopum Salute*, ed. Nicole von Germeten (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co, 2008), 47.

directly impacted the final destination in which enslaved Africans disembarked. For both the captives aboard the *Tryal* and the ship's investors the voyage was a fiasco. Moreover, the ship's imperial role as a flag of truce ship sent to recover the German migrants from Havana was also a debacle. The trials of the *Tryal* continued after returning to Charleston. Rather than sail directly to Bristol with a shipment of rice, Capt. Jefferis departed directly for Oporto, Portugal in early September 1745.²²⁴ A few weeks later the *Tryal* encountered a "violent whirlwind" at sea that mutilated the ship's masts and sails; Jefferis was forced to limp back to Charleston for repairs.²²⁵ Even nature seemed to conspire against the *Tryal*.

The 1740 legislation passed in the wake of the Stono uprising had a lasting impact on both the white and enslaved African population in the colony. In the wake of the rebellion, Charleston elites were anxious to regain control of the colony. They hoped to achieve at least two primary goals with the new laws. First, increase the number of white Europeans migrating and settling in the colony. In this respect, the law proved ineffective. Second, decrease the number of slave ships designed for the Carolina market and the volume of captive Africans disembarking in Charleston. For the duration of the legislation, the punitive taxes proved effective in its immediate goal of suppressing the slave trade to the colony. Nevertheless, in anticipation of the statutes expiration, slave dealers acted decisively and in collaboration with British slave merchants to revive the trade to Carolina. The German migrants onboard the *Lydia* were the first attempt by free migrant organizers to send settlers to the colony after the passing of the new legislation. The voyage of the *Tryal* was organized as a direct response to the expiration of the anti-

²²⁴ SCG, 2 September 1745.

²²⁵ SCG, 14 October 1745.

slave trade law. Although the Carolina market continued to suffer from certain economic drawbacks, the profitability of transporting and selling slaves returned.

Britain's 'Labor Wars' with Spain for control over access to disciplined labor regimes dominated political, military and diplomatic discourse across much of the Atlantic world. The organization of the slave trade was entrenched in the politics of power, war and violence in the enslavement and transport of captive Africans. Nowhere was this more evident than in coastal West Africa and the inland communities where captives were seized from their homeland. At the same time, the continuing conflict between Spain and Britain directly impacted the volume of captives arriving in Carolina. While the anti-slave trade law passed in Carolina made the trade unprofitable for a few years, the ongoing war, prompted largely by predatory Spanish privateers, made the risks of sending ships there too great for investors. British merchants and colonial slave dealers never successfully mastered the formula for overcoming the challenges, inefficiencies and evolving contingencies inherent to the organization of the transatlantic slave trade. However, that the traffic in human cargo lasted over 385 years and died a very slow, violent death, indicates that it was not necessary to master the challenges of hemispheric forced migration. Near misses all too often brought just enough profits to keep an investor hooked for another voyage.

CHAPTER 2

MISMANAGING WHYDAH: COMMERCE, DIPLOMACY AND THE PRINCIPLES OF ELITE AUTHORITY ON THE SLAVE COAST, 1695-1724

Commercial exchange on the Slave Coast required more than a well-stuffed fully sorted trunk of trade goods. Few learned this lesson more quickly than Royal African Company (RAC) chief factor John Winder at Whydah. Although Winder had served as an agent at Accra and Commenda, two Gold Coast factories, before arriving at Whydah in early 1682, the skills he cultivated prior to his arrival failed to transfer into success at Whydah.¹ According to RAC trader Andrew Crosbie, in a matter of roughly ten short months, Winder single-handedly alienated himself from the “King to the poorest” to such a degree that he was deported from Whydah by order of King Agbangla. Winder’s transgressions were severe, perhaps because he did not prepare accordingly for his new position. To be sure the Slave Coast was much different than the Gold Coast most notably because of the ways in which Whydah elites governed so many aspects of the slave trade. Failing in his duties of “studying and considering the humors and dispositions” of Whydah trading culture before arriving at his new post, Winder quickly

¹ Robin Law, ed., *The English in West Africa, 1681-1683; The Local Correspondence of the Royal African Company of England, 1681-1699, pt. 1* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1997), 155, no. 392, 20 February 1681; 28, no. 45, 10 December 1681.

and seemingly “for ever lost the love and good will” of the people by his “high and lofty carriage,” and abusive “bad language.”²

In addition to his cultural transgressions, Winder made a habit of fraudulent and deceptive commercial transactions. In August 1682, Winder was “panyard by the blacks” for intentionally overextending his credit to the amount of “forty slaves” with the “design to go off” with an interloper at port. The suspicion that Winder designed to depart unexpectedly was confirmed when he covertly carried “out of the company’s goods in the night” to Petley Wyburne’s trading factory.³ Winder was “always quarrelling and not agreeing with the natives” because he cut short the linens and “lessen[ed] the bunches” of cowries he attempted to trade with. Such behavior was considered an “absolute cheat to their country.”⁴ Little wonder the locals endeavored to send Winder off a “second time...with a positive resolution that he shall not remain upon this place.” Attempts at mediation proved fruitless, leading RAC subordinate factor Timothy Armitage to conclude that there was “no reconciling” the differences between Winder and the Whydah traders.⁵

Winder’s extradition in 1682 illustrates the dynamic political, commercial, and military power that elites wielded in the Kingdom of Whydah. That Winder was removed without the application of armed soldiers or violence is indicative of influential commercial relationships that Whydah elites developed with Europeans. As Robin Law

² Law, *The English in West Africa, 1681-1683*, 238, no. 485, 1 September 1682. The date is clearly wrong since it refers to events on 15 September. Likely a clerical error in copying the original into the bound letter book.

³ Law, *The English in West Africa, 1681-1683*, 237, no. 485, 1 September 1682; 240, no. 487, 24 October 1682. Winder was reportedly expecting a ship from New England to purchase slaves. Petley Wyburne operated a private factory at Whydah from December 1681 until 1686 when he was arrested.

⁴ Law, *The English in West Africa, 1681-1683*, 239, no. 486, 1 September 1682; 241, no. 487, 24 October 1682.

⁵ Law, *The English in West Africa, 1681-1683*, 240, no. 487, 24 October 1682; 241, no. 489, 28 October 1682. Winder was dead by August 1686 when his will was proved. PROB 11/384/224.

has shown, in terms of economic, military, and political power in Whydah “it is by no means clear that the balance of power was in favour of Europeans.”⁶ By the mid-seventeenth century Whydah was a burgeoning hub of international trade as a supplier of captive Africans. Links with long-distance trade networks that extended far into the interior buttressed the ports relationship with European traders. As an Atlantic port, Whydah was an important coastal town and embarkation point for the transatlantic slave trade where governing elites formed political and commercial relationships with expansive networks that bridged the ocean.⁷ The commercial culture that was at the heart of Whydah’s economic expansion influenced neighboring ethnic groups and societies as well as European perceptions and customs.⁸

Whydah’s productivity directly impacted neighboring and foreign economies. As a result, Europeans were required to defer in matters of religion to indigenous susceptibilities to preserve commercial relationships with local elites. For example, in 1688 the French officer Jean Baptiste du Casse participated with King Agbangla in the annual pilgrimage to the principal shrine of Dangbe wearing “tyger’s skins and other sorts of trifles” on the occasion.⁹ By the 1740s, a pagan shrine dedicated to “Nabbakou, the titular god of place” was located inside the compound of the English fort.¹⁰ Perhaps

⁶ Robin Law, “‘Here Is No Resisting the Country’: The Realities of Power in Afro-European Relations on the West African ‘Slave Coast,’” *Itinerario* 18, no. 02 (1994): 50–64. Law is arguing against Walter Rodney’s position that Europeans held the reigns of economic power in Atlantic Africa and when the scales tilted in favor of the Africans, Europeans resorted to armed violence and war. Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington: Howard University Press, 1972), 86-91.

⁷ Robin Law, “The Port of Ouidah in the Atlantic Community,” in Horst Pietschmann, ed., *Atlantic History: History of the Atlantic System 1580-1830* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), 349-64.

⁸ Robin Law and Kristin Mann, “West Africa in the Atlantic Community: The Case of the Slave Coast,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 56, no. 2 (1999): 307–34.

⁹ Willem Bosman, *A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea* (London: J. Knapton, 1705), 371

¹⁰ Robert Norris, *Memoirs of the Reign of Bossa Ahádee, King of Dahomy, an Inland Country of Guiney* (London: W. Lowndes, 1789), 42.

more so than anywhere else in West Africa, the basic principle governing life for European traders on the Slave Coast was acknowledge, conform, assimilate, and support African power or suffer the consequences.

While this chapter considers the political and commercial dynamics of the slave trade at Whydah, the above examples of Europeans acquiescing to local religious practices are indicative of the fact that local policy required polite customs of trade to preserve and strengthen relationships. Failure to acknowledge and adhere to sociocultural customs on the Slave Coast could result in the severing of commercial ties with respective European traders. In severe breaches of protocol, as discussed above with Winder, Europeans were deported from Whydah and in some cases, trade representatives were executed. Winder's deception was not the last time a Whydah king would exercise his political authority. In the complex and highly competitive commercial environment that emerged in the 1680s between Offrah and Whydah, as well as among the French, Dutch, and English, it was Whydah and the English that emerged as victors.¹¹ Perhaps surprisingly it was the English that ended up more often than not on the wrong side of Whydah justice.

In the mid-seventeenth century, Europeans trading operations on the Slave Coast expanded dramatically. A century later when the transatlantic slave trade was abolished, more captive Africans embarked from Whydah than any other port in West Africa except for the Portuguese colony of Luanda in Angola.¹² More than a million captives were exported from Whydah. The overwhelming majority of the literature on the transatlantic

¹¹ Robin Law, *The Slave Coast of West Africa, 1550-1750: The Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on an African Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 130.

¹² Robin Law, *Ouidah: The Social History of a West African Slaving "Port", 1727-1892* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2004), 5.

slave trade places the ships, ocean and captives at the heart of the narrative. Without a doubt, for the histories addressing the captive experience, the horrors of European enslavement, and the emergence of capitalism in the early modern Atlantic world, these topics have very much to offer. However, this chapter considers themes of the transatlantic slave trade from the perspective of the physical and geographical center – Whydah - where the transactions occurred, relationships formed, and negotiations took place before captive Africans embarked. Recent studies by Ugo Nwokeji, Roquinaldo Ferreira, and Randy Sparks have shown the importance of foregrounding Africans and the African side of the transatlantic slave trade.¹³ This chapter applies a similar analytic lens utilized by Robin Law in his important work on Whydah. However, my study predates the 1727 Dahomey conquest of Whydah when Law’s study begins. It approaches themes of the transatlantic slave trade with a “view from below” by focusing on middling company traders to understand the nature of political authority and the formation of power relationships in the operation of the slave trade within the Kingdom of Whydah and more broadly the Slave Coast.¹⁴

Before the invasion of Whydah in 1727 by an army under the command of Dahomey King Agaja, the coastal port of Whydah was the commercial center of the

¹³ G. Ugo Nwokeji, *The Slave Trade and Culture in the Bight of Biafra: An African Society in the Atlantic World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Roquinaldo Ferreira, *Cross-Cultural Exchange in the Atlantic World: Angola and Brazil During the Era of the Slave Trade* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Randy J. Sparks, *Where the Negroes Are Masters: An African Port in the Era of the Slave Trade* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2014).

¹⁴ Robin Law’s work on the *Slave Coast* (1991) remains the most-comprehensive work on the rise of Dahomey in the first quarter of the eighteenth century. In describing how his new project on the port of Whydah differed from his previous work, Law stated that the *Slave Coast* was written from the “viewpoint of the Dahomian monarch, in effect of the inland city of Abomey” which was the same focus of I.A. Akinjogbin, Edna Bay and David Ross. This book focuses on the “coastal commercial center of Ouidah, represents, if not quite a view from below, nevertheless a perspective from what was, in political terms, the periphery rather than the center.” Law, *Ouidah*, 3. For an important work on intellectual history from below see, Stuart B. Schwartz, *All Can Be Saved: Religious Tolerance and Salvation in the Iberian Atlantic World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

kingdom. Only a few miles north was the capital city of Savi, the administrative and political center of Whydah. The RAC assigned permanent factors to both Savi and Whydah where critical relationships were formed necessary to the function of the slave trade. While studies of the slave trade generally emphasize the necessity of working relationships between Africans and Europeans for the slave trade to operate and function efficiently, this chapter focuses on a particularly remarkable incident when these relationships collided in a most destructive and violent manner. This resulted in the eviction of Joseph Blaney, governor of Whydah, and the consolidation of the company's factories on the Slave Coast. Several important questions guide the organization of this chapter. First, what were the local circumstances, and more broadly the Atlantic context, which led to the incident? What social, commercial and political norms were violated that led to the breakdown in important relationships that generally functioned properly? How did the breakdown in functional relationships impact the organization and operation of the transatlantic slave trade from the Slave Coast? And lastly, what were the consequences for the people involved?

This chapter examines the organization of the transatlantic slave trade by analyzing the structure and operation of the slave trade on the Slave Coast from 1695 to 1724. Unlike the Gold Coast, where massive trading fortifications such as Cape Coast Castle and El Mina that pockmarked the coastline, on the Slave Coast Europeans did not construct fortified spaces that laid national claims to trading rights with the local people. At Whydah, governing elites established commercial policies that welcomed all European traders. Visitors were required to uphold a decorum of civility regardless of ongoing Atlantic hostilities or European declarations of war against each other. While

some European trading companies did construct protected spaces to store trade goods and warehouse soldiers at Whydah, the mud-thatched walls surrounding the buildings were little more than facades with little actual protection from a determined enemy force.¹⁵ That the trading factories were not medievaesque fortified structures meant Europeans engaged more actively and directly with Whydah society and culture in building personal relations in the service of commerce.

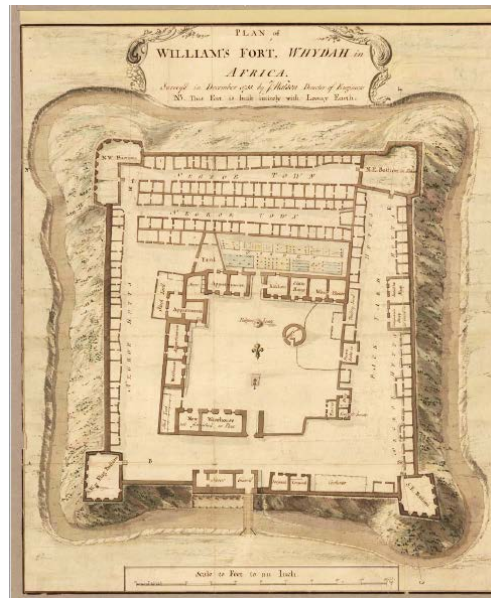


Figure 2.1. Plan of William's Fort, Whydah in Africa. Surveyed in December 1755 by J. Watson Director of Engineers. NB. This fort is built intirely [sic] of loomy [sic] earth. Colonial Office 267/11, BNA, Kew.

This chapter examines the operation of the English trading factory at Whydah to show how trading relationships were formed and the ways in which African authority operated in times of political crisis. It argues that beginning around 1704 when Richard Willis was appointed governor of the Whydah factory through 1712 when his successor

¹⁵ Surveyor Justly Watson reported in 1755 that "Fort Williams is a square and had it been originally constructed on any principles of fortification might have been a good regular small fort; but in its present condition, it deserves the name of a fort the least of anything I ever yet saw which bears that denomination. It is more like a large farm with several barns and thatched houses than any fort. In general it is in a most wretched and ruinous condition and does not deserve the name of a fort." The French fort was roughly 425 yards and the Portuguese fort about 850 yards from the English fort. CO 267/11, f. 27, Kew, BNA. John Atkins wrote that the "French, Dutch and English, have each a house, or mud fort, about three miles from the sea." John Atkins, *A Voyage to Guinea, Brasil and the West-Indies* (London: C. Ward and R. Chandler, 1735), 172.

William Hicks died, the chief trade representatives of the RAC successfully applied a strategy of commercial diplomacy in order to maintain a preferred status with Whydah elites. In doing so, Willis and Hicks demonstrated the important benefits of deference to elite authority in supporting the company's long-term commercial goals. At the same time, they created an easily replicated template for future governors that illustrated plainly the pitfalls of applying force, threatening violence or directly inflicting violence on local elites as a means to achieve economic objectives. This chapter argues that Jospeh Blaney, governor of the Whydah factory from September 1713 to March 1715, was unable to successfully manage the factory because he did not reproduce the model of commercial diplomacy outlined by his predecessors, nor adhere to company directives for engaging with European trade representatives.¹⁶

Atlantic commerce formed the core of economic life on the Slave Coast. This chapter analyzes the nature of sociocultural interactions between Europeans and Whydah elites participating in the slave trade to show how the deployment of diplomatic strategies impacted political relationships. While this chapter does focus on employees of the RAC with West Africans it is not an institutional history of a corporation. Rather it is a history from the bottom-up that examines the relationships, collaborations and strategies of commercial exchange to understand the role European trade representatives and Whydah elites played in the organization and execution of the transatlantic slave trade. The strategies of exchange deployed by RAC trade representatives either buttressed or severed political and commercial ties with Whydah elites. Ultimately, the volume of slaves departing on company ships was directly linked to its appointed trade

¹⁶ On the limitations of strong-arm tactics in West Africa and the use of obstructionist strategies against mounting European competition see, Jonathan I. Israel, *Dutch Primacy in World Trade, 1585-1740* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 327.

representatives' ability to successfully engage Whydah elites in commercial exchange and market manipulation.

The Negroes Esteem None but Power:" Building a Template for Trade

Portuguese mariners explored and exchanged trade goods with African traders near the River Volta as early as the 1500s but trade did not develop on the Slave Coast until the second half of the sixteenth century. Dutch ships arrived in the 1640s to dislodge the Portuguese domination of trade in the region.¹⁷ The Company of Royal Adventurers Trading to Africa, predecessors to the RAC, first established a factory at Offra in the Kingdom of Allada in 1664. Twenty years later in 1682, a factory was established at Whydah.¹⁸ In 1703 Whydah King Agbangla died, creating a succession crisis between the heir, the eldest son, and his younger brother Amar. Agbangla had ruled Whydah for about twenty five years and his passing was a great loss to the Whydah people and the European trade representatives.¹⁹ During the elaborate morning rituals that followed, trade to the European factories slowed. In addition, this interregnum period was a time of social disorder when justice retreated and crimes were committed with impunity.²⁰ In August 1704, it was reported that King Amar desired "presents" from the RAC as a gesture of support for his government.²¹ Although the new king continued the practice of

¹⁷ On the Dutch lodge at Arda see, Wilhelm Johann Muller's description of the Fetu country, 1662-69, in Adam Jones, *German Sources for West African History, 1599-1669* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1983), 245; Law, *Slave Coast*, 116-124 [ADD notes CO 1/19 here on early Allada]

¹⁸ Robin Law, ed., *Correspondence from the Royal African Company's Factories at Offra and Whydah on the Slave Coast of West Africa in the Public Record Office, London 1678-93* (Edinburgh: Centre of African Studies, Edinburgh University, 1989), 1-3.

¹⁹ Bosman suspected that a civil war would erupt from the succession crisis. Bosman, *New and Accurate Description*, 366-366a; Law, *Slave Coast*, 31, 76.

²⁰ Law, *Slave Coast*, 89.

²¹ Richard Willis, 3 August 1704, T 70/14, f. 53, Kew, BNA.

demanding customary payments from the European trade representatives, King Amar was described as having “not so good principles as his father.”²²

The transition to the new Whydah sovereign provided an opportunity for the French to reestablish their presence on the coast.²³ The French Compagnie d’Afrique established a factory at Whydah in 1671 but by the 1690s French activities on the Slave Coast had lapsed altogether.²⁴ In September 1704, four French frigates under command of Honfleur corsair Jean Doublet anchored in the Whydah roadstead. The expedition’s immediate goal was to revive French presence and construct a permanent factory in Whydah to warehouse trade goods.²⁵ RAC merchant Richard Willis pleaded with King Amar “not to suffer the French” to resettle but there was little he could do other than voice his objection. Indeed, the French *asiento* ships sent there to purchase slaves for Spanish American markets, came prepared with “large presents...to effect their design.” The heavily armed French fleet carried the day in negotiations. King Amar ordered four Portuguese ships to “pay 10 Negroes each to the French chief that there ships should not molest them in the road.” The French ships departed in December with over 1,800 slaves.²⁶ The persuasive power of commercial diplomacy was an effective tool for manipulating the Whydah market and establishing economic relationship with trading elites.

²² Richard Willis, 13 August 1705, T 70/14, f. 110, Kew, BNA.

²³ P. E. H. Hair, Adam Jones, and Robin Law, eds., *Barbot on Guinea: The Writings of Jean Barbot on West Africa, 1678-1712* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1992), 653n35.

²⁴ Law, *Slave Coast*, 126-27, 132.

²⁵ Charles Bréard, *Journal Du Corsaire Jean Doublet De Honfleur* (Paris: Charavay frères, 1883), 253-54; Clarence J. Munford, *The Black Ordeal of Slavery and Slave Trading in the French West Indies, 1625-1715* (Lewiston: E. Mellen Press, 1991), 210-211.

²⁶ Richard Willis, 3 August 1704, T 70/14, f. 53-4, Kew, BNA.; Voyage ID 33803, *Avenant*; Voyage ID 33801, *Badine*; Voyage ID 33804, *Faucon François*; Voyage ID 33802, *Marin*. Munford states that the ships only carried off a thousand captives.

The French success at Whydah echoed painfully in the ears of Cape Coast Governor Dalby Thomas. He proposed state sponsored violence to evict the French. Thomas stated that the Whydahs “esteem none but power and the French show it.” The permanent retrenchment of the French at Whydah would mean “farewell [to the] English...unless her Majesty sends force to pull down the fort they build.”²⁷ RAC officials believed that the construction of the French fort might have been “prevented...with prudent management” by the Whydah governor. However, company officials admitted reluctantly a few years later that because the French “obtained permission” from King Amar the only measure to “oppose” it was “engaging in a war with that King.”²⁸ The completion of the earthen-walled French fort demonstrated the long-term success of commercial diplomacy and signaled a new chapter in the highly competitive Whydah market for slaves.

King Amar ruled Whydah for little more than five years when his premature death in late 1708 threw the country into a second succession crisis. Amar’s eldest son Huffon, a boy-prince about 12 years old, was selected as the new king.²⁹ The political transition within the Kingdom of Whydah coincided with a similar shift in leadership at the English factory. In early May 1709, Cape Coast chief merchant William Hicks was assigned to

²⁷ Dalby Thomas, 21 August 1704, T 70/14, f. 53, Kew, BNA.

²⁸ Report of the Royal African Company Addressed to the Parliament of England, Relating to the British Trade with Africa, Especially the Slave Trade from 1698 to 1707. HC 339/8, Hispanic Society of America, New York.

²⁹ A Dutch factor report indicated that King Amar died on 28 October 1708 and that “his little son of about 12 years has succeeded the king.” A. van Dantzig, ed., *The Dutch and the Guinea Coast, 1674-1742: A Collection of Documents from the General State Archive at the Hague* (Accra: GAAS, 1978), 141, no. 158, 11 February 1709; Law, *Slave Coast*, 77, 151.

take over the Whydah factory in the void created by the death of Richard Willis.³⁰ With a new Whydah king and the arrival of a new, though well-seasoned English governor, presented an opportunity for reaffirming diplomatic and commercial relationships. Hicks met with King Huffon in early June. Captain Carter, Captain Assou, and other trading elites visited the English fort as well.³¹ Hicks reported that the summit with the king went well, the latter making the “usual abundance of promises of friendship.”³² With official formalities completed, it was important to reestablish economic ties with the king and Whydahs trading elites. “A present to the King” Hicks implored “and his chief merchant Carter deserves to be remembered.” The officially sanctioned offering of tribute from the RAC reaffirmed English commitment to maintaining sound diplomatic relations and enhanced the “company’s interest” with King Huffon.³³

The establishment of formal relations with Huffon did not necessarily guarantee a steady supply of slaves to Whydah. English overtures to the “Great King of Ardra” in 1664 requested “freedom of trade in your dominions” in exchange for a “plentifull supply of all sorts of goods, what shall be most to your liking.” As a token representative of commercial diplomacy, the Duke of York sent a “Crown which is the Badge of the highest authority” to ensure the kings assistance in dispatching ships.³⁴ In August 1701, the RAC addressed a long epistle to the “Great King of Whydah” indicating that company ships traded “most to those places where we are safest and civilist” treated.

³⁰ T 70/1445, Kew, BNA.; William Hicks, 6 May 1709, T 70/5, f. 57, Kew, BNA.; R. Porter, “English Chief Factors on the Gold Coast, 1632-1753,” *African Historical Studies* 1, no. 2 (1968), 207.

³¹ For Assou see, Robert W. Harms, *The Diligent: A Voyage through the Worlds of the Slave Trade* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 197-224. For Carter see, Law, *Slave Coast*, 211-14.

³² William Hicks, 22 August 1709, T 70/5, f. 60, Kew, BNA.

³³ William Hicks, 22 August 1709, T 70/5, f. 60, Kew, BNA.

³⁴ R. van Luttervelt, “Herrinneringen aan Michel Adriaenszoon de Ruyter in het Rijksmuseum,” *Bulletin Van Het Rijksmuseum* 5/2 (1957), 53.

Reaffirming the company's commitment to commercial diplomacy, and for sending ships to Whydah, King Agbangla received a large copper bell engraved with his name.³⁵ The tribute Hicks requested for Hufon arrived in January 1710; a "fine crown" valued at £30. Hicks informed RAC officials that the company's strategy of commercial diplomacy had it's hoped for outcome. Hufon personally requested a "fyne seymeter, and a hat and feather and scarlet cloak." It was clear the "14 years old" Hufon was receiving as well as teaching an early lesson in the politics of the slave trade. However, King Hufon's crown was not purchased by the RAC. Rather it was sent by Peter Paggen, an active lobbyist for opening up West Africa to independent traders.³⁶ It is unclear if Hufon differentiated between RAC ships or interlopers but it is certain that the application of commercial diplomacy, put the English on good terms.

Regardless of King Hufon's polite overtures of commercial reciprocity, the captive Africans that embarked at Whydah originated far beyond the borders of the kingdom. Whydah slave traders were the last node in a vast long-distance network that hustled thousands of captives from their homes in the interior towards the coast. The principal suppliers of slaves to Whydah came from the Kingdom of Allada but they too were middlemen for captives brought hundreds of miles inland. During the eighteenth century, Dahomey, the kingdom immediately north of Allada was the primary supplier of

³⁵ T 70/51, f. 201-2, Kew, BNA. Bells were recovered from the wrecks of two slave ships; the *Henrietta Marie* (1699) and the *Whydah* (1715). Mel Fisher Maritime Heritage Society, ed., *A Slave Ship Speaks: The Wreck of the Henrietta Marie* (Key West, FL: Mel Fisher Maritime Heritage Society, 1995); Barry Clifford, *Expedition Whydah: The Story of the World's First Excavation of a Pirate Treasure Ship and the Man Who Found Her* (New York, NY: Cliff Street Books, 1999).

³⁶ William Hicks, 13 March 1710, T 70/5, f. 70; Dalby Thomas, 12 February 1709, T 70/5, f. 67; PROB 11/575/141, Kew, BNA. For Paggen see, William A. Pettigrew, *Freedom's Debt: The Royal African Company and the Politics of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1672-1752* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 158.

captives to Allada and Whydah.³⁷ Just a few months after Hicks arrived at Whydah, the Dutch agent Jan de Paauw reported that “the passages through the country are...kept closed by the King of Ardra to such an extent that hardly a single slave comes through.”³⁸ The few slaves coming down the trade roads to Whydah were according to Hicks “very dear” because “13 ships of several nations” were waiting in the road off Whydah.³⁹ The internal politics of the Slave Coast tended to overshadow European commercial diplomacy. In the highly competitive Whydah market, the benefits of commercial diplomacy were often muted by limited supplies of slaves and the increasing volume of European buyers.

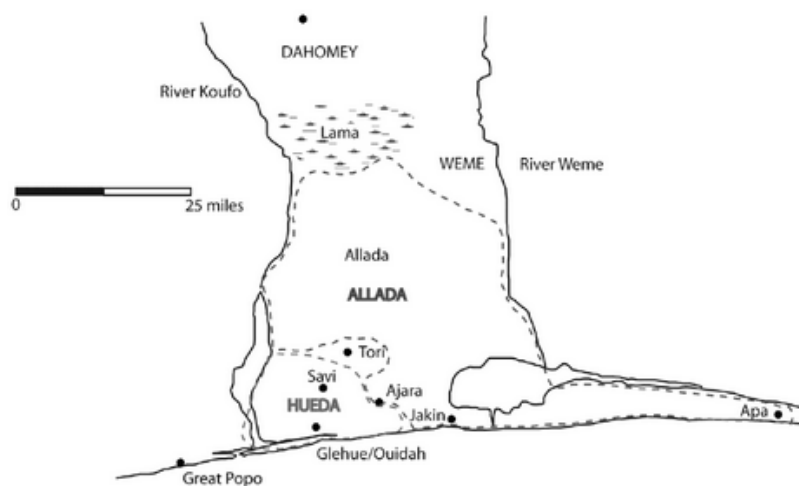


Figure 2.2. The late seventeenth-century Slave Coast. From Neil L. Norman, “From the Shadow of an Atlantic Citadel: An Archaeology of the Huedan Countryside,” in J. Cameron Monroe and Akinwumi Ogundiran, eds., *Power and Landscape in Atlantic West Africa: Archaeological Perspectives* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

When Hicks arrived at Whydah in May 1709, English ships were not well-regarded by local traders. A particularly menacing French privateer was reported in the waters east of Whydah waiting for English ships to prey upon.⁴⁰ In late 1709, the

³⁷ Law, *Slave Coast*, 184-91. For the ethnic groups departing from Whydah see, Robin Law, “Ethnicity and the Slave Trade: ‘Lucumi’ and ‘Nago’ as Ethnonyms in West Africa,” *History in Africa* 24 (1997): 205–19.

³⁸ Van Dantzig, *The Dutch*, 143, no. 159, 6 September 1709.

³⁹ William Hicks, 4 November 1709, T 70/5, f. 65, Kew, BNA.

⁴⁰ Dalby Thomas, 26 November 1709, CCC, T 70/5, f. 64, Kew, BNA.

predatory French cruiser had seized and ransomed five English ships.⁴¹ A London observer reported that the RAC suffered “prodigious losses at sea...in Africa by the French” carrying off ships.⁴² As a result of the French taking so many prizes in rapid succession, the English were made to “look little among the natives” and the French “look great in the eyes of the natives.”⁴³ To rub salt into the wound, the French ship captain “offered” to sell Hicks the cargoes of the *Dartmouth* and the *Joseph & Thomas* as the Whydah chiefs looked on.⁴⁴ Moreover, because the French were well supplied with sorted cargoes, they “actively threatened to destroy the company’s interest” at Whydah.⁴⁵

Opinion at Whydah had swayed significantly in favor of the French. Only a few years earlier it was reported that the Whydahs “think the French are masters of the world by their taking so many prizes of other nations.”⁴⁶ The shift towards the French was a result of the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) that awarded the coveted *asiento* contract to France; thereafter the volume of French ships trading on the Slave Coast ballooned.⁴⁷ The new

⁴¹ Dalby Thomas, 12 February 1710, CCC, T 70/5, f. 66, Kew, BNA.

⁴² 31 March 1709, Daniel Defoe, ed., *Defoe’s Review* (New York: Published for the Facsimile Text Society by Columbia University Press, 1938), vol. 13:630.

⁴³ Dalby Thomas, March 1710, T 70/5, f. 68; William Hicks to Dalby Thomas, 19 January 1710, T 70/5, f. 71, Kew, BNA.

⁴⁴ William Hicks, 31 January 1710, T 70/5, f. 70, Kew, BNA. Hicks was unsure how to proceed on the Frenchman’s proposal. His hesitancy was strictly legal because ship owners took out insurance clauses for such cases of seizure and ransom. In this case were the ship captain to sue for payment on the insurance claim, the case would be brought against the RAC thus making the company liable if Hicks were to purchase the cargoes that were stolen by the French cruiser. The last thing the RAC wanted to do at this time was to pay out a large settlement to an independent trader. Thomas told Hicks he was uncertain if the “French condemnation at Whydah would stand good at Doctors Commons.” 12 February 1710, T 70/5, f. 67, Kew, BNA.

⁴⁵ William Hicks to RAC, 22 August 1709, T 70/5, f. 60; William Hicks to RAC, 15 March 1711, T 70/5, f. 78, Kew, BNA.

⁴⁶ Richard Willis, 13 August 1705, T 70/14, f. 110, Kew, BNA.

⁴⁷ Only two French ships visited Whydah from 1690-1700. From 1701-1713, thirty-three French ships embarked captives from the Bight of Benin.

enterprise focused its activities at Allada, Offra and Whydah.⁴⁸ By attacking English shipping in coastal West Africa and carrying the booty to Whydah, the French accomplished not only imperial goals but enhanced the factory's relationship with trading elites on the Slave Coast. From the perspective of Whydah elites, French imperial aggression was a boon to the local economy. Only through Hicks continued "interest in the country" was he able to prevent French attempts to "engross the trade" and resuscitate the RAC's reputation with Whydah trading elites.⁴⁹

King Huffon's inclination for specific European trade representatives ebbed and flowed; as one rose to favor they garnered the ire of the outsiders. In early October 1710, the Whydahs mobilized to assist Huffon "against a rebellious Caboceer (headman)."⁵⁰ As the people marched through Savi, they carried forth the "colors of all nations" but as it happened on this occasion "there were more English [flags] than any other nation." The French and Dutch chiefs were "enraged" and "threatened revenge" against the Whydahs for the trespass but they were prevented by Hicks who in turn directed their anger at the English governor. The French and Dutch traders then threatened to attack the "English Fort" with the Dutch chief making additional threats to hire "Gold Coast people" as mercenaries.⁵¹ But when Huffon heard about the incident he quickly prevented any

⁴⁸ Munford, *Black Ordeal*, 203. On the eighteenth century French slave trade see, Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade; A Census* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 163-203; David Geggus, "The French Slave Trade: An Overview," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (2001): 119-38.

⁴⁹ Hicks to RAC, 15 March 1711, T 70/5, f. 78, Kew, BNA.

⁵⁰ The term 'caboceer' (Portuguese *cabeceiro*, head man) was commonly used by Europeans. Smith reported that "Caboceroes are the principal men and commonly limited to a set number." William Smith, *A New Voyage to Guinea* (London: J. Nourse, 1744), 87.

⁵¹ The Dutch chief followed through on his threats. Hicks sent Dalby Thomas a "certificate from the Gold Coast people in the Dutch pay which shows the intention of the Dutch chief" to attack the English factory. William Hicks, 18 October, 20 October 1710, T 70/5, f. 75; Dalby Thomas, 23 November 1710, f. 74, Kew, BNA.

escalation of violence. The Whydahs display of pageantry appears to have resulted in the submission of the “rebellious Caboceer.” No additional violence was reported.

In celebration, King Huffon requested that Hicks join him at “making up of a difference” and for a “feast made on the occasion.” Apparently an invitation only event, the “Dutch and French chiefs had the mortification to see themselves so despised by the country as not to be invited.”⁵² Hicks inclusion and the exclusion of the French and Dutch trade representatives, indicates King Huffon’s approval of English commercial diplomacy. Moreover, by Hicks preventing the Dutch chief from escalating his threats into violence, he preserved King Huffon’s authority and ability to administer justice in Whydah. The politics of the slave trade on the Slave Coast rested heavily on various forms of economic mediation and the formalities of procedural etiquette that required European subordination and routine acknowledgments of royal authority.

The English factory at Whydah remained in King Huffon’s good graces for much of the ensuing two years. Dalby Thomas informed Hicks in his last message before his death in January 1711, that he was “satisfied of [Hicks’] ability to manage his post.”⁵³ Despite the continued good management of the factory, as well as the “quality of slaves” Hicks was reported to have had on hand, few RAC ships arrived to embark slaves.⁵⁴ The lack of ships was noticed by everyone at Whydah. Hicks reported that the local traders were “admiring at the long absence” of the English ships on the coast.⁵⁵ The volume of English ships at Whydah was in stark contrast to the number of French ships arriving to purchasing slaves. Over the past two years, 23 French ships were reported to have carried

⁵² William Hicks, 18 October, 20 October 1710, T 70/5, f. 75, Kew, BNA.

⁵³ Dalby Thomas, 17 November 1710, T 70/5, f. 75; PROB 11/ 521/51, Kew, BNA.

⁵⁴ William Hicks, 24 January 1711, T 70/5, f. 75, Kew, BNA.

⁵⁵ Gerrard Gore and James Phipps, 10 June 1711, T 70/5, f. 77; William Hicks, 15 March 1711, T 70/5, f. 78, Kew, BNA.

off approximately 9,000 slaves.⁵⁶ Without company ships arriving at Whydah there was little Hicks could do to maintain the company's interest. In the weeks before his death Hicks wrote that the trade at Whydah was "indifferent" and that harassment from the Dutch continued unabated.⁵⁷ Hicks' successful deployment of commercial diplomacy and deference for King Huffon's authority proved tremendously beneficial to the company's long-term economic goals. However, the intended fruit of Hick's labors, numerous healthy slaves, would only rot and wither unless company ships arrived with sorted cargoes.

William Hicks' death in April 1712 signaled a change in the organization and management of the English factories on the Slave Coast. It would be sometime before London officials would identify a replacement and until then the Whydah lodge was managed by Henry Hillyard and Charles Green.⁵⁸ In March 1711, Greene was appointed as the company's representative at "Kingstown" [Savi], the Whydah capital where King Huffon resided.⁵⁹ In October 1712, Hillyard and Green reported that the "company's interest was well established with the King" and Whydah trading elites.⁶⁰ Hicks' deployment of commercial diplomacy kept the English in Huffon's corner well after his death. With Hicks passing, the RAC and Whydah elites like Captain Carter and Assou lost a dedicated employee and loyal ally. As a Gold Coast resident for 15 years before his appointment as Whydah governor, Hicks cultivated a keen sense of Fante culture and

⁵⁶ William Hicks, 15 March 1711, T 70/5, f. 78, Kew, BNA; Munford, *Black Ordeal*, 216-217.

⁵⁷ William Hicks, 24 February 1712, T 70/5, f. 84, Kew, BNA.

⁵⁸ Henry Hillyard was assigned to Whydah before September 1708. Charles Green arrived at Cape Coast as a writer in November 1706 and was transferred to Whydah before March 1711. T 70/1445.

⁵⁹ William Hicks, 15 March 1711, T 70/5, f. 78, Kew, BNA.

⁶⁰ Henry Hillyard and Charles Green, 25 October 1712, T 70/5, f. 88- 89, Kew, BNA.

political economy.⁶¹ Samuel Eyles, a writer at Cape Coast who worked closely with Hicks before his appointment to Whydah, apparently absorbed his philosophy for dealing with local residents and traders. In dealing with African traders, Eyles noted that “civil treatment and a kind behavior is best.” By allowing traders “to have the sorts of goods they like best without forcing any other goods on them is the only way to bring them to trade with us.”⁶² At Cape Coast and Whydah Hicks was able to cultivate relationships that were mutually beneficial for the RAC and local trading elites. “Nothing can preserve the company’s interest,” Hicks observed “but the company’s factor being in good understanding and friendship with the natives.”⁶³ Hicks’ knowledge and experience of African trading practices led to a deep-held conviction of the effectiveness of commercial diplomacy. By cultivating goodwill and treating African traders as equal allies in trading relationships, Hicks demonstrated the long-term benefits of commercial diplomacy over violence.

After Hicks’ death, RAC factors Henry Hillyard and Charles Green oversaw operations of the Slave Coast. In April 1713, Hillyard “with no regard for the company’s interest or his reputation” suddenly quit his post.⁶⁴ Such a bold move was uncommon on the coast and only possible because the factory was in transition. Cape Coast chief merchants Seth Grosvenor and James Phipps suspected subterfuge. That Hillyard departed on the *Heroine*, a private trading vessel for Jamaica, made him even more suspect.⁶⁵ In addition to a large amount of gold Hillyard stole from the factory, he also “put his tricks” on Charles Green, resident factor at Savi. Hillyard falsified the

⁶¹ William Hicks, 23 December 1707, T 70/5, f. 46, Kew, BNA.

⁶² Samuel Eyles, 14 January 1708, T 70/5, f. 46, Kew, BNA.

⁶³ William Hicks, 15 March 1711, T 70/5, f. 78, Kew, BNA.

⁶⁴ Seth Grosvenor and James Phipps, 14 May 1713, T 70/3, f. 1, Kew, BNA.

⁶⁵ Seth Grosvenor and James Phipps, 27 May 1713, T 70/3, f. 2, Kew, BNA.

inventories sent to Cape Coast. When officials at Cape Coast realized what Hillyard had done, Green took the fall.⁶⁶ Hillyard covered his fraudulent tracks well, taking several of the factory's account books and papers that belonged to the company.⁶⁷

The operation of the Whydah factory suffered under Hillyard and Green's management. From March 1712 to October 1713, the two agents loaded four RAC ships.⁶⁸ The available records indicate that none of the company ships departed with their full complement, whereas several interlopers that purchased slaves at Whydah over the same period filled their hulls without problem. Company vessels averaged 283 captives whereas 11 interloper ships averaged 335 slaves embarking from Whydah in 1713 and 1714. RAC officials were fed up and decided something had to change. It does not appear much consideration was given for how local Whydah and Allada politics impacted the operation of the factory.⁶⁹

In April 1713, RAC officials and much of Europe had reason to hope that the current state of affairs domestically and abroad would take a turn for the better. The Treaty of Utrecht ended over a decade of conflict in which every major European power participated.⁷⁰ French ships preyed upon RAC ships making their way to Slave Coast throughout the war, with particular losses in the 1710s. The reorganization of the Whydah factory resulted from the company's contract with the South Sea Company, now responsible for fulfilling the *asiento* contract as the suppliers of slaves to Spanish

⁶⁶ Charles Green, 3 July 1713, T 70/3, f. 2, Kew, BNA.

⁶⁷ Joseph Blaney, 15 October 1713, T 70/3, f. 8, Kew, BNA.

⁶⁸ The RAC ships were the *Canada*, *Oxford*, *Elizabeth* and *Catherine*. Voyage ID 15217, 20624, 20875, 20882.

⁶⁹ TASTD on statistics. T 70/1446, Kew, BNA.

⁷⁰ Henry Kamen, *The War of Succession in Spain, 1700-15* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969); Kamen notes that "Utrecht was fundamentally an English peace." Henry Kamen, *Philip V of Spain: The King Who Reigned Twice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 80.

American markets.⁷¹ Another possible factor was the high mortality at Whydah. Some employees on the Gold Coast considered it an especially unhealthy assignment.⁷²

Interestingly, the chief merchant at Commenda, who would later become governor of Whydah, wrote in September 1714 that he declined the appointment when it was initially offered because “too many die there.”⁷³ Company records hint that the frequent turnover in leadership was another catalyst, noting the “inconveniency of mortality” at Whydah caused many problems.⁷⁴

In addition to the general practicality of the measure, by appointing three chief merchants rather than just one governor, the company spread responsibility for factory’s transactions across several employees. At the same time, the strategy made additional employees accountable while encouraging factors to work together and promote a professional business-oriented environment where profits were priority one. Also, the company continued the practice of requiring agents to put up an additional security for their new position.⁷⁵ By appointing three chief merchants, the company hoped to “settle the factory” and ensure better overall management of operations. The RAC believed this

⁷¹ Pettigrew, *Freedom’s Debt*, 154-161; James A. Rawley and Stephen D. Behrendt, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade: A History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 67-69.

⁷² From 1704 to 1712, on average 12 company personnel managed the Whydah factory of which over half were soldiers. T 70/1445, Kew, BNA.

⁷³ William Baillie, September 1714, T 70/1475, f. 5, Kew, BNA.

⁷⁴ RAC to Joseph Blaney, Henry Hillyard, Charles Green, 19 May 1713, T 70/52, f. 322, Kew, BNA.

⁷⁵ RAC to Henry Hillyard and Charles Green, 19 May 1713, T 70/52, f. 323, Kew, BNA. RAC chief factor at Whydah John Carter gave a security of £1000 to the company in 1683. John Carter, Whydah, 22 November 1686, page 40 Law, 1992, *Further Correspondence of the Royal African Company of England*; James Phipps gave a bond of £500 to the RAC when he signed on as a writer. After becoming one of the Chief Agents at CCC, the RAC wanted an additional bond of £1500. David Henige, “‘Companies Are Always Ungrateful’: James Phipps of Cape Coast, a Victim of the African Trade,” *African Economic History*, no. 9 (1980), 34; Ann M. Carlos, “Bonding and the Agency Problem: Evidence from the Royal African Company, 1672-1691,” *Explorations in Economic History* 31, no. 3 (1994): 313-35.

strategy would result in more healthy captives embarking on company ships from Whydah.⁷⁶

The reorganization of the Whydah factory was a response to the financial crisis facing the company and large volume of slaves leaving from that port each year. By making the Whydah factory independent of Cape Coast management, company administrators in London cut out the middle administrators on the Gold Coast and communicated directly with Whydah officials. At the same time, the reorganization of the Whydah factory was a direct response to the emphasis placed on the Slave Coast in providing a large percentage of captives for *asiento* ships. In June 1713, the RAC began negotiations with representatives of the South Sea Company to supply slaves for the *asiento* contract.⁷⁷ One commentator noted that the *asiento* contract not only offered the possibility of financial renewal for the fiscally deflated RAC, but that the “trade to Africa seems to promise us some new revolution” for the nation.⁷⁸ RAC officials had much hope for the output of the Slave Coast factories.⁷⁹ Of the 4,800 slaves the RAC contracted to supply *asiento* ships with, the largest percentage of slaves - nearly 40 percent (1,900) - would come from Whydah.⁸⁰ The increased slaving activity on the Slave Coast would inherently produce, if managed accordingly, a great deal of corporate and private wealth.

During times of corporate realignment or new acquisition assessment, having influential associates was generally advantageous towards promoting one’s self-interest.

⁷⁶ RAC to Henry Hillyard and Charles Green, 19 May 1713, T 70/52, f. 323, Kew, BNA.

⁷⁷ T 70/38, Kew, BNA.

⁷⁸ 3 January 1713, *Defoe’s Review*, vol. 13:81.

⁷⁹ The Kingdoms of Allada and Whydah were consistent and reliable suppliers of slaves. During the first decade of the eighteenth century, an average of 10,000 slaves embarked each year from the Slave Coast for the Americas. Patrick Manning, “The Slave Trade in the Bight of Benin, 1640-1890,” in Henry A Gemery and Hogendorn, Jan S., eds., *The Uncommon Market: Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (New York: Academic Press, 1979), 107-140.

⁸⁰ T 70/38, Kew, BNA. Factories on the Gold Coast were to contribute 1,500, Gambia 700, Windward Coast 500 and Sierra Leone 200 slaves.

As it happened, Joseph Blaney, a “London merchant” with “some friends in the Court of Assistants,” was “recommended and proposed to be chief agent at Whydah.”⁸¹ In addition to powerful friends, Blaney was touted as a “person of good experience in business.”⁸² It does not appear that Blaney had any previous experience with the RAC in West Africa, and for that reason alone, he was a poor choice. However, a James Blaney (likely related) arrived on the Gold Coast as a secretary in September 1703 and over the next few years was appointed chief merchant at Accra.⁸³ Once his contract ended with the company in November 1706, Blaney traveled to Bahia in an effort to establish direct ties with Brazilian merchants smuggling gold to West Africa.⁸⁴ Blaney reported from Brazil that Bahia was “very rich” and that slaves were selling there at “good prices from £30-50 per head.” He recommended sending “ten or twelve” slaves as an “experiment” from Cape Coast or Whydah.⁸⁵ Martin Hardrett, who worked with Joseph Blaney at Whydah, suggested that he either resided in Portugal for a period or had traded with Iberia prior to his appointment.⁸⁶ To better manage the business of slaving on the Slave Coast, and increasing the volume of slaves the RAC would be responsible for providing, the company reorganized the managerial structure of the factory and placed their faith in a merchant who most likely had never stepped foot in Africa.

⁸¹ Royal African Company vs. Joseph Blaney, C 11/1177/2, Kew, BNA.

⁸² RAC to Joseph Blaney, Henry Hillyard, Charles Green, 19 May 1713, T 70/52, f. 322, Kew, BNA.

⁸³ T 70/ 1445, Kew, BNA. In 1728, a James Blaney resided in St Giles-without-Cripplegate parish of London. MS 11316/82. London Land Tax Records. London Metropolitan Archives. London, England.

⁸⁴ For the gold trade from Brazil see, Stuart Schwartz and Johannes Postma, “The Dutch Republic and Brazil as Commercial Partners on the West African Coast during the Eighteenth Century,” in Johannes Postma and Victor Enthoven, eds., *Riches from Atlantic Commerce: Dutch Transatlantic Trade and Shipping, 1585-1817* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 171-199.

⁸⁵ James Blaney to Dalby Thomas, 2 May 1707, T 70/5, f. 38; Dalby Thomas, 25 September 1706, T 70/5, f. 25, Kew, BNA.

⁸⁶ Martin Hardrett, 6 August 1715, T 70/5, f. 108, Kew, BNA. In 1712, Lisbon merchant Benjamin Blaney, complained that he had not received satisfaction from the Portuguese who seized his ship the *São João Baptista*. State Papers 89/22/225, 24 April 1712, Kew, BNA.

The organization of the Whydah factory was based on the administrative structure already in place on the Gold Coast. The chief merchant, or governor, at Cape Coast Castle was responsible for the operation and management of all the company's factories, lodges and forts on the Gold Coast. The "whole directive power in all matters either civil or military" was vested in a council of six consisting of the chief merchants residing at Cape Coast, Accra and Commenda.⁸⁷ RAC officials attempted to select workers with "high qualities of skill, tact and intelligence" to govern their West African factories. Successful merchants tended to be multilingual and business savvy with a strong understanding of cultural diplomacy.⁸⁸ Life and labor on the Gold and Slave Coasts was not as unbearably miserable for RAC employees as some scholars have claimed. To be sure, at times mortality rates for employees were high, stripping the factories of necessary personnel.⁸⁹ That death crept about stealthily wearing many guises certainly created additional stressors, but at the same time similar conditions existed for much of the laboring people across the Atlantic world. Those that adapted and habituated to their new environment recreated old comforts and exploited new ones in West Africa.⁹⁰ European traders readily developed and took advantage of relationships with African women as part of this transition and buttressed the formation of new commercial relationships with local

⁸⁷ Davies, *Royal African Company*, 243-44. Quote on 243.

⁸⁸ Davies, *Royal African Company*, 255-58. Quote on 255.

⁸⁹ Davies, *Royal African Company*, 256.

⁹⁰ Lionel Abson (d. 1803) was Whydah governor for thirty-three years. Richard Brew (d. 1776) resided for thirty years on the Gold Coast and Robert Westgate (d. 1779) for twenty-eight years. The Caulkers, Rogers and Clevelandes of Sierra Leone are additional examples of cultural assimilation and adaptation in West Africa. Robin Law, ed., *Contemporary Source Material for the History of the Old Oyo Empire, 1627-1824* (Ibadan: Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, 1993), 38; Margaret Priestley, *West African Trade and Coast Society; a Family Study* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969); Walter Rodney, *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast, 1545-1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 209-22.

elites.⁹¹ Conversely, those who arrived at Cape Coast with the requisite skill-sets but failed to adapt to the natural rhythms of life and cultures of local society tended to nullify the potential profits they hoped to reap as an agent of the British transatlantic slave trade.⁹²

Thus far this chapter has provided a brief overview of the operation of the English trading factories on the Slave Coast. The installation of new Whydah governments provided a transitional platform for reinforcing established relationships through customary offerings of tribute. When applied opportunely and generously, commercial diplomacy was a highly effective strategy for gaining a vaulted status with trading elites. William Hicks' application of commercial diplomacy in the development of lasting relationships with Whydah trading elites was a refined model of the strategy honed over many years of practice. Hicks' death and the RAC's contract to supply *asiento* ships with slaves allowed company administrators to reconsider the organization of the factories on the Slave Coast. More so than at any time in the company's history, Whydah became the key focal point in the operation of the transatlantic slave trade. To a large degree, successfully supplying *aseinto* ships with slaves hinged on Whydah. That the company selected a London merchant with no experience in Africa and ties to Portugal, most likely resulted from deep pockets and patronage privilege. In providing the forgoing overview, this section has explained the contextual background for understanding how the slave trade operated at Whydah before Joseph Blaney's appointment. The next section

⁹¹ Pernille Ipsen, *Daughters of the Trade: Atlantic Slavers and Interracial Marriage on the Gold Coast* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); George E. Brooks, *Eurafricans in Western Africa: Commerce, Social Status, Gender, and Religious Observance from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003), 122-60.

⁹² European trade representatives dined often with elites. King Hufon's royal kitchen was stocked with coffee, tea, chocolates, and other fine delicacies. His cellar contained wines from France, Madeira, and Spain as well as French brandy and liquors. Harms, *Diligent*, 163.

examines how Blaney administered the company's factories on the Slave Coast and considers some of the unforeseen hurdles and challenges he encountered.

"Concerned with Them in Their War:" Commerce, Conflict and (would be) Coalitions

In July 1713, Joseph Blaney departed on the RAC ship *Mary* to begin his new assignment as governor of the Slave Coast factories.⁹³ RAC officials allowed new governors to take large sums of trade goods with them and offered up substantial incentives to set the trade in motion. Some of the trade goods were meant as customary payments to local elites. Upon arriving at Whydah in September 1713, Blaney was to advance a "good interest with the natives in order to bring them to encourage and improve" commerce with RAC. Using his implied tact and intelligence, Blaney was to ensure that neither the "Europeans...or the natives do anything that may affect the company's interest or the honor of our nation."⁹⁴ The "sortable cargo" shipped on the *Mary* was intended to purchase 600 slaves.⁹⁵ However, only a few weeks after arriving on the coast, Blaney's first correspondence foretold the challenges of the slave trade at Whydah. The ship *Mary*, along with the ship *Oxford*, reportedly had "insufficient [cargoes] to purchase their complement of Negroes."⁹⁶

In February 1714, less than five months since arriving, it seemed Blaney was at odds with everyone at Whydah. Blaney frequently bickered with the Dutch factors as well as a "precedence" which Blaney would "not yield to the French" or the Dutch.

⁹³ Voyage ID 76468.

⁹⁴ RAC to Joseph Blaney, 19 May 1713, T 70/52, f. 315; Joseph Blaney and Charles Green, 29 September 1713, T 70/18, f. 59, Kew, BNA. Blaney arrived at Whydah on 21 September 1713.

⁹⁵ RAC to Blaney, Hillyard, Green, 19 May 1713, T 70/52, f. 317-322, Kew, BNA.

⁹⁶ Joseph Blaney and Charles Green, 29 September 1713, T 70/5, f. 93; Joseph Blaney and Charles Green, 15 October 1713, T 70/18, f. 59; Joseph Blaney and Charles Green, 12 January 1714, T 70/18, f. 59, Kew, BNA.

Rather than resolve the matter, Blaney hoped to settle new factories at Jakin and Popo.⁹⁷

The establishment of a factory at Jakin was a possible solution because it was the primary outlet for slaves carried by Allada traders which competed handedly with Whydah.

However, moving the factory to another Slave Coast port was counterintuitive because thousands of slaves continued to disembark annually from Whydah. Rather than confront these issues, Blaney let them fester and as a result reconciliation grew more difficult. At this early stage, the application of common sense diplomacy would have most likely settled most of the matters.

The ongoing political crisis in Whydah and its enduring trade war with Allada had tremendous consequences for the operation of the English factory.⁹⁸ Blaney complained incessantly of the challenges he faced to purchase the intended quota of captives for company ships. Although the factory warehouse was far from bare, the trade goods on hand were insufficient. Supply canoes from the Gold Coast carried provisions and stores to Whydah, but under the new management agreement, Cape Coast merchants were only required to send specific items.⁹⁹ Blaney does not seem to have taken his official directives seriously. RAC officials instructed Blaney to “keep an amicable correspondence with the chiefs” at Cape Coast.¹⁰⁰ The Cape Coast merchants implored him to correspond with them frequently and “to be as free with them as they with him,

⁹⁷ Joseph Blaney, 3 February 1714, T 70/5, f. 99, Kew, BNA.

⁹⁸ The origin of the trade war between Allada and Whydah began with the succession crisis following the death of King Agbangla in 1703. From 1705 through the 1720s, reports of Allada closing the paths and preventing slaves from entering Whydah were common but clearly with varying degrees of stoppage. Political turnover and the growth of European trade were related issues to the disorders of the Slave Coast. The trade war was lifted briefly in July 1717 with the death of the Allada king. However, the political conflict between Allada and Whydah continued until 1724 when Dahomey conquered Allada. Law, *Slave Coast*, 225-27, 252-60; Akinjogbin, *Dahomey*, 39-50.

⁹⁹ Seth Grosvenor, James Phipps, Robert Bleau, 10 April 1714, T 70/5, f. 99, Kew, BNA.

¹⁰⁰ RAC to Joseph Blaney, 19 May 1713, T 70/52, f. 315; RAC to Gerrard Gore, James Phipps, Robert Bleau, 19 May 1713, T 70/52, f. 314, Kew, BNA.

and to that end the company may be fully acquainted with their affairs there.”¹⁰¹ The plea fell on deaf ears. Poor communication only fueled the suspicion of subterfuge. Reports to London in May 1714, stated that Blaney did not communicate nor “advise” Cape Coast “about trade” nor about personnel at Whydah.¹⁰² As the company headquarters in West Africa, Cape Coast Castle was the administrative hub where information from London was received and diffused out to factories. Although Blaney was technically operating the Whydah factory independent of Cape Coast management, his unwillingness to seek counsel from experienced agents on trading protocol demonstrates his lack of experience with the slave trade in West Africa.

During 1713, King Hufon’s revenues from the slave trade were exceptional. In that year, 43 ships traded at Whydah and carried away approximately 11,770 captives.¹⁰³ Encouraged by his growing wealth, Hufon attempted to exert additional control over the slave trade and as a result, alienated many of his most important political allies. In turn, the Whydah traders appealed to the king of Allada to take action against Hufon. In response to the traders’ requests, the king of Allada gathered his chief administrators and “bound them by oaths to close the paths” to prevent slaves from coming down to Whydah. The blockade was successful “more or less continuously” for over two years as the flow of slaves were redirected to Jakin.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Seth Grosvenor, James Phipps, Robert Bleau, 10 April 1714, T 70/5, f. 99, Kew, BNA.

¹⁰² Seth Grosvenor, James Phipps, Robert Bleau, 24 May 1714, T 70/5, f. 100, Kew, BNA.

¹⁰³ The increasing wealth Hufon reaped from the slave trade was noticed by neighboring elites on the Gold Coast. The King of Aquambue demanded that he be paid the “same custom as the King of Fidda enjoys, as well as goods worth twenty slaves.” Ole Justesen, ed., *Danish Sources for the History of Ghana, 1657-1754* (Copenhagen: Det Kongelige Danske Videnskabernes Selskab, 2005), 248, no. VI.12, 3 April 1714. The year 1713 saw a 25 percent increase over the previous year when 29 ships traded at Whydah. Voyages database.

¹⁰⁴ Law, *Slave Coast*, 255-56.

In April 1714, the Dutch factor Peter Valckenier wrote that the “King of Great Ardra” effectively closed the paths “thus preventing the traders who wish to go to Fida [Whydah] with their slaves from going there; that not only the trade of the Company, but also that of other Nations is now limited to such an extent, that it is virtually impossible to get a single slave.”¹⁰⁵ As a result when the *Windsor*, the first *asiento* ship sent to Whydah, departed in April 1714, which was supposed to purchase 450 slaves, carried only 201.¹⁰⁶ Six weeks after the *Canada* arrived at Whydah, the second *asiento* ship sent there, Blaney reported that he might be able to give the ship “a quick dispatch from Jakin” but not from Whydah. When the *Canada* finally departed in August 1714, the ship carried only 253 slaves, barely half of the intended 500.¹⁰⁷ South Sea Company officials intentionally dispatched the ships to Whydah because it was expected the vessels would load their slaves quickly and full.¹⁰⁸

Despite the internal political conflict between Huffon and the Whydah traders, as well as the ongoing trade war with Allada, Blaney believed he could resolve the crisis by throwing money at the problem, or rather by placing tribute at Huffon’s feet.¹⁰⁹ Aligning

¹⁰⁵ Van Dantzig, *The Dutch*, 174, no. 204, 4 April 1714.

¹⁰⁶ Voyage ID 20635.

¹⁰⁷ Joseph Blaney to RAC, 22 May 1714, T 70/5, f. 103, Kew, BNA. Voyage ID 76473.

¹⁰⁸ Add. MSS, 25562, 11 November 1713, British Library.

¹⁰⁹ Robin Law’s depiction of the conflict between Allada and Whydah as a ‘trade war’ and A.I. Akinjogbin’s as ‘economic warfare’ misses an important piece of the larger Atlantic context. Certainly, economic exchange was the root purpose of the trade but what this framing overlooks is the very nature of what is being exchanged; a laborer, rather a captive African laborer. A more accurate depiction of the conflict is that beginning about 1705 and continuing until 1724, Whydah and Allada engaged in an on-off again labor war. As I have already discussed, by closing the trading paths to Whydah, Allada placed a chokehold on the supply chains moving captive African laborers. For Kingdoms of Whydah and Allada, both of which had flourishing coastal ports actively engaged in Atlantic commerce, it was about access to inland supply chains where captives originated. After a series of initial exchanges, these captive African laborers, once severed from their homelands and transported across the ocean were transformed into transferable commodities within the Atlantic marketplace. However, in the African interior and on the Slave Coast, the person was a laborer. West African societies had a long history of domestic slavery. It was a labor war from the African perspective. It was a labor war to control the supply of captive Africans sold to Europeans.

with Huffon through commercial diplomacy to induce preferential treatment for slaves was only possible if the Whydah king controlled the trading paths transporting captives to the coast. However, there was another potential alternative to resolve the crisis; a military alliance. In July 1714, Blaney reported that Huffon had approached him “to be concerned with them in their war” against Allada. As King Huffon’s ally, the English would provide financial support for hiring mercenaries and supply arms. The opportunity to break Allada’s chokehold on the supply of slaves to Whydah was now within Blaney’s reach. Rather than aid Huffon in a war with Allada, Blaney laid down untenable terms. “If they will regulate the extravagant prices Portuguese pay. If they recover the company’s debt contracted by former agents. If they exclude all but the English company from trading in their country and demand no customs for any of ships of the company.”¹¹⁰ Blaney’s terms were outrageously offensive. Unsurprisingly, he stubbornly resorted to an old strategy. To London officials he wrote, “Whydah will not be serviceable to the company in their contract for supplying the Assientiets unless” ships brought “larger” cargoes.¹¹¹ Blaney’s correspondence convey a cloud-like haze in his logic that was further compounded by a non-alliance approach to the political crisis that had engulfed the Slave Coast.

The political crisis at Whydah was heightened by the ongoing trade war with Allada. The ever dwindling volume of slaves arriving to the coast forced European traders to consider alternative markets to secure captives. With additional personnel assigned to Whydah, Blaney proposed settling new factories at “Aguya [Agoué] near the Volta River...and at Appah [Badagry]” to the east while maintaining the “settlement at Jakin.” A “good sloop or longboat” would enable the factory to extend trade even further

¹¹⁰ Joseph Blaney, 15 July 1714, T 70/5, f. 107, Kew, BNA.

¹¹¹ Joseph Blaney and Martin Hardrett, 22 April 1714, T 70/5, f. 103, Kew, BNA.

east with “Calabar” in the Bight of Biafra. But this strategy required significant economic investment and logistical planning, both of which were in short supply. A more feasible solution was to respond directly to local consumer demands. Whydah traders clearly expressed their demand for cowries and firearms. To satisfy the local market, Blaney requested that “one third if not half the value of every cargo” should consist of firearms.¹¹² Rather than align with Huffon against Allada and release the chokehold on slaves to the coast, Blaney attempted to flood the market with firearms in exchange for the few available captives.

In addition to alternative markets and responding to local demand, Blaney attempted to weaken the influence of neighboring rival competitors as a strategy to acquire more slaves. In early August 1714, Blaney engaged in a “small contest with the French, Dutch, and Portuguese about a punctilio,” the details of which are unknown. However, Blaney was deemed the champion in the challenge for which Huffon promised “he would maintain for our nation.” As a result of Blaney’s tactics, the English “are...now called the first people” at Whydah.¹¹³ Clearly, Blaney believed he had gained some ground with Huffon. If Blaney succeeded in establishing the English as the “first people” at Whydah it was not apparent to Captain Richard Randes, of the RAC ship *Pindar Galley*. Randes wrote in September 1714 that the French “carry off a great many slaves” from Whydah and although he had as “good a cargo as any” he could “not get slaves near as fast as the French.”¹¹⁴ During the trade war between Whydah and Allada, European demand for slaves remained high. In fact, English expectations for the volume

¹¹² Joseph Blaney and Martin Hardrett, 4 August 1714, T 70/5, f. 105, Kew, BNA.

¹¹³ Joseph Blaney and Martin Hardrett, 5 August 1714, T 70/5, f. 105, Kew, BNA.

¹¹⁴ Richard Randes, 30 September 1714, T 70/5, f. 106, Kew, BNA; Voyage ID 99030. Randes carried from Cape Coast an additional 500 firearms to Whydah to aid in dispatching the ship. Nevertheless, the ship left short 78 captives.

of captives embarking from the Slave Coast were never greater. The limited supply drove prices higher. Despite Blaney's efforts, RAC and *asiento* ships continued to depart Whydah in succession without their intended number of slaves.

The fierce market competition at Whydah and the daily struggle to procure captives took its toll on factory personnel. In September 1714, Martin Hardrett became ill and returned to Whydah. In his place, Charles Green was assigned to manage the factory at Jakin. The lack of healthy workers strained the operation of the RAC factories. Captain Randes went ashore to aid in the dispatch of the *Pindar Galley* and the ship's surgeon went along as well to "examine slaves," which was contrary to company protocol.¹¹⁵ Desperate times called for drastic measures. In late 1714, Blaney made two proposals to the Whydah trade chiefs to improve commerce with the intended goal for English control of the trade. The first was a reoccurring theme; create an English monopoly of the Portuguese gold trade.¹¹⁶ Blaney wanted the Whydah trading elites to "regulate the extravagant prices Portuguese pay" for slaves. Trading largely in gold and tobacco - two of the three most regarded items at Whydah - the Portuguese regularly outbid all other competitors.¹¹⁷ Blaney was not the only one frustrated with the state of the Whydah market. The French governor Du Coulombier wrote that the Portuguese ship captains allowed sailors to "embark as many slaves as they like for their own profit." Once trading concluded, the "rest of the crew in order to hurry often give up to twice the usual price to be able to have handsome captives."¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Richard Randes, 30 September 1714, T 70/5, f. 106, Kew, BNA.

¹¹⁶ Akinjogbin, *Dahomey*, 44.

¹¹⁷ Joseph Blaney, 6 July 1714, T 70/5, f. 107, Kew, BNA.

¹¹⁸ Du Coulombier, 22 March 1714 in Verger, *Trade Relations*, 108.

The second scheme was much bolder; the construction of a canal from the forts to the ocean allowing boats to discharge merchandise within only a short distance of the factories.¹¹⁹ The Whydah factory was located about three miles from the sea and reaching the forts required crossing “three rivers or rather three different branches of the same river.”¹²⁰ Blaney also requested to control access, set the charges and collect the revenue for vessels using the canal. Rather than paying portage fees and risking continued theft of merchandise, Blaney would collect incoming revenue. His plan would transform the English factory into a landlord rather than a tenant in the kingdom of Whydah. The proposal to cut out the porters, the various captains and tertiary laborers that depended on the wages they received for their services was shortsighted.¹²¹ The Whydah chiefs rejected Blaney’s proposals.¹²²

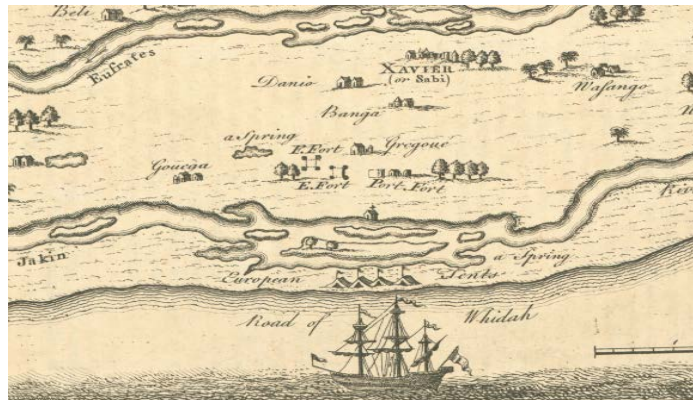


Figure 2.3. Des Marchais’s 1725 map of Whydah. To reach the Whydah roadstead, supplies and trade goods had to traverse a treacherous lagoon between factories and the sea. The tents on the beach were the final way station before captives embarked. A Map of the Kingdom of Whidah, from Marchais; G. Child, sculp. [S.l. : s.n.]. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library.

¹¹⁹ Watson wrote that the landing at Whydah was “one of the worst” he surveyed in West Africa. CO 267/11, f. 27, Kew, BNA. On European difficulties navigating the lagoons see, Robin Law, “Between the Sea and the Lagoons: The Interaction of Maritime and Inland Navigation on the Precolonial Slave Coast,” *Cahiers d’Études Africaines* 29, no. 114 (1989): 209–37.

¹²⁰ William Smith, *A New Voyage to Guinea* (London: J. Nourse, 1744), 169.

¹²¹ Law shows that the consistently high proportion of slaves purchased with cowries is an “index of the degree to which the proceeds of the slave-dealing were recycled into the local economy and... to some degree, a multiplier effect, stimulating a more general expansion of the commercial sector of the economy.” Robin Law, *The Kingdom of Allada* (Leiden: Research School CNWS, 1997), 104.

¹²² Akinjogbin, *Dahomey*, 44.

Blaney's schemes were bold and desperate in both origin and execution. Perhaps the most significant oversight was the timing of the proposals. Over the past six months, on two separate occasions, Blaney was approached by Hufon as a potential ally against Allada to open up the commercial roads and put an end to the trade war.¹²³ In a third incident illustrative of the escalating violence on the coast, an "abdicated Prince of Appah...who had fled Whidah" but was "invited to return" requested English protection.¹²⁴ Failing to comprehend the potential short and long-term benefits of accepting the pleas for assistance, Blaney refused to allocate English resources. Blaney's unwillingness to support Hufon was his greatest misstep and likely the cause of his downfall. His failure to comprehend that irrespective of the quantity of trade goods stored in the company warehouses, it was impossible to purchase captives if none were available in Whydah. Blaney informed London officials that as long as the factory has "goods they need not want slaves. Let there be war or no war." Moreover, although he had almost no experience in the dynamics of diplomacy or Slave Coast politics, Blaney preached a policy undergirded by the notion that the "company never got anything by war or siding with any party."¹²⁵ As Hufon took alternative measures to ramp up the Whydah war machine against Allada, Blaney held steadfast to his baseless notion of non-alliance with Whydah. "If only the company were exclusive" of any European traders at Whydah Blaney stated, "would it be worthwhile to assist" Hufon against Allada.¹²⁶ The inattention to diplomacy or concern for local political tensions did little to enhance the

¹²³ Joseph Blaney, 6 July 1714, T 70/5, f. 107; Joseph Blaney and Martin Hardrett, 3 November 1714, T 70/6, f. 11, Kew, BNA.

¹²⁴ Joseph Blaney and Martin Hardrett, 3 November 1714, T 70/6, f. 11, Kew, BNA.

¹²⁵ Joseph Blaney and Martin Hardrett, 4 August 1714, T 70/5, f. 105, Kew, BNA.

¹²⁶ Joseph Blaney and Martin Hardrett, 3 November 1714, T 70/6, f. 11, Kew, BNA.

company's interest at Whydah. Moreover Blaney's schemes were likely most unsettling for the king given the fact that since he came to the throne in late 1708, Hufon put in place ever tightening regulatory measures on the slave trade at Whydah; procedures intended to prevent the formation of non-state monopolies.¹²⁷

The enduring trade war between Whydah and Allada heightened tensions amid the various European traders on the Slave Coast. Animosity between the Dutch, English and French merchants teetered daily between passive hostility and naked violence. In early September 1714, Blaney contracted with Portuguese trader Manuel Moreno for a large quantity of Brazilian tobacco and slesias in exchange for a number of slaves to be provided at a later date. The agreement was intended to enhance the quality of the trade goods in the English warehouse so Blaney could dispatch the *Elizabeth* waiting offshore for captives.¹²⁸ Blaney's agreement with Portuguese ship was not out of the ordinary. However, when the arrangement is considered within the context of Blaney's hardline, non-alliance stance, coupled with his recent proposals to the Whydah Chiefs - the canal and monopoly scheme - the incident that occurred on 18 November, takes on a greater significance.

"Here is No Resisting the Country:" Blaney's Blunder and the Limits of Whydah State Authority

To fully grasp the significance of Blaney's breach of protocol it is necessary to consider the ways in which European politics and military conflicts impacted the structure of

¹²⁷ Robin Law, "Royal Monopoly and Private Enterprise in the Atlantic Trade: The Case of Dahomey," *The Journal of African History* 18, no. 4 (1977): 555–77; Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 97.

¹²⁸ Joseph Blaney and Martin Hardrett, 3 November 1714, T 70/6, f. 11; Richard Randes, 30 September 1714, T 70/5, f. 106, Kew, BNA.

international commerce on the Slave Coast and the expectations Whydah elites had for European traders. As early as the 1680s, Whydah was described as a “place of free trade” receptive to “all ships trade that comes” ashore.¹²⁹ The status of Whydah as a port that welcomed all European trade was distinct among slave trade ports of West Africa. This nondiscriminatory policy was the primary reason why so many captives departed from Whydah during the four hundred year history of the transatlantic slave trade. However, the liberal commercial policy was not without significant regulation and established guidelines to maintain order amongst the various Europeans residing on the Slave Coast. For example in 1703, King Amar required the English, Dutch, and French to sign an “agreement for the freedom of the roadstead and the trade” at Whydah.¹³⁰ Included in the treaty, which was renewed in 1704, were clauses that prevented the molestation or capture of a ship trading at Whydah regardless of official declarations of war by the respective European nations. In sum, “all nations” were expected to “live in peace and friendship” which was not exclusive to whites but extended to the slaves as well. Heavy penalties including the seizure of property and persons were the punishments for any violations.¹³¹

In October 1704 Captain Andrieu Barnebau was informed by King Amar that as long as the French fleet were in “his harbor and on his lands that there be a neutrality

¹²⁹ Law, *The English in West Africa, 1681-1683*, 224, no. 479, 4 December 1681.

¹³⁰ Van Dantzig, *The Dutch*, 90, no. 101, 10 October 1703. Stein claims that the treaty ‘saved the French’ from a military disaster but this is likely a misreading of the evidence since the French *aseinto* fleet arrived heavily-armed and with several prizes. Stein, *French Slave Trade*, 90.

¹³¹ Van Dantzig, *The Dutch*, 115-16, no. 121, Copy of Agreement of 25th April 1703. Labat wrote that “peace and neutrality treaty signed between four European nations engaged in the slave trade at Juda, both on land and off-shore, and even with sight of the shore.” Jean Baptiste Labat, *Voyage Du Chevalier Des Marchais En Guinée, Isles Voisines, Et À Cayenne, Fait En 1725, 1726 & 1727*. (Paris, G. Saugrain, 1730), vol. 2:112.

among all nations for the good of his country, as well as for foreign commerce.”¹³² In 1708, the treaty was renewed and agreed upon by the French, English and Dutch trade representatives.¹³³ The first decade of the eighteenth century was marred by brutal violence between England and France, particularly in the waters off coastal West Africa. During that same period of heightened violence, Whydah sovereigns established a well-defined policy of peaceful open commerce for foreign traders. In doing so European traders acknowledged the authority of the Whydah state and its administrator’s duty to administer justice.

The significance of the neutrality agreement in Whydah was reported in London and other European metropolises. Charles Davenant observed that the “solemn quadripartite neutrality” agreement at Whydah was observed by all the European company’s agents residing on the Slave Coast.¹³⁴ During his visit to Whydah in 1682, Jean Barbot observed that the king “administers very impartial justice and will not suffer any European factor to abuse or encroach upon another, but will have them all live in unity.”¹³⁵ By agreeing to the treaty, European traders acknowledged Whydah’s authority and ability to enforce the mandates stipulated in the neutrality pact. Although it was not stipulated in the treaty, it was understood that trade with the enemies of Whydah was forbidden.¹³⁶ The expectations of European trade representatives were quite simple. The “King says that if the white men correspond not with his enemies nor pinnyair his people

¹³² Add. MSS, 19560, British Library.

¹³³ Richard Willis, 30 September 1708, T 70/5, f. 55, Kew, BNA; Van Dantzig, *The Dutch*, p138, no. 152, 31 July 1708.

¹³⁴ Charles Davenant, *The Political and Commercial Works...*, Volume 5, (1771), 313.

¹³⁵ Hair et al., *Barbot on Guinea*, 645.

¹³⁶ Edward Wortley was evicted because he traded with Offrah during time of war. The King forced Wortley to depart on an independent ship against his will. Robin Law, ed., *The English in West Africa, 1691-1699*, The Local Correspondence of the Royal African Company of England, 1681-1699, pt. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 2006), 574, no. 1334, 10 May 1692.

none shall wrong them, but if they do he is resolved to serve them the same trick.”¹³⁷

English trader Edward Jackline concluded that “Here is no resisting the country.”¹³⁸ The symbolic authority and tangible power of the policy lasted for decades. A late 1760s French account observed that “the employees of our fort Juda [Whydah] and those of the English and Portuguese forts... have always lived in good understanding even while their nations have been at war.”¹³⁹ Blaney it seems failed to consult these precedents before arriving or while a resident of the Slave Coast.

On 18 November 1714, Blaney marched out of the English factory with a sizable cadre of armed men behind him carrying the “English flag” towards the Dutch factory.¹⁴⁰ Upon arriving at the gate of the Dutch lodge, Blaney demanded an explanation from the Dutch factor Pieter Valckenier on why he had seized 40 slaves belonging to Manuel Moreno.¹⁴¹ Valckenier, “giving an untenable answer,” refused to discuss the matter further with Blaney until the armed men were sent away.¹⁴² Unsatisfied with the rebuke, Blaney forced open the gate, “fired several shots” at Valckenier, took him prisoner, dragged him “feet first” in “triumph down to the English” factory.¹⁴³ French governor Coulombier sent a dozen “war boys” from the French fort in an attempt to quiet the

¹³⁷ Law, *The English in West Africa, 1691-1699*, 575, no. 1334, 10 May 1692.

¹³⁸ Edward Jacklin, 10 May 1692, T 70/11, f. 48, Kew, BNA.

¹³⁹ ‘Memorandum on the Fort of Juda’ in John D. Hargreaves ed., *France and West Africa* (Macmillan, 1969), 53.

¹⁴⁰ Akinjogbin, *Dahomey*, 44. The French account states 18 Mina men. Valckenier says it was 60 or 70 soldiers. Blaney said with a guard. The following account utilizes English, French, and Dutch sources to assemble the most complete account of the Blaney incident. As far as I can tell, it is the first attempt to reconstruct the incident utilizing these sources together.

¹⁴¹ Akinjogbin, *Dahomey*, 44; Joseph Blaney, 1 January 1715, T 70/6, f. 8, Kew, BNA. The Dutch account does not provide a number.

¹⁴² Joseph Blaney, 10 May 1715, T 70/6, f. 12, Kew, BNA.

¹⁴³ Akinjogbin, *Dahomey*, 45; Van Dantzig, *The Dutch*, 176, no. 206, 7 December 1714. Valckenier stated he was “dragged along in an unhuman...barbarian manner.”

melee.¹⁴⁴ “Skirmishes” broke out “between the blacks on each side.”¹⁴⁵ At the same time, Hufon dispatched a “large number of his own men” who after a “fight ousted” the English soldiers from the Dutch lodge.¹⁴⁶ The Whydah soldiers “seized, stripped and carried” Blaney off into the country where he remained a prisoner for ten days.¹⁴⁷ An armed guard surrounded the compound to prevent Blaney from escaping or any attempt at his rescue.¹⁴⁸ Akinjogbin suggests that the incident could have led to a “civil war” had it not been quickly checked by the Whydah authorities.¹⁴⁹ Blaney’s armed attack on a representative of the Dutch West Indies Company (WIC) was an extraordinary and shocking act of violence.

The European accounts are generally in agreement on why Blaney was stirred to attack the Dutch agent. Valckenier claimed he had permission from King Hufon to take the slaves off the Portuguese ship. Blaney suggested that the Portuguese ship was robbed of the 40 slaves. Whereas the French account, which seems much less likely, posits that Blaney and the soldiers harassed a group of Portuguese men assembled at the “captain’s trees,” a site where trade occurred regularly.¹⁵⁰ That the slaves were taken from the Portuguese ship angered Blaney so much originates from a situation a few weeks earlier.¹⁵¹ Given the fact that Blaney was assisted by Manuel Moreno a trader on the unnamed Portuguese ship in dispatching the *Elizabeth*, when Valckenier took the slaves

¹⁴⁴ Akinjogbin, *Dahomey*, 45.

¹⁴⁵ Joseph Blaney, 1 January 1715, T 70/6, f. 8, Kew, BNA.

¹⁴⁶ Van Dantzig, *The Dutch*, 177, no. 206, 7 December 1714.

¹⁴⁷ Joseph Blaney, 1 January 1715, T 70/6, f. 8, Kew, BNA.

¹⁴⁸ Van Dantzig, *The Dutch*, 177, no. 206, 7 December 1714. In October 1713, the personnel at the English factory numbered 33 of which 20 were soldiers. T 70/ 1445, Kew, BNA. Perhaps as many as 70 (a conservative estimate) Europeans, employees, and Whydahs were involved in the violence.

¹⁴⁹ Akinjogbin, *Dahomey*, 44.

¹⁵⁰ Van Dantzig, *The Dutch*, 177, no. 206, 7 December 1714; Joseph Blaney, 10 May 1715, T 70/6, f. 12, Kew, BNA; Akinjogbin, *Dahomey*, 44 (captain’s trees).

¹⁵¹ The *Elizabeth* departed Whydah on 3 November 1714. Voyage ID 76479.

from the Portuguese ship Blaney considered the “theft” a personal slight and responded erratically in a fit of armed naked violence.

The central issue agreed upon in all three accounts is that Valckenier removed slaves belonging to a Portuguese ship. Blaney had traded with Manuel Moreno for tobacco and slesias in exchange for slaves, which seems legitimate because all accounts agree. The Dutch agent then went on the ship to take 40 or more slaves because Huffon authorized the removal. What followed was much more than a “fracas” as one historian has described the incident.¹⁵² Although Robin Law uses Blaney’s eviction as evidence of King Huffon’s authority, he downplays the incident as a fracas which seems shortsighted since several Whydah soldiers were murdered. Moreover, Law oversimplifies the origins of the incident as English attempts to monopolize the Portuguese gold trade which further blurs the nuances of commerce at Whydah. To be sure it was an outright rebuke of King Huffon’s authority as the sovereign of Whydah. In addition it was a direct violation of the neutrality treaty agreed upon by European traders visiting and residing in Whydah. That Blaney escaped with his life, was sheer luck. Other European trade representatives were not so fortunate having lost their heads for much lesser infractions.¹⁵³

News of Blaney’s blunder traveled quickly up the Gold Coast. The response by the Dutch and English officials was measured and premeditated. By 27 November the English at Cape Coast were aware of the incident and sent off correspondence alerting London.¹⁵⁴ A month later, Captain Lawrence Prince informed Cape Coast officials that

¹⁵² Law, *Slave Coast*, 253.

¹⁵³ English governor Testefoule was killed by Dahomey soldiers in 1729. Later that year, French governor Duptitval was killed by Whydah assassins. William Snelgrave, *A New Account of Some Parts of Guinea and the Slave-Trade* (London, 1734), 119, 133-34.

¹⁵⁴ Gerrard Gore, James Phipps, Robert Bleau, 27 November 1714, T 70/6, f. 8, Kew, BNA.

Blaney was a prisoner on his ship the *Whydah*, upon strict orders from Hufon.¹⁵⁵ Prince, a victim of circumstance, was forced to enter into an agreement with the king promising that Blaney would remain on his ship until officials from Cape Coast arrived on penalty of his cargo and ship.¹⁵⁶ As Cape Coast officials waited on certified instructions from London, Randle Logan, one of the chief merchants at the castle, having arrived in October 1714, was instructed to go to Whydah and assess the situation.¹⁵⁷ He left on the *Broughton* on 3 February and arrived at Whydah a few days later. After getting ashore Logan received a message from Blaney asking him for a meeting, which could not take place at the English fort because Blaney was a “sort of prisoner upon honor” on the *Whydah*.¹⁵⁸ Logan and Blaney conferred on the matter at length, discussing the intricacies of the incident and possible solutions for restoring Blaney to his post. Blaney drew up a memorandum for Logan to take with him during his meeting with Hufon. Three months had passed since the incident but the king’s frustration with Blaney had not cooled during that time. Joining Logan were Lawrence Prince, Walter Breary, one of the new chief merchants appointed to Whydah and fort physician Matthew Whyche.¹⁵⁹

The breadth and scope of Blaney’s infraction against the Dutch factor as well as his insult to the Kingdom of Whydah and King Hufon’s authority was apparent from the

¹⁵⁵ An experienced ship captain of 14 voyages to the coast, Prince was well-acquainted with West African society and the culture of commerce at Whydah. Prince traded at Whydah at least once before 1714 and returned to the Slave Coast three times. Voyage database.

¹⁵⁶ Lawrence Prince, 23 December 1714, T 70/6, f. 8; Joseph Blaney, 1 January 1715, T 70/6, f. 8, Kew, BNA. There are several mentions of Hufon’s agreement with Prince’s as a physical document that circulated at Whydah by the parties involved. The agreement is not extant.

¹⁵⁷ T 70/1445, Kew, BNA. Randal Logan was sent out with Gerrard Gore to replace Seth Grosvenor who was recalled in 1713. In 1709, Logan was a First Lieutenant on the HMS Guernsey before signing on with the RAC. Logan saw service in Newfoundland and Barbados. PROB 11/554/180, Kew, BNA. His first name is spelled Randall in his will but throughout the company’s copybooks, his name is misspelled as Randle. For consistency, I have retained Randle.

¹⁵⁸ Joseph Blaney to Randle Logan, 6 February 1715, C 113/276, Kew, BNA.

¹⁵⁹ Randle Logan to Joseph Blaney, 14 February 1715, C 113/276; Gerrard Gore, James Phipps, and Robert Bleau to Joseph Blaney and Martin Hardrett, 31 January 1715, T 70/6, f. 8, Kew, BNA.

outset. The conference did not get off to a good start for the English envoy. Logan made his case asking why Blaney was removed from his post as head of RAC operations at Whydah. He requested that Blaney be allowed to come ashore to answer the charges against him, to be returned to his position, and to explain his proceedings with the Portuguese. Logan reported that Hufon's "aversion to you is so great that your name was never mentioned." So much so that Logan was not allowed to "use of your name" again because of the "great uneasiness" it caused King Hufon. Whatever favor Blaney and the RAC had earlier cultivated in their relations with King Hufon, had clearly lapsed. Among the list of affronts "crimes and insults committed" by Blaney, several "deserve[d] death."¹⁶⁰

Hufon identified four primary offenses that he could not pardon. The first was a threat of violence, "shaking your cane at his person," directed squarely at the king. The direct threat of an assault on the king's body was without doubt the most egregious act committed by Blaney. The second offense, which involved Captain Carter, the Whydah trade chief assigned to the English factory, and perhaps the most important figure to maintain good relations with, Blaney "kick't a tub of boogies [cowries] in Carter's face."¹⁶¹ Given that the two offenses occurred "at the same time" Blaney was lucky to have walked away with his life.¹⁶² The absolute disrespect displayed cannot be overstated. The third offense was not a direct threat of physical violence but an assault on the primary political institutions that gave form and meaning to Whydah society. As

¹⁶⁰ Randle Logan to Joseph Blaney, 14 February 1715, C 113/276, Kew, BNA.

¹⁶¹ Captain Carter was an entrusted official in the king's inner circle. First mentioned in the 1690s, Carter was said to have been a former employee of the English factory, most likely as an interpreter. Carter was the chief merchant to the English factory (liaison) as Captain Assou was to the French. Law, *Slave Coast*, 207-14.

¹⁶² Randle Logan to Joseph Blaney, 14 February 1715, C 113/276, Kew, BNA.

mentioned above, the Kings of Whydah entered into treaties of neutrality with the European nations as early as 1703. Blaney “endeavor[ed] often to subvert their ancient Constitution by not allowing the King to have any power to protect the neutrality, [even] though his grandfather, father, and himself were guarantors for the agreements made between the nations.” According to Huffon, Blaney acted as “both the judge and party [jury]”.¹⁶³ More than just acts of naked violence, Blaney threatened the core principles and customs that governed Whydah society.

To further illustrate his point King Huffon cited specific incidents of Blaney’s attempts to usurp his authority. The most recent example, and the cause of his imprisonment, was “when the Dutchmen” Huffon stated “pannyard the Portuguese slaves, you came (with violence in a war like manner) to assault the Dutch without ever applying to him for justice or acquainting him with your reasons.” Also at risk from Blaney’s violent actions were the lives of “several of his people (Whydahs)” that were injured and killed in the incident.¹⁶⁴ Logan attempted to counter the charges repeatedly throughout the conference but his challenges failed to move the proceedings in his favor. He held out hope that a meeting with Valckenier might have some sway over the king.¹⁶⁵

The incident at Whydah required the intervention of RAC and Dutch WIC officials on the Gold Coast. In early February, just a few days after Logan departed for Whydah, the Dutch governor travelled from El Mina to Cape Coast for a meeting to discuss the Blaney episode. On the Whydah incident, Cape Coast officials acknowledged that Blaney was “too harsh...and could not really be excused.” The Dutch agents reported

¹⁶³ Randle Logan to Joseph Blaney, 20 February 1715, C 113/276, Kew, BNA.

¹⁶⁴ Randle Logan to Joseph Blaney, 20 February 1715, C 113/276, Kew, BNA.

¹⁶⁵ Randle Logan to Joseph Blaney 14 February 1715, C 113/276, Kew, BNA.

that the “English feel ashamed that their first servant at Fida [Whydah] was chased away by the Negroes,” but justified the exile because Huffon had “reasons enough to deny [Blaney] access to his country.”¹⁶⁶ After receiving their instructions, Dutch agents Van Naerssen and Valckenier returned to Whydah and met with Logan and the French governor on 28 February 1714. During the meeting, Logan made a concerted effort to collect depositions from all the parties involved. The Dutch envoy made clear that Blaney’s “breach of neutrality” by placing a “flag at the door” of the WIC factory and “abusing their representative by dragging him along the ground” was unpardonable. In addition, the French governor was also fed up with Blaney and his irrational behavior, having refused his mediation and attempts to prevent the incident.¹⁶⁷

As Logan collected additional information, Blaney’s account began to lose credibility. Once the meeting with the Dutch and French concluded, Logan arranged a second summit with Huffon. He pleaded to allow Blaney to come ashore and defend himself. Logan even offered up himself as security for the request, but again the King refused.¹⁶⁸ Huffon’s mind was made up. He was resolute that not only would Blaney never return to his post, but that he should “be sent [to] England... not be landed in any part of Africa even not at Cape Coast.” That Huffon’s geographical authority stretched across the continent is dubious, but the statement illustrates that Blaney had made a series of commercial and political blunders that could not be excused.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ Gerrard Gore, James Phipps, Robert Bleau, 23 March 1715, T 70/6, f. 4-7, Kew, BNA; Van Dantzig, *The Dutch*, 180, no. 210, 4 February 1714.

¹⁶⁷ Randle Logan to Joseph Blaney, 28 February 1715, C 113/276, Kew, BNA.

¹⁶⁸ Randle Logan to Joseph Blaney, 28 February 1715, C 113/276; Mynheer R. Van Naerssen, 25 March 1715, T 70/6, f. 14, Kew, BNA.

¹⁶⁹ Randle Logan to Joseph Blaney, 14 February 1715, C 113/276, Kew, BNA.

The tapestry weaved by Blaney's contemporaries at Whydah depicts a hardened unapologetic administrator who lacked many of the characteristics necessary to thrive on the Slave Coast. In addition to the French and Dutch accounts, and Logan's correspondence that abstract his conversations with Hufon, Blaney's personal communication provides a supplementary layer that substantiates the descriptions submitted by his contemporaries. In the midst of the negotiations with king Hufon, Blaney stated that the,

Honor of the Company and Nation ought to be infinitely preferred to any proportion of a Negro, tho in his own house; and no comparison ought to be admitted with the representative of the Company which in a degree is the Nation's representative and consequently should be treated with such distinction as becomes the Crown of England and to receive, or a liberty to exert toward such unequal as well as unchristian, worthless power as theirs is, and only fit to be laught at when saucy punctilios prevail from poor servile slaves to flatter or embolden and encourage a proud ambitious, insolent, worthless Prince who believes an awe to himself ought to be as sacred as life or death.

That Blaney had such contempt for King Hufon and such regard for himself demonstrates boldly the near fatal flaws inherent to his character and inability to administer his duties as governor of the Slave Coast.¹⁷⁰

Blaney hoped that the "King of Whidah and the Dutch Capeman... [had] put it out of their mind" to have him removed. Blaney reminded subordinate factor Martin Hardrett that "no persons power upon this coast much less in any Blacks to dispose me of that which was so well confirmed in London upon a very valuable security for the term of five years and can't be repealed by any but themselves they gave it." He continued "everybody on this side of the River Volta may be assured that wherever I am whether on board or on shore I am lawfully, legally and justly, chief director and first agent of

¹⁷⁰ Joseph Blaney to Randle Logan, 18 February 1715, C 113/276, Kew, BNA.

Whydah.”¹⁷¹ As the negotiations continued to spiral out of Blaney’s favor, his contempt for the Dutch and the king was redirected towards his ally Randall Logan. He accused Logan of falsely and incompletely pleading his case, failing to assert the company’s authority, acquiescing to the Dutch too easily, and lacking the authority to present Blaney’s actions.¹⁷² The accusations at this point were futile. The gears of Whydah politics turned a full cycle against the English governor and there was no way to return the dial back to its former setting.

As the RAC’s ranking official at what was quickly becoming one of the most important international trading hubs in West Africa, the political and commercial consequences for Blaney’s blunder were placed squarely on his shoulders. Once it appeared that Logan would be unable to restore Blaney to his post, he informed Blaney that he was instructed to make official inventories of the company’s warehouses and take charge of the Whydah factory.¹⁷³ Blaney was livid because he believed that his commission granted him absolute authority over the operation of the company’s factories on the Slave Coast.¹⁷⁴ In his absence, Martin Hardrett and Charles Green managed Whydah. Blaney was adamant during negotiations that he needed to return to the factory to settle the trading accounts. He estimated that “several thousand pounds” of transactions remained outstanding which he would ultimately be held accountable for.¹⁷⁵ The account ledgers could be balanced in his absence, but if Blaney was not on site to

¹⁷¹ Joseph Blaney to Martin Hardrett, 25 December 1714, C 113/277, Kew, BNA.

¹⁷² Joseph Blaney to Randle Logan, 24 February 1715; Joseph Blaney to Randle Logan, 1 March 1715, C 113/276, Kew, BNA.

¹⁷³ Randle Logan to Joseph Blaney, 28 February 1715, C 113/276; Gerrard Gore, James Phipps, Robert Bleau, 2 May 1715, T 70/6, f. 12; RAC to Gerrard Gore, James Phipps, Robert Bleau and Randle Logan, 11 November 1714, T 70/52, f. 448-50, Kew, BNA.

¹⁷⁴ Joseph Blaney to Martin Hardrett, 25 December 1714, C 113/277, Kew, BNA.

¹⁷⁵ Joseph Blaney to Randle Logan, 1 March 1715, C 113/276, Kew, BNA.

cover his tracks then the books would certainly not balance in his favor. To be sure, he had a lot on the line. Blaney's contract was to run for five years; he would receive an annual salary of £300 and a commission of 5 shillings for every slave sent off.¹⁷⁶ With the addition of the *asiento* ships to Whydah, if he was successful, Blaney stood to profit substantially from his appointment. To ensure Blaney's utmost commitment to his duties as a commissioned officer, he posted a security of £4,000 before departing for the Slave Coast.¹⁷⁷

On 12 March 1715, Blaney was notified that he had permission to leave the *Whydah*, the ship on which he was imprisoned for three months.¹⁷⁸ Just as king Hufon ordered, Blaney was not allowed to step foot in his kingdom again. He was quickly rushed onto the company's cruiser, the *Broughton*, without gathering his possessions from the fort.¹⁷⁹ Much to the surprise of the Cape Coast officials, the *Broughton* returned directly from Whydah, having to forgo her intended voyage to St. Tomé. The potentially lucrative trip was vacated because of its unexpected human cargo, Blaney.¹⁸⁰

The extent to which Blaney carried over his frustration for expulsion from Whydah into additional acts of violence is unclear, but given the shadow regime he administered while governor there is reason for suspicion. First, Logan's correspondence indicate that he did not receive the assistance he needed from Hardrett or Green to record

¹⁷⁶ The 5 shillings commission was divided by the RAC agents; Blaney receiving 3 and 1 shilling each to the other two factors.

¹⁷⁷ Joseph Blaney to Randle Logan, 7 March 1715, C 113/276, Kew, BNA. Carlos states that company employees posted bonds ranging from six to ten times their annual salary. That Blaney received an annual salary of £300 and posted a security of £4,000 is illustrative of the importance of the Whydah factory to the company and the value of the cargoes sent there. Ann M. Carlos, "Principal-Agent Problems in Early Trading Companies: A Tale of Two Firms," *The American Economic Review* 82, no. 2 (1992), 142.

¹⁷⁸ Joseph Blaney to Randle Logan, 12 March 1715, C 113/276, Kew, BNA.

¹⁷⁹ Joseph Blaney, 10 May 1715, T 70/6, f. 14, Kew, BNA.

¹⁸⁰ Gerrard Gore, James Phipps, Robert Bleau, 2 May 1715, T 70/6, f. 12, Kew, BNA.

updated inventories of the company warehouses.¹⁸¹ Second, Blaney threatened Hardrett with violence for offering assistance and called him a traitor for doing so.¹⁸² Hardrett and Green, the remaining agents at Whydah, had two choices. They could either indict themselves for defrauding the company or lob the charges at the outgoing governor Blaney. The cover up was extensive. That Logan and Captain Clark of the *Broughton* fell deathly ill between the time Blaney was allowed to leave and the short trip back to Cape Coast was alarming. Moreover, given that Logan and Clark were landed at Cape Coast in coffins rather than walking ashore is especially suspect.¹⁸³ Randal Logan, the official responsible for carrying out the investigation ends up dead rather than the accused and deported governor, seems more like a screenplay scripted for a Hollywood thriller than an enquiry into the mismanagement of the Slave Coast factories.¹⁸⁴

“Chased Away by the Negroes:” Slave Coast Justice and the Company Response

The deportation of the Whydah governor was humiliating for the RAC. That Blaney forgot the “English live...in his [Huffon’s] land only by his tolerance” was a tough lesson to learn. The Dutch, and likely the French as well, reveled in the mortification that

¹⁸¹ Gerrard Gore, James Phipps, Robert Bleau, 2 May 1715, T 70/6, f. 12, Kew, BNA.

¹⁸² Joseph Blaney to Martin Hardrett, 11 March 1715, C 113/277, Kew, BNA.

¹⁸³ I suspect that Blaney poisoned Logan and Clark. English trader John Carter reported in 1686 that he was threatened with poisoning on two occasions and carried an antidote in his pocket. John Carter, Whidah, 22 November 1686, page 41, Law, 1992, *Further Correspondence of the Royal African Company of England*. Thomas Phillips was informed that the local practice of poisoning whites was accomplished by placing a “small ball of poison” underneath the nail of the little finger and into the drinking cup of the victim. The poison originated from the “inland countries” and cost the value of three or four slaves to purchase. Thomas Phillips, *A Journal of a Voyage Made in the Hannibal of London, Ann. 1693, 1694* (London: J. Walthoe, 1732), 220-21.

¹⁸⁴ As a consolation prize, Cape Coast officials sent Logan’s widow 50 oz. of gold. In 1717, the Royal Mint set the price of gold price at £3.17 per troy ounce. Gerrard Gore, James Phipps, Robert Bleau, 2 May 1715, T 70/6, f. 12; Gerrard Gore, James Phipps, Robert Bleau, 7 June 1716, T 70/6, f. 30-1, Kew, BNA.

Blaney was “chased away by the Negroes.”¹⁸⁵ In June 1715, company officials sent out new instructions for governing the Whydah factory. First, Joseph Blaney’s commission was revoked. Next, Cape Coast officials were instructed to “take possession” of the Whydah factory and begin the arduous process of putting the company’s affairs back in order. The experiment to make Whydah independent of Cape Coast management had dramatically failed. London officials were determined to put “Whydah and Cape Coast under one management” and to restore the factory to the “ancient establishment as dependent on Cape Coast.”¹⁸⁶

The reorganization of the Whydah factory to its previous state was easily dictated and committed to paper, but the actual labor was far more difficult. Upon Blaney’s departure the most tenured factor on the Slave Coast was William Green, who had spent the majority of his time at Jakin.¹⁸⁷ Robert Mason, former chief merchant at Secondee, was assigned to Whydah to replace the deceased John Errington.¹⁸⁸ How quickly Mason could overcome the hurdles placed in his path and resettle the factory was unclear. Blaney covered his tracks well by leaving “no papers” for incoming factors.¹⁸⁹ Shortly after his departure it was reported that “Mr. Blaney has only in every respect during his continuance here done the company as much injury and injustice as he could have done

¹⁸⁵ Van Dantzig, *The Dutch*, 180, no. 201, 4 February 1715.

¹⁸⁶ RAC to Robert Bleau and Randle Logan, 14 June 1715, T 70/52, f. 451-52; RAC to Joseph Blaney, 14 June 1715, T 70/52, f. 452, Kew, BNA.

¹⁸⁷ T 70/1445, Kew, BNA.

¹⁸⁸ Gerrard Gore, James Phipps, Robert Bleau, 21 May 1715, T 70/6, f. 16; Robert Mason, 21 May 1715, T 70/6, f. 17, Kew, BNA. Robert Mason arrived on the Gold Coast in April 1711. From June 1713 to April 1714, Mason was the chief merchant Secondee. T 70/1445, Kew, BNA.

¹⁸⁹ John Errington and Walter Brearey, 1 May 1715, T 70/6, f. 16, Kew, BNA.

in that time.”¹⁹⁰ Although the Slave Coast was rid of Blaney, the evidence of his presence was disturbingly lasting.

The operational productivity of the English factories on the Slave Coast suffered in the wake of the Blaney incident. To get Blaney out of Whydah alive, Logan had to make several concessions which included, “withdrawing” the English factory at Jakin. However, once the deal with King Hufon was concluded, Blaney continued to defy the King’s authority by proposing to settle a new factory at Apa east of Jakin. At Savi, in the void of guidance and leadership “nothing was minded...but eating and drinking.”¹⁹¹ In May 1715, John Errington reported that the “differences between Ardrah, Jacqueen, and Whidah” continued and little sign of resolution.¹⁹² Conditions further deteriorated. Factor Walter Breary “refused to take charge of the company’s affairs” and resigned his post.¹⁹³ Moreover, when Breary deserted the factory, he stole about 30 slaves and left the coast on a French vessel.¹⁹⁴ As a result of Blaney’s blunder, King Hufon required the RAC to consolidate its operations on the Slave Coast and cease trading activities with Allada. Regrettably for the RAC, employees at Whydah took drastic measures that threw the company’s affairs further into disarray.

When Blaney returned home to London in early September 1715, he was not welcomed with open arms nor embraced by his former employer. For all practical purposes, he disgraced the company and the larger London trading community. Perhaps as soon as Blaney disembarked in London, he was arrested and placed in prison where he

¹⁹⁰ John Errington and Walter Breary, 1 May 1715, T 70/3, f. 129, Kew, BNA.

¹⁹¹ Joseph Blaney, 10 May 1715, T 70/6, f. 14, Kew, BNA.

¹⁹² John Errington, 7 May 1715, T 70/6, f. 20, Kew, BNA.

¹⁹³ Lancelot Greene and William Green, 25 May 1715, T 70/6, f. 20, Kew, BNA.

¹⁹⁴ John Errington, 7 May 1715, T 70/6, f. 20; Gerrard Gore, James Phipps, Robert Bleau, 7 June 1716, T 70/6, f. 30, Kew, BNA.

remained for over two months.¹⁹⁵ After his release, Blaney appeared before the Court of Assistants to give his “account of the differences between the King of Whidah.”¹⁹⁶ The court demanded that Blaney submit his original papers while governor of the Slave Coast factories. However, upon examining the submitted reports, the company’s suspicions were conclusive and moved to bring charges against Blaney in February 1716.¹⁹⁷

From the outset, Blaney disregarded the most important clauses included in the detailed list of instructions he received before leaving for the Slave Coast. Blaney was entrusted with the “whole executive power” in the “management” of the factory and all “affairs at Whydah [were] vested and entrusted” to him. Blaney’s commission carried a great deal of weight and responsibility. Perhaps the most egregious, especially for a self-proclaimed professional merchant, was his lack of recordkeeping, a facet he failed to produce in both the company and private accounts of transactions at Whydah. RAC officials expected Blaney to maintain “a true particular journal of all the proceedings relating to the trade and affairs of the said company and also books of account wherein he should daily and truly enter all the accounts of every particular buying selling receipts payments and all of the transactions.” Failure to produce company accounts on demand was incredibly suspicious. As a result, the RAC was left with little recourse other than to conclude that Blaney had used company trade goods to enrich his personal wealth.¹⁹⁸

RAC officials expected the contract to supply *asiento* ships with slaves would restore the company to its former financial stability. The volume of French *asiento* ships

¹⁹⁵ In 1717, Blaney paid taxes on a property located in Scroope’s Court (Union Court) adjacent to St. Andrew Holborn Church. MS 11316/56, London Land Tax Records. London Metropolitan Archives.

¹⁹⁶ T 70/89, f. 161, Kew, BNA. The Court of Assistants was a directorate of twenty four of the company’s major shareholders selected by annual elections. Pettigrew, *Freedom’s Debt*, 46.

¹⁹⁷ T 70/89, f. 196, 241, Kew, BNA. [REVIEW Black Journal notes]

¹⁹⁸ Royal African Company vs. Joseph Blaney, C 11/1177/2, Kew, BNA.

that embarked slaves at Whydah from 1701 to 1713 was one of the reasons why RAC officials placed a greater emphasis on the factories of the Slave Coast.¹⁹⁹ With the new contract, the RAC invested heavily in regaining the trust and partnership of King Huffon and other Whydah trading elites. The first three *asiento* ships dispatched to Whydah were “cargoes of great value” specifically “large quantities of cowries and fuzees and other vendible goods,” intended to purchase captives quickly and display the company’s commitment to King Huffon’s government and Whydah trading elites.²⁰⁰ It was Blaney’s responsibility to use the valuable cargoes to “not only...procure the sufficient quantity of Negroes to supply the several compliments” of the *Windsor*, *Canada* and *Elizabeth* “but to command the trade” from Whydah.²⁰¹

Critical to the operation of the slave trade on the Slave Coast were the castle slaves responsible for portage and other laborious tasks.²⁰² Owned by the RAC, castle or “working slaves” were considered an investment of “very great value” and were not to be disposed of without prior authorization. Reports from Whydah showed that Blaney “clandestinely and illegally disposed of the company’s goods and castle slaves” to the Portuguese.²⁰³ More specifically, when Blaney arrived, over 100 “sound and healthy” castle slaves labored at the fort. Shortly thereafter about 20 of the castle slaves fell sick with smallpox. Those that recovered were considered more valuable because of their

¹⁹⁹ From 1701 to 1713, 30 percent of French ships to West Africa embarked captives from the Slave Coast. No other region held a share greater than 12 percent. Voyages database.

²⁰⁰ RAC to Joseph Blaney, Charles Greene, Martin Hardrett, 11 November 1714, T 70/52, f. 436-39, Kew, BNA.

²⁰¹ Royal African Company vs. Joseph Blaney, C 11/1177/2, Kew, BNA.

²⁰² About one third of the physical space inside Fort William was identified as “Negroe Town” and “Negroe Hutts.” Plan of William’s Fort, Whydah in Africa. CO 267/11, Kew, BNA. For the role of castle slaves on the Gold Coast see, Simon P. Newman, *A New World of Labor: The Development of Plantation Slavery in the British Atlantic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 139-65, esp. 141-47.

²⁰³ John Errington and Walter Breary, 1 May 1715, T 70/6, f. 16; John Errington and Walter Breary, 1 May 1715, T 70/3, f. 29, Kew, BNA.

ordeal with the disease. Blaney sold “12 [castle slaves] that recovered...to a Portuguese trader and upon his own account” while the ship *Mary* was waiting to be loaded off shore. The bartering away of the valuable castle slaves was detrimental to the function of the factory and displayed Blaney’s overriding self-interest in profiting from his new appointment at the expense of his employers.²⁰⁴

Blaney’s disregard for the company’s attempts to revitalize Whydah as an important trading hub for English ships was a dangerous and costly misstep. As previously noted, the RAC shipped expensive cargoes on the *Windsor*, *Canada* and *Elizabeth*. As it turned out, the *Canada* left from Jakin short of the intended number of slaves because when the ship stopped at Whydah Blaney “took out...many of her goods” estimated at over 100 slaves worth. Blaney was skimming off the best trade goods, pocketing the proceeds, and putting the trouble of dispatching the ship onto subordinates.²⁰⁵ In late 1714, the RAC reported that because of the problems at Whydah in loading the *asiento* ships, the “South Sea Company have thought fit to break off their contract with us.”²⁰⁶

That Blaney did not purchase the intended number of slaves for each ship was doubly costly for the company. First, the company suspected, and perhaps rightly so, that Blaney embezzled sizable amounts of trade goods for his private consumption. Second, according to the contract with the SSC, the RAC was required to pay a penalty fee for each slave that did not embark on *asiento* ships from the Slave Coast. The first three *asiento* ships dispatched to Whydah were expected to carry off 1,450 slaves or more.

²⁰⁴ Royal African Company vs. Joseph Blaney, C 11/1177/2, Kew, BNA.

²⁰⁵ Martin Hardrett, 6 August 1715, T 70/5, f. 108, Kew, BNA.

²⁰⁶ RAC to Joseph Blaney, Charles Greene, Martin Hardrett, 11 November 1714, T 70/52, f. 439, Kew, BNA.

However, only one ship, the *Windsor*, left with more than 50 percent of the intended number of captives on board. All total, the three *asiento* ships embarked only 731 of the contracted 1,450 slaves. Needless to say, the RAC expected to profit from the new contract to supply *asiento* ships slaves. At Whydah, nothing of the sort transpired. In fact, it was the opposite. From Blaney's blunders, the RAC "suffered damages to the value of £10,170." The sum illustrates the calculable financial loss incurred by the RAC, but the intrinsic damage was not as easily measured.²⁰⁷

The incident that caused Blaney's eventual exile from Whydah tarnished the reputation of the RAC in the eyes of Whydah elites and the other European trading representatives on the Slave Coast. Blaney's application of naked violence against the Dutch factor Pieter Valckenier was an unprecedented act of aggression that resulted in the injury and death of several of Hufon's soldiers. From the outset, Blaney actively cultivated relationships with traders from Portugal and Brazil, neglecting his duties as governor. In April 1714 Blaney indicated that his efforts were taking root. "In a little time there will be such a correspondence settled with Brazil" Blaney reported, "as will never let" the Whydah "factory want of gold unless they want to goods."²⁰⁸ The amount of gold Blaney deposited in his private coffer likely factored into his actions against Valckenier.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ Royal African Company vs. Joseph Blaney, C 11/1177/2, Kew, BNA. If the company was able to recover Blaney's security bond of £4,000 is unclear. Even if the RAC was successful, the company would have recovered less than 40 percent of the damages claimed in the suit. It does not appear that Blaney left a will or probate inventory at the time of his death. The absence of a will may suggest the company's success.

²⁰⁸ Joseph Blaney and Martin Hardrett, 22 April 1714, Whydah, T 70/5, f. 103, Kew, BNA.

²⁰⁹ In November 1714, RAC officials indicated that a large quantity of gold (valued at 202 slaves) was unaccounted for. In March 1715, Logan informed Blaney that "no one knows what happened to the £700 in gold, belonging to the Company which Green left with you." RAC to Joseph Blaney, Charles Green, Martin Hardrett, 11 November 1714, T 70/52, f. 437; Randle Logan to Joseph Blaney, 6 March 1715, T 70/3, f. 119, Kew, BNA.

By his own admission, Blaney bartered with Portuguese trader Manuel Moreno for “916 slesias and 142 rolls of tobacco” to, allegedly, improve the variety of trade goods in the company’s warehouse. But company officials could not disregard the fact that Blaney granted “license and protection” for Moreno and supplied him with 42 slaves on his private trading account. Moreover, in “defense...and vindication” of Moreno, Blaney “assembled the Blacks and white men belonging to the company’s fort and castles at Whydah and marched with them in a hostile manner” to Savi where “some were killed and others hurt.” Blaney’s actions were indefensible. That Blaney protected Moreno in “his quarrels” with Valckenier and King Huffon was a “great misdemeanor and was done without any authority from the company and tended very much to the destruction of the company’s commerce and trade at Whydah.”²¹⁰ By arming and marching a cadre of soldiers into Savi and murdering some of King Huffon’s subjects, Blaney wore the guise of a foreign invading army. His imprisonment and exile was a penalty less severe than most sovereigns would have pronounced.²¹¹

The RAC made a concerted effort to recover some of the financial damages resulting from Blaney’s shadow regime. Blaney’s dogged denial of any wrongdoing while in the company’s service at Whydah was renewed upon returning to England. However, London officials knew that something was afoot at Whydah. In August 1714, officials made an entry in one of the company’s copybooks; “memorandum. that Blaney signed this letter for Mr. Hardrett at Jakin.” Another note indicated that the duplicate copy of a letter sent “left out the paragraph about the number of Negroes per the *Canada*

²¹⁰ Valckenier continued as the Dutch agent at Whydah for several years. From 1723-27, Valckenier was the Director General of the Dutch Gold Coast. Van Dantzig, *The Dutch*, 220, no. 250, 12 November 1726.

²¹¹ Royal African Company vs. Joseph Blaney, C 11/1177/2, Kew, BNA.

and differ in many places from the said forgoing letter as not being truly copied.” Also “some words left out and some altered. This also signed by Mr. Blaney for Mr. Hardrett at Jakin.” Blaney intentionally doctored official documents sent to company administrators and blamed subordinates for improperly disposing of trade goods.²¹²

RAC officials tried to convince Blaney to “come to a fair and just account” or at least compromise on the damages, but he refused. Although Blaney played the victim, his lack of oversight and comprehensive mismanagement of the Slave Coast factories proved his downfall. Indeed, Blaney’s bumbling blunders gave the RAC ample tangible evidence of fraudulent transactions. As contracted in his “articles of agreement” with the RAC, Blaney was responsible for maintaining accurate and complete account ledgers and journals of all the transactions made at the Slave Coast factories as well as those for “his own trade and dealings.” However, when Blaney was ordered to deliver the record of his dealings at Whydah he “concealed” them from officials and instead “since his coming home to England procured a spurious account to be drawn up in an artificial manner” which included “many spurious and false accounts.”²¹³ Moreover, none of the accounts Blaney submitted included any “particulars of his private trade.” Perhaps most telling of his character, and guilt, was that rather than coming to a settlement and reconciling with the RAC, Blaney attempted to “take action at law against the company for his salary and commission pretended” he was owed.²¹⁴

²¹² Joseph Blaney and Martin Hardrett, 4 August 1714, T 70/5, f. 105; Joseph Blaney and Martin Hardrett, 5 August 1714, T 70/5, f. 105, Kew, BNA.

²¹³ There are no Whydah account ledgers documenting the transactions of the factory before 1717 in the company’s official archive. The first ledger, T 70/885, begins in 1718.

²¹⁴ Royal African Company vs. Joseph Blaney, C 11/1177/2, Kew, BNA.

Conclusion

The RAC's factories on the Slave Coast were consolidated in response to Blaney's blunder. Hufon forced the RAC to centralize operations at Whydah and abandon trade directly with Allada at Jakin. Though youthful for a regal, King Hufon wielded a great deal of authority in Whydah. His ancestors instituted formal procedures that regulated international trade by requiring all foreigners to adhere to a code of neutrality and civil commerce. As a result of Blaney's transgressions, Hufon implemented a state-monopoly over England's premier trading company and restricted the RAC's trading operations on the Slave Coast to only those markets supplied by Whydah traders. Rather than company agents encouraging trade with King Hufon through customary tribute and commercial diplomacy, the king regulated the range of commerce and with whom the RAC could trade. Consequently, in the decade following Blaney's eviction, only five English vessels embarked captives at Jakin, none of which were owned by the RAC.²¹⁵

After the Chancery Court proceedings, Blaney disappears from company records. His death in February 1722 is recorded in St Ethelburga parish records, an ancient district within the commercial heart of metropolitan London.²¹⁶ The parish church is within a quarter mile of the Royal Exchange, the Bank of England and the headquarters of the RAC on Leadenhall Street. Despite a long career that took Blaney for a short stay in West Africa, the proximity of his birth and death the RAC headquarters illustrates how intimately connected London was to West Africa.

²¹⁵ 55 ships loaded at Whydah over that time. Of the five ships that embarked captives from Jakin three were owned by the SSC and two by private investors. Voyages database.

²¹⁶ Blaney was baptized in April 1675 at Saint Edmund the King Church. His death is recorded in the parish records of St Ethelburga Bishopsgate. MS.04236. St Ethelburga Bishopsgate, Composite Register. London Metropolitan Archives. London, England.

It is likely Blaney received adequate training in his youth in one of London's many counting houses and for a period of his life was a capable merchant acutely cognizant of the central role political relationships played in commerce. Whatever skillsets Blaney honed prior to his appointment as governor of the RAC's factories on the Slave Coast, very few translated to West Africa. Blaney never seems to have acclimated to life on the Slave Coast where local African rituals and customs dictated the rhythmic pulse of commerce. Moreover, Blaney was uncomfortable operating within the company's hierarchy. The proximity of neighboring European trading agents frustrated Blaney tremendously and as a result failed to develop connections with both rival traders and Whydah elites that were critical to the function of the slave trade. Neither the company nor Blaney were capable of extracting the much hoped for wealth at Whydah because he failed to cultivate cooperative relationships with trading elites necessary for commerce. Rather than embracing the nature of Whydah political authority and allying with powerful trading elites, Blaney arrogantly ignored the forces that guided the operation of the transatlantic slave trade on the Slave Coast.

CHAPTER 3

“SUCKING THE ENGLISH ASSIENTO AND ASSIENTISTS BLOOD DAILY:” THE SOUTH SEA COMPANY AND THE SLAVE TRADE TO BUENOS AIRES, 1715-1740

In early November 1727, Captain Charles Burnham looked out from the top of the quarterdeck and saw several canoes paddling towards the *Saint Michael*. The lack of permanent trading factories in western Madagascar meant that *asiento* ships relied on local Malagasy mariners to locate safe anchorage. Burnham hoped to see Prince William, a provincial governor appointed by King Ramoni who played an important role in the formation of the Sakalava Kingdom in the early eighteenth century. The Sakalava warrior-kings specialized in slave raiding and were an outgrowth of the growing demand for labor in European plantation-colonies. Much of the western coast of the island and beyond was controlled by the Sakalava.¹ Burnham purchased Malagasy captives from

¹ The surgeon on board the *Saint Michael* wrote that Morondava was “in the dominion of Ramoni King of Succulava. He is one of the most powerful kings upon the island. He has a great body of people under his subjection who possess a large part of this island. I could not get any exact account of the extent of his dominions but according to the best conjecture which I can make they are extended along the seashore from latitude 18° South to 22° South and across the island more than half way to the east side.” Journal of Saint Michael, 2 February 1727, HC 363/1299, Hispanic Society of America (HSA), New York. Typically identified as a ‘Journal and logbook of an anonymous Scottish sailor, 1725-1729’ the title of the manuscript belies its true value and content. Consisting of 182 folios in a neat and legible script, the manuscript is an especially rare manuscript as it is the only known journal of its type documenting the day-to-day slaving operations of an English *asiento* ship’s voyage. To date, no historian has interrogated its content or placed the voyage of the *Saint Michael* within the context of the South Sea Company’s trade to Spanish America or the operation of the transatlantic slave as I have done in this chapter.

Prince William and King Ramoni a decade earlier and hoped to renew their friendship on this occasion.

Prince William was not on one of the boats, but he greeted Burnham as he came ashore. As the longboat approached the beach, the unmistakable ruins of a ship rose from the sand like a wooden skeleton. Less than a year had passed since Malagasy slaves had risen up against the French crew of the *Vautour*, killing the majority of the sailors, running the ship aground and escaping into the interior. The French suspected that Prince William had intentionally incited the slaves to rebel. The shipwreck was a clear symbol of the vulnerability of overseas trade and of Malagasy rebelliousness. Prince William and Burnham quickly got down to business, and in a short time several hundred slaves were aboard the *Saint Michael*. One of the Sakalava men Burnham purchased had previously aided in a successful rebellion on the *Vautour* only to be recaptured and sold again. That same nameless Malagasy man would also become one of the ringleaders in a shipboard rebellion on the *Saint Michael* when it left several months later.² Madagascar was capable of meeting demands of European slave ships but with certain inherent risks that made the island attractive and unappealing at the same time.³

The *Saint Michael* was chartered by the South Sea Company (SSC) in 1726 to carry slaves to Buenos Aires as the holder of the Spanish *asiento* contract. Granted to the company in 1713, the SSC played an important role in the economic development of

² This scenario is drawn largely from the Journal of the Saint Michael located in the archives of the Hispanic Society of America. The location of the HSA in Harlem, considered by some as inconvenient, as well as its status as a museum has caused many to overlook the rich materials there dealing with the slave trade to Spanish America. The following secondary sources were also consulted. Arne Bialuschewski, "Anatomy of a Slave Insurrection: The Shipwreck of the *Vautour* on the West Coast of Madagascar in 1725," *French Colonial History* 12, no. 1 (2011): 87–101; Stephen Ellis, "The History of Sovereigns in Madagascar: New Light from Old Sources," in Didier Nativel and Faranirina V. Rajaonah, eds., *Madagascar Revisitée En Voyage Avec Françoise Raison-Jourde* (Paris: Karthala, 2009), 405–433.

³ For the surgeon's account of the shipboard rebellion that took place on 15 February 1727 and the brutal torture afterwards see Appendix 1 - Shipboard Uprising at Madagascar.

Spanish America. Historians have approached the *asiento* and the SSC with various methodologies that have contributed to several entangled historiographies. Early economic studies gravitated towards the extent of illicit commerce carried on by the company.⁴ With the resumption of hostilities between Spain and England in the 1740s, scholars have considered the various factors that brought the trade to a halt.⁵ Over the last two decades, historians have considered the *asiento* and its relationship to international law, diplomacy and modern business methods.⁶ Recent studies have shifted the analysis back to the Caribbean to focus on the relationships that formed out of the frequent trade between Spanish and English subjects. In addition, scholars have examined the relationship between the *asiento* and popular perceptions of the slave trade to Britain's imperial projects in the Caribbean and beyond.⁷

Most economic studies of the SSC emphasize the infamous 1720 South Sea Bubble, when the company's stock skyrocketed as a result of speculative future profits

⁴ Arthur S. Aiton, "The Asiento Treaty as Reflected in the Papers of Lord Shelburne," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 8, no. 2 (1928): 167–77; Vera Lee Brown, "The South Sea Company and Contraband Trade," *The American Historical Review* 31, no. 4 (1926): 662–78; Curtis Nettels, "England and the Spanish-American Trade, 1680-1715," *The Journal of Modern History* 3, no. 1 (1931): 1–32; George H. Nelson, "Contraband Trade under the Asiento, 1730-1739," *The American Historical Review* 51, no. 1 (1945): 55–67; G. Scelle, "The Slave-Trade in the Spanish Colonies of America: The Assiento," *The American Journal of International Law* 4, no. 3 (1910): 612–61; Lilian E. M. Batcheler, "The South Sea Company and the Assiento," *Historical Research* 3, no. 8 (1925): 128–30; Harry Reibman, "Private Profits and the South Sea Company: Illicit Trafficking Under the Asiento," *Michigan Journal of History* 9 (2012): 1–30.

⁵ Ernest G. Hildner Jr., "The Role of the South Sea Company in the Diplomacy Leading to the War of Jenkins' Ear, 1729-1739," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 18, no. 3 (1938): 322–41; Nadine Hunt, "Contraband, Free Ports, and British Merchants in the Caribbean World, 1739-1772," *Diacronie. Studi Di Storia Contemporanea* 13, no. 1 (2013).

⁶ Rafael Donoso, "Accounting and Slavery: The Accounts of the English South Sea Company, 1713-22," *European Accounting Review* 11, no. 2 (2002): 441–52; Salvador Carmosa, Rafael Donoso, and Stephen P. Walker, "Accounting and International Relations: Britain, Spain and the Asiento Treaty," *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 35, no. 2 (2010): 252–73; Andrea Weindl, "The Asiento de Negros and International Law," *Journal of the History of International Law* 10, no. 2 (2008): 229–57.

⁷ Adrian Finucane, *The Temptations of Trade Britain, Spain and the Struggle for Empire* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); Abigail L. Swingen, *Competing Visions of Empire: Labor, Slavery, and the Origins of the British Atlantic Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).

and suddenly collapsed with devastating effects on Britain's imperial economy.⁸ As a result, some historians have downplayed the role of the slave trade to Spanish America and the company's relationship with Africa.⁹ Prior to Philip Curtin's groundbreaking census of the slave trade in 1969 and the explosion of scholarship on the African Diaspora that resulted from it, Elizabeth Donnan made pioneering contributions towards our understanding of the organization of the transatlantic slave trade.¹⁰ Colin Palmer's work on the British *asiento* trade to Spanish America is perhaps the most important to date, not only for its clarity and depth of analysis, but also because it was the first to integrate Spanish colonial sources with the records of the South Sea Company.¹¹ More recently, Gregory O'Malley's work on the intercolonial slave trade in the circum-Caribbean has taken great strides in dissecting the operation of the *asiento* from Jamaica to Spanish American markets.¹²

⁸ Around the same time as the stock market crash in 1720, the directors of the South Sea Company made proposals to the Lords Proprietors to purchase the colony of South Carolina. Only a minority of the proprietors were interested in selling their shares so a deal was not struck. Colonial Office (CO) 5/383, f. 86-88, Kew, BNA.

⁹ John Carswell, *The South Sea Bubble* (London: Cresset Press, 1960); Richard Dale, *The First Crash: Lessons from the South Sea Bubble* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Helen J. Paul, *The South Sea Bubble an Economic History of Its Origins and Consequences* (London: Routledge, 2011). For a work that analyzes the two great early modern financial fiascos in tandem see, Larry Neal, *"I Am Not Master of Events": The Speculations of John Law and Lord Londonderry in the Mississippi and South Sea Bubbles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

¹⁰ Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969); Elizabeth Donnan, "The Early Days of the South Sea Company, 1711- 1718," *Journal of Economic and Business History* 2 (1929): 419-50. Elizabeth Donnan, ed., *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America: 4 volumes* (Washington, D.C: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1930-1935). Although published in the same year, Platt's analysis was not included in Curtin's analysis and thus predates it. Virginia Bever Platt, "The East India Company and the Madagascar Slave Trade," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 26, no. 4 (1969): 548-77. An important work on the slave trade to Buenos Aires and the *asiento* based on Spanish sources, Elena Scheuss de Studer, *La Trata De Negros En Río De La Plata Durante El Siglo Xviii* (Buenos Aires: Universidad de Buenos Aires, Departamento Editorial, 1958).

¹¹ Colin A. Palmer, *Human Cargoes: The British Slave Trade to Spanish America, 1700-1739* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981).

¹² Gregory E. O'Malley, *Final Passages: The Intercolonial Slave Trade of British America, 1619-1807* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

In general, historians' detailed studies on the *asiento* trade to Jamaica and the Spanish Caribbean have neglected other geographic areas. In doing so, scholars have overlooked how the slave trade operated to Buenos Aires, the second most important market for *asiento* ships from 1715 to 1739. This chapter provides a much needed intervention into this largely discounted aspect of Britain's slave trade to Spanish America. Moreover, this chapter shows how the *asiento* operated to Buenos Aires, the only Spanish American market to receive shipments of captive Africans directly from West and East Africa. Furthermore, few scholars have analyzed the political and social dynamics of the African side of the *asiento* trade. This chapter considers the rise of the Sakalava Kingdom in Madagascar and its impact on the *asiento* trade to that island and the ways in which Malagasy captives influenced outcomes of the slave trade. Moreover, some historians, such as John Sperling and Abigail Swingen, blame the company's failure to fulfill the terms of the *asiento* trade on its poor functioning relationship with the Royal African Company (RAC).¹³ Regrettably, what this conclusion fails to consider is the African side of the trade, and the role West African elites had in influencing the flow of captives to the coast. To understand the operation of the *asiento* trade to Spanish America we must factor in the African side of the trade where the politics of power, war, violence and greed directly impacted the flow of captives to the coast.

This chapter builds on and departs from these works in several important ways. It integrates the official records of the SSC, the private papers of Lord Shelburne, the personal papers of London merchant Thomas Hall, and underutilized first-hand accounts of the slave trade in Madagascar and the Loango Coast in West Central Africa to provide

¹³ Swingen argues that the South Sea Company's failure to "fulfill the terms of the *asiento* during its early years was a testament to the inability of the two companies to operate efficiently." Swingen, *Competing Visions*, 195.

a more nuanced account of the operation of the *asiento* trade, from the top, while paying careful attention to the lived experience of the slaves, from the bottom. Several important questions guide the organization of this chapter. First, what was the nature of the slave trade in West Africa in the 1710s when the SSC received the *asiento* contract? How did the structure of Malagasy society and political culture impact the operation of the slave trade? How did the organization of the slave trade guide and inhibit the company's access to captive Africans? What strategies did the SSC use to acquire slaves for Spanish American markets and how did these strategies change over time?

This chapter argues that the SSC looked to Madagascar as a practical alternative for captives because of its limited access to West African labor supply centers. The RAC's monopoly in West Africa meant that the SSC had to contract with the RAC for slaves. The Madagascar strategy was informed by the perception that the island was a more accessible, less competitive market where slaves could be purchased cheaply. The attempt to exploit Indian Ocean labor markets and connect them with plantation zones of the Americas was a calculated, yet risky, maneuver with potentially high financial rewards for the company. The South Sea Company explored the viability of the Madagascar market in two periods, from 1717 to 1719 and 1727 to 1730. The latter period is significant because from 1724 to 1732, Dutch traders, the second most active European carrier of slaves from Madagascar over that period, abandoned the island market to concentrate on revitalizing a factory on the Mozambique coast.¹⁴ This chapter argues that the company's strategy was unsuccessful because of the political structure of Malagasy society, the cultural characteristics of the Malagasy people, the limited supply

¹⁴ James C. Armstrong, "The Slaves, 1652-1795," in Richard Elphick and Hermann Giliomee, eds., *The Shaping of South African Society, 1652-1820* (Cape Town: Longman, 1979), 78.

of the Madagascar market, and the human limitations of captive Malagasy for surviving the long voyage to Buenos Aires.

In 1730 the Madagascar strategy was abandoned all together and no *asiento* ship returned to the island. The company unofficially handed the *asiento* trade to Buenos Aires over to Thomas Hall, who was not a company employee but a wealthy London merchant specializing in the East Indies trade. At the same time, a new market, the Loango Coast, became the primary site for purchasing captives carried to Buenos Aires.¹⁵ Neither the *asiento* trade nor British ships were strangers to the Loango Coast. In the early 1720s, the RAC attempted to expand its operations on the Loango Coast by establishing a permanent factory at Cabinda to supply slaves to *asiento* ships. Over the long-term, the Loango Coast was a more accessible and reliable market for purchasing large numbers of captive Africans. This chapter charts the rise and fall of the *asiento* trade in Southeast Africa with the eventual return to Loango in West Central Africa.

Buenos Aires was one of the most important destinations for captive Africans in Spanish America.¹⁶ Recent studies on the transatlantic slave trade to Spanish America have thrown new light on the scope and volume of the commerce. These important works provide valuable context for the British *asiento* to Buenos Aires and other Spanish Caribbean ports.¹⁷ Moreover, they have set the benchmark for future studies by emphasizing the necessity of foregrounding Africans and the African side of the slave

¹⁵ The Loango Coast refers to the coast regions between the Gabon and Congo River.

¹⁶ On Buenos Aires as a critical terminal for early Spanish slave voyages see, Kara D. Schultz, “‘The Kingdom of Angola Is Not Very Far from Here’: The South Atlantic Slave Port of Buenos Aires, 1585–1640,” *Slavery & Abolition* 36, no. 3 (2015): 424–44.

¹⁷ Tatiana Seijas and Pablo Miguel Sierra Silva, “The Persistence of the Slave Market in Seventeenth-Century Central Mexico,” *Slavery & Abolition* 37, no. 2 (2016): 307–33.

trade.¹⁸ By engaging with these works, this chapter contributes to our understanding of the slave trade to Spanish America. Much of the literature focuses on the ports of Cartagena and Vera Cruz, the two largest markets for captives over the long history of the slave trade.¹⁹ However, this was not the case during the years of the British *asiento* trade. Panama and Porto Bello and Buenos Aires received the largest volume of slaves from *asiento* ships because both markets were the chokepoints for the export of Peruvian excavated silver from Spanish America.²⁰ Geographically, these markets were the closest British traders could come to Potosí. By focusing their activities on Panama and Porto Bello and Buenos Aires, British *asiento* agents engaged directly with the traders carrying the bullion from the Pacific. Potosi silver not only tied together markets across Spanish America, but was also the driving force behind the early modern Atlantic economy.²¹

Madagascar was critical to this equation because company officials believed they could purchase more slaves and cheaper at the island than in West Africa. Buenos Aires was the only Spanish American market to receive slaves directly from Africa. *Asiento* ships disembarking captives in Spanish Caribbean markets collected slaves at bulking centers on the islands of Barbados and Jamaica. The *asiento* ships arriving at Buenos Aires were nearly 50 percent larger than those that carried captives to the British and

¹⁸ David Wheat, *Atlantic Africa and the Spanish Caribbean, 1570-1640* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016).

¹⁹ Enriqueta Vila Vilar, *Hispanoamérica y el Comercio De Esclavos* (Sevilla: Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos, 1977); Linda A. Newson and Susie Minchin, *From Capture to Sale: The Portuguese Slave Trade to Spanish South America in the Early Seventeenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Patrick James Carroll, *Blacks in Colonial Veracruz: Race, Ethnicity, and Regional Development* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991); Alejandro de la Fuente, César García del Pino, and Bernardo Iglesias Delgado, *Havana and the Atlantic in the Sixteenth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

²⁰ Panama and Port Bello were essentially one factory. No *asiento* ship disembarked captives at Panama on the Pacific.

²¹ In the 1640s, the Buenos Aires silver trade attracted Portuguese slave ships from Angola. António Brásio, *Monumenta Missionaria Africana. Africa Ocidental* (Lisboa: Divisão de Publicações e Biblioteca, 1952), vol. 10: 359; Alex Borucki, David Eltis, and David Wheat, "Atlantic History and the Slave Trade to Spanish America," *The American Historical Review* 120, no. 2 (2015), 456.

Spanish Caribbean.²² As a result, these vessels not only carried more captives but much larger cargoes to trade with Spanish customers at Buenos Aires. The Spanish port's reputation as the capital of the contraband trade governed by notoriously corrupt officials made it easier for British ship captains and company factors to unload the large cargoes carried to Buenos Aires. Illicit commerce was the driving force that fueled the economy of the Rio de la Plata. Consequently, these factors combined to overshadow primary Spanish markets, especially those at Cartagena, during the operation of the *asiento* trade.

"The Markets for Slaves are Not at All Times Alike:" Setting the Asiento Trade in Motion

The integration of an Indian Ocean supply market with an Atlantic world labor market has its challenges, but historians have identified a useful framework for completing such a task. This chapter utilizes Joseph Miller's conceptualization of a historical comparison of slaving to demonstrate how "marginal contenders" or rather marginal markets, Madagascar as a marginal market for harvesting slaves, and Buenos Aires, a marginal Spanish American market for the reception of enslaved bodies, participated through slaving in a single process transcending scale and duration.²³ The shared framework of historical change that coursed through the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and the Atlantic world was an "intensifying commercialization, as merchants consolidated a new global economy and governmental authorities" attempted to integrate "larger and increasingly imagined communities of insiders who seldom encountered one

²² The 45 ships that carried slave to Buenos Aires averaged 270 tons. The 72 ships that carried captives to Spanish American markets averaged 184 tons. Voyages database.

²³ Joseph C. Miller, "A Theme in Variations: A Historical Schema of Slaving in the Atlantic and Indian Ocean Regions," *Slavery & Abolition* 24, no. 2 (2003), 171.

another.”²⁴ For example, in comparison to Whydah in the first quarter of the eighteenth century, Madagascar was a “slaving frontier” rarely visited by Europeans seeking large numbers of captive bodies.²⁵ For example, in the year 1722 more European ships purchased slaves at Whydah than visited Madagascar in the entire first half of the eighteenth century.²⁶ In a similar comparative vein to Jamaica, as many slaves disembarked at that island in the year 1732 as arrived at Buenos Aires in the first quarter of the eighteenth century.²⁷ In the expansion of European commercialization across the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, the search for cheap labor markets resulted in new management strategies that connected disparate peoples, societies, and cultures across long distances. This chapter analyzes slaving historically and the specific outcomes that connected Madagascar with Buenos Aires as the South Sea Company competed for control of supply zones in the Indian Ocean and Spanish authorities attempted to extend control over the outsiders brought in as slaves.²⁸

Madagascar was attractive to Europeans because they believed slaves could be purchased cheaper and less competitively, two features uncharacteristic of West Africa. In 1691, resident Adam Baldrige wrote from his factory on the island of St. Mary’s off the northeast coast of Madagascar to his backer in New York, Frederick Philipse, that he

²⁴ Miller, “Theme in Variations,” 169; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983). For an important work on the volume of the Indian Ocean slave trade see, Richard B. Allen, *European Slave Trading in the Indian Ocean, 1500-1850* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014).

²⁵ Miller, “Theme in Variations,” 188.

²⁶ In 1714, a ship captain informed RAC factors at Antigua that there were 48 ships at Whydah. Thomas Trant, 3 August 1714, T 70/38, Kew, BNA; Voyages database.

²⁷ From 1700-24, 11,918 captives disembarked at Buenos Aires. In 1732, 12, 832 captives disembarked in Jamaica. Voyages database.

²⁸ Miller, “Theme in Variations,” 191; Jane Hooper and David Eltis, “The Indian Ocean in Transatlantic Slavery,” *Slavery & Abolition* 34, no. 3 (2013): 353–75.

could supply a ship load of 200 slaves at a “per capita cost of 30 shillings.”²⁹ Daniel Defoe wrote that 10 shillings worth of English goods would purchase a slave at Madagascar whereas the price in West Africa ranged from £3-4.³⁰ Although the Indian Ocean was within the charter limits of the British East India Company (EIC), the company did not ship slaves to the colonies.³¹ In the 1660s and 1670s, English and Dutch ships slaved at Madagascar because the prices were considered low, but the market was hampered by erratic supply. Dutch records indicate that between 1675 and 1693, English ships tended to purchase slaves at St. Augustine and Morondava on the west coast of the island.³² However, by 1738, English merchant Charles Barrington suggested that Mazelgem in the northwest was the best port to buy captives. According to Barrington, Mazelgem was preferred because of its “constant traffic” with East African markets as well as relative stability of its government that was “not at all disturbed...by rival parties and factions.” Moreover the King at Mazalgem had direct access to supply networks to sell off a “great part” of the slaves there.³³ However, by the late seventeenth century, Madagascar’s western and south-central coasts were the primary destinations for European slave ships, as the founding of the Sakalava kingdoms brought about widespread social change and political reorganization across the island.³⁴

²⁹ Jacob Judd, “Frederick Philipse and the Madagascar Trade,” *New York Historical Society Quarterly* (1971), 357; Dennis J. Maika, “Encounters: Slavery and the Philipse Family: 1680-1751,” in Roger G. Panetta, ed., *Dutch New York: The Roots of Hudson Valley Culture* (Yonkers: Fordham University Press, 2009), 35-66.

³⁰ Daniel Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates* (London: Printed for and sold by T. Warner, 1724), 2:104; Donnan, *Documents Illustrative*, 3:440n.

³¹ Arne Bialuschewski, “Pirates, Slavers, and the Indigenous Population in Madagascar, C. 1690-1715,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 38, no. 3 (2005), 404.

³² James C. Armstrong, “Madagascar and the Slave Trade in the Seventeenth Century,” *Omalay Sy Anio* 17–20 (1983), 218-19.

³³ Journal of Charles Barrington, January 1738, in Solofo Randrianja and Stephen Ellis, *Madagascar: A Short History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 104.

³⁴ Randrianja and Ellis, *Madagascar*, 99.

In 1726, company officials calculated that the price of slaves at Madagascar were cheaper than markets in mainland West Africa. In fact, company ships expected to pay nearly quadruple the price for slaves on the Loango Coast.³⁵ Company records indicate an anticipated price of £10.6 for a captive purchased in Angola whereas at Madagascar expected to pay only £2.8. The ship *Sea Horse* that departed with the *Saint Michael* in 1726 for Madagascar carried an “outward bound” cargo valued at £991.2 with an additional invoice totaling £251 for “Negro provisions.”³⁶ Company officials valued the slaves purchased at Madagascar by the *Saint Michael* and *Sea Horse* at £25.³⁷ The initial investment in trade goods for the Madagascar market was significantly less than ships trading at Angola and was a decisive factor in sending ships to purchase slaves at that market. Despite the dangers associated with the long voyage to the Indian Ocean, SSC officials considered Madagascar a potentially profitable market for purchasing slaves. The inherent risks were significant but as markets in West Africa were flooded with British interlopers on the Gold Coast, and French ships flocked to Whydah and Angola in increasing numbers, officials implemented a labor shortage strategy that connected Indian Ocean markets with Spanish consumers in the Rio de la Plata.³⁸

The *asiento* was a treaty between the Spanish crown and a private party, or a company by which the crown rented to the contracting party a monopolistic right over a defined period to merchandise a specific commodity.³⁹ The War of Spanish Succession (1702-1713) was as much a war for Spanish commerce as it was a conflict to settle the

³⁵ Palmer, *Human Cargoes*, 31-33.

³⁶ Add. MSS, 25567, British Library (hereafter as BL).

³⁷ Add. MSS, 25502, BL.

³⁸ For the first half of the eighteenth century as the peak of French slaving activities see, Robert Stein, *The French Slave Trade in the Eighteenth Century: An Old Regime Business* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979).

³⁹ A copy of the Asiento (1714), T 52/26, f. 67-104, Kew, BNA.

Habsburg dynasty. As the decade of Atlantic warfare drew to a close, the British victors approached the *asiento de los negros* not as a matter of negotiation but as a precondition for peace.⁴⁰ The organization and execution of the commercial treaty was dependent upon peaceful diplomatic relations between Spain and England. Political fractures consequently could thwart the transport of slaves to Spanish markets. In brief, peace was a precondition to commerce. The SSC played a critical role in the peace negotiations, and from the outset the English ambassador made clear that the purpose in suing for peace was to insure commercial access to Spanish America. While the SSC was not mentioned specifically in connection with the *asiento*, it was clear that it was a “transaction designed to grace the union of the two African companies [RAC and SSC] whose affairs were in great disorder and that they hoped to reestablish them by this means.”⁴¹ Company profits depended on the exploitation of the *asiento* privileges. In a matter of a few weeks, six new committees were appointed to put things into motion.⁴²

The SSC wasted little time in putting together a working contract with the RAC to supply slaves for the *asiento* trade. The contract was required because of the RAC’s monopoly on supply centers located on the Gold and Slave Coasts of West Africa.⁴³ In June 1713 both companies choose members from its board of directors for a select committee to negotiate the terms of the agreement.⁴⁴ The RAC’s West African trading factories served as embarkation centers for *asiento* ships. The SSC was responsible for delivering 4,800 *pieza de Indias* or slaves annually to Spanish Caribbean markets of

⁴⁰ Weindl, “Asiento de Negros,” 230, 242-243.

⁴¹ John G. Sperling, *The South Sea Company: An Historical Essay and Bibliographical Finding List* (Boston: Baker Library, Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration, 1962), 12.

⁴² Sperling, *South Sea Company*, 12-13.

⁴³ K. G. Davies, *The Royal African Company* (London: Longmans, Green, 1957).

⁴⁴ T 70/38, 13 and 16 June 1713, Kew, BNA.

which Buenos Aires would receive 1,200.⁴⁵ Located on the Rio de la Plata, Buenos Aires was a major entrepôt for supplying burgeoning inland markets in Chile and Peru. By the late sixteenth century, contraband, particularly silver and slaves, were the lifeblood of Buenos Aires's economy.⁴⁶ It was a port driven by inland markets connected by far-reaching merchant networks that stretched to Potosí in the Peruvian highlands and Santiago on the Pacific. The riverine and land routes into the interior that began in Buenos Aires meant that the city dominated regional commerce.⁴⁷ The asiento ships that disembarked captives in the Rio de la Plata inserted valuable commodities into the region's economy. Consequently, Buenos Aires was not the culmination for many captives but the starting point for a much larger migratory journey.

The SSC provided very precise instructions concerning the captives destined for the Rio de la Plata. The slaves “delivered at Buenos Aires are to be in such a condition as to be able to go over the ship's side,” whereas the slaves arriving at Caribbean markets were to be “sound and healthy.”⁴⁸ By “going over the ship's side” the SSC indicated many of the dark realities inherent to the middle passage. Few captive Africans ever arrived healthy enough to disembark the ship on their own strength. As a result, captives

⁴⁵ The *pieza de Indias* was a unit of measurement. It did not refer to an individual slave. Rather it was a theoretical value, equivalent to an adult slave in the prime of his or her life, of a specified height, and physical health. Throughout Spanish America the measurement of a *pieza de Indias* was subjective and fluid according to market conditions and other factors. For a valuable discussion of the changing definitions see Frederick P. Bowser, *The African Slave in Colonial Peru, 1524-1650* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), 39.

⁴⁶ Zacarias Moutoukias, “Power, Corruption, and Commerce: The Making of the Local Administrative Structure in Seventeenth-Century Buenos Aires,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 68, no. 4 (1988): 771–801.

⁴⁷ Fabricio Prado, *Edge of Empire: Atlantic Networks and Revolution in Bourbon Rio de la Plata* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 13–33; Susan M. Socolow, “Buenos Aires: Atlantic Port and Hinterland in the Eighteenth Century,” in Franklin W. Knight and Peggy K. Liss, eds., *Atlantic Port Cities: Economy, Culture, and Society in the Atlantic World, 1650-1850*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990), 240–261; Jonathan C. Brown, “Outpost to Entrpot: Trade and Commerce at Buenos Aires,” in Stanley R. Ross and Thomas F. McGann, eds., *Buenos Aires, 400 Years* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), 3–17.

⁴⁸ T 70/38, 21 July, 11 September 1713, Kew, BNA.

spent several weeks and sometimes longer on the ship after arriving before finally disembarking. During this liminal period, captives received fresh provisions and perhaps rested in more sanitary spaces. Also hidden in this coded language was the SSC's understanding that many of the captives disembarking at Buenos Aires were expected to begin another migration soon after arriving.

The process of transporting several hundred captive Africans across the continent was a long and grueling process.⁴⁹ The massive coffle of captive Africans that departed from Buenos Aires in 1731 was larger than most of the cargoes that disembarked slaves directly from West Africa. It was critical that the coffle depart Buenos Aires in the proper season because if the journey began left in the “very dead of winter” there was a great “risk of losing most of our Negroes by the cold.” In August 1731, José de Salinas was hired to deliver 408 slaves to Potosi. Although the trek was delayed three months for warmer weather, less than ten days after departing Buenos Aires the freezing temperatures at night took the lives of ten Africans.⁵⁰ Six months later Salinas arrived in Potosi with just 327 of the captives that left from the Rio de la Plata. Along the way ten captives were sold, while 70 men and women either died making the trek or in the city before being purchased. The mortality rate for the interregional migration was 17 percent, but it was a little higher for the male captives. The sales in Potosí lasted just short of two years.⁵¹ The journey to Potosi demonstrates the high demand for captives in Spanish

⁴⁹ A 1760s account suggested that travelers from Buenos Aires to Chile traveled in “covered carts and wagons made almost as commodious as a house with the doors shut and window on each side...laying on beds or mattresses on the floor on which they can sleep.” Tucuman was the mid-point for the journey. Clearly enslaved Africans experienced no such luxuries. John Campbell, *An Account of the Spanish Settlements in America* (Edinburgh: Printed by A. Donaldson and J. Reid, 1762), 285, 325.

⁵⁰ John Cox to Peter Burrell, 28 September 1731, Shelburne Papers, vol. 44, 407-08, WCL.

⁵¹ Rafael Donoso Anes, *El Asiento De Esclavos Con Inglaterra (1713-1750): Su Contexto Histórico Y Sus Aspectos Económicos Y Contables* (Sevilla: Secretariado de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Sevilla,

markets that neither had *asiento* agents present nor slaves arriving directly from Africa. Consequently, Buenos Aires was a crucial entrepôt for the reception, recuperation and redistribution of captive Africans across the region.

At this early stage of organizing the *asiento*, neither the SSC nor the RAC mentioned the Loango Coast or Madagascar as potential markets for purchasing slaves. Each assumed that the primary markets of West Africa - the Gold and Slave Coasts - would provide enough slaves to meet the terms of the contract. The first three *asiento* ships dispatched by the company were the *Windsor*, *Canada*, and the *St. Mark*. According to its contract, the SSC agreed to pay £10 for each slave between the ages of 16 to 40 and £6 for slaves between the ages of 10 and 16 purchased on the coast.⁵² The three *asiento* ships were contracted to carry 1,230 slaves to Jamaica and Barbados.⁵³ Each cargo was to include two thirds men and no more than ten percent under the age of 16. The limitations of West African slave markets quickly proved disappointing.

2010), 804-45, esp. 811-16; Rafael Donoso Anes, "Los Problemas Contables Derivados De Un Caso De Venta De Esclavos Tierra Adentro En La Factoría De Buenos Aires En El Contexto Del Asiento De Esclavos Con Inglaterra: El Caso Salinas (1731-1737)," *De Computis, Revista Española de Historia de La Contabilidad* 7 (2007): 38-79.

⁵² T 70/38. In 1732, the *Rudge* was contracted to carry 450 slaves from Angola to Buenos Aires at £20 per head. In 1734, the *Hiscox* and the *Anne* were contracted to carry slaves to Buenos Aires at £20 per head. Palmer, *Human Cargoes*, 18n30.

⁵³ The *Windsor* was to carry 400, the *Canada* 500, and the *St. Mark* 280.



Figure 3.1. 44-46 Leadenhall Street London former site of the African House, headquarters of the Royal African Company. Sometime between 1752 and 1766 when company officials met at Cooper's Court in Cornhill, the original building was pulled down. A 1745 account stated that the "Royal African-house is situated on the south side of Leadenhall Street, near the east end of it. Here the affairs of the company are transacted but the house has nothing in it that merits a particular description." Thomas Osborne, *A Collection of Voyages and Travels* (London: T. Osborne, 1745), 116. Photograph by Neal Polhemus, 2015.

Acquiring the specific demographic ratios for *asiento* ships was an ongoing problem for RAC agents in West Africa. In regards to the "contracts" the company made with *asiento* ships, Cape Coast governor John Tinker wrote, that "stipulating any number of boys and girls" was bad business and an allowance for men and women must be obtained "since the markets for slaves are not at all times alike." Moreover, without the "necessary provision" Tinker stated the company "will unavoidably be losers."⁵⁴ On the receiving end, a Jamaican agent noted that the "masters of the African trade cannot seldom or never buy a whole cargo of such slaves as they would choose."⁵⁵ Writing from

⁵⁴ John Tinker, Nathaniel Rice, John Wingfield, 11 August 1724, T 70/7, f. 38-9, BNA, Kew.

⁵⁵ Meriwether to Peter Burrell, 5 September 1737, Shelburne Papers, 44, f. 829-32, William C. Clements Library, University of Michigan (hereafter as WCL).

Jamaica in 1734, George Hamilton opined that “the assortment of negroes they want from the coast is impossible to be had” even if the ship “was to lye on the coast 12 months...those that made a good assortment two years ago will now not be looked at by the company.”⁵⁶ Purchasing the ideal ratio of men and women for a ship’s cargo in West Africa was a problem for which a solution was never discovered.

Relations between the RAC and SSC soured over the summer of 1714 as each accused the other of contractual failures.⁵⁷ The SSC wanted to renegotiate the contract, but when a meeting date and time was finally agreed upon the committee cancelled the afternoon of the scheduled conference.⁵⁸ For their part, the RAC sent copies of letters received from West Africa and Caribbean agents indicating the hurdles they encountered in supplying slaves to *asiento* ships. The financial constraints facing the RAC were evident, but the SSC continued to delay payments.⁵⁹ Although the slaves aboard the *Windsor* and *St. Mark* were described as “very good,” RAC administrators claimed the reason why the *Windsor* carried off only 201 of her intended 450 slaves was because the “King of Whydah and the King of Ardah were at an open war.”⁶⁰ These reports from the coast were troubling. The RAC claimed that the reason why the *Windsor* transported so few slaves was an “unavoidable accident arising from a war lately” at Whydah, but reassured the SSC that “company factors have now taken such measures that the rest of your ships will be dispatched with their full compliments. Tho will be with great

⁵⁶ George Hamilton to Thomas Hall, 20 August 1734, C 103/130, BNA, Kew.

⁵⁷ Lilian E. M. Batcheler, “The South Sea Company and the Assiento,” *Historical Research* 3, no. 8 (1925), 128; Sperling, *South Sea Company*, 1-4.

⁵⁸ T 70/38, 21 May, 1 June, 18 June, and 23 June 1714, Kew, BNA.

⁵⁹ T 70/38, 8 July 1714. From Barbados, Patrick Thompson wrote that “Negroes increase daily in their price on the coast.” Thomas Trant informed the company that a ship captain had paid on the Gold Coast “£20-£30 per head and were sold here [Antigua] for £15 per head round.” Patrick Thompson, 19 March 1713; Thomas Trant, 15 September 1714, T 70/38, Kew, BNA.

⁶⁰ T 70/38, 13 October 1714, Kew, BNA.

difficulty by reason of their scarcity and extravagant high prices.” The excuses convinced the SSC that the RAC had little control of West African politics and the disruptions caused by regional conflicts.⁶¹ However, by 1721, it was evident the RAC could not supply the captives needed for *asiento* ships, and three years later the SSC ended its contract with the company.⁶² Navigating the dense and highly competitive slave markets of West Africa was a challenging feat that was never mastered by *asiento* ship captains.

The SSC’s first trading period lasted from 1714 to 1718. During that time, 14 ships delivered approximately 4,050 slaves to Buenos Aires.⁶³ Two of the ships, the *Sarah Galley* and the *Arabella*, purchased slaves at Madagascar. When the *Sarah Galley* arrived at Madagascar in late 1716, more than fifteen years had passed since a ship purchased slaves at the island and carried captive Malagasy to plantation zones of the Americas.⁶⁴ Capt. Bloom, of the *Sarah Galley*, disembarked 347 slaves at Buenos Aires and were regulated by Spanish officials at 217 pieces de India.⁶⁵ By the time the *Arabella* departed from Madagascar in January 1718, interest in the island market had increased dramatically.⁶⁶ London merchants Thomas White, Randolph Knipe, and William

⁶¹ T 70/38, 3 November 1714, Kew, BNA.

⁶² Sperling, *The South Sea Company*, 39.

⁶³ The slave voyages database incorrectly lists seventeen ships disembarking slaves at Buenos Aires from 1714-1718. The *Warrick* (ID# 41510) was one of the transport ships that carried company personnel to Buenos Aires in 1715. It did not disembark slaves. The *Opie Galley* (ID# 41496) was a company supply ship. I have been unable to locate evidence of the ship disembarking slaves at Buenos Aires in the company records. Palmer does not identify the *Warrick* or *Opie Galley* in his list of Buenos Aires ships. Also listed is a French ship *Subtile* (ID# 32037). It is more likely that the ship was in Buenos Aires to retrieve the possessions of the French *asiento* factory than disembarking slaves. Studer also identifies the *Warrick* as “Trae a los Directores de la real Compania de la Gran Bretana.” Studer, *La Trata De Negros*, 220. For the *Warrick* see William Toller, *The History of a Voyage to River of Plate 1715*, Biblioteca Nacional De España, Madrid.

⁶⁴ Add. MSS, 25563, f. 60-3, BL. Last voyage listed in database was the *Margaret*, in 1700.

⁶⁵ Add. MSS, 25563, f. 276, BL.

⁶⁶ Add. MSS, 25563, f. 276, BL. The *Arabella* stopped at Cape Coast in December 1718 with 240 Malagasy slaves. The stopover is not recorded in the voyages database. Maurice Boucher, *The Cape of Good Hope and Foreign Contacts, 1735-1755* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1985), 104. For the

Heysham, as well as several Bristol merchants, were the most active petitioners to the EIC for licenses.⁶⁷ However the SSC was not in a hurry to hastily send off another *asiento* ship before meeting with Capt. Bloom to gather information on the “freighting a ship for those parts for Negroes.”⁶⁸ Company officials continued to pursue an opening up of the Madagascar market but a disruption in the company’s financial stability deflected attention away from additional voyages.⁶⁹ The final blow to SSC attempts to gain an interest in the Madagascar market came shortly thereafter. In September 1721, EIC directors stated that “considering the present circumstances...with respect to the company having liberty to carry slaves from Madagascar to the West Indies, this committee can’t think it advisable.”⁷⁰ The company’s first trading period came to an end before another ship was dispatched to Madagascar. In the interim, only a handful of European ships purchased slaves at the island for West Indies markets.

“Let Them Not Seem Afraid... Nor Frighten the Blacks”: Malagasy Commerce and Culture

The political structure of Malagasy society was characterized by a dynastic ruler who dictated the nature of commercial exchange with Europeans. The lack of a

early British trade to Madagascar see, Virginia Bever Platt, “The East India Company and the Madagascar Slave Trade,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 26, no. 4 (1969): 548–77.

⁶⁷ J. L. Geber, “The East India Company and Southern Africa: A Guide to the Archives of the East India Company and the Board of Control, 1600-1858” (Ph.D., University of London, 1998), 105; Platt, “East India Company,” 556; David Richardson, *Bristol, Africa, and the Eighteenth-Century Slave Trade to America* (Gloucester: A. Sutton Pub., 1986), vol. 1:75, 90-91.

⁶⁸ Add. MSS, 25497, f. 189, BL.

⁶⁹ Platt, *East India Company*, 560-61.

⁷⁰ Geber, *East India Company*, 25. At the same time the committee rejected the RAC's petition to slave at Madagascar.

centralized government that controlled the entire island meant that there were numerous places along the coast to trade, although not all were equal.⁷¹ During the 1640s, on the southeastern rim of Madagascar, the French established Fort Dauphin among the Antanosy.⁷² The primary sites of exchange on the island were located near natural bays or harbors where rivers emptied into the ocean. A 1690s account noted that St. Augustine and Fort Dauphin were the best places to purchase provisions. On the west coast of the island “the best places to buy slaves” were at Masseledge and Morondava where one mariner noted “you need not doubt of meeting of slaves enough at some of these places.”⁷³ Smaller ships were advised that Matatana on the east coast was worth exploring. The “commodities...the natives esteem most” included a long list of trade goods that were easily accessible in London, Amsterdam or Lisbon. The list included:

good powder and armes, flints, beads, sissors, knives, looking glasses, needles, glass beads, coral, agate, cornelian beads, silver, brass tin manilloes, iron, lead and brass, painted and striped clouts, rings and several other toyes, and cases of spirits.⁷⁴

These goods were exchanged for “slaves...rice, yams, honey, wax, tamarinds, dragon’s blood and several other things that the country affords.”⁷⁵ The trade conditions in

⁷¹ Gwyn Campbell, *An Economic History of Imperial Madagascar, 1750-1895: The Rise and Fall of an Island Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Pier Martin Larson, *History and Memory in the Age of Enslavement: Becoming Merina in Highland Madagascar, 1770-1822* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000).

⁷² Mike Parker Pearson, “Close Encounters of the Worst Kind: Malagasy Resistance and Colonial Disasters in Southern Madagascar,” *World Archaeology* 28, no. 3 (1997): 393–417.

⁷³ Rawlinson, A 334a, f. 61. Bodleian Library, Oxford University.

⁷⁴ Rawlinson, A 334a, f. 61. Bodleian Library, Oxford University.

⁷⁵ Rawlinson, A 334a, f. 61. Bodleian Library, Oxford University. Dragon’s blood was a bright red resin in continuous use since ancient times as varnish, medicine, incense, and dye. In 1727 the surgeon on the *Saint Michael* made a similar list. “The things most in demand here are small beads of bright lively colors namely green, blue, yellow, and white. Red beads are not so much valued, and they won’t take the black. Large beads of any color will not sell here. Looking glasses do very well but brass rings are not much minded. Coarse scissors and yellow handled knives, course knives and forks do very well especially to purchase necessities such as honey tamarind and fowls. Brass nails do pretty well and those they use for to adorn the stocks of their guns. Pocket looking glasses, combs, brass bells and steels for striking of fire and black and red beads do not sell here.” *Journal of Saint Michael*, 2 February 1727, HSA.

Madagascar prompted one observer to suggest that “greater commerce” with Europeans would motivate the local Malagasy to embrace European ideological conceptions of land management and the implementation of plantations.⁷⁶ The island’s robust economy was likely due to the fact that there was “no piece of ground in all the Isle but has its master” to manage.⁷⁷

Europeans trading at Madagascar depended on local knowledge and experience to complete commercial transactions. Fishermen and mariners were generally the first Malagasy people that Europeans encountered.⁷⁸ European reliance on local knowledge of coastal Madagascar and navigation was so great that by the end of the eighteenth century charts of the island remained rudimentary.⁷⁹ Ship captains sailed along the coast hoping that local traders would come off and assist them in navigating the dangerous shoals and reefs towards a safe harbor. In situations when locals did not come off, visitors were advised to approach the beach with caution. Each sailor was advised to carry a firearm but “let them not seem afraid themselves nor frighten the Blacks.”⁸⁰ Malagasy soldiers carried “muskets knives and spears.”⁸¹ An early 1690s account described an encounter where Captain Dering was seized, “stripped naked” and held for ransom.⁸²

⁷⁶ Rawlinson, A 334a, f. 61. Bodleian Library, Oxford University.

⁷⁷ Sloane 3392, BL.

⁷⁸ Europeans often reported that Malagasy mariners served as pilots for the larger ships. Pieter E. Westra and James C. Armstrong, eds., *Slawehandel Met Madagaskar: Die Joernale Van Die Kaapse Slaweskip Leijdsman, 1715* (Kaapstad: Africana Uitgewers, 2006), 51-53, 81; Alfred Grandidier, ed., *Collection Des Ouvrages Anciens Concernant Madagascar* (Paris: Comité de Madagascar, 1903), vol. 6:52, voyage of the *Brak*, 1742.

⁷⁹ Jane L. Hooper, “An Empire in the Indian Ocean: The Sakalava Empire of Madagascar” (Ph.D., Emory University, 2010), 111-12.

⁸⁰ Rawlinson, A 334a, f. 61. Bodleian Library, Oxford University.

⁸¹ John Bartlett, Journal of ship Massachusetts, in Gwyn Campbell, *An Economic History of Imperial Madagascar, 1750-1895: The Rise and Fall of an Island Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 51.

⁸² Rawlinson, A 334b, f. 58. The ship Little Josiah, Captain Dering at St. Lawrence. Bodleian Library.

First encounters between people of different cultures were often tense and filled with anxiety. Decades of experience tended to relax relations and as the Malagasy and Europeans grew more familiar with each other. Local elites appointed official representatives found it profitable to cultivate these lasting relationships. Towards the end of the seventeenth century, the number of Europeans trading on the island increased. An English account advised traders to Madagascar to inquire about “white men” in the area who would inform them “how to manage your affairs with the Blacks.”⁸³ When the ship *Francis* arrived at Masseledge, a Portuguese soldier from Mozambique acquainted the king of the ship’s business and arranged initial trading dialogue.⁸⁴

Early accounts dating from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries described Madagascar’s natural resources, geography, and the cultural rituals practiced by the Malagasy people. Madagascar’s northeast coast had strong ties with East Africa and supported several Muslim communities. In 1528, Nuno de Cunha described the people living near the Mangoky River as “black with fuzzy hair like those of Mozambique.”⁸⁵ English mariner John Davis reported that the inhabitants of Fiherenana were “as black as coal.”⁸⁶ John Lancaster styled the men residing at Saint Mary’s as having a “black color and frizzled hair which they stroke up at their foreheads...so that it stands three inches upright.”⁸⁷ In 1608 William Finch noted that the Malagasy men were “stout, tall and well-made, of a tawny colour... Their beards black and reasonably long; and the hair on

⁸³ Rawlinson, A 334a, f. 61. Bodleian Library, Oxford University.

⁸⁴ Stephen Ellis, “Un Texte Du XVIIe Siècle Sur Madagascar,” *Omaly Sy Anio* 9 (1979), 156.

⁸⁵ Raymond Kent, *Early Kingdoms in Madagascar, 1500-1700* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), 183.

⁸⁶ John Davis, “Voyage of Captain John Davis to the East Indies, in 1598,” in Robert Kerr, *A General History and Collection of Voyages and Travels* (Edinburgh: Printed by G. Ramsay for W. Blackwood, 1811-1824), vol. 8:35.

⁸⁷ John Lancaster, “First Voyage of the English East India Company, in 1601,” in Kerr, *General History*, vol. 8:104.

their heads likewise black and long, plaited and frizzled very curiously.”⁸⁸ Walter Hamond’s claimed that the Malagasy exceeded the English in “stature” and were of a “brown or chestnut colour.” Both the men and the women braided their hair which was about a “foot” in length.⁸⁹ As the brutal plantation enterprise took root in the Americas, Europeans became more aware of the defining physical and cultural traits of enslaved laborers and consequently expected ship captains to purchase enslaved Africans with specific qualities.

The distinct markers of Islamic culture on the island were evident in the daily rituals and dietary habits of the Malagasy. Young boys were circumcised, and most practiced an “abstinence from swine’s flesh.”⁹⁰ The physical features of the Malagasy were not lost on SSC administrators. Ship captians that stopped in Madagascar were instructed to purchase the “blackest sort with short curled hair and none of the tawny sort with straight hair.”⁹¹ The surgeon on the *Saint Michael* noted that the Malagasy were different from other “Guinea Negroes” that he encountered in West Africa. Of note was their “long black hair instead of wool” and most tended to have “not so flat” noses nor “so such a black color” as the people of the Guinea coast. The Sakalava were the “blackest” on the island, whereas others observed were “yellow or copper color.”⁹²

⁸⁸ William Finch, “Observations made at St Augustine in Madagascar,” in Kerr, *General History*, vol. 8:262.

⁸⁹ Walter Hamond, *Madagascar, the Richest and Most Frvityll Island in the World* (London: Printed for Nicolas Bourne, 1643), 6.

⁹⁰ Walter Hamond, *A Paradox: Prooving That the Inhabitants of the Isle Called Madagascar, or St. Laurence, (in Temporall Things) Are the Happiest People in the World.* (London: Printed for Nathaniell Butter, 1640), B4; Hamond, *Madagascar* (1643), 11.

⁹¹ Add. MSS, 25567, f. 2. BL.

⁹² Journal of the *Saint Michael*, 7 April 1727. Attempts to identify the surgeon’s identity have been unsuccessful thus far. Several journal entries indicate he was likely in the service of the EIC before 1727. He wrote letters to his father (unnamed) and George Ouchterlony who was a mariner on the EIC ship *Middlesex*. George’s brother, Patrick Ouchterlony, was a mariner on the EIC ship *Devonshire*. PROB 11/685/267; PROB 11/858/663, BNA, Kew.

Company factors stationed in the Caribbean reported that the Spanish customers demanded slaves that were the “finest deep black...without cutts in their face nor filled teeth.” Facial tattooing, scarification, and dental modification were common among the Ibo and Yoruba of the Bights of Benin and Biafra. Spanish consumers wanted the “men to be well grown of the middle stature, not too tall not too short” and under 25 years old. Women were expected to “be of a good stature, not too short and without any long breasts hanging down.” Keeping slaves healthy, not just alive, was critical. Captive Africans were expected upon arrival to be “well fleshed and not too thin and lean for skin and bones only will not sell.”⁹³ Madagascar as a potential market for purchasing slaves for delivery to plantation zones of the Americas was noted by many early English writers. The habits and rituals of the Malagasy and their interactions with Europeans played an important role in the nature of commercial exchange. Malagasy culture would not go unnoticed in Caribbean plantation zones.

Malagasy slaves disembarking in Caribbean plantation zones made lasting contributions to the development of diasporic identities and culture particularly in Jamaica and Barbados. In the 1680s and 1690s, English ships carried approximately 3,500 captive Malagasy to Barbados. The year 1683 was the zenith for ships from Madagascar disembarking slaves at Barbados. In that year, one in four slaves that disembarked were of Malagasy origin, and their presence amongst the islands’ enslaved population was noted in a 1684 account.⁹⁴ Many remained on the English islands but some were re-exported through the intercolonial slave trade to the Spanish mainland and French Hispaniola. Spanish ships stopped regularly in Jamaica, some with large sums of

⁹³ Shelburne Papers, 44 f. 595, WCL.

⁹⁴ Sloane 2441, BL.

cash, as much as “2 or 300,000 pieces of eight” to “buy 3000 negroes.”⁹⁵ The high demand for slaves at English and Spanish Caribbean markets encouraged ship captains to venture to Madagascar and Mozambique to purchase slaves.⁹⁶ Ships with Malagasy slaves arriving in Jamaica in 1686 disembarked their cargoes to a glutted market populated by cash-strapped planters.⁹⁷ By the end of the 17th century Malagasy slaves made up an important cross-section of the ethnically-defined maroon settlements and were resilient defenders of their freedom against militia attacks.⁹⁸ In 1720, a group of slaves led by a “resolute cunning fellow” of Malagasy origins established a rebel community in the mountains near Deans Valley. Infighting between the Malagasy and the Leeward maroons led to the death of the “Madagascar Captain” in the early 1720s and the subsequent incorporation of the two groups. From this union “arose the great body of the Leeward rebels.”⁹⁹ Although the volume of captives disembarking on English Caribbean islands were relatively small compared to ethnic groups of the Gold Coast, the Malagasy proved influential to identity formation in Jamaica.

⁹⁵ Thomas Lynch to William Blathwayt, 23 July 1683; Thomas Lynch to William Blathwayt, 6 October 1683, William Blathwayt Papers.

⁹⁶ Thomas Lynch to William Blathwayt, 21 October 1683, William Blathwayt Papers, Colonial Williamsburg.

⁹⁷ Hender Molesworth to William Blathwayt, 15 June 1686; Hender Molesworth to William Blathwayt, 15 September 1686, William Blathwayt Papers. For an example of Malagasy slaves saturating the New York market see, Jacobus van Cortlandt to Mr. Mayhew, 15 April 1698; Jacobus van Cortlandt to Richard Sleight, 4 June 1698, Jacobus van Cortlandt Letterbook, New York Historical Society (NYHS). In June 1719, Barbados merchant Hugh Hall wrote that the “late vast importation of Madagascar Negroes” had driven down the price of slaves disembarking from Sierra Leone. Hugh Hal to Samuel Betteress, 22 June 1719, Hugh Hall Letterbook, 17, New York Public Library, (NYPL).

⁹⁸ Hender Molesworth to William Blathwayt, 28 September 1686, *Calendar State Papers, Colonial Series. America and West Indies, 1685-1688* (London, 1899), 251-52; Hender Molesworth to William Blathwayt, 12 March 1687, William Blathwayt Papers.

⁹⁹ Add. MSS, 12431, f. 70, BL.

“Very Pressing that We Buy Slaves:” Elite Authority and the Madagascar Slave Trade

The War of Quadruple Alliance (1718-1720), brought about a temporary cessation of the *asiento*, but commerce resumed with peace restored in 1721.¹⁰⁰ SSC officials continued to apply a policy of aggressive commercial expansion into Spanish-American markets. In early 1726, London shipwrights Mr. Hopkins and Mr. Taylor contracted to build two new ships for the “Guinea and Jamaica trade” for the company.¹⁰¹ Company officials gathered at Limehouse dockyards in East London to celebrate the launching of a new ship, the *Saint Michael*. The 300-ton, 30-gun behemoth was operated by crew of 65 sailors.¹⁰² Experienced slave ship captain Charles Burnham was hired by the company to sail the *Saint Michael* to Madagascar and Buenos Aires.¹⁰³ The owner of the *Saint Michael*, John Brown, occasionally supplied company ships with beads and other commodities for the African trade.¹⁰⁴

In preparation for the voyage company officials conferred with the EIC regarding permission to send the *Saint Michael* and *Sea Horse* to Madagascar. Permission from the EIC was granted and preparations moved ahead without delay. Next officials met with experienced mariners versed in the Indian Ocean trade. In April 1726, captains John Opie, Matthew Kent and Charles Burnham, “who are conversant in the navigation” of Madagascar informed the court that it was the “proper time for ships departing” London “for making the Cape and delivering the... Negroes at Buenos Aires in the right season.”

¹⁰⁰ Brendan Simms, *Three Victories and a Defeat: The Rise and Fall of the First British Empire, 1714-1783* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 135-55.

¹⁰¹ *The London Journal*, 19 February 1726.

¹⁰² *The London Journal*, 29 January 1726. Identified as 350 tons in Add. MSS, 25565, BL.

¹⁰³ Burnham was spent his life at sea. In 1709, Burnham was the captain of the *Jamaica Merchant* that sailed from London to Kingston. William Park to Thomas Eyre, 24 May 1709, Letters from Jamaica on Commercial Affairs, 1662-1788, NYPL.

¹⁰⁴ Add. MSS, 25502, BL.

Lastly, a license was granted by the EIC for the *Saint Michael* and the *Sea Horse* to depart for Madagascar in early June 1726. The pass was necessary if the ships stopped at the Cape Good Hope or St. Helena during the voyage. With preparations complete, the *Saint Michael* departed Gravesend on 3 June 1726.¹⁰⁵



Figure 3.2. Henri Chatelain, “Carte de l’Ile de Madagascar Contenant sa Description & Diverses Particularitez Curieuses de ses Habitans Tant Blancs Que Negres,” 1719. The portrait depicts five men in a canoe with the Malagasy man in the rear waving at a ship. In the canoe is a bull carcass indicating their intention to trade. George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida.

Six months later, the *Saint Michael* arrived off the western coast of Madagascar. At Morondava, the ship was greeted by several canoes with local traders interested in commerce. [Figure 2.] A few of the Malagasy traders “could speak English pretty well” and “Captain Jack” who “spoke English best” had a “fine plantation” near the Morondava River. The traders were invited on the ship where they were greeted by Capt. Burnham

¹⁰⁵ Add. MSS, 25502, BL.

and initial pleasantries were exchanged. Burnham gave Captain Jack and Prince William a “long buccaneer gun, some small bunches of beads, four knives, scissors” and some English spirits. Prince William was a very important person for any European trading at St. Augustine Bay.¹⁰⁶ Burnham was informed that before trading could commence an envoy of the ship’s company had to be dispatched “up in the country” to acquaint King Ramoni, upon which the king would come down to the beach to “open the trade” personally. Mr. Eizat and David Britton, who “spoke a little of their language,” were dispatched with an assortment of trade goods to present to the king as customary tribute. Ten days later, the envoy returned to the beach, the King Ramoni having sent three slaves as gifts, one each to Burnham, Eizat and Britton. Having established relations with the King to the nature of their business, the English traders waited for the King to arrive at the beach to complete the ritualized ceremonies of commercial diplomacy and exchange.¹⁰⁷

The Madagascar slave trade was structured around an elaborate and established set of procedures developed over decades of interaction. These rituals included conventions respected by both sides of the trade. The initial socio-cultural rituals and formalities were necessary in order to establish trust. The sharing of alcoholic beverages was significant to these rituals.¹⁰⁸ In the interim between the meeting with Prince William and the arrival of the King, the crew began the construction of a temporary trading

¹⁰⁶ In 1741, Prince William greeted the ship *Onslow*. Hooper, “Sakalava Empire,” 112-16. Downing noted that Prince William was a powerful local leader renowned for selling slaves to the English and for harboring sailors. Clement Downing, *A Compendious History of the Indian Wars* (London: Printed for T. Cooper, 1737), 117-22. A 1715 Dutch account described Prince William as “Bevaha, the viceroy of Saint Augustine.” Pieter E. Westra and James C. Armstrong, eds., *Slawehandel Met Madagaskar: Die Joernale Van Die Kaapse Slaweskip Leijdsman, 1715* (Kaapstad: Africana Uitgewers, 2006), 65, 67.

¹⁰⁷ Over two weeks passed before the king arrived. Journal of the Saint Michael, 30 November 1726, HSA.

¹⁰⁸ Randrianja and Ellis, *Madagascar*, 102.

factory on the beach.¹⁰⁹ Adam Baldbridge's trading factory was rather extensive and well-fortified, having a "platform of a fort with 22 guns" or cannons.¹¹⁰ A Dutch factory constructed in 1742 consisted of a guardhouse, kitchen, hospital, surgeon's dwelling, enclosed within a protective palisade.¹¹¹ A factory constructed at Morondava in the 1770s consisted of a kitchen, large trading area, and a dwelling for slaves surrounded by a palisade.¹¹² The temporary structure was constructed largely by the ship's crew with the assistance of hired laborers and disassembled once trading was completed.¹¹³



Figure 3.3. Map of eighteenth century Madagascar. From Arne Bialuschewski, "Thomas Bowrey's Madagascar Manuscript of 1708," *History in Africa* 34 (2007): 31–42.

¹⁰⁹ A 1595 account describes Dutch traders building a "sort of simple fort...constructed for safety." J. T. Hardyman, "Outline of the Maritime History of St. Augustine's Bay (Madagascar)," *Studia* 11 (1963), 320.

¹¹⁰ J. Franklin Jameson, ed., *Privateering and Piracy in the Colonial Period: Illustrative Documents* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923), 176, 181. The cannons were pillaged off a Muslim ship.

¹¹¹ Maurice Boucher, "The Voyage of a Cape Slaver in 1742," *Historia* 24 (1979), 54.

¹¹² Andrew Alexander, "Negotiation, Trade and the Rituals of Encounter: An Examination of the Slave-Trading Voyage of De Zon, 1775–1776," *Itinerario* 31, no. 3 (2007), 50.

¹¹³ Georg Nørregård, "Pa slavetogt til Madagascar, 1737-1739," *Handels-og Søfartsmuseet Arborg*, (1955): 38.

King Ramoni arrived two weeks later and “fixed his residence” on the banks of the Morondava River about two miles from the English factory. On 31 November 1726, the King with a “great body of men and arms” went to the factory to meet with Burnham where they had a “conference.” As with any commercial transaction where bartering is a ritualized ceremony, each side must be willing to make certain concessions. Burnham, after listening to the King’s initial proposal, which was apparently “so high” for slaves and rice, cleared the trade goods from the factory and loaded them onto the ship and threatened to go to “some other part of the island.” King Ramoni did not want to lose the opportunity for commerce, so he agreed to some of Burnham’s “measures” and the ship stayed at Morondava.¹¹⁴ Three days later the King returned to the factory and had a “second interview” with Burnham when the “principle articles of trade” were agreed.¹¹⁵ In comparison to the prices Captain Dering paid for slaves in 1692, the commodities bartered for a captive Malagasy at Morondava had more than doubled.¹¹⁶ However, while it’s clear the price increased in value the type of goods had not changed. The most important trade item exchanged for slaves at Morondava were various types of firearms. Five different types of muskets were identified. (See Table 1. Appendix) By the 1720s, the Malagasy had a long history of trade with Europeans. The fact that five different categories of firearms were included in the transactions for slaves demonstrates that the

¹¹⁴ Journal of the Saint Michael, 30 November 1726, HSA.

¹¹⁵ Journal of the Saint Michael, 4 December 1726, HSA.

¹¹⁶ In 1692 Captain Dering paid one gun, seven cartridges of powder, 20 shot and 20 flints for a man or woman. The price for a boy or girl was one gun, four cartridges of powder, 20 shot and 20 flints. Rawlinson, A 334b, f. 58. Bodleian Library, Oxford University.

Malagasy were very astute traders and discerning consumers of European commodities.¹¹⁷

King Ramoni, though the terms of trade were established, continued to play an important role in the transactions of the English ship at Morondava. While the primary purpose of the voyage to Madagascar was to purchase captive Malagasy, the large number of human cargo stored on the *Saint Michael* could not be sustained without sufficient provisions. In order to safely transport the captive Africans safely to Buenos Aires, several hundred tons of food and water were needed. Decades of experience with European traders made the imperative to stock ships clearly evident to local traders. King Ramoni was at first “very pressing that we buy slaves” but Capt. Burnham “refused until we bought a quantity of rice.” Had Burnham purchased the slaves first, as he had “done in the past,” the price for rice would have increased drastically afterwards. According to the journalist, the traders “know we need rice” and because in the case of less attentive captains, made “them pay more for rice than they had paid for their slaves.”¹¹⁸ Given that Burnham purchased slaves at Madagascar in 1717, combined with Eizat and Britton’s familiarity with Sakalava linguistics, it is not surprising that the King was unable to get the best of the English traders.¹¹⁹ Experience, cultural knowledge, and reciprocity worked to both party’s advantage. To be sure, both the Europeans and the local traders were “very cunning subtle people” in their own right. Once the terms of the trade agreement

¹¹⁷ In 1715, King Demonaij summoned Dutch traders to his compound after receiving complaints that they were trading defective muskets. The Malagasy traders refused to exchange the broken muskets for the same type of musket fearing further defects. No one on the ship was capable of fixing the guns and when the Dutch traders returned to shore, they had to “return the already bartered slaves to them, which extremely embarrassed us.” Westra and Armstrong, eds., *Slavehandel Met Madagaskar*, 105.

¹¹⁸ Journal of the Saint Michael, 4 December 1726, HSA.

¹¹⁹ Burnham was one of the first independent ship captains to receive a license from the EIC to carry slaves from Madagascar to the Americas. Platt, *East India Company*, 556.

were settled, slaves and provisions arrived at the factory “pretty fast.”¹²⁰ In early January 1727, King Ramoni’s son, “Romenetta” came down to the beach with a few slaves, but it was clear to Burnham that the market was drained.¹²¹ The *Saint Michael* sailed from Morondava with 285 slaves on board.¹²² Offshore on the floating prison ship the captive Malagasy wrestled with their chains and tested the limits of their desire to return to their home just a short swim away.

It was not uncommon for European ships trading at Madagascar to purchase slaves at more than one coastal market.¹²³ The decision to leave one market and test another was strictly economic. With fewer healthy bodies arriving on the coast, and an increasing volume of sick and dying slaves on the ship, Burnham closed outstanding accounts on shore and listened to the desperate promises of traders that more slaves were soon to arrive. The *Saint Michael* sailed south along the coast until 7 February when they encountered some fishermen who convinced them to stop at Tullear to trade with “Monross King Hueringo.” Burnham agreed to pay the same purchasing price for slaves as he gave King Ramoni at Morondava but according to the surgeon “this kingdom...had neither slaves nor rice.” Burnham was able to purchase only three slaves during the weeks the *Saint Michael* anchored at Tullear. The poor trading conditions at Tullear were likely a result of recent raids from the north conducted by the Ramonis. The surgeon noted that the country was “very poor in slaves, rice and cattle” because over the past few

¹²⁰ Journal of the Saint Michael, 4 December 1726, HSA.

¹²¹ King Ramena was described as ‘Menabe’s powerful, autocratic and much feared’ ruler. Raymond Kent, “Royal Possession Cults in Southeastern Africa and Western Madagascar: An Exploratory Historical Comparison of the Shona and the Sakalava,” *Omalu Sy Anio* 17–20 (1983-1984), 131.

¹²² Journal of the Saint Michael, 5 January 1727, HSA. A total of 294 were purchased at Morondava. Eight slaves succumbed to the limits of their mortality and one man jumped overboard.

¹²³ The 1775 voyage of the Dutch ship *De Zon* purchased slaves at Morondava, Tullear, and Mangariek. Alexander, “Shipboard Uprisings,” 87. The *Leijdsman* attempted to purchase slaves at St. Augustine Bay, Tullear and Comoro Islands before stopping at Manigaar. Westra and Armstrong, eds., *Slavehandel Met Madagaskar*, 13

years the Romanis had raided it “twice...carried away their slaves and other goods which losses they never have been able to repair.” Interregional conflicts on the island were common in Madagascar. The fortunes of dynastic rulers tended to fluctuate as kings wrestled for control of European commerce. It is likely that the slaves sold to Burnham at Morondava by King Romani originated from communities near Tullear.¹²⁴ This is deduced through notes of the surgeon, who observed “two men who had been in our factory” at Morondava, had “run away from Romani,” and were residing at Tullear.¹²⁵

The large volume of slaves and rice purchased at Morondava would not have been possible without the assistance of local interpreters who aided in the negotiations. At Morondava, about 50 tons of rice were purchased from local traders. It was “not inferior to Carolina rice” the journalist noted though the “greatest part is not so large a grain nor so well cleaned.”¹²⁶ Dutch voyages to Madagascar brought along enslaved Malagasy men that were taught Dutch at Cape Town to assist in facilitating slave purchases.¹²⁷ Several interpreters were utilized in Burnham’s negotiations with the King Romani. A local Malagasy man named “Tambourha or John Freeman who lived long with the pirates on St. Mary’s” was accused of telling “lies” between Burnham and the King and was dismissed. “Will Purser and his brother” were next followed by a “Johanna” man fluent in Arabic and through his commercial acumen cultivated a small fortune. Before departing he sold “several small diamonds” to Burnham. “Old Will Bush” who spoke English “pretty well” and lived opposite of the ship’s factory was Burnham’s “confidant

¹²⁴ On captives from inland communities see Ellis, “Un Texte Du XVIIe Siècle,” 157.

¹²⁵ Journal of the Saint Michael, 8-12 February 1727, HSA.

¹²⁶ Journal of the Saint Michael, 2 February 1727, HSA.

¹²⁷ The Malagasy interpreter on board the Dutch ship *De Zon* was named Cornelis. Alexander, *Shipboard Slave Uprisings*, 42.

and honestest man among them.”¹²⁸ Interpreters played an integral role as go-betweens in the trade conducted between the English and Malagasy elites.

The *Saint Michael* arrived at Fort Dauphin on 16 March 1727. Anchored in the harbor was the *Alcyon*, a French ship owned by the Compagnie des Indies, trading for rice and beef. The next day Capt. Burnham went ashore to negotiate with “King Andriomansa” who controlled much of the region. It was reported that once he set the prices on “trade all other kings come to his measures.” Burnham agreed with the king to purchase adult slaves for the same price as at Morondava and negotiated a negligible reduction in the price for Malagasy children. The presence of the *Alcyon* was likely a powerful bargaining tool for King Andriomansa. Although a marginal victory, Burnham conceded that it was necessary to give the traders a “good price [over paid]” because the French “carried” off most of the slaves from “this side of the island.”¹²⁹ Since arriving at the island, Capt. Burnham had heard nothing from the *Sea Horse*. Reports that the pirate Olivier Levasseur was at St. Mary’s caused some to fear that the ship had been ambushed. Lavasseur and Howell Davis had only recently returned from a raid on English and French ships in West Africa.¹³⁰

Slaves arrived slowly to the coast from the inland communities. On the first day of trading only two male slaves were purchased. The ships factory was located on “top of the hill” within Captain Sieur de la Butte’s “pallisadoes” near the ruins of the 1640s French fort.¹³¹ In West Africa, the English and French constructed their own trading factories and rarely shared space for mutual commerce. That the English and French

¹²⁸ Journal of the Saint Michael, 2 February 1727, HSA.

¹²⁹ Journal of the Saint Michael, 16-17 March 1727, HSA.

¹³⁰ Journal of the Saint Michael, 17 March 1727, HSA.

¹³¹ Captain Sieur de la Butte of the *Alcyon*.

traders shared the protected factory at Fort Dauphin illustrates the lack of permanent forts at Madagascar. The remains of the fort were “covered with grass and various sorts of plants,” but the “great gate” and the majority of the walls remained intact. The neglected garden continued to produce cabbage and other greens harvested by the crew. The sorted cargo stowed on the *Saint Michael* was well received by Fort Dauphin traders. During the first week of trading, 86 slaves were purchased; an average of about 12 slaves per day.¹³² On 30 March an entire family, “a man, his wife and a suckling child,” were purchased.¹³³ In comparison to the rate of slaves purchased at Morondava, Burnham was able to obtain captive Malagasy at a more rapid pace at Port Dauphin.¹³⁴ It is not entirely clear but the presence of the *Alcyon*, although it was not purchasing slaves may have induced traders to make preemptive raids. In addition, the proximity of regional trade networks to unsuspecting communities where Malagasy were kidnapped likely impacted this outcome.

At Morondava, the first three slaves arrived on the *Saint Michael* on 7 November 1726. Specific information on the number of slaves purchased each day at Morondava is unclear. Burnham bartered with Malagasy traders for 81 days, ending that period with a purchase of 294 slaves. This data indicates that Burnham acquired on average 3.6 slaves per day for transport to Buenos Aires. On 3 February 1727, a survey of the slaves indicated that a total of 284 Malagasy were onboard the ship.¹³⁵ Several captive Malagasy died in route to the next slaving port. When the ship arrived at Port Dauphin, only 278

¹³² Journal entries for 19-28 March 1727, HSA.

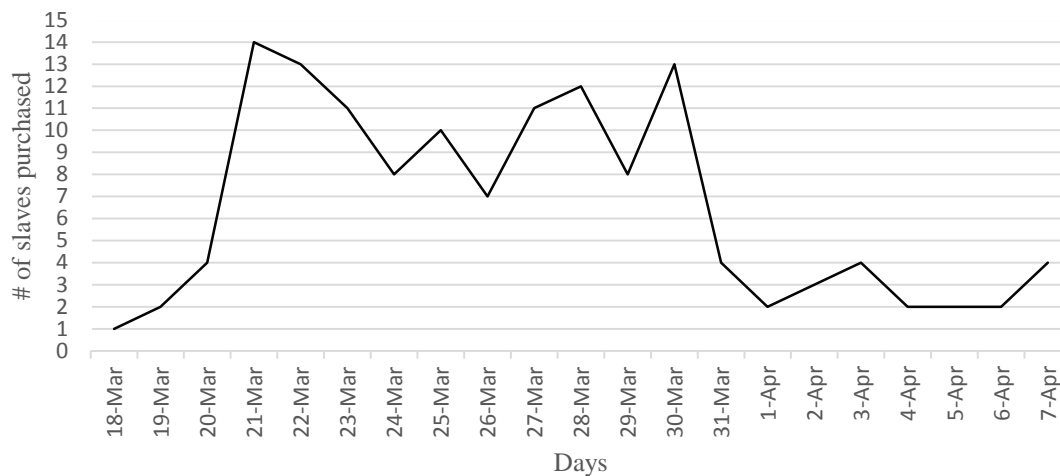
¹³³ Journal of the Saint Michael, 30 March 1727, HSA.

¹³⁴ The number of slaves arriving each day at Morondava is not specified in the journal. For Morondava, I arrived at the average number of slaves each day by dividing the number of trading days into the number of slaves purchased over that period. The *Saint Michael* traded at Morondava for 81 days and purchased 294 slaves, an average of 3.7 slaves per day.

¹³⁵ Journal of the Saint Michael, 3 February 1727, HSA. 194 males and 90 females.

Malagasy slaves remained on board. At Port Dauphin, from 18 March to 7 April, 137 captives were purchased. Burnham acquired on average, 6.8 slaves per day. During the three weeks the *Saint Michael* anchored at Port Dauphin, two or more slaves were purchased every day, save one. The largest lot of slaves (14) purchased by Burnham took place on 21 March. Among the captive Malagasy purchased at Port Dauphin were “many very young boys and girls and several old men and women.” In addition, the surgeon noted that the slaves purchased on the West Coast were “much better” than those at Port Dauphin.¹³⁶ The fact that more children and elderly slaves were purchased at Fort Dauphin may indicate that the traders were making raids on whole villages, capturing families and the majority of the community rather than selective kidnapping. However the male to female captive ratio (2:1) remained the same at both ports. From the available data, nearly twice as many slaves were purchased per day at Fort Dauphin than at Morondava.

Table 3.1. Volume of slaves purchased daily at Port Dauphin by the *Saint Michael*



¹³⁶ Journal of the Saint Michael, 7 April, 1727, HSA. The assumption being that by “much better” the journalist implied young male slaves.

Many localized factors within West African slave markets effected the eventual outcome of a voyage.¹³⁷ Studies of Bight of Biafra markets have shown that quicker turnaround time, or slave loading rates, local political structures, and innovative credit networks and enforcement were critical factors that led to the rise of Bonny as the principal slave port in the region.¹³⁸ The loading rates of slaves per day at Bonny and Old Calabar increased over the second half of the eighteenth century. Bonny outpaced all other African ports compared in the Lovejoy and Richardson dataset. From 1750-75, Bonny merchants loaded 3.1 slaves per day whereas the second most efficient port, Angola loaded 1.7 slaves per day. By 1800, Bonny merchants were loading 5.7 slaves per day. Lovejoy and Richardson attribute this to the ability of Bonny merchants to more efficiently supply greater numbers of slaves to Liverpool ship captains than their neighboring competitors.¹³⁹

The amount of time a ship stayed at a port was one of the most critical factors to the success of the voyage and the mortality of the slaves on board.¹⁴⁰ An analysis of 21 British voyages that slaved on the Gold Coast during the first half of the eighteenth century indicated that ships traded for 109 days on the coast.¹⁴¹ A similar analysis of 21 eighteenth-century voyages that purchased slaves at Madagascar indicated that ships on

¹³⁷ David Eltis, Frank D. Lewis, and Kimberly McIntyre, "Accounting for the Traffic in Africans: Transport Costs on Slaving Voyages," *The Journal of Economic History* 70, no. 04 (2010): 940–63; Joseph C. Miller, *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730-1830* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), 658–62.

¹³⁸ Paul E. Lovejoy and David Richardson, "'This Horrid Hole': Royal Authority, Commerce and Credit at Bonny, 1690-1840," *The Journal of African History* 45, no. 3 (2004), 364; Stephen D. Behrendt, A. J. H. Latham, and David Northrup, eds., *The Diary of Antera Duke, an Eighteenth-Century African Slave Trader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 70-2.

¹³⁹ Lovejoy and Richardson, *Horrid Hole*, 379-80

¹⁴⁰ David Richardson, "The Costs of Survival: The Transport of Slaves in the Middle Passage and the Profitability of the 18th-Century British Slave Trade," *Explorations in Economic History* 24, no. 2 (1987): 178–96.

¹⁴¹ Voyages with information on when the trade began in Africa and the date the vessel departed Africa were selected. The sample included vessels that slaved on the Gold Coast from 1710-1725.

average traded for 149 days on the coast. The *Saint Michael* traded at Morondava and Port Dauphin for 145 days. Comparing trading times for the sample Madagascar voyages with the sample of Gold Coast voyages shows that ships purchasing slaves at Madagascar spent an additional 40 days on the coast. This additional time tended to increase shipboard mortality and voyage costs. In addition, although the trading time of the *Saint Michael* at Madagascar was slightly less than the average, the mortality on the ship does not appear to have been positively impacted.

A few days later two Port Dauphin men broke out of their irons. For their rebelliousness, they were “whipped severely” and placed in “stronger irons.” On 5 April, the ship began preparations for departure by stretching out the sails and raising the topmasts. That day while the captain and surgeon were ashore “the Negroes... showed us the manner of their fighting” in a display of pageantry and local authority.¹⁴² Perhaps the ritual was coordinated with the visible signs from shore that signified the ship was soon to sail. As the canoe rowed back to the ship, the Malagasy man on board, jumped out of the boat “swam and dived so dexterously” that he evaded recapture. A few hours later “two little boys” jumped from the *Saint Michael* into the water in an escape attempt but they were recaptured by some of the men at the factory who were alerted to their flight. As the crew searched the deck “five more little boys concealed” in the shadows were found who “designed to swim away” but failed to seize the moment. The attempted

¹⁴² Although the successful uprising on the *Vautour* occurred on the other side of the island at Morondava, the display of masculinity and military power may lend some credit to the French accusations that Prince William incited the slaves to rebel in November 1725. Boucher suggests that Malagasy elites were “always looking for a chance to incite rebellions on little ones in order to take possession of the ships, their cargoes and their guns.” Boucher, *Cape of Good Hope*, 111.

escapees were put into irons, and all the “men women and children” were “barred down” below deck for the night.¹⁴³

“Her Body Intirely Emaciated by the Violence”: An Asiento Ship’s Middle Passage

As the *Saint Michael* departed from Port Dauphin in April 1727, many of the Malagasy purchased at Morondava had been on the ship for over six months. The physical suffering and psychological torture did not wait for the commencement of the middle passage.¹⁴⁴

Many captives snared in the slaver’s dragnet were captured in sophisticated kidnapping raids that crisscrossed the interior of West Africa.¹⁴⁵ However, some were also taken off as intact family units; mother and father hand-in-hand with their children in tow.¹⁴⁶ Once such drama played out on the *Saint Michael*. Just six days after departing Port Dauphin, the surgeon recorded an often repeated entry in his journal, the death of a Malagasy slave. On 13 April, a man purchased at Port Dauphin died of a fever. Less than one hundred feet from him in the ship’s forecandle where the women and children were kept, was the man’s “wife and two children.”¹⁴⁷ Any chance the family had for making the voyage together or reuniting in Buenos Aires was over. Carried aboard as a family unit they would depart separately, their bodies crashing into the white-tipped waves and sinking silently into the sea. Traditional mourning practices were denied. Malagasy funeral rituals were elaborate,

¹⁴³ Journal of the Saint Michael, 5 April 1727, HSA.

¹⁴⁴ The horrors of the Atlantic crossing have been well documented. However since this is the only known manuscript documenting the voyage of a slave ship carrying captives from Madagascar to the Americas, it is necessary to recount the experience (selective portions) and integrate the voyage into the body of literature on the Atlantic slave trade and more specifically the execution of the asiento to Spanish American markets.

¹⁴⁵ Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (London, 1789).

¹⁴⁶ As far as I can tell this is the only known account describing an African family onboard a slave ship.

¹⁴⁷ Journal of the Saint Michael, 13 April 1727, HSA.

deeply engrained cultural rituals that marked the passing of loved ones onto the afterlife.¹⁴⁸

The cold weather and rough seas ravaged the bodies of the Malagasy. Some of the men shackled together receive some clothes.¹⁴⁹ By 5 May the death count rose to 22 since leaving Port Dauphin, at which point the structural geography of the wooden prison was transformed. The “boy’s apartment in the main hatchway” was turned into “one hospital for the sick slaves.”¹⁵⁰ The location of the impromptu hospital was logistically and strategically selected to improve the health of the captives. The room was located between the men’s apartment in the rear of the ship and the women’s rooms in the front. Perhaps the most important accommodation for the dying slaves, was that the room provided a rare “warm and dry” oasis on the otherwise cold and wet ship. Winter temperatures at the Cape generally hovered around the low 50s. As the sickest slaves were transitioned into the new hospital, the “smallest boys” [children] were moved in with the women and the adolescent boys placed in the men’s room.¹⁵¹ The effectiveness of the new hospital is unclear though the data indicates little change in the mortality of the Malagasy. By the end of the month an additional 18 slaves were dead. Not more than two days passed before another body was unceremoniously cast overboard. One Sakalava man suffered from a fever for 2 months. Before succumbing, his thighs swelled to such an extent that the skin of one of his legs tore open, as the diarist graphically explained,

¹⁴⁸ “As to their burials the bodies of the richer sort, they wrap up in a large cloth of their own making which they call a ruffea and put them in an old canoe and so inter them. The poorer sort they only wrap up in a cloth and so put them underground which ceremony at Succlava is attended with singing dancing and firing of guns.” *Journal of the Saint Michael*, 7 April 1727. For the role of burial rituals in Diasporic culture see, Vincent Brown, *The Reaper’s Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008).

¹⁴⁹ *Journal of the Saint Michael*, 15 April 1727, HSA.

¹⁵⁰ *Journal of the Saint Michael*, 5 May 1727, HSA.

¹⁵¹ *Journal of the Saint Michael*, 5 May 1727, HSA.

and “broke externally” causing “very much thick gross matter” to discharge from the tissue. The surgeon made an incision in the man’s leg and “evacuated a great quantity of thin fetid and bloody matter” but the additional loss of blood and effects of the fever on his lymphatic nervous system brought the man “so low that there was no hope of his recovery.”¹⁵²

The *Saint Michael* did not sail directly to Buenos Aires from Madagascar. Captain Burnham made a brief stopover at the island of St. Helena, a remote post operated by the EIC. The three weeks the *Saint Michael* anchored at St. Helena may have proved beneficial to many of the slave’s physical health, but the dying did not cease completely. After presenting the necessary certificates to the governor, several of the crew took the pinnace to “Lemon Valley” to collect water.¹⁵³ Although water was available at James Fort, the river was considered better and worth the additional time and effort.¹⁵⁴ The slaves suffering from scurvy required immediate attention. On 15 January, 24 of the sickest slaves were taken to the beach and “after walking them a little on shore” were carried back to the ship that evening. Since the entry reads “walking them” it suggests that the slaves were so weak that they were unable to walk on their own thus requiring the assistance of an assigned sailor. Consequently, the exercise would have required one of the sailors to walk shoulder to shoulder with the captive Malagasy to assist his or her movement. Although briefly no longer confined to the wooden prison ship, the intimacies, physical proximities and bodily exchanges between whites and captive Africans continued on terra firma. Two days later, 22 slaves were again sent ashore in an

¹⁵² Journal of the Saint Michael, 17 May 1727, HSA.

¹⁵³ Hudson R. Janisch, *Extracts from the St. Helena Records* (St. Helena: B. Grant, 1885), 135, 148. Lemon Valley was also the location where sick slaves were quarantined on the island.

¹⁵⁴ Journal of the Saint Michael, 14 June 1727, HSA.

attempt to “recover their health.” In addition to the increased physical activity and fresh water, the Malagasy slaves received a supplement of yams “a change of diet” which one observer noted “they love very much.” To feed the Malagasy aboard the *Saint Michael*, about seven hundred pounds of yams were purchased each day.¹⁵⁵ The description of the Malagasy captives needing the assistance from the crew to walk about the beach indicates that they were not in a condition to “going over the ship’s side” as company officials required of all slaves disembarking at Buenos Aires.

On the morning of 28 June, the sickest slaves were taken ashore for a third time but by the evening when the slaves returned to the ship, the composition of the population on board unexpectedly changed. Capt. Burnham exchanged a Malagasy man “whose legs were contracted... for a good man slave” residing on the island. Perhaps realizing the rapidly decreasing market value of the Malagasy man, Burnham was willing to make the exchange despite the fact that the St. Helena man frequently ran away from his former owner.¹⁵⁶ Moreover, St. Helena colonists were unwilling to show mercy towards habitual runaways as evidenced in the proceedings against a man named Totty. In August 1724, Totty was tried for “repeatedly running away and leading a free booters life,” found guilty and sentenced to be drawn on a cart “by other runaway slaves and hung.” Totty’s corpse was carried to the “top of the hill above Castle path and hanged upon a gibbet.”¹⁵⁷ It is likely the St. Helena man exchanged for by Burnham was of Malagasy origins. The overwhelming majority of the slaves carried to the island were transported from

¹⁵⁵ Journal of the Saint Michael, 11, 15, 17 June 1727, HSA. An additional 15 tons of yams were purchased for the journey to Buenos Aires.

¹⁵⁶ Journal of the Saint Michael, 28 June 1727, HSA.

¹⁵⁷ Janisch, *Extracts*, 133, 168.

Madagascar on EIC ships.¹⁵⁸ During the year 1716, letters from the island to company officials in London requested “200 or 300” Malagasy slaves who were considered “the best for our purpose.”¹⁵⁹ The stopover at St. Helena for refreshing the sick Malagasy slaves appears to have been relatively effective.¹⁶⁰ One Port Dauphin man died of the flux while at St. Helena, and Burnham gave Governor Edward Byfield a Malagasy boy as a present before departing.¹⁶¹

From the heart of the South Atlantic, the *Saint Michael* departed for Buenos Aires. Although the ship was on the last leg of its journey, the mood on board was anything but tranquil. While at St. Helena, the ship was scrubbed clean and covered with a new coat of paint.¹⁶² In addition, all the guns and carriages were cleaned and orders given that they remain “always...clear and ready for action.”¹⁶³ The armorer was kept busy “cleaning the small arms” while the gunner and his mate were employed “filling cartridges, filling and fitting the granado shells.”¹⁶⁴ The militarization of the ship was necessary because of the tenuous state of diplomacy between England and Spain. Capt. Burnham was given an emergency set of instructions before leaving London, which detailed the measures for dealing with the outbreak of a war.¹⁶⁵ On 20 July, “40 of the

¹⁵⁸ Richard B. Allen, *European Slave Trading in the Indian Ocean, 1500-1850* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014), 38; Philip J. Stern, “Politics and Ideology in the Early East India Company-State: The Case of St Helena, 1673–1709,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 35, no. 1 (2007): 5.

¹⁵⁹ In 1717 the *Drake* and *Mercury* carried 107 Malagasy slaves to St Helena. The *Mercury* carried an unknown number of Malagasy slaves to the island in 1720. Janisch, *Extracts*, 133, 140, 146, 160.

¹⁶⁰ The surgeon noted that the slaves taken ashore were “upon the way of recovery” except one woman “who is very bad of the flux,” a man with an untreatable “hydrocele,” and a boy whose legs were “very much contracted.” The slave voyages database does not list the *Saint Michael* as stopping at St. Helena. It is unclear how many SSC ships purchasing slaves at Madagascar stopped at St. Helena before sailing on to Buenos Aires.

¹⁶¹ Journal of the Saint Michael, 28, 30 June 1727, HSA.

¹⁶² Journal of the Saint Michael, 28 June 1727, HSA.

¹⁶³ Journal of the Saint Michael, 30 June 1727, HSA.

¹⁶⁴ Journal of the Saint Michael, 1 July 1727, HSA.

¹⁶⁵ Add. MSS, 25567, BL. Upon arriving at Buenos Aires, if peace continued, then Burnham was to continue accordingly. But if war had been declared then Burnham was to try and sell his slaves to the

stoutest men slaves” were selected from the body of captive Malagasy who were deemed capable of using “small arms.” The men were “quartered on the poop and forecastle” in case a hostile Spanish ship was encountered. That afternoon, a ship was spotted while the crew was “training the Negroes,” and immediately everyone quickly readied at their “respective quarters.”¹⁶⁶ The unidentified ship sailed off, and nothing came of the potential aggressor. As night approached, a Portuguese ship in route to Salvador da Bahia informed Burnham that there were no Spanish battleships at Buenos Aires. Although “no accounts of war” had been received at the South Atlantic colony, relations between Spain and England continued on the same “uncertain footing.”¹⁶⁷ The political nature of the *asiento* contract created an additional hurdle for successfully delivering healthy captives to Spanish markets that was distinct in the history of the transatlantic slave trade. Madagascar, though attractive for its lack of competition and lower slave prices, was an unreliable market for transporting slaves to Atlantic slaving zones.

As the *Saint Michael* approached the Spanish coast, a Sakalava woman gave birth to a baby Malagasy boy. On the day the boy was born, lightning splintered the clouds as the “cold and piercing” rain fell from sky. Muffled by the unrelenting rain pounding against the deck of the ship, the boy's screams were quickly muted as life exhaled from his mortal shell. His “black parents” wept for the loss of their child. The slave ship was a multifunctional tool that served the commercial expansionist policies of the British state and corporate agenda of the South Sea Company. Much more than an oceanic

Portuguese at the Colonia de Sacramento, just across the Rio de la Plata. If unsuccessful, Burnham was to sail the ship to Jamaica.

¹⁶⁶ Voluntarily arming Malagasy slaves was very dangerous. The Malagasy on board the *Meermin* were allowed to freely access the ship's deck. Several of the Malagasy men were ordered to clean a number of Malagasy weapons collected during the voyage. They refused to return the weapons upon completing the task and proceeded to massacre the captain and several of the crew. Alexander, *Shipboard Uprisings*, 90.

¹⁶⁷ Journal of the Saint Michael, 20 July 1727.

transportation vessel, the *Saint Michael* was the ‘Swiss Army Knife’ of its day. The slave ship was an adaptable, readily transformable and quickly deployable offensive weapon of early modern capitalism. At a moment’s notice, sailors turned gears and tightened ropes to convert the ship from an unsanitary prison, into a hospital, or rudimentary neonatal station.¹⁶⁸ By the time the *Saint Michael* reached the Isla del Lobos the ship had served all these functions. More than 20 Malagasy captives perished in the leg from St. Helena to Buenos Aires.

Arrival off the Spanish coast was a relief for many of the sailors and enslaved Malagasy on the *Saint Michael*. As for the Malagasy, their fate remained unclear. On 6 September Burnham took the final census of the Malagasy on the *Saint Michael*. According to the official tally, 300 slaves, 203 males and 97 females, were entered for the company. An additional 40 slaves remained on board for “private sales.”¹⁶⁹ On September 29, a Spanish physician came out to the ship to determine if slaves were in the “proper condition to be brought ashore.”¹⁷⁰ Two weeks would pass before 283 slaves, 192 males and 91 females, were delivered to Don Mathias Ojenello and Mr. Hall, the factory surgeon. Ten slaves remained onboard that were too sick to go ashore.¹⁷¹ Only four would leave the ship a month later.¹⁷² Spanish records indicate that 26 of the Malagasy slaves arrived on shore sick and that 118 perished since the *Saint Michael* departed Madagascar.¹⁷³ However, the surgeon indicated that 72 slaves died since leaving Port Dauphin. The discrepancy with the Spanish sources was a result of including the

¹⁶⁸ Journal of the Saint Michael, 1, 20 July, and 3-7 August 1727.

¹⁶⁹ Journal of the Saint Michael, 6 September 1727.

¹⁷⁰ Journal of the Saint Michael, 29 September 1727.

¹⁷¹ Journal of the Saint Michael, 10 October 1727.

¹⁷² Journal of the Saint Michael, 16 November 1727.

¹⁷³ Studer, *La Trata De Negros*, 234-35.

additional 40 slaves that remained on the ship for private sales which were sold at Buenos Aires.¹⁷⁴ Despite the conflicting data across the Spanish and English records, the *Saint Michael* was unable to purchase her quota of slaves at Madagascar. In addition the particularly longer voyage from the island to Buenos Aires further hampered the company's objective.

Thus far, this chapter has analyzed the structure of West Africa's highly-competitive slave markets and the problems the SSC had in obtaining captives for Spanish American markets. In addition, it has analyzed the commercial operation of the slave trade in Madagascar, the alternative market the SSC attempted to exploit and the reasons why *asiento* ships sailed to the Indian Ocean for captives. The company's Madagascar strategy to overcome the labor shortage in West Africa was unsuccessful. From 1717 to 1730, six *asiento* ships purchased captives at Madagascar and carried them to Buenos Aires. The ships were supposed to deliver 2,650 slaves to Buenos Aires, but only 1,561 captives disembarked; less than sixty percent of the intended slaves purchased survived the voyage. Captives surviving the voyage were not the most significant problem. Most problematic for *asiento* ships was the fact that the Madagascar market could not supply *asiento* ships with their intended quota. If *asiento* ships could not embark the necessary captives in Africa, then Spanish markets would never be properly supplied. Although geographically detached from the continent, Madagascar like all West African ports remained a sellers' market in the eighteenth century. The next section examines the company's evolving strategies for supplying *asiento* ships with captives for Spanish-American markets. It was, after many years of trial and error, on the Loango

¹⁷⁴ The surgeon's journal is the only source indicating that at least 40 slaves stayed on the ship for private sales.

Coast that *asiento* ships would identify a West African market that could supply captives for the Rio de la Plata.

“Good Friendships and Full Complements of Slaves:” The *Asiento* Trade on the Loango Coast

As a part of the peace treaty, Spain granted the SSC the right to sell goods at the annual Porto Bello fair, but the primary objective of the contract was the transport of thousands of captive Africans to Spanish markets.¹⁷⁵ From 1715 to 1738, 44 *asiento* ships disembarked approximately 16,222 slaves at Buenos Aires.¹⁷⁶ The captives on those ships suffered a remarkably high mortality rate of about 28 percent.¹⁷⁷ The majority of the slaves disembarking in Buenos Aires originated from the Loango Coast. A few of the early *asiento* voyages illustrate the difficulties in carrying out a successful voyage. The ship *Hope* purchased 377 slaves at Cabinda in early 1716, but delivered only 188. The *Windsor* purchased slaves at Loango around the same time, taking in about 300 captives while safely landing only 162. The *George* also purchased at Loango and suffered catastrophic losses before arriving at the Rio de la Plata. Captain Malthus purchased 594 captives but in crossing the South Atlantic 351 perished.¹⁷⁸ Of the 243 captives that landed from the *George*, within fifteen days an additional 145 were dead.¹⁷⁹ Outbreaks of

¹⁷⁵ On the Porto Bello fair see, Thomas Gage, *The English-American, His Travail by Sea and Land, Or, a New Survey of the West-India's* (London: 1648), 368-9. William Gerbing Wood, “The Annual Ships of the South Sea Company, 1711-1736.” (Ph.D. University of Illinois, 1938).

¹⁷⁶ Palmer, *Human Cargoes*, 103, 116.

¹⁷⁷ Herbert S. Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 138. Shipboard mortality hovered around 10 percent.

¹⁷⁸ Add. MSS, 25563, BL.

¹⁷⁹ Palmer, *Human Cargoes*, 45, 116. Palmer notes that only 98 of the 594 captives landed because of rain and disease.

deadly diseases were all too common for ships carrying slaves across the South Atlantic. In the case of the *George*, the heavy rains off the coast of Loango created wet unhealthy conditions on the ship. These circumstances proved particularly detrimental for the captives on board and negatively impacted the health of the slaves before embarking.

Similar to the labor markets of colonial Brazil, the majority of the slaves arriving at Buenos Aires on *asiento* ships embarked from West Central Africa. Seventy-five percent of company vessels purchased slaves from ports on the Loango Coast. Only during the company's first trading period (1715-1721), were slaves landed in Buenos Aires that had not embarked from the Loango Coast or Madagascar.¹⁸⁰ Of the voyages for which information is available on the first place of purchase, the primary ports of embarkation were Loango and Cabinda.¹⁸¹ As early as the sixteenth century, English ships purchased slaves from trading elites on the Loango Coast. Although officially within the territorial claims of the Portuguese crown, English, French, and Dutch ships purchasing slaves north of the Congo River were generally tolerated because this stretch of the coast was beyond the extent of military enforcement. However, the ambitious expansionist policies of the British state combined with the ravenous capitalist spirit of private interlopers, British ships visited the region in increasing numbers during the early eighteenth century. These aggressive encroachments troubled the Portuguese crown but no action was taken for many years.

In early 1721, RAC officials assembled building supplies and several large cargoes of trade goods for customary tribute with the design to establish a permanent

¹⁸⁰ The *Asiento* and *Wiltshire* purchased slaves at the Gold Coast. The *Thomas & Deborah* and the *Europe* purchased slaves at Whydah.

¹⁸¹ Of the 19 ships, 10 purchased at Cabinda and 9 at Loango.

trading factory at Cabinda.¹⁸² At the same time, company officials dispatched Playden Onely to Lisbon. Onely was instructed to establish relations with Portuguese merchants there and begin preliminary negotiations for delivering slaves to the Atlantic islands and Brazil.¹⁸³ However the commercial contracts were not Onely's primary purpose of the trip. The development of a new RAC factory at Cabinda "was in truth the sole motive in my coming" to Lisbon Onely wrote, but he did not press for legal recognition of the new factory because the politically sensitive topic would have hampered his financial success.¹⁸⁴ With little regard for the political ramifications that would follow, the RAC sent out a flotilla in early 1721 to the Kingdom of Loango.

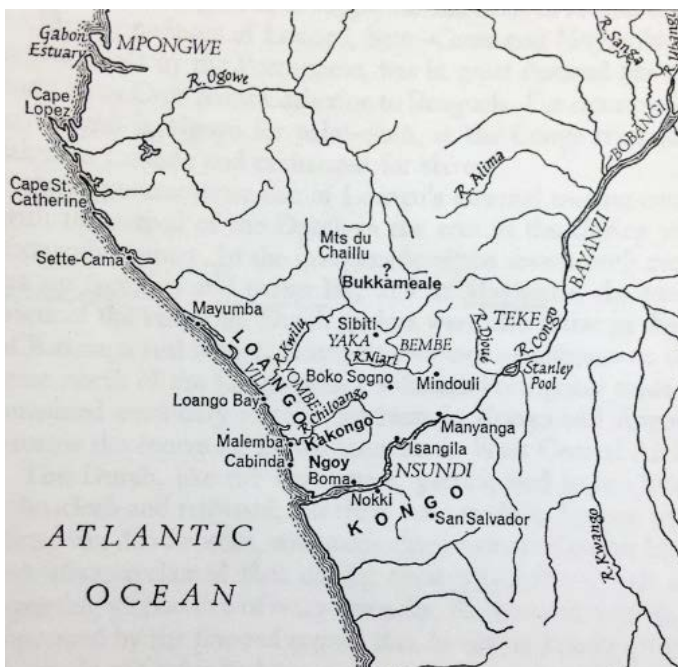


Figure 3.4. The Loango Coast. From Phyllis Martin, "The Trade of Loango in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in Richard Gray and David Birmingham, eds., *Pre-Colonial African Trade: Essays on Trade in Central and Eastern Africa before 1900* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970).

¹⁸² In October 1722, there were 77 English on the Loango Coast for the RAC. On the ship *Royal African* were 26 crew and sailors. 24 traders, soldiers and artisans worked at the three factories. Three vessels, the *Cabenda* sloop, the *Congo* sloop and the *Accra* sloop were on the coast at that time. Eight slaves along with the white crew worked on the sloops carrying supplies and captives to the factories. T 70/1446, f. 87-88, Kew, BNA.

¹⁸³ Onely appears to have had some success in drumming up some business for the company. In February 1722, he was captain of the ship *Dove* bound to "Gambia for a cargo of young slaves for the Western Islands and Lisbon." However it does not appear that the *Dove* sold any slaves at Madeira or in Portugal. The *Dove* disembarked 244 slaves in Jamaica where Onely quit his post shortly after arriving at Port Royal. Onely was strictly interested in purchasing "small slaves male and female from 6 to 10 years old" for delivery to Lisbon. T 70/1225; Donnan, ed., *Documents Illustrative*, 2:257.

¹⁸⁴ Gough Somerset 7, f. 103-116. Bodleian Library.

The RAC's expansion into northern Angola was a direct response to increased competition in West Africa and the company's inability to supply *asiento* ships with slaves. In February 1721, Nurse Hereford was appointed governor of the proposed Cabinda factory.¹⁸⁵ Herford's ship the *Royal Africa* was to stay off shore as a "floating factory" until the more permanent settlement was established.¹⁸⁶ At "Loango Saint Paul" Hereford was "denied liberty of landing" but further south at Cabinda local rulers were more receptive.¹⁸⁷ On 14 July 1721, Hereford completed negotiations with several Anjoy elites to build a trading factory for the RAC at Cabinda.¹⁸⁸ [Appendix 3] Unable to gain a foothold at Loango, two out factories were established at Sonia and Malemba.¹⁸⁹ It was common practice on the Loango Coast for a primary factory to be established with as many as two or three operating successively.¹⁹⁰ Nathaniel Uring established a primary factory at Loango in a rented "house in the town" and then settled a second factory about 40 miles south at Sammon.¹⁹¹

A misidentified ledger book in the company's archives details the trading activities of the short-lived RAC factories on the Loango Coast. It provides a thorough reckoning of the types of goods exchanged, the volume of slaves purchased, and the

¹⁸⁵ From 1704 to 1718, Hereford was a ship captain of 6 slave voyages. Voyages database.

¹⁸⁶ The 330-ton, twenty-six gun *Royal Africa* carried a cargo valued at £7,364 and arrived at Cabinda on 29 June 1721. T 70/1225, Kew, BNA.

¹⁸⁷ Nurse Hereford, 3 July 1721, T 70/7, f. 25, Kew, BNA.

¹⁸⁸ Purchase Deed of Cabenda, Daniel Parish Jr. Slavery Transcripts, Folder 23, New York Historical Society (NYHS).

¹⁸⁹ Nurse Hereford, 20 October 1722; Nurse Hereford, 23 January 1723, T 70/7, f. 37-38, Kew, BNA.

¹⁹⁰ In 1681, Capt. Swan established a factory at Malemba and Cabinda. The Malemba factory operated for 13 weeks and purchased 294 captives. The Cabinda factory operated from for 19 weeks and purchased 175 captives. Journal of the Carlyle, 1680-81, T 70/1216, Kew, BNA.

¹⁹¹ Nathaniel Uring, *A History of the Voyages and Travels of Capt. Nathaniel Uring with New Draughts of the Bay of Honduras and the Caribbee Islands* (London: Printed by W. Wilkins for J. Peele, 1726), 37-38.

nature of commerce at Sonia and Malemba.¹⁹² The two secondary factories operated as auxiliary trading sites that supplied captives to the fortified factory at Cabinda. In early 1722, trade at the Malemba factory was rather brisk. The factor there, John Forbes, purchased a total of 117 slaves.¹⁹³ The 96 men, 16 women, and 5 boys were then shuttled south to Cabinda. Transactions at the Sonea factory dating from September 1722 to April 1723, also indicate that the location was a reliable source of captives. The factor there, John Read, bartered for 184 slaves, 101 men, 42 women, 32 boys, and 7 girls.¹⁹⁴ As one of the busiest ports on the Loango Coast, European competition was fierce at Cabinda and consequently, secondary factories were established to provide the necessary captives to *asiento* ships.¹⁹⁵

During the roughly two years the RAC operated on the Loango Coast, four *asiento* ships purchased slaves at Cabinda for Spanish American markets. The *Neptune* and the *Helden Frigate* disembarked slaves at Jamaica while the *Saint Quintin* and the *Carteret* landed slaves at Buenos Aires.¹⁹⁶ Shortly after the *Neptune* arrived at the Cabinda factory in March 1722, Nurse Hereford informed London officials that a war had recently erupted between two rival groups near the factory.¹⁹⁷ In a subsequent report, Hereford observed that “the war we have had with the natives [was] advantageous to the

¹⁹² T 70/873, Kew, BNA. The ledger is misidentified in the catalogue as a ‘Mohimba’ account book.

¹⁹³ T 70/1446, f. 87, Kew, BNA. At the factory with Forbes were two sailors and one soldier.

¹⁹⁴ T 70/1446, f. 87, Kew, BNA. At the factory with Read were two sailors and one bricklayer. Michael Middlebrook was the factor at Cabinda with Hereford.

¹⁹⁵ T 70/873, Kew, BNA. Factors at Sonea and Molemba traded the following items with local traders for slaves. Firearms, anabases, gunpowder, tapseals, phothaes, slesias, herba longes, bafts, bays, pewter basins, brass pans, cutlasses, knives, spirits, niceness, looking glasses, earthenware, long ells, brandy, and Indian chintz.

¹⁹⁶ *Neptune* voyage ID 75921; *Helden Frigate* voyage ID 75628. *Saint Quintin* voyage ID 76208; *Carteret* voyage ID 75241.

¹⁹⁷ Nurse Hereford, 16 March 1722, T 70/7, f. 31, Kew, BNA.

company.”¹⁹⁸ Hereford implied that the captives taken in the local conflict were sold to the factories at Cabinda, Malemba and Sonea and put onto waiting ships. The well-stocked factory warehouses allowed the English to maintain “good friendships” with the natives, apparently preventing at least temporarily, the local violence from spilling over against them.¹⁹⁹ At the same time RAC factors successfully loaded a “full complement of slaves” on the *asiento* ship *Saint Quintin*.²⁰⁰ Although *asiento* ships specified a specific ratio of male to female slaves, RAC agents at Cabinda and throughout West Africa, were at the mercy of local traders for the captives brought to the coast. Hereford reported that he was “obliged to put on more males than females” on the *Saint Quintin* “which did not exactly match the contract.” The dispatch of the ship was further delayed because Capt. Bird “refused six slaves tho perfectly merchantable.”²⁰¹ Bird’s discerning selection of less than ideal captives was a violation of the SSC contract with the RAC, but, in doing so, he may have decreased the high mortality aboard slave ships crossing the South Atlantic.²⁰² Spanish sources indicate that only one slave perished on the *Saint Quintin* in route to the Rio de la Plata.²⁰³

After two years on the Loango Coast, the English had nearly completed the fort overlooking the anchorage at Cabinda Bay. Expansion on the coast was going so well,

¹⁹⁸ Nurse Hereford, 20 October 1722, T 70/7, f. 37, Kew, BNA. How advantageous the war was to commerce is questionable. A Dutch official reported that “the Angola trade was completely ruined as a result of the wars among the natives.” Quoted in Johannes Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1600-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 102.

¹⁹⁹ Nurse Hereford, 23 January 1723, T 70/7, f. 38, Kew, BNA.

²⁰⁰ Nurse Hereford, 16 March 1723, T 70/7, f. 46, Kew, BNA.

²⁰¹ Nurse Hereford, 16 March 1723, T 70/7, f. 46, Kew, BNA.

²⁰² T 70/38, Kew, BNA. *Asiento* ship captains were required to obey the instructions of RAC agents on the coast.

²⁰³ Studer, *La Trata De Negros*, 235.

plans were made to build an additional factory at Malemba.²⁰⁴ In May 1723, Hereford reported that an “agreement” was reached with Portuguese traders to supply their ships with slaves.²⁰⁵ By the time the *asiento* ship *Carteret* arrived in late August 1723 the Cabinda settlement was suffering from numerous desertions and lack of trade goods, a deficiency which “provokes the natives.”²⁰⁶ Before the *Carteret* could embark all her slaves a Portuguese squadron destroyed the RAC factory at Cabinda. No longer willing to tolerate English trespasses, Lisbon officials acted decisively to prevent further incursions. A report from the coast stated that the “natives of the Kingdom of Angola upon that Coast assisted by a Portuguese man of war” burned the company’s floating factory, the *Royal Africa*, and destroyed the “factory” at Cabinda.²⁰⁷ Captain Opie of the *Carteret* wrote that the trade was “open” at Cabinda despite the “destruction of the Royal African Company’s settlement” and that he could have purchased slaves on his own accord but was “restrained” by the RAC agents.²⁰⁸ In March 1724, the Portuguese battleship *Nossa Senhora da Atalaia*, responsible for the destruction of the Cabinda factory, appeared off the waters of Cape Coast Castle much to the alarm of the English garrison.²⁰⁹ The SSC had entered into “several contracts” with the RAC to supply slaves “particularly at Cabinda” and the destruction of the factory put the fulfillment of those agreements in

²⁰⁴ Phyllis Martin, *The External Trade of the Loango Coast, 1576-1870: The Effects of Changing Commercial Relations on the Vili Kingdom of Loango* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 81.

²⁰⁵ Nurse Hereford, 18 May 1723, T 70/7, f. 46, Kew, BNA.

²⁰⁶ Nurse Hereford, 30 October 1723, T 70/7, f. 51, Kew, BNA.

²⁰⁷ Add. MSS, 25502, BL; *The Boston Newsletter*, 30 April 1724; Donnan, *Documents Illustrative*, 2:296.

²⁰⁸ Daniel Wescomb to Captain White, 20 February 1723 in Donnan, *Documents Illustrative*, 2:295-96. White was allowed to take a significantly larger cargo onboard the *Essex* in case he meet the *Carteret* at Cabinda.

²⁰⁹ John Tinker, Nathaniel Rice, John Wingfield, 5 March 1724, T 70/7, f. 54, Kew, BNA.

jeopardy.²¹⁰ Ultimately, it cost the RAC the lucrative contract for supplying slaves to *asiento* ships.²¹¹

In 1724, SSC policy on the delivery of slaves to Buenos Aires and the Spanish Caribbean was modified to account for difficulties associated with supply deficiencies and shipboard mortality. The most significant outcome of the policy change was the elimination of the RAC contract for supplying *asiento* ships with slaves.²¹² After 1724, slaves were purchased in Jamaica from private traders for delivery to Spanish Caribbean markets and private ships were contracted to deliver slaves to Buenos Aires. The transshipment of slaves from Jamaica transformed the SSC from a competitor in transatlantic slaves to their greatest customer.²¹³ In 1730, the company sold the remaining “Guinea goods” stockpiled in London warehouses.²¹⁴ In March 1730, four *asiento* ships were chartered to carry slaves from the Loango Coast to Buenos Aires.²¹⁵ One of the ships was the 300-ton *Laurence*.²¹⁶ The captain of the *Laurence*, Abraham Dumarsque, was familiar with the Loango Coast.²¹⁷ The following month memorials were submitted indicating that the cargoes on the *Laurence* and the *City of London* were insufficient to purchase 500 slaves and as a result, the captains were ordered to stopover in Holland to

²¹⁰ “A Memorial of the Court of Directors of the South Sea Company to Lord Carteret,” 20 February 1723, Add. MSS. 25556, f. 51, BL.

²¹¹ In response to the Cabinda debacle, the Portuguese crown renewed claims to coast north of the River Congo by establishing the Corsico Company with operations concentrating on Gabon Coast. Add. MSS 20953, BL.

²¹² On the RAC failing in its contract to supply *asiento* ships see, James Knight, *A Defence of the Observations on the Assiento Trade* (London: Printed for H. Whitridge, 1728), 20-21.

²¹³ Sperling, *The South Sea Company*, 39; O’Malley, *Final Passages*, 223.

²¹⁴ Palmer, *Human Cargoes*, 16.

²¹⁵ Add. MSS, 25504, BL.

²¹⁶ Log of the ship *Lawrance*, 1730-1731, ZL-234, New York Public Library, New York (hereafter NYPL).

²¹⁷ In 1725, Dumarsque was captain of the *asiento* ship *Levant*. Dumarsque brought along on this voyage an apprentice named Thomas Brice. IR 1/12, f. 12, BNA, Kew. In May 1732, Dumarsque married Anne Reynell. Marriage Register, 1730-1754, All Hallows London Wall, London Metropolitan Archives.

take on the necessary additional cargo.²¹⁸ For twenty days the *Laurence* anchored at Helvet Sluys where the ship's loading was supervised by a SSC agent. In late May 1730 the ship departed for the Loango Coast.²¹⁹ As the *Laurence* approached Cape St. Catherine, a boat belonging to the ship *Bonita*, one of the other four *asiento* ships taking in slaves at Loango for Buenos Aires, came on board and exchanged information.²²⁰ On 12 August 1727, the *Laurence* arrived at Loango. That night the ship's longboat returned, along with several local traders in their own canoes.²²¹

Despite the loss of the RAC factory at Cabinda in 1723, British ships continued to trade on the Loango Coast. From 1720 to 1730, fifty-five British ships purchased slaves along the Loango Coast and in the subsequent decade, that number more than doubled. Cabinda was the favored port on the Loango Coast for purchasing slaves followed by Loango and Malemba.²²² When the *Laurence* arrived at Loango, three other British ships were already there slaving.²²³ Although the presence of additional ships generally tended to raise the price of slaves, increased competition and potential conflict this does not appear to have been the case while the *Laurence* was at Loango. In fact much of the time the ships cooperated with each other, sending supplies and returning boats that drifted to shore.²²⁴ Shortly after Capt. Dumarsque and the ship's purser established the primary factory at Loango, another factory was settled at Sonia.²²⁵ Entries in the log book indicate that supplies were sent to each factory almost daily but the number of slaves purchased

²¹⁸ Add. MSS, 25504, BL.

²¹⁹ Log of the ship *Lawrance*, 9-21 May 1730, NYPL.

²²⁰ Log of the ship *Lawrance*, 29-30 July 1730, NYPL.

²²¹ Log of the ship *Lawrance*, 12 August 1730, NYPL.

²²² Search parameters, principal place of purchase and flag, 1720-1740. 60 percent slaved at Cabinda 23 percent at Loango and 16 percent at Malemba. Voyages database.

²²³ The *Bridget Galley* ID #16613; *Blackmoor* ID # 16612; *City of London* ID # 76721.

²²⁴ Log of the ship *Lawrance*, 28 August, 3 September 1730, NYPL.

²²⁵ Log of the ship *Lawrance*, 18 August 1730, NYPL.

each day is unknown. However, it is evident that by 25 August, just ten days after the Loango factory was established, a significant enough number of slaves were on board for the “negro’s furnace” to be brought up and put into operation.²²⁶ By hauling the “negro furnace” out of the ship’s hold, the preparation of hundreds of meals daily would become routine throughout the remaining months of the voyage.

Trade was brisk throughout late August 1730 and to further hasten the purchase of slaves, the physician and chief mate settled a third factory at Malemba. In addition to the operation of the three factories at Loango, Malemba, and Sonea several entries indicate that members of the crew were sent in the ship’s longboat to patrol the shoreline for potential traders.²²⁷ Towards the end of October, the unsold supplies at the factories were collected, loaded and returned to the ship. Last-minute trips were made to shore for fresh water and wood needed for the second leg of the voyage to Buenos Aires. The *Laurence* left Loango on 16 November 1730 with only 453 of the 500 captives that were intended for her cargo.²²⁸ The passage across the South Atlantic would further reduce that total and extract a heavy cost on the lives shackled beneath the deck.²²⁹ A comparative analysis of the *Laurence*’s trading accounts on the Loango Coast in 1730 with those of the Cabinda factory in the early 1720s indicates several similarities across time and space and in the methods of commerce and interactions with local trading elites.²³⁰ In other words, it was not necessary to have a permanent trading factory on the Loango Coast for private traders

²²⁶ Log of the ship *Lawrance*, 25 August 1730, NYPL.

²²⁷ Log of the ship *Lawrance*, 10 September 1730, NYPL.

²²⁸ Log of the ship *Lawrance*, 16 November 1730, NYPL.

²²⁹ Palmer, *Human Cargoes*, 117.

²³⁰ For two additional sources indicating similar trading practices on the Loango Coast see, Nathaniel Uring, *A History of the Voyages and Travels of Capt. Nathaniel Uring with New Draughts of the Bay of Honduras and the Caribbee Islands* (London: Printed by W. Wilkins for J. Peele, 1726) and the Log of the Mampookata (Madam Pookata), 1786-1788, Merseyside Maritime Museum, Liverpool.

hired by the SSC to obtain large numbers of captive Africans for the Buenos Aires market.

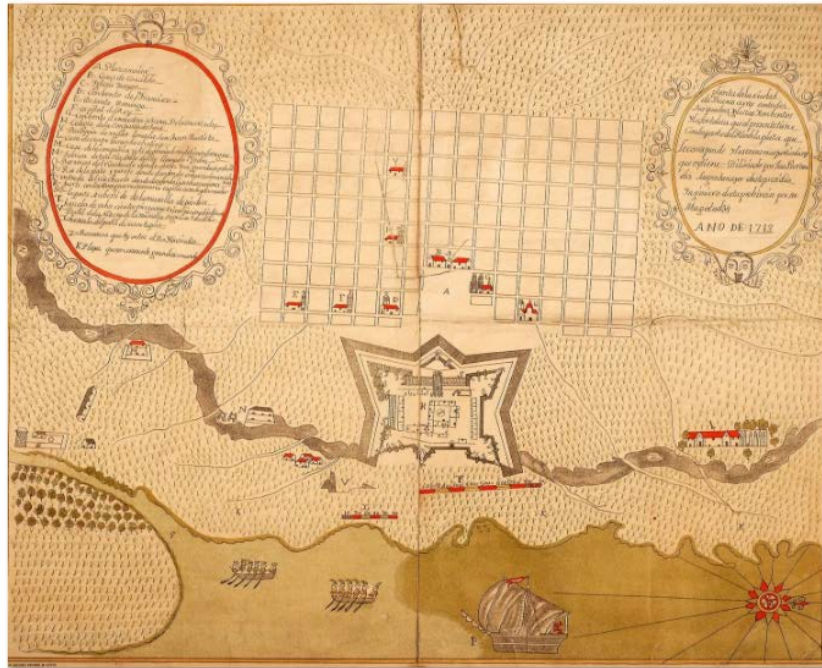


Figure 3.5. Plano de la ciudad de Buenos Aires, en esa época Buenos Ayres, en 1713, by Jose Bermudez. The letter L (below the yellow circle) identifies the location of the English asiento compound. The letter M (below the red circle) was the location of the slave market. Archivo General de la Nación Argentina. Documentos Escritos. Mapoteca II-51

When the *Laurence* arrived at Buenos Aires in January 1731, the city was overstocked with slaves. Unlike the RAC, or with private ships carrying slaves to the Americas, arriving at a port when demand was high and few captives were available was not a primary concern for the SSC. The company's coffers, replenished annually by the Spanish crown, depended on the number of healthy captives, or *pieza de Indias*, that disembarked. In just eighteen months, from January 1730 to July 1731, eight *asiento* ships disembarked 2,907 slaves.²³¹ The reception of the ship and disembarking of the slaves on board required the cooperation of John Brown, president of the Buenos Aires factory, and Spanish officials. When Dumarsque requested Brown's assistance for "easier

²³¹ Voyages database.

treatment” from Spanish officials in landing his slaves, Brown replied that he had “no concern...nor nothing to do with the ship” and that the “Royal officers might do what they would” with the *Laurence*.²³² Perhaps more important than the assistance provided by company officials, was the cooperation of Spanish officials who similarly created problems in the process of landing slaves. The slaves on board the *Genoa Galley* were not “landed sooner” because Spanish officials required them to disembark at Barragan “a boggy unhealthy...and dangerous harbor,” located about 20 miles southeast of Buenos Aires.²³³ Negotiations with Spanish officials for landing the slaves on the *Genoa Galley* took more than a month.²³⁴ Although *asiento* ships were not directly dependent on market conditions for disembarking captives, the cooperation of Spanish officials and maintenance of serviceable relationship proved most important at Buenos Aires.

Few if any of the slave ships dispatched to Buenos Aires were owned by the SSC.²³⁵ In the 1730s, the majority of the ships chartered to carry slaves to Buenos Aires were owned by Thomas Hall, an influential London merchant who made his fortunes in the East Indies trade. In the 1720s, Hall rose to prominence as the chief contractor for shipping to the EIC and through his investments in the tea and coffee trade maintained close relationships with bankers in Holland. Perhaps the key to Hall’s success was his relationships with several of London’s largest woolen and linen manufacturers.²³⁶ In 1730, the SSC chartered Hall’s ship the *Mermaid* to carry 600 slaves to Buenos Aires.²³⁷

²³² Francis Humphreys to John Eyles, 15 March 1731, Shelburne Papers 44, f. 436, WCL.

²³³ Shelburne Papers 44, f. 445, WCL.

²³⁴ Henry Fisher to Thomas Hall, 27 February 1738, C 103/132, Kew, BNA.

²³⁵ Palmer, *Human Cargoes*, 11.

²³⁶ Conrad Gill, *Merchants and Mariners of the 18th Century*. (London: E. Arnold, 1961), 61-90; Joseph E. Inikori, *Africans and the Industrial Revolution in England: A Study in International Trade and Economic Development* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 244, 288-94

²³⁷ Add. MSS, 25503, f. 378, BL.

Hall's reputation with SSC administrators increased over the subsequent decade. Five of the last eight *asiento* ships to carry slaves to Buenos Aires between 1732 in 1737 were owned by Hall.²³⁸ It is likely he had at least a small role in dispatching each of them. In addition, all of the ships chartered by Hall purchased slaves on the Loango coast. In 1732, the Amsterdam firm of Jacob Senserf & Son loaded the *Mermaid* and the *Princess Amelia* with cargoes for the Loango Coast and Buenos Aires.²³⁹ The two ships took on very sizable cargoes intended to purchase more than a thousand slaves and carry on an extensive private at Buenos Aires. Several tons of linens and other commodities in demand by Spanish consumers were loaded onto the ships. In addition, the irregularly large cargos were utilized to decrease the time spent on the coast by offering higher prices for captives.²⁴⁰ Both ships disposed of their cargoes quickly on the Loango Coast.²⁴¹ Once the *Mermaid* and the *Princess Amelia* delivered their respective cargoes of slaves, the ships remained in the harbor for several months selling goods to Spanish consumers.²⁴²

Europeans carried a diverse range of commodities to West Africa. European fabrics and Indian woolens and linens were by far the most common items carried to West Africa. Traders on the Loango Coast expected English traders to carry high-quality

²³⁸ Voyages database.

²³⁹ In 1725 and 1726 Senserf & Company loaded the SSC ships *Sicilian Galley*, *Mercury*, and *Grenadier* with particularly large quantities of cowries for Whydah. Add. MSS, 25567, BL. At the time of his death founder of the firm Walter Senserf possessed a fortune in excess of £600,000. *Gentleman's Magazine* (1752), 389.

²⁴⁰ The *Mermaid* carried a cargo valued at £42,460. The breakdown of the cargo as follows: negro cargo £17,497, private trade £23,335, stores £1,628. The *Princess Amelia* carried a cargo valued at £43,070. The breakdown of the cargo as follows: negro cargo £17,533, private trade £23,090, stores £2,447. C 103/132, Kew, BNA.

²⁴¹ James Pearce to Thomas Hall, 20 April 1733, C 103/130 Kew, BNA.

²⁴² The *Saint Michael* stayed at Buenos Aires for six months after disembarking the slaves onboard.

linens and practical metal goods in exchange for captives.²⁴³ In March 1732, Jacob Senserf informed Thomas Hall that the quality of “East Indies goods fit for a Guinea cargo” were much better in Amsterdam than those in London. Hall did not need very much convincing; he had been conducting business with Dutch merchants for over a decade. Nevertheless, in his letter to Hall, Senserf included a small sample piece of a blue-striped Silesia cloth that of “late years much were sent to Africa.” The high-quality linen was very popular. Senserf noted that “there are not many to be had” and if Hall or his associates wanted to place an order it should be done right away.²⁴⁴ At that time Hall was preparing to dispatch the *Princes Amelia* and *Mermaid* to the Loango Coast. Hall’s marginal notes suggest that he may have placed an order with Senserf for the linens and had them loaded on the two ships.²⁴⁵ Reports indicate that the two ships did not spend much time on the Loango Coast and made a speedy voyage to Buenos Aires.²⁴⁶ Selecting high-quality trade goods that responded to coastal traders’ demands was an essential negotiation strategy that contributed towards *asiento* ships delivering captives to Spanish American markets.



Figure 3.6. Jacob Senserf sent this sample of ‘cusleas India’ to Thomas Hall in March 1732. C 103/130, Kew, BNA.

²⁴³ Stanley B. Alpern, “What Africans Got for Their Slaves: A Master List of European Trade Goods,” *History in Africa* 22 (1995): 5–43.

²⁴⁴ Jacob Senserf & Son to Thomas Hall, 18 March 1732, C 103/130, Kew, BNA.

²⁴⁵ On the European cloth trade and its relationship to political authority and consumption patterns see, Phyllis M. Martin, “Power, Cloth and Currency on the Loango Coast,” *African Economic History*, no. 15 (1986): 1–12.

²⁴⁶ James Pearce to Thomas Hall, 20 April 1733, C 103/130 Kew, BNA.

Although firearms were not listed in the invoices, slaves on the Loango Coast were rarely purchased without this commodity.²⁴⁷ In August 1733, Thomas Hall dispatched the *asiento* ship *Argyle* to the Loango Coast. For about five months the ship traded at Cabinda where Capt. Hamilton purchased 524 captives. The trading account of the *Argyle*, which has yet to be analyzed prior to this dissertation, indicates how the *Mermaid*, *Princess Amelia* and other *asiento* ships would have conducted commerce on the Loango Coast.²⁴⁸ Capt. Hamilton established the primary factory at Cabinda and settled four additional out-factories at Malemba, Coya, Bomongouy, and Chimongos.²⁴⁹ Over half of the slaves were purchased at Cabinda and Bomongouy, the latter factory producing the largest percentage of men and boys. The factory at Malemba purchased the largest percentage of female captives.²⁵⁰

The trading account of the *Argyle* details with incredible precision the exact volume of trade goods exchanged for each captive. For example, 524 transactions occurred on the Loango Coast between the English crew and local traders, of which only six transactions did not include a firearm.²⁵¹ However, 580 firearms in total were exchanged for the 524 captives indicating that over the larger period of trade on the Loango coast, a firearm was involved in virtually every transaction.²⁵² *Asiento* ships slaving on the Loango Coast tended to purchase a larger percentage of their intended

²⁴⁷ Included in the invoice of the *Molly* that purchased 225 slaves at Loango were ‘Angola muskets’ and several other types of firearms. Accounts of the Molly, 1750-1753, SMV/7/2/1/25, Bristol Record Office. Miller states that the British ‘Angola gun’ an inexpensive, unproved long-barreled flintlock musket “dominated the weapons trade in western central Africa.” It was an “essential component of every transaction negotiated along the Loango coast.” Miller, *Way of Death*, 77, 88.

²⁴⁸ C 111/95, Kew, BNA. The accounts were likely completed by Hamilton after returning to London.

²⁴⁹ Malemba, Coya, Bomongouy. Chimongos (Cilongo) was located north of Loango Bay.

²⁵⁰ 113 males were purchased at Bomongouy and 66 females were purchased at Malemba.

²⁵¹ Towards the end stages of trade, Hamilton purchased 5 boys and one girl that did not include a firearm.

²⁵² C 111/95, Kew, BNA.

captives than ships slaving at Madagascar. Both societies placed a cultural and economic premium on European firearms, and demanded the commodity from traders wishing to purchase slaves.

Once the captives were aboard, the captain was responsible for maintaining the safety of the crew and the delivery of the slaves. Instruments of coercion on slave ships were distinctly designed to ensure the submission of enslaved bodies. In 1735, the London ironmonger company operated by Theodesia Crowley provided these instruments for the one of Thomas Hall's ships, the *Hiscox*, which carried 297 slaves from the Loango coast to Buenos Aires.²⁵³ Ships chartered by the South Sea Company for Buenos Aires often sailed together from London and traded in proximity of each other on the Loango coast.²⁵⁴ While poor diplomatic relations between Spain and England tended to create sporadic problems for *asiento* ships at Buenos Aires, conflicts between Spain and Portugal on the Rio de la Plata tended to fracture the strict enforcement of imperial statutes which opened up fissures for more easily selling off contraband captives.²⁵⁵ When Capt. Butler arrived at Buenos Aires, Spanish officials delayed the landing of the slaves on board the *Mermaid*. Although the slaves were described as "the best cargo ever brought" to Buenos Aires Butler had a lengthy "arbitration" with Spanish officials to get the slaves landed.²⁵⁶ The process of disembarking slaves at the Rio de la Plata was often

²⁵³ Crowley's account with Butler, 3 June 1735, C 103/130, Kew, BNA. Among the items purchased for the *Hiscox*'s voyage included; "20 pair hand shackles, 100 pair shackles for feet, 20 Negroes collars, 10 Negroes chains, 1 iron shovel for the Negroes furnace, 6 large strong padlocks, 2 large round door bolts for baracado, 300 spare locks for shackles. For the cook an extra-large ladle for the furnace with large iron handle, extra strong gridiron. A large cleaver and hatchets for boatswain."

²⁵⁴ James Pearce to Thomas Hall, 5 December 1736, C 103/130 Kew, BNA.

²⁵⁵ James Pearce to Thomas Hall, 14 July 1736, C 103/130 Kew, BNA.

²⁵⁶ John Butler to Thomas Hall, 12 May 1733, C 103/130 Kew, BNA.

an arduous process for *asiento* ships because of regional conflict, statute enforcement and local market conditions.

In early 1731, as many as a thousand slaves or more were locked away in the factory's urban compound.²⁵⁷ Agent James Saville reported that there were "very small" sales of slaves.²⁵⁸ The *Laurence* and the *Bonita* traded together on the Loango Coast and arrived at Buenos Aires within a week of each other.²⁵⁹ The 285 men and 135 women carried on board the *Laurence* were regulated by Spanish officials at 319 pieces de India. The *Bonita*, the companion ship that slaved with the *Laurence* on the Loango coast, disembarked 273 men and 165 women and were regulated by Spanish officials at 361 pieces de India.²⁶⁰ The flooding of the market with slaves also saturated shopkeeper's shelves with illicit manufactured goods, thus driving down the price of imported commodities for consumers and reducing the flow of currency. The surgeon onboard the *Saint Michael* observed that because there was a "great glut here of all English goods" some of the ships that departed from Buenos Aires "sold many things at and under prime cost. So it seems the trade of this place is in a dismal condition where goods bear a low price while at the same time there is imminent danger in getting them ashore and no less risk in bringing off the money for them." The surgeon's commentary likely reflects a

²⁵⁷ In 1696, Buenos Aires Governor Agustin de Robles constructed a two-story 32-room house, with massive cellars and several secondary buildings. The property, known as *El Retiro*, was the largest dwelling in the city for many years. In 1703 it was used as the French *asiento* factory. When the French were evicted in 1715, Riglos sold the property to the British who expanded the property significantly. The façade of the building was some 10 city blocks and the property was over a league deep. Daniel Schavelzon, "On Slaves and Beer: The First Images of the South Sea Company Slave Market in Buenos Aires," *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal* 7, no. 2 (2014), 123-24.

²⁵⁸ James Savill to Peter Burrell, 25 March 1731, Shelburne Papers 44, f. 424; Faurve to Peter Burrell, 12 March 1738, Shelburne Papers 44, f. 365, WCL.

²⁵⁹ Log of the ship *Lawrance*, NYPL.

²⁶⁰ Francis Humphreys to Peter Burrell, 17 March 1731, Shelburne Papers 44, f. 385-86, WCL. The company assumed that the normal ratio of piezas to slaves was three to four. The ratio of piezas to slaves for the *Laurence* was 75 percent whereas the ratio of piezas to slaves for the *Bonita* was higher at 82 percent. Palmer, *Human Cargoes*, 102.

short-term paralysis of local market conditions as many goods, as well as captive Africans, that landed at Buenos Aires were destined for inland markets hundreds of miles away.²⁶¹

Buenos Aires was one of the most important destinations for captive Africans in Spanish America.²⁶² From the Rio de la Plata port, merchants traded in “Vigonia wool from Peru, copper from Coquimbo, gold from Chile, and silver from Potosi.”²⁶³ From 1715 to 1738, *asiento* ships disembarked approximately 16,222 slaves at Buenos Aires, making it the second largest Spanish American market behind Panama and Porto Bello.²⁶⁴ In 1727, the South Sea Company contracted with London merchant John Brown to deliver 1,600 slaves to Buenos Aires. The *Saint Michael* would carry 1,100 slaves on two voyages and the *Rudge* 500. The *Saint Michael* purchased captives at Madagascar in 1727 and 1730 and the *Rudge* at Madagascar as well in 1730. The ship’s struggled to deliver healthy slaves. Francis Humphreys, one of the Buenos Aires factors, stated that the ships suffered “indifferent voyages...thro the loss they had upon their Negroes.”²⁶⁵ In total, the three voyages delivered only 817 Malagasy slaves.²⁶⁶

The surgeon aboard the *Saint Michael* noted that the slaves were sold at a “public sale for \$214 one with another which is a great price considering the condition of some of

²⁶¹ Journal of the Saint Michael, 22 August, 27 September 1727, HSA.

²⁶² On Buenos Aires as a critical terminal for early Spanish slave voyages see, Kara D. Schultz, “‘The Kingdom of Angola Is Not Very Far from Here’: The South Atlantic Slave Port of Buenos Aires, 1585–1640,” *Slavery & Abolition* 36, no. 3 (2015): 424–44.

²⁶³ John Campbell, *An Account of the Spanish Settlements in America* (Edinburgh: Printed by A. Donaldson and J. Reid, 1762), 330.

²⁶⁴ The Panama and Porto Bello factories received 19,662 slaves. A substantial portion went to Lima and other Pacific markets. The Cartagena factory received 10,549 captives, the third largest number. Many slaves were destined for the mines and haciendas of New Granada. From 1714-1739, the factories at Panama and Bello, Buenos Aires, and Cartagena received 62 percent of the captives carried on British *asiento* ships. Palmer, *Human Cargoes*, 102-05, 110.

²⁶⁵ Francis Humphreys to Peter Burrell, 18 December 1731, Shelburne Papers 44, f. 383-84, WCL.

²⁶⁶ John Brown to Directors, 25 May 1741, Shelburne Papers 44, f. 143-46, WCL.

them.” The Malagasy captives that remained on the ship were dispatched at private sales for \$170 and \$180.²⁶⁷ Despite the glutted market and troublesome Spanish officials, some *asiento* ships delivering slaves to Buenos Aires were profitable to the ship-owners and company officials. The depositions of Charles Burnham and Francis Williams indicate that despite delivering only 817 of the contracted for 1,600 slaves, ship-owner John Brown cleared a profit in excess of £19,000. For the 1727 voyage of the *Saint Michael* profits were estimated at £9,057 and on the 1730 voyages of the *Saint Michael* and *Rudge* profits was approximately £10,176.²⁶⁸ As the governor of the Buenos Aires factory and owner of the two ships, Brown was able to profit substantially from the voyages by unloading the cargoes at night and convincing Spanish officials though generous kickbacks to ignore contraband sales.

More than eight months after arriving from Madagascar, the *Saint Michael* continued to dodge Spanish official’s efforts to send the ship off from the Rio de la Plata. In April 1728, the ship’s long boat returned from the city and put on board “37 parcels of silver...in all the value of \$21,500 belonging to the owners.”²⁶⁹ Brown would claim in 1741 that he was in debt some £2,000 for the voyages and court fees.²⁷⁰ The governor as well as the “Royal officers and all other ministers” according to Brown were “sucking the English Assiento and the Assientists blood daily.”²⁷¹ Such statements are not surprising from imperial foot-soldiers like Brown who considered Spanish markets untapped

²⁶⁷ Journal of the *Saint Michael*, 26 January, 16 February 1728. Company records indicate that captives sold for \$210 each. Shelburne Papers 44, f. 138, WCL.

²⁶⁸ Shelburne Papers 44, f. 137-38, WCL.

²⁶⁹ Journal of the *Saint Michael*, 8 April 1728, HSA.

²⁷⁰ Add. MSS, 33032, f. 155-56, BL. In 1720, Burnham ran into some unspecified trouble in Holland and Brown bailed him out. Brown had the *Saint Michael* built with Burnham in mind and submitted his name for the job.

²⁷¹ John Brown to Directors, 25 May 1741, Shelburne Papers 44, f. 144, WCL.

orchards of ripe fruit waiting for English exploitation. However, not everyone was of the same opinion about the *asiento* trade. Investors in the *Hiscox's* 1736 voyage to Buenos Aires expected the ship to return to London with a “quantity of money” that would more than suffice for the partners.²⁷² Consignments sent to Buenos Aires on the *Mermaid* netted Hall profits in excess of 40 percent.²⁷³ The account given here of the yields gained from the *Saint Michael* and *Rudge* is strong evidence supporting Colin Palmer’s argument that the SSC, and the owners of the ships that carried slaves to Buenos Aires from 1715 to 1719, profited handsomely.²⁷⁴

Conclusion

In early 1738, the *Genoa Galley*, the last *asiento* ship to carry captives to Buenos Aires, departed the coast for Britain. During the twenty four years that the SSC held the *asiento* contract, approximately 66,680 captives disembarked in Spanish America.²⁷⁵ The purchase, transport and delivery of those captives were not easy tasks for the company. Although the politics of power, violence and greed tended to work in unison with Britain’s imperial designs for much of the eighteenth century (until the British surrender to American forces at Yorktown), the operation of the slave trade to Spanish America involved numerous diplomatic and commercial hurdles. The most challenging hurdle to clear was gaining access to West African supply markets. This was especially true for *asiento* ships to Buenos Aires because slaves carried there arrived directly from West Africa. For a short while, the company utilized the Madagascar strategy to supply *asiento*

²⁷² James Pearce to Thomas Hall, 30 July 1736, C 103/130 Kew, BNA.

²⁷³ Gill, *Merchants and Mariners*, 86-7.

²⁷⁴ Palmer, *Human Cargoes*, 164.

²⁷⁵ Palmer, *Human Cargoes*, 106.

ships with captives for the Buenos Aires market. On the island, ship captains developed mutually beneficial relationships with Sakalava elites who exchanged captive Malagasy for firearms and other trade goods.

The Sakalava kingdoms of western Madagascar grew from this increasing European demand for enslaved laborers. Rigid hierarchies structured commercial exchange on the island. Because alliances were necessary to trade with Sakalava sovereigns, Europeans acknowledged elite monopolization of the slave trade. This restriction made purchasing large numbers of captives and provisions difficult. At some ports, many slaves were available for purchase but suffered from limited supplies of rice, cattle and provisions which made it difficult for ships to trade for long periods of time in one place. Moreover, the limited maritime knowledge of the coast and reliance on Malagasy elites in negotiating and translating meant that the English *asiento* captains had little input in dictating the terms of trade. All of this combined to make it very difficult for *asiento* ships sent to Madagascar to purchase their intended number of captives.

By 1730 SSC officials abandoned the Madagascar strategy and concentrated their efforts on the Loango Coast, a region known for providing ships with large numbers of captives. *Asiento* ships had much better success on the Loango Coast and consequently, more captive Africans disembarked at Buenos Aires. Over the course of the English *asiento* trade, Buenos Aires was one of the most important markets in Spanish America, second only to Porto Bello and Panama in the number of captives received.²⁷⁶ That the Rio de la Plata received more slaves than Cartagena runs counter to larger patterns of the transatlantic slave trade to Latin America. However, this anomaly was informed by the

²⁷⁶ In 1736, debts at the Panama and Porto Bello factory exceeded £80,100 and at Buenos Aires £56,813 which accounted 80 percent of the payments owed to the company. Palmer, *Human Cargoes*, 127.

fact that Buenos Aires, the region's primary entrepôt, served as a redistribution hub for sending captives to inland markets. From the Peruvian mines, silver and other trade goods made their way to Buenos Aires. Thousands of captives were marched inland along treacherous dirt roads where many died before reaching their intended destination. That so many captives reached Buenos Aires on *asiento* ships illustrates the wealth that poured into the city and the growing demand for slaves in distant markets. The rise and fall of the *asiento* trade in Southeast Africa to Madagascar with the eventual return to Loango in West Central Africa demonstrates how the African side dictated many of the larger patterns of the transatlantic slave trade to Spanish America.

CHAPTER 4

“PAY HIM IN NEGRO FLESH”: AFRICAN MIGRATION AND THE OPERATION OF THE INTERCOLONIAL SLAVE TRADE

In preparation for the invasion of the French Caribbean in late 1761, a British force of approximately 25,000 troops, and auxiliary forces from across the Atlantic world, gathered off the coast of Barbados, some 140 miles southeast of Martinique. The British armada departed Barbados in early January 1762, and as small squadrons spread out to encircle Martinique, privateers hustled ashore to raid, pillage and loot French plantations near the coast.¹ As news reached London that the island was in British hands, one administrator observed that Admiral Rodney had given the “King the key to the West Indies...and in effect the whole sugar trade of the World.”² Once Martinique capitulated, the rest of the French West Indies fell in like dominoes.³ At Grenada, the British quickly installed an operative government. New settlers submitted petitions for land and exploited the island’s functioning sugar works.⁴

¹ Daniel A. Baugh, *The Global Seven Years War, 1754-1763: Britain and France in a Great Power Contest* (New York: Longman, 2011), 576-80.

² Hardwicke to Newcastle, 2 April 1762, in Theodore Calvin Pease, ed., *Anglo-French Boundary Disputes in the West, 1749-1763* (Springfield: Trustees of the Illinois State Historical Library, 1936), 411.

³ Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years’ War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 490; Jeremy Black, *The British Seaborne Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 123-24.

⁴ R. P. Devas, *The History of the Island of Grenada*. (Grenada: University of the West Indies, 1964), 61-2; Robert Stein, *The French Sugar Business in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1988), 97.

Less than three weeks after the island's inhabitants surrendered in early March 1762, four British prize ships carried 350 slaves from Martinique to Grenada.⁵ There is little doubt that many of the captive Africans were kidnapped from French plantations.⁶ Over the next twelve months, the pace of the intercolonial slave trade to Grenada quickened as ships primarily from St. Christopher and Martinique carried 1,172 captive Africans to the island. During that time, 23 ships departed from ports across the Caribbean, carrying an average of 51 captives each to Grenada. The dismantling of the French sugar regime on Martinique was central to Britain's imperial strategy in the Caribbean. One of the ways the British deployed this policy was through the removal and resettlement of captive Africans from French plantations to British plantation settlements in the Caribbean and North America. From March 1762 to March 1763 half (585) of all the captives transshipped to Grenada in the intercolonial slave trade originated from Guadeloupe and Martinique.⁷ As imperial warfare engulfed the Atlantic basin during the

⁵ On 29 March 1762, the *Postilion* arrived carrying 105 slaves. The *Marian* arrived the same day carrying 100 slaves. The *Peggy* arrived on 30 March carrying 45 and the following day the *Monckton* arrived with 100 slaves from Martinique. This manuscript is similar to the shipping spreadsheets submitted by colonial naval officers to London officials. However, the Grenada shipping lists (CO 106/1) at Kew (BNA) are only partially extant for 1764-67 and none are complete for a full calendar year. This contemporary manuscript fills a gap in the shipping lists that at incomplete at Kew. Shelburne Papers, volume 111, William C. Clements Library (hereafter as WCL).

⁶ By April 1762, the British navy was desperate for slaves. Albemarle informed Monckton that it was necessary "by any means we can be furnished with a number of blacks from Martinique" and "at any price as I cannot do without them." Albemarle paid £4,000 for about 100 slaves from Martinique and secured an additional 500 from Antigua and St. Kitts. Albemarle to Monckton 21 April 1762; Albemarle to Pocock, 27 April 1762; Albemarle to Monckton, 5 May 1762; Albemarle to Egremont, 27 May 1762, in David Syrett, *The Siege and Capture of Havana, 1762* (London: Navy Records Society, 1970), 94, 100, 105, 137. Jamaica slave-owners contributed 1,562 slaves to the Havana expedition of which only 1045 were returned. Warrants issued to Jamaica slave-owners totaled £50,028. Of Martinique Lt. Henry Waterson and Captain Matthew Leslie contributed 94 slaves. Colonel James Grant purchased 273 slaves at Antigua and Captain Peter Clarke purchased 97 slaves at St. Christopher for the expedition. Original Entry Book of Warrants issued by George Earl of Albemarle during the Secret Expedition to Havana. March 1762-January 1763. HC: NS 5/541; Original Book of Accounts Relating to the Secret Expedition to Havana. HC: NS 5/540. Hispanic Society of America, (HSA).

⁷ The British Navy invaded and occupied Guadeloupe in 1759. Admiral Rodney reported in December 1762 that in the three since Guadeloupe was taken by the British over 40,000 slaves had been imported to the island. Report to George Grenville about Martinique, 1762, MSS 2603, New York Public Library,

second-half of the eighteenth century, the intercolonial slave trade was an important strategy for the rise of Britain as the undisputed leader in overseas colonization.⁸

In the post-1763 Atlantic world, the plantation complex, a “new form of colonialism” born out of the violent collision between British ambition and European competition for accumulation of international capital, was no longer constrained in North America by geographical limitations or rival claims. With the North American continent secured, fears of French encirclement of British markets were extinguished and the expansion of the plantation enterprise was limited only by the mobilization of resources and labor.⁹ In the frontier plantation zones of Spanish Florida and the Ceded Islands, new land acquisitions secured by Britain in the 1763 Treaty of Paris, expropriation intensified; the large-scale mobilization of unpaid labor for developing a modern agro-industry formed the foundation of the ‘new capitalist order’ sweeping across the Atlantic world.¹⁰ One of the key commercial innovations that prompted the boom in British slave shipments after 1763 was the construction of “less personal and more formal institutional arrangements” for conducting business and handling problems associated with long-distance trade.¹¹ Slave deliveries to British plantation zones increased sharply after the

(NYPL); Anon., *A Genuine Account of the Late Secret Expedition to Martinico and Guardaloupe, Under Commodore Moore and General Hopson* (London: Printed for R. Griffiths, 1759); Shelburne Papers, volume 111, WCL.

⁸ Grenada continued to be an important hub of the intercolonial slave trade. From January 1784 to April 1788, approximately 2,369 captives were carried from the island to circum-Caribbean markets and beyond. CO 101/28/40, f.148-49.

⁹ Eric Hobsbawm wrote in 1954 that “The major achievement of the 17th century [European economic] crisis is the creation of a new form of colonialism.” Eric J. Hobsbawm, “The Crisis of the 17th Century-II,” *Past & Present* 6, no. 1 (1954), 60; Peter Linebaugh, “All the Atlantic Mountains Shook,” *Labour/Le Travail* 10 (1982): 87-121.

¹⁰ Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 45-6; Frank Moya Pons, *History of the Caribbean: Plantations, Trade, and War in the Atlantic World* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2007), 132-8.

¹¹ Robin Pearson and David Richardson, “Social Capital, Institutional Innovation and Atlantic Trade Before 1800,” *Business History* 50, no. 6 (2008): 765–80.

war.¹² British success in the Seven Years' War therefore had a radical effect on the geography of slave arrivals to Caribbean plantation zones.¹³ Shockwaves reverberating from the Seven Years' War created fissures in both Spanish and British imperial administrative apparatuses, which brought about new reform programs that fundamentally altered their imperial relationships with overseas possessions.¹⁴

For Britain specifically, the acquisition of new territories meant the expansion of legal and administrative systems already in place across North America and the Caribbean. The growth of the eighteenth-century transatlantic slave trade and the increasing demand for plantation produced goods by European consumers, were directly linked to a proliferation of plantation cultivation. Caribbean plantation productivity was the driving force behind myriad commercial booms and the acquisition of personal fortunes across the Atlantic world.¹⁵ However, in British East Florida new commercial innovations and imperial strategies fell short in supplying the necessary capital and enslaved laborers required to transform the sub-tropical lands into a profitable overseas possession. Britain attempted to implement a more centrally controlled empire based on Spanish models, but the streamlining of imperial institutions did not unravel the problems associated with supplying captives directly from West Africa to East Florida.¹⁶ The organizational limitations of the British transatlantic slave trade resulted in a labor-

¹² From approximately 28,300 in 1763 to over 45,100 in 1775.

¹³ David Richardson, "The British Empire and the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1660–1807," in Nicholas Canny (1998), 457.

¹⁴ John H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492-1830* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 303; John H. Elliott, *Spain, Europe & the Wider World, 1500-1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 212.

¹⁵ Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492-1800* (1997), 397.

¹⁶ For a review of the Bourbon Reform historiography see, Gabriel Paquette, "The Dissolution of the Spanish Atlantic Monarchy," *The Historical Journal* 52, no. 1 (2009): 175–212.

shortage problem in East Florida that was resolved locally with the assistance of like-minded colonists in neighboring settlements.

This chapter examines the organization and operation of the circum-Caribbean intercolonial slave trade from the 1680s-1780s, with particular attention paid to the decades after the Seven Years' War. Several important questions guide the organization of this chapter. How did agricultural output and the assimilation of new colonial markets under British administration impact the volume and organization of the intercolonial slave trade? What sorts of strategies were employed by parties, willingly and unwillingly caught up in human trafficking, utilize to cloak their activities and resist captivity? What was the relationship between the intercolonial slave trade and the growth of illicit commerce across porous imperial borders?

"New Negroes out of the ship with good management always turn out best"

With peace restored in 1763, the first global war came to an end. In terms of new land acquisition the British Empire made exceptional gains in the Caribbean and North America.¹⁷ Britain's entrenched plantation regime seemed unstoppable. In the coming decades, enslaved people would till American soil soaked with Native blood. Much has been made about the so-called Age of Revolutions as a critical turning point in the rise of new political systems in the Americas and the collapse of Old World monarchies. However, it is unlikely many West Africans or captives carried across the Atlantic

¹⁷ Some British merchants hoped to retain Puerto Rico in exchange for Havana. Nicholas Munckley to Samuel Munckley, 8 November 1762, Ashton Court: Papers of Samuel Munckley, Bristol Record Office, Bristol.

embraced this era of European political upheaval in the same light.¹⁸ Indeed, it was in the decades after the 1763 Treaty of Paris that the breadth and scope of the transatlantic slave trade expanded unlike any time in human history. In the last one hundred years of the trade, more than 6.2 million captives were violently extracted from West Africa and carried across the Atlantic, a total one and a half times greater than the volume of slaves trafficked since 1515. As the volume of slaves trafficked across the Atlantic expanded, so too did the number of captives trafficked within the intercolonial slave trade. British acquisition of Spanish Florida was a critical turning point in the ever-heightening and destructive intercolonial slave trade, because under British governance former military outpost was transformed into an expansive plantation zone.

Since its founding in 1670, perhaps no other foreign settlement impacted the political and cultural development of Charleston more than Spanish St. Augustine.¹⁹ The Spanish garrison was a strategic military outpost on the continent that protected homeward bound galleons sailing through the Bahamas channel.²⁰ Despite imperial restrictions on commercial exchange between the two settlements, ships traded regularly between Charleston and St. Augustine.²¹ Shipping manifests from the 1720s indicate that English ships carried supplies and provisions to Spanish Florida.²² In January 1737, the schooner *Neptune* departed Charleston for St. Augustine with “7 negroes” and a supply of

¹⁸ On the failed promises of Atlantic Revolutions see, Jane Landers, *Atlantic Creoles in the Age of Revolutions* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 231-35.

¹⁹ Robert M. Weir, “Charles Town circa 1702: On the Cusp,” *El Escribano* 39 (2002): 65–79; Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (New York: Knopf, 1974), chapter 9.

²⁰ Amy Turner Bushnell, “Gates, patterns, and peripheries: the field of frontier Latin America,” in Christine Daniels and Michael V. Kennedy, eds., *Negotiated Empires: Centers and Peripheries in the Americas, 1500-1820* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 20–3.

²¹ In 1749, St. Augustine Governor Melchor de Navarrete received explicit instructions to allow no vessels into the harbor that did have Spanish passports. Pares. Cuba 2263, Archivo General de Indias.

²² Joyce Elizabeth Harman, *Trade and Privateering in Spanish Florida, 1732-1763* (St. Augustine, Fla.: St. Augustine Historical Society, 1969), Appendix 1.

provisions.²³ The Spanish policy of welcoming escaped Africans from South Carolina did not eliminate slavery or the slave trade at St. Augustine.²⁴ In the 1730s and 1740s, St. Augustine resident-merchant Charles Hicks received shipments of slaves from New York and Charleston.²⁵ However, Spanish policy towards captive Africans could make such transactions difficult. Hicks explained that he had “a great deal of trouble” trying to sell the two men he received because the “fellows...proved to be free and one of which upon arrival petitioned” Governor Manuel de Montiano. The disputed status of the two African men “they being not slaves,” Hicks noted “nobody will buy them.” Hicks had the two men imprisoned until Spanish officials in Havana decided the outcome of the petition.²⁶ In addition to selling slaves he received via the intercolonial trade, Hicks engaged in commercial transactions with free Africans residing at Fort Mose. In the late 1730s, Hicks sold flour to “El Negro Joseph Burnham” and “El Negro Kojo.” Since the town of St. Augustine was a military outpost and not a plantation colony under Spanish administration, ships did not carry slaves there directly from West Africa.²⁷ Consequently, the supply of captive Africans to the Matanzas River settlement depended primarily on non-Spanish ships trafficking in the intercolonial slave trade.

The expansion of the intercolonial slave trade during the latter half of the 18th century was fueled by the legalization of slavery in the colony of Georgia and the British

²³ Naval Office Lists, CO 5/510. Tepaske noted that traders from Carolina had in 1735 and 1736 “began to pour their goods onto the Florida market.” John J. TePaske, *The Governorship of Spanish Florida, 1700-1763* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1964), 88, 89n53.

²⁴ Jane Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 23–28.

²⁵ In February 1743, Hicks stated that he had been a resident of St. Augustine for near nine years. CO 5/384, f.185.

²⁶ Charles Hicks to (unknown) circa 1738, f. 39-40. Charles Hicks Letterbook, 1738-1750, (WCL). The addressee nor the date is indicated for this letter. It is most likely to William Walton of New York or Othniel Beale of Charleston, his most frequent correspondents. Hicks’ script is very difficult to decipher. Moreover portions of letters were defaced, making the manuscript more challenging to decipher.

²⁷ Around 1718, an *asiento* ship or chartered vessel, likely from Jamaica, carried 80 slaves to St Augustine. Donnan, *Documents Illustrative*, 4:244n.

acquisition of new territories in the Caribbean and North America. The Georgia Trustees originally banned slavery because they planned to use the colony's "fertile lands" to support the "useless poor in England and distressed Protestants" of Europe.²⁸ Samuel Eveleigh, the commercial agent for the Trustees in Charleston, wrote that to "have no Negroes amongst" the colonists "will be a great prejudice" to the new settlement.²⁹ Eveleigh cautioned that the Trustees to "admit...but a limited number, for without Negroes you can't have any produce" nor trade "carried on there to satisfaction." In sum, Eveleigh concluded that "Georgia can never be a place of any great consequence without" enslaved African laborers.³⁰

The perceived prosperity of the neighboring colony, especially the demographic African majority in Carolina, bore heavy on the minds and attitudes of early Georgia settlers. John Vat observed that in "Carolina Negroes are the only proper planters...and that whenever white people are employed in that way of working they die like flies." Some posited that "it would be better to shoot the [white] people than to put them into such a way of planting" in the new colony.³¹ The colonists that settled in Georgia reported that despite the prohibition on captive African labor the "slaves [were] employed mostly in rice" and naval stores production. John Wright observed, "if [naval] stores continue in demand" in England, "of which there is great plenty" slaves will continue to "sell well" in Georgia.³² The ban on enslaved African labor was lifted in 1751 and a large share of the slave population in Georgia was transported overland and by ship from South

²⁸ Sloane 3986, British Library.

²⁹ Samuel Eveleigh to Trustees, 6 April 1733, Lord Egmont Papers, 14200, f. 26, Earl John Perceval Papers, MS 746, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia (hereafter Egmont Papers).

³⁰ Samuel Eveleigh to Benjamin Martyn, 20 January 1735, Egmont Papers, 14200, f. 193-94.

³¹ John Vat to Mr. Newman, 30 May 1735, Egmont Papers, 14200, f. 349-50.

³² John Wright to John Tomlinson, 7 January 1742, African American Collection, (WCL).

Carolina.³³ As a result, merchants, planters and ship captains in Georgia and South Carolina would directly impact the organization and operation of the intercolonial slave trade to British East Florida.

The expansion of the intercolonial slave trade in the circum-Caribbean coincided with an increase in the volume of transatlantic voyages from West Africa. In response to the growing demand for enslaved Africans in British plantation zones, Liverpool merchants in particular developed commercial relationships with local elites in underexploited West African markets, principally in the Bight of Biafra.³⁴ The push to open new markets in West Africa paralleled with new land acquisitions in the Caribbean and North America.³⁵ British imperial administrators planned to transform the undeveloped lands along the St. Johns River into profitable tracts based upon agricultural models developed in South Carolina.³⁶ For decades advocates in Carolina trumpeted that the “Spaniards have neglected this fine settlement.” Settlers hoped they would not “forever be deprived of any prospect of enjoying the many advantages” of Spanish Florida.³⁷ British colonial strategists supposed that if Spanish Florida were administered by “active and industrious people,” the “very fertile and pleasant” lands would abound

³³ When the slavery ban was lifted, the African population in the colony consisted of “349 working Negroes, namely 202 men, 147 women, besides children too young to labor.” William Stephens to Benjamin Martyn, 19 July 1750, Colonial Records of Georgia. Vol. 26:21.

³⁴ G. Ugo Nwokeji, *The Slave Trade and Culture in the Bight of Biafra: An African Society in the Atlantic World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Paul Lovejoy and David Richardson, “African agency and the Liverpool slave trade,” in David Richardson, Anthony Tibbles, and Suzanne Schwarz, eds., *Liverpool and Transatlantic Slavery* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), 43-65.

³⁵ Stephen D. Behrendt, A. J. H. Latham, and David Northrup, eds., *The Diary of Antera Duke, an Eighteenth-Century African Slave Trader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

³⁶ David R. Chesnutt, “South Carolina’s impact upon East Florida, 1763-1776,” in Samuel Proctor, ed., *Eighteenth-Century Florida and the Revolutionary South* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1978), 5-14. Georgetown slave-owner Archibald Johnston provided Grant with a detailed account for replicating indigo cultivation in East Florida. James Grant Papers, Reel 18, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. (hereafter *JGP*).

³⁷ James Crockatt, “Consequences of and Importance of the English taking St Augustine,” April 1748, CO 5/13.

with empire enriching produce.³⁸ Charleston cleric Oliver Hart noted that the “planters or farmers here go much upon indigo which proves a very profitable commodity.” Barring the outbreak of a war, Hart prophesied, “in all probability this would be the richest province upon the continent by far.”³⁹ The similarities in climate between East Florida and the “maritime parts of Georgia and South Carolina” were primary reasons why potential investors looked towards these two northern colonies for advice and assistance.⁴⁰ Promoter of the new colony William Stork, observed that the “heat” in Florida was “mitigated by a never-failing sea-breeze.” Moreover, even the “white people work in the fields in the heat of the day without prejudice to their health.”⁴¹ Stork’s vision of white settlers laboring in the fields never panned out. Perhaps the climate differed slightly but the West African composition of Carolina and East Florida plantations were very similar.

The South Carolina colonial government fostered the intercolonial slave trade from Charleston by providing a remission of a portion of the initial duty paid if the captive was sold into another colony.⁴² Often during the 1750s, Charleston traders

³⁸ Dr. John Campbell’s Account of Florida, 1763, Add MSS 38336, British Library.

³⁹ Oliver Hart to John Hart, 1 September 1755, Oliver Hart Papers, South Caroliniana Library (hereafter SCL).

⁴⁰ Hints Respecting the Settlement and Culture of East Florida, 1763, William Knox Papers, (WCL).

⁴¹ William Stork, *An Account of East-Florida* (London: Sold by W. Nicoll and G. Woodfall, 1766), 42–3.

⁴² In the first draft of the “Act for better strengthening of this province” local exporters of slaves shipped off within 6 months of their arrival in the colony were granted a drawback of 2/3 but this was amended to 3/4 of the purchase price. J. H. Easterby, ed., *The Journal of the Commons House of Assembly, Sept. 12, 1739-Mar. 26, 1741* (Columbia: Historical Commission of South Carolina, 1951), 127. From 1717 to 1774, more than 7,000, and perhaps as many as 10,000 Africans departed from Charleston in the intercolonial slave trade for secondary markets in adjacent colonies and the Caribbean. W. Robert Higgins, “Geographical Origins of Negro Slaves in South Carolina,” *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 70 (1971), 46; W. Robert Higgins, “Charleston: Terminus and Entrepôt of the Colonial Slave Trade,” in Martin Kilson and Robert I. Rotberg, eds., *The African Diaspora: Interpretive Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 114–31.

exported slaves to St. Augustine.⁴³ In August 1756, slave dealers George Austin and Henry Laurens sold slaves to Depaz Viron, a Spaniard in town from Havana. Viron paid £1,110 for nine slaves that arrived on the *Concord* from Sierra Leone. Since Viron paid in cash Austin & Laurens cut him a deal.⁴⁴ In 1756, Charleston trader John Hume shipped approximately 22 slaves to Havana and 28 slaves to Cartagena.⁴⁵ A few years later, Austin & Laurens exported roughly 48 slaves to St. Augustine. Laurens noted in March 1763 that “we shall in all probability have a large field opened to the southward of this province...with St. Augustine and all of Florida ceded...for the benefit & advancement of commerce.”⁴⁶ That same year, John Gordon, Jesse Fish’s business partner, along with Charleston traders Thomas Buckle, Andrew Robertson and John Jamieson shipped

⁴³ James Irving received a drawback for a slave carried on the *Friendship*, Captain John Baddely that cleared for St. Augustine in May 1750. SCG 21 May, 18 June 1750. Charles Mayne received a drawback for a slave carried on the *Deborah*, Captain Richard Wright in June 1754. SCG 4, 11 July 1754. McQueen & Co. received a drawback for a slaves carried by Captain Archibald Borland. Borland sailed the *Nelly* to the “Florida Shore” in January 1756. SCG 22 January 1756; 28 April 1757. Public Treasurer’s Journal A, 1735-48; Journal B, 1748-65, SCDH.

⁴⁴ Austin & Laurens Account Book, 1750-1758, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University (hereafter BRBL). In a letter to the owners of the *Concord*, Laurens stated that “we have a Spaniard amongst us that seems to want Negroes. If we can agree with him may help the sale a good deal.” Henry Laurens to Robert and John Thompson & Co., 24 July 1756, HLP, 2:269; Voyage ID 24028; Public Treasurer’s Journal B, 1748-65, SCDH.

⁴⁵ Hume received drawbacks for slaves shipped to Havana and Cartagena between March 1756 and March 1757. In April 1757 the ship *Hawk* was listed as ready to depart for Cuba. SCG, 14 April, 12 May 1757. A Spanish sloop from Cuba arrived in Charleston in late May 1756 and a schooner from Cuba shortly thereafter. In late June a Spanish sloop from Campeche limped into the harbor badly in need of repairs. The ships remained in Charleston throughout the summer and early fall. The commanders of the Spanish ships from Cuba were Captains Sevallos and Rosado who carried slaves purchased from Austin & Laurens and John Hume back to Havana. Depaz Viron returned to Havana with Rosado. Captain Bautista of the Spanish sloop from Campeche also purchased slaves from Hume for a return voyage to Cartagena. Hume sold slaves to a third Spanish ship captain named Don Pedro Cavancas. SCG 29 May, 24 June, 8 July, 29 July, 19 August, 16 September, 30 September, 7 October 1756; Public Treasurer’s Journal B, 1748-65, SCDH.

⁴⁶ Henry Laurens to John Ettwein, 19 March 1763, HLP 3:373-74; Public Treasurer’s Journal C, 1765-76, SCDH.

Austin & Laurens received drawbacks totaling £330 on slaves transshipped to St. Augustine between March 1761 and March 1762. Reports circulated that a French privateer had been at Tybee Island and stolen slaves belonging to Captain Thomas Tucker and Captain Edward Tucker. Both were professional mariners though it is unclear which Tucker carried slaves to St Augustine for Laurens. SCG, 1 August 1761.

between 47 and 75 slaves to St. Augustine.⁴⁷ A handful of South Carolina traders active in the intercolonial slave trade to Spanish Florida purchased property in St. Augustine.⁴⁸ After 1763, Spanish Florida was officially under English governance but the commercial connections, especially the intercolonial slave trade, were already well established with St. Augustine.⁴⁹ The Spanish garrison that had for nearly a century threatened the westward expansion of Carolina's slave labor camps was transformed into an increasingly open marketplace.

The transshipment of slaves from Savannah to St. Augustine aboard the 25-ton schooner *Margaret* in June 1767 is illustrative of the ways in which groups of captive Africans could be assembled for the intercolonial trade. The *Margaret* was owned by Charleston mariner turned merchant Thomas Buckle and was one of the most active suppliers of provisions to St. Augustine.⁵⁰ Captain William Blythe departed in the *Margaret* from Charleston for Savannah on 11 May 1767 carrying a sorted cargo of supplies that included several thousand feet of timber, furniture, iron cooking ware and "one machine" for processing indigo.⁵¹ None of these goods were landed. Blythe stopped in Savannah specifically for the purpose of purchasing slaves for the St. Augustine market.

⁴⁷ John Gordon received £217, Thomas Buckle received £11, and Robertson & Jamieson received £221 in drawbacks totaling £580. All of the slaves were not registered before leaving Charleston with the customs collector. According to the Charleston's port records, in August 1763 the *Anne & Martha*, Captain Thomas Buckle departed Charleston with "31 negroes." Also in August 1763, the *Endeavor*, Captain James Rogers departed with "11 new Negroes." In October 1763, the *Harlequin*, Captain Abraham Remington, departed Charleston with "5 negroes." Naval Office Lists, CO 5/510; Public Treasurer's Journal C, 1765-76, SCDAH.

⁴⁸ Accounts of Jesse Fish, 1763-1770, East Florida Papers, Reel 146, Library of Congress (LOC), Adam Bachop and John Gordon.

⁴⁹ Charles Hicks Letterbook, 1738-1750, (WCL); Commerce with Spanish markets was a critical source for hard currency in Charleston. Peter Manigault to Sarah Nickleson, 14 September 1765, Peter Manigault Letterbook, 1763-1773, MSS 11/278/7, SCHS.

⁵⁰ R. Nicholas Olsberg, "Ship Registers in the South Carolina Archives 1734-1780," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 74, no. 4 (October 1973): 208, 224, 226, 243, 245, 259; *HLP* 4: 125n; CO 5/510-511; CO 5/573.

⁵¹ The 'machine' was in fact several vats and auxiliary parts for indigo manufacturing. Naval Office Lists, CO 5/710.

Blythe went into town and negotiated with Captain John Ross of the ship *Pitt*. Ross arrived in Savannah a week earlier from St. Vincent with 15 slaves and sold “7 new negroes” to Blythe.⁵² Having completed his transaction with Ross, Blythe then met with another ship captain. Blythe negotiated with Henry Stiell of the ship *Christian* that carried a parcel of slaves from Grenada.⁵³ From Stiell, Blythe purchased “2 seasoned and 5 new negroes.”⁵⁴ In total, Blythe purchased 14 slaves in Savannah that had arrived from two different Caribbean markets, St. Vincent and Grenada, for resale in the colony of Georgia. While a few of the captives were sold in Savannah, it was not their final migration. The captive Africans from the *Pitt* and *Christian* purchased by Blythe were then marched onto the *Margaret* for an additional transit to St. Augustine.⁵⁵ The record of the 14 captives amassed on the *Margaret* details one of the strategies, amalgamating groups of slaves collected from several colonial traders, used by ship captains in the intercolonial slave trade to secure laborers for secondary markets.

The repopulation of St. Augustine with captive Africans was a fluid process that entangled distant markets and crossed imperial borders throughout the Caribbean, North America and the Atlantic world. The shipment of captive Africans directly from West Africa to the new colony was not an option in the early stages of development because as one investor stated “St. Augustine is not as yet a market upon which one could properly rest the prospect of a sale either as to price or goodness of pay.”⁵⁶ Consequently, one of the markets considered for purchasing skilled Africans was Virginia. Governor Grant

⁵² Naval Office Lists, CO 5/710.

⁵³ The *Christian* returned to Savannah in April 1769 with a cargo shipped by St. Croix merchant James Warden. William Gibbons Jr. Papers, 1728-1803, Duke University.

⁵⁴ Naval Office Lists, CO 5/710. [Blythe returned to Savannah with 13 slaves]

⁵⁵ The *Margaret* departed Savannah on 18 March 1767. CO 5/710.

⁵⁶ Richard Oswald to James Grant, 18 September 1768, *JGP*, Reel 15.

considered the Chesapeake colony as a potential source for laborers because of Richard Oswald, a wealthy investor in East Florida land, and due to his own previous dealings in Virginia.⁵⁷ Grant hoped it would be possible to “get a few Negroes...in Virginia” particularly a “couple of carpenters and coopers...seasoned to the country” to plant indigo on his property.⁵⁸ In addition to the “2,000 white” settlers projected from Bermuda, Grant expected “as many negroes from that island” to migrate to Florida.⁵⁹

In addition to Virginia, Oswald recommended Grenada as a potential labor market. Grenada merchants Thomas Townsend and Peter Taylor, Oswald ensured, would “certainly execute” any orders for slaves that Grant might request.⁶⁰ From Antigua and St. Christopher, it was possible to purchase a “few old negroes who understand the culture and cleaning” of cotton.⁶¹ In early 1767, an intercolonial shipment of slaves from Antigua arrived in St. Augustine by way of Georgia. John Graham received the “unlucky consignment” from a trader in Antigua, and because the slaves were “seasoned people” and subject to a high duty if landed in Savannah, Graham loaded them onto his schooner “along a shore” to avoid the colonial taxes.⁶² The island of Barbados was an important

⁵⁷ Oswald was co-owner of the ship *St Paul* that delivered 124 slaves to Virginia in 1752. Voyage ID# 76204. For Richard Oswald’s commercial networks see, David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁵⁸ James Grant to Henry Laurens 29 December 1764; James Grant to Henry Laurens 12 February 1765; James Grant to Richard Oswald 12 February 1765, *JGP*, Reel 1.

⁵⁹ James Grant to Thomas Gage, 4 April 1765, Thomas Gage Papers, (WCL). The Bermuda migrants eventually settled in Georgia. *HLP* 4:452-54n; Michael Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade: Bermuda, Bermudians, and the Maritime Atlantic World, 1680-1783* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 339-41.

⁶⁰ Richard Oswald to James Grant, 26 April 1766, *JGP*, Reel 9. James Taylor and Thomas Townsend were settling estates in Grenada and East Florida. *HLP* 5:473n.

⁶¹ Richard Oswald to James Grant 28 April 1766; Richard Oswald to James Grant 12 February 1766, *JGP*, Reel 9.

⁶² John Graham to James Grant, 6 January 1767, *JGP*, Reel 12. John Graham arrived in Georgia in 1753 with some experience in the West Indies trade and the backing of Richard Oswald. In 1764, Graham was appointed to the Governor’s Council. By 1768, Graham & Company was one of the largest exporting firms

stop for many ships crossing the Atlantic from West Africa to collect supplies and information about colonial markets. In early March 1768, Grant received news that a ship was departing from Barbados “with new negroes” for Savannah.⁶³ The development of East Florida’s slave labor camps required local and distant administrators to strategize on the potential markets of the circum-Caribbean to obtain laborers. As a result, the captive Africans that resettled British East Florida originated from various colonial settlements within the circum-Caribbean and West Africa.

Situated at the confluence of the Ashley and Cooper Rivers, Charleston was geographically an ideal harbor for large European ships carrying hundreds of captive Africans. Located roughly 120 miles from Savannah and about 270 miles from St. Augustine, Charleston’s “great mart” was a key terminus for supplying slaves to secondary markets.⁶⁴ The largest and aggressively entrepreneurial slave dealers in colonial Charleston were Henry Laurens and his partner George Austin. In the 1750s, a decade that saw a resurgence of the slave trade to the colony, Austin & Laurens were at the forefront of the traffic and profited tremendously.⁶⁵ Laurens was drawn into the development of East Florida, and the intercolonial slave trade that followed, because of his personal relationship with James Grant, who, notoriously massacred the inhabitants of fifteen starving and unarmed Cherokee settlements during the 1761 Cherokee War.⁶⁶ As

in Savannah. Paul M. Pressly, “Scottish Merchants and the Shaping of Colonial Georgia,” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 91, no. 2 (2007): 138-39, 159; David Dobson, *Scots in Georgia and the Deep South, 1735-1845* (Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Pub. Co, 2000), 69-70.

⁶³ John Graham to James Grant, 14 March 1768, *JGP*, Reel 14.

⁶⁴ Sloane 3986, British Library.

⁶⁵ In the 1760s when Laurens ‘retired’ or rather gradually withdrew from largescale slave sales, he declined consignments sent to him from long-time commercial partners for over a decade. British and Caribbean merchants knew that if they wanted to profit from a slave cargo that Laurens was the go to dealer for consignments.

⁶⁶ “Journal of March and operations of troops under Grant, 7 June-9 July 1761,” CO 5/61; “List of Towns destroyed in the Cherokee Nation by Grant,” CO 5/61.

commander of one of South Carolina's militia companies, Laurens and Grant worked hand-in-hand to extinguish the colony's former allies.⁶⁷ For many of the settlers and investors of East Florida, Laurens was the point man for acquiring captive Africans, planting supplies, intrinsic knowledge and white laborers for transforming the landscape of the former Spanish colony.

The colony of South Carolina received more captive Africans than any other settlement in British North America. However, the intercolonial slave trade was an important resource for supplying enslaved laborers that supplemented the direct commerce from West Africa. Of the 23,265 captive Africans that disembarked in the colony from 1751 to 1760, fifteen percent arrived via intercolonial commerce.⁶⁸ In the first five years of Austin and Laurens' partnership, almost half of all the cargoes the slave dealers paid taxes on arrived from the Caribbean.⁶⁹ As a result of the large number of captives carried to South Carolina through the intercolonial trade, traders and dealers in the colony were well-equipped to supply East Florida plantations with enslaved Africans.

The Caribbean slave trade to Carolina was an avenue for developing long-term commercial relationships and expanding regional networks. For example, in August 1763, Laurens informed St. Kitts merchants Smith & Baillie that slaves were selling high in Charleston, especially Gold Coast slaves that arrived recently from Antigua.⁷⁰ In

⁶⁷ Daniel J. Tortora, *Carolina in Crisis: Cherokees, Colonists, and Slaves in the American Southeast, 1756-1763* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 139-54.

⁶⁸ Gregory E. O'Malley, "Beyond the Middle Passage: Slave Migration from the Caribbean to North America, 1619-1807," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 66, no. 1 (2009), 142; *Voyages Database*. Estimated total of slaves in the intercolonial trade 3,549. Estimated total of slaves disembarking directly from Africa 19,716.

⁶⁹ From 1751 to 1755, Austin & Laurens paid taxes on 28 cargoes of which 13 arrived from Barbados (9), St. Christopher (2), Antigua (1) and Anguilla (1). Warner Oland Moore, "Henry Laurens: A Charleston Merchant in the Eighteenth Century, 1747-1771" (Ph.D., University of Alabama, 1974), 300-02.

⁷⁰ Henry Laurens to Smith & Baillies, 25 August 1763, *HLP* 3:539. In 1763, members of firm were James Smith, Alexander and James Baillie. (Smith was formerly a partner in the firm of Smith & Clifton).

February 1764, Smith & Baillie sent Laurens six slaves, two of which were “little boys” to sell in Charleston.⁷¹ Laurens noted that although the slaves sold at “very great” prices, he encouraged Smith & Baillie not to “dabble too freely” with the Charleston market because “vast importations” expected soon would “knock down the market.”⁷² Smith & Baillie could not pass up the chance to dabble in the Charleston market and in April 1764 sent a cargo of “50 new negroes” on the *Mary Ann*.⁷³ The intercolonial transit was physically debilitating on the captives. Initially Laurens intended to send the slaves on an inter-coastal voyage north to sell in Georgetown, South Carolina but a sudden turn in the weather nullified the plan. As a last resort, Laurens considered sending the entire cargo south to Beaufort.⁷⁴ Although they “came in all alive” Laurens claimed, the captives were “extremely meagre and thin.” Only through his many years of experience as the port’s premier slave dealer was Laurens able to negotiate a sale within Charleston’s fluctuating and “ordinary” market.⁷⁵

Laurens first wrote to Smith & Clifton in May 1755 thanking them for delivering letters to several slave ship captains and goes on at length about various slave ships in the Atlantic. It is likely one of the earliest correspondence because Laurens explains in detail how Austin & Laurens handles slave consignments, crop cycles and remittances. (Henry Laurens to Smith & Clifton, May 1755, *HLP* 1:255).

⁷¹ Henry Laurens to Smith & Baillies, 9 February 1764, *HLP* 4:167

⁷² The little boys were indeed children. Laurens having paid only £5 in duties for them instead of £10 for adults.

⁷³ Of the 50 slaves sent by Smith & Baillie on the *Mary Ann*, 15 were men, 15 women, 16 girls, and 4 small boys.

⁷⁴ On the rise of Beaufort as an important commercial port see, Josiah Smith to Sampson and Solomon Simson, 29 January 1772, Josiah Smith Letterbook, 1771-1784, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill.

⁷⁵ Henry Laurens to Smith & Baillies, 30 April 1764, *HLP* 4:255-58. Junior member of the firm George Appleby expressed the importance of having an experienced partner like Laurens to aid in conducting slave sales. Appleby remarked that since Laurens left to fight the Cherokees he had “been immersed overhead and ears in the sale of Negroes.” George Appleby to Nathaniel Tregagle, 25 October 1760, Aswarby Muniments Lincolnshire Record Office.

The large volume of slaves arriving to the colony in the early 1760s from West Africa and the Caribbean concerned some members of the South Carolina oligarchy.⁷⁶ Internal political conflict and an increasing number of overextended planters were the driving forces behind the legislation harmful to the colony's slave dealers. As one observer noted on the fractious nature of the Carolina gentry "faction and party are signs of wealth."⁷⁷ In August 1764 the local assembly passed a "law to prohibit the importation" of slaves for three years.⁷⁸ The "impolitic and partial Act" placed an "additional duty" on each captive paid by the first purchaser.⁷⁹ In lieu of the news, Laurens informed Smith & Baillie that slaves would continue to "sell very high through" the winter.⁸⁰ Lt. Gov. William Bull reported that the "bill to prevent importation" was a response to the "great import of Negroes" that endangered "the safety of the province." Although about 600 new white settlers had arrived in the past year, it was not enough to offset the black majority that persisted within the colony.⁸¹ Ships from West Africa and the Caribbean swarmed on Charleston in anticipation of the impending prohibition on

⁷⁶ In June 1761 the Commons House attempted to pass legislation that would have placed an additional £40 tax on all captives arriving in the colony. The rise in runaway slaves, mounting costs of the Cherokee War, and absence of poor whites from the parishes drove the legislative push. The bill was defeated by the Council. *South Carolina Gazette*, 6 June 1761.

⁷⁷ James Grant to Henry Laurens 3 April 1765, *JGP*, Reel 1.

⁷⁸ Henry Laurens to Smith & Baillie, *HLP* 4:416. As early as March 1764, news was spreading that a growing faction of Carolina planters were planning to pass an act to prohibit slave importation. Lowbridge Bright to Henry Bright, 30 March 1764 in, Kenneth Morgan, ed., *The Bright-Meyler Papers: A Bristol-West India Connection, 1732-1837* (Oxford: Published for the British Academy by Oxford University Press, 2007), 387-89.

⁷⁹ Henry Laurens to John Knight, 24 August 1764, *HLP* 4:378-82; Henry Laurens to Rossell & Gervais, 4 September 1764, *HLP* 4:393; Donnan, *Documents Illustrative*, vol. 4:404. Laurens' arguments against the bill failed to convince the assembly to postpone the bill. He hoped British administrators would veto the law. In the 1760s, import duties on new Africans arriving in the colony were £10 for adults and £5 for children. The new legislation placed an additional duty of £100 on captives.

⁸⁰ Henry Laurens to Smith & Baillies, 11 September 1764, *HLP* 4:416

⁸¹ William Bull to Board of Trade, 20 August 1764, CO 5/378, 1-4; William Bull to Board of Trade, 13 September 1764, SC Transcripts, vol. 30:196-97.

captive Africans.⁸² As the year drew to an end, Bull informed London officials that the prohibitory act “has in great measure defeated the salutary end proposed, as above 8,000 have been imported this year, being nearly equal to three years importation.”⁸³ The loss of the most important entrepôt in British North America was a blow to merchants of the African trade.⁸⁴ However, as one market was temporarily sealed off, another, opened up in British East Florida. The prohibitory measures sanctioned against Charleston simply redirected captive Africans southward, consequently increasing the volume of captives trafficked in the intercolonial slave trade.⁸⁵

The new law appears to have deterred slave importations for a time. However, in October 1767, Smith & Baillie sent several cargoes of slaves to sell in Charleston. Laurens was unwilling to pay the additional fine required by the prohibitory statute and instead sent them to Savannah on his ship the *Broughton Island Packet*.⁸⁶ Some of the slaves that arrived on the *Peggy* belonged to a Grenada attorney Peter Gordon. The second parcel of ten slaves sent by Smith & Baillie on the *Duke of Lancaster* were described as “old and the women very small.”⁸⁷ Laurens transshipped the captive Africans received from St. Kitts to Savannah for merchants Clay & Habersham to sell. Laurens informed the Savannah merchants that the slaves were sent sight unseen but

⁸² The year 1765 was the second largest number of slaves to disembark in colonial Charleston.

⁸³ William Bull to Board of Trade, 17 December 1765, SC Transcripts, vol. 30:298. Bull’s father, William Bull Sr., was the first white official to encounter the insurgents at Stono in 1739; it is unsurprising that Bull would muse “whether this sudden addition to a number already beyond a prudent proportion will be productive of unhappy consequences, cannot be certainly foreseen, but I have a few days ago received intimation that some plots are forming and some attempts of insurrection to be made during these holidays, at which time slaves are allowed some days of festivity and exemption from labor.”

⁸⁴ Laurens sent copies of the law with his handwritten notes to Richard Oswald, John Knight, Henry Bright, and George Appleby.

⁸⁵ For the redistribution of slaves to Beaufort in the 1760s see, Daniel C. Littlefield, “Charleston and Internal Slave Redistribution,” *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 87, no. 2 (1986): 93–105.

⁸⁶ In addition to the £100 duty, buyers were still required to pay the statutory £10 fee for adult slaves.

⁸⁷ Henry Laurens to Smith & Baillies, 22 October 1767, *HLP* 5:375. The *Duke of Lancaster* arrived from St. Kitts 26 September 1767. SC-NOSL, 1764–67, p160.

forwarded the first description received from Smith & Baillie that they were in “prime” condition.⁸⁸ Less than three weeks later Laurens received a third parcel of “new negroes” from Smith & Baillie that arrived on the *Dolphin* from Saint Kitts.⁸⁹ This third parcel of “10 new negroes” was sent to St. Augustine and sold by James Penman for £350.⁹⁰ Despite the heavy import duties levied on slaves arriving in Charleston after 1 January 1766, Caribbean merchants continued to send captive Africans to the colony.

By the end of November 1767, Clay & Habersham informed Laurens that the slaves he sent to Savannah were a slow sale.⁹¹ The sales were likely delayed because of local market conditions and the general slowness of winter commerce. On 2 December, the ship *Betsey* arrived in Charleston from St. Kitts after stopping there directly from Angola where Captain Maxwell embarked approximately 358 Africans. The number of slaves sold in St. Kitts is unclear but Smith & Baillie sent at least 38 to Charleston.⁹² Unable to make a deal with any local merchants, Laurens hired William Price to carry the captives down the coast and sell them in Savannah. Upon arriving at Savannah, Price

⁸⁸ Henry Laurens to Clay & Habersham, 26 October 1767, *HLP* 5:377.

⁸⁹ Henry Laurens to Smith & Baillies, 14 November 1767, *HLP* 5:390. The *Dolphin* arrived from St. Kitts on 14 November 1767. SCG, 16 November 1767.

⁹⁰ Henry Laurens to Smith & Baillies, 15 January 1768, *HLP* 5:547; Henry Laurens to James Penman, 24 December 1767, *HLP* 5:529. In November 1767, Laurens told Penman that he was sending by Captain Doran “10 new negroes” that belonged to Smith & Baillie and at end of the month sent a bill of lading for the slaves sent on Doran for Penman to sell at St Augustine. The slaves were sold by Penman to William Stork who complained to Laurens about the quality of the slaves but Laurens said he never saw them nor had an interest in them. Penman wrote to Laurens and enclosed a sales account of the slaves sold in St Augustine and Laurens noted that the sales would “satisfy” Smith & Baillie. These slaves were not registered upon arrival in St Augustine with the naval officer but landed illegally. The communication between Laurens, Penman and the East Florida settlers indicates one of the many difficulties of documenting the volume of the intercolonial slave trade official records are generally silent on the transactions. Laurens to James Penman & William Makdougall, 21 November 1767; Laurens to James Penman, 23 November 1767; Laurens to William Stork, 24 December 1767; Laurens to James Penman, 24 December 1767, *HLP* 5:467, 473, 526, 529.

⁹¹ Henry Laurens to Clay & Habersham, 25 November 1767, *HLP* 5:478. The slow sales at Savannah is in contrast to Darold Wax’s claim that slaves sent to Georgia “seldom remained on hand for extended periods.” Darold D. Wax, “‘New Negroes Are Always in Demand’: The Slave Trade in Eighteenth-Century Georgia,” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 68, no. 2 (1984), 211.

⁹² David Richardson, *Bristol, Africa, and the Eighteenth-Century Slave Trade to America* (Gloucester: Produced for the Bristol Record Society by A. Sutton Pub., 1986), vol. 3:198, 200.

consigned the captive Africans to John Graham. As the primary distributor of slaves to East Florida, Graham sent an express boat to James Penman in St. Augustine informing him to come to Savannah as soon as possible to take advantage of the surplus slaves. Penman arrived in Savannah a few days later and purchased “about 80 of the cargo” of which 38 belonged to Smith & Baillie.⁹³ In December 1767, the ship *Susannah* was reported at Tybee Island, Georgia with “upwards of 90 new negroes” on board.⁹⁴ On 19 January 1768, the *Susannah* arrived at St. Augustine with 93 slaves.⁹⁵ Caribbean merchants continued to send slaves to Charleston despite the fact that the market was essentially closed. Consequently, the volume of the intercolonial slave trade increased as captive Africans were redirected south to Savannah and St. Augustine. Captives that initially landed in the Caribbean consequently endured as many as three or more additional voyages before disembarking at their final destination.

The supply of slaves to British East Florida depended largely on the arrival of ships directly from West Africa to Savannah and Charleston.⁹⁶ Slave dealers were able to purchase more slaves at lower prices from vessels with large numbers of captives. The arrival of two ships at Savannah from the Windward Coast provided John Graham with

⁹³ Henry Laurens to Smith & Baillies, 15 January 1767, *HLP* 5:546-7; James Grant to John Graham, 21 December 1767, *JGP*, Reel 2.

⁹⁴ Donnan, *Documents Illustrative*, 4:623n.

⁹⁵ Naval Office Lists, CO 5/573. A total of seven East Florida planters invested in the *Susannah*'s cargo organized and transshipped by Graham. The shares of slave for each investor were McDougall (16), Gray (10), Ross (10), Penman (15), Jollie (20), Bissell (12), and Turnbull (12). James Grant to John Graham, 14 December 1767; James Grant to John Graham, 18 December 1767, *JGP*, Reel 2.

⁹⁶ The St. Augustine harbor and shallow coastline was a hindrance to large ships carrying captive Africans. Anon., *An Account of the Spanish Settlements in America* (Edinburgh: Printed by A. Donaldson and J. Reid, 1762), 65; William Stork, *An Account of East-Florida* (London: Sold by W. Nicoll and G. Woodfall, 1766), 42-3.

an opportunity to purchase 44 slaves for several East Florida planters.⁹⁷ When Governor Grant submitted his order for slaves to Graham, he requested “all new Negroes young and of the best kind.” However, Grant included an important caveat stipulating that the “best Negroes are always the cheapest.”⁹⁸ In April 1765, Laurens sent a shipment of twenty-four slaves to St. Augustine and noted that they were purchased “very cheap and extremely so, according to the...present value” of captive Africans in Charleston.⁹⁹ Regardless of the perceived bargain or the assumed healthfulness of a captive, there was no proven method for identifying a slave that would survive the brutal adjustment stage known as seasoning. As one slave dealer grimly quipped “with new Negroes it is a kind of lottery”¹⁰⁰

The first ship directly from West Africa did not arrive at St. Augustine until September 1767 but this vessel was privately outfitted and the captives that disembarked were for a singular plantation. None of the slaves were sold at a public sale. In fact, seventeen slaves were carried from St. Augustine and sold in Savannah.¹⁰¹ Richard Oswald and his associates purchased Bunce Island, the slave trading fort located at the mouth of the Sierra Leone River, in 1748. The Royal African Company began operating on the site in the late seventeenth century but abandoned the island in 1728 after an Afro-

⁹⁷ John Graham to James Grant, 25 July 1768, *JGP*, Reel 15; Order to quarantine the ship *Gambia*, 2 August 1768, Telamon Cuyler Collection, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia.

⁹⁸ James Grant to John Graham, 4 March 1767, *JGP*, Reel 2.

⁹⁹ Henry Laurens to James Grant, 26 April 1765, *JGP*, Reel 7.

¹⁰⁰ John Graham to James Grant, 13 June 1767, *JGP*, Reel 13.

¹⁰¹ The *Saint Augustine Packet* arrived from Bunce Island on 24 September 1767 with 103 Africans, the overwhelming majority were children. A pregnant woman miscarried during the voyage and died shortly after reaching shore. Grant stated that about 40 of the 70 Africans that disembarked were under 10 years old. The slaves sent to Savannah were described as boys from 10 to 12 years old. The voyages database incorrectly identifies the number of slaves disembarking (70) from the ship. Naval Office Lists, CO 5/573, 20, 22; James Grant to John Graham, 5 November 1767; James Grant to Richard Oswald, 7 November 1767, *JGP*, Reel 2; Voyage ID # 77,919.

Portuguese trader named Senhor Lopez and his supporters evicted the company's agent from the island and burned down the fort.¹⁰² In addition to Oswald's Sierra Leone connections, another potential ally for supporting the colony with labor was the former Governor of Cape Coast Castle John Roberts, who petitioned in May 1764 for land in East Florida.¹⁰³ Governor Grant complained irritably to Graham that local planters were "looking out with great impatience for...your Negroes."¹⁰⁴ Grant worried that if Graham did not "appear soon with [his] black attendants" the nascent settlement at Mosquito inlet would collapse.¹⁰⁵ Purchasing slaves in bulk on the Savannah market for reshipment to St. Augustine was not an easy task. In early 1768, Graham was expecting an intercolonial shipment of slaves from Barbados. Until the vessel arrived, "I am sorry for the delay already occasioned" Graham confessed "but there is no such thing as whistling for Negroes and such things just when one wants them."¹⁰⁶

The transshipment of captive Africans in the intercolonial slave trade tended to increase the overall costs for obtaining new laborers. British East Florida bore characteristics that made it distinct from other secondary labor markets of the circum-Caribbean. The implementation of a plantation regime on the scale the British intended required several growing seasons to produce sufficient subsistence crops for the maintenance of the new population. The lack of preparation for large number of new migrants, both free and enslaved, crippled the colony's ability to develop a healthy and

¹⁰² Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, 175-77; Walter Rodney, *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast, 1545-1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 213-14. George Fryer operated on the island for roughly ten years and sold the island to Oswald.

¹⁰³ CO 5/563, f. 234. Roberts was Governor of Cape Coast Castle from February 1750-June 1751 and March 1780-May 1781. PROB 11/1159/131, 16 November 1787.

¹⁰⁴ James Grant to John Graham, 31 August 1767, *JGP*, Reel 2.

¹⁰⁵ James Grant to John Graham, 5 September 1767, *JGP*, Reel 2.

¹⁰⁶ John Graham to James Grant, 14 March 1768, *JGP*, Reel 14.

thriving population.¹⁰⁷ In addition, as Grant noted in early 1767, all slaves sent to the new colony had to come with their own clothes and blankets because “everything of that kind is yet dear in this new world.”¹⁰⁸ As the primary supplier and distributor of slaves from Savannah, Graham also had to send “six months provisions” for each captive African transshipped to St. Augustine.¹⁰⁹ Suppliers of the intercolonial slave trade like Laurens and Graham made purchases for customers when the market afforded them opportunities.

Many captives purchased for the intercolonial trade waited long periods of time prior to re-embarking on another voyage. It was not uncommon for slaves to be purchased several weeks or months in advance. Martha Bremar was paid £24 for “victualing and boarding four new Negroe girls” for forty-eight days that were sent to St. Augustine.¹¹⁰ In February 1767, Graham was able to secure five handpicked “young Negroe men-boys” after negotiating a bargain with the ship captain that carried them to Savannah. While they waited for transshipment, Graham promised that the boys would be “well clothed...and have the run of my kitchen.”¹¹¹ The expenditures associated with the intercolonial slave trade for provisioning captives was similar to those of transatlantic voyages. However, if customers made specific demands on the demographics of expected laborers, slave dealers had to wait for the market to produce the captives requested, and consequently costs increased.

¹⁰⁷ In August 1768, 1,400 Greek settlers arrived in Florida and began developing the New Smyrna settlement. Starvation, inadequate housing, disease and misery encapsulated the seasoning process for the new settlement. By December 1768, the population was further reduced to about 953 settlers. Grant to London, 28 August 1768, CO 5/567, f. 40; Grant to London, 1 December 1768, CO 5/567, f. 47.

¹⁰⁸ James Grant to John Graham, 4 March 1767, *JGP*, Reel 2

¹⁰⁹ James Grant to John Graham, 4 April 1767; James Grant to John Graham, 16 April 1767, *JGP*, Reel 2

¹¹⁰ James Grant’s Account with Henry Laurens, 20 July 1765 to 21 February 1766, *JGP*, Reel 11. Bremar was Laurens’ sister.

¹¹¹ John Graham to James Grant, 10 February 1767, *JGP*, Reel 12.

For many captive Africans the separation from family members began in the interior of West Africa. However, it was possible, though uncommon, for family members to make the voyage across the Atlantic together. In the mid-nineteenth century as the U.S. interstate slave trade expanded in breadth and scope, critics frequently couched the trade as an assault on the African American family. Slave-owners regularly separated husbands from wives, brothers from sisters in order to capitalize on the growing demand for laborers in plantation zones of the Mississippi River Delta. While this critique of the interstate slave trade may have been marginally successful towards decreasing the traffic, the separation of African families was not distinct to the nineteenth-century. In fact, the disregard for a captive's familial relationships was inherent to the structural organization of the intercolonial slave trade. For example, in January 1769 John Graham sent to St. Augustine three "black ladies" for Governor Grant. The winter brought cold temperatures to the Lowcountry so Graham sent with the girls "woolen caps...blankets and above the usual clothing" to help keep them alive for the voyage. However, one of the girls, named Sulundie, took sick the night before the ship was to leave for St. Augustine and stayed behind to recover her strength but only after a physician's recommendation.¹¹²

Graham stated that when he was at the sale selecting from the group of captives, he "fixed upon" Sulundie's "sister or relation" and as he began to drag her away Sulundie

¹¹² To date this important manuscript has been misinterpreted by historians Michael Mullins, Daniel Schafer and Jane Landers. Each, especially Mullins and Schafer, claim that Sulundie is a toponym or country name referencing a regional ethnicity of West Africa which is incorrect. A closer reading, as I have demonstrated here, indicates that Sulundie is in fact the name of the African girl. Michael Mullin, *Africa in America: Slave Acculturation and Resistance in the American South and the British Caribbean, 1736-1831* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 23; Daniel Schafer, "'Yellow Silk Ferret Tied Round Their Wrists': African Americans in British East Florida, 1763-1784," in Jane Landers and David Colburn, ed., *The African American Heritage of Florida* (University Press of Florida, 1995), 78; Jane Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999). Landers simply reproduces Schafer's misinterpretation of the text.

protested frantically in “her language” against their separation. Graham stated he “should have picked out” another girl, but reluctantly purchased Sulundie along with her sister. Sulundie’s sister was sent off ahead of her on Capt. Hunt’s sloop with a group of “seasoned English” speaking captives to St. Augustine.¹¹³ Now separated from her sister by the bad-timing of a cold, it was possible this was last time they would ever see of each other. But, Graham had more sinister plans. Sulundie departed for St. Augustine upon her recovery.¹¹⁴ However, Graham specified to Grant that “if the girls should be” of family relations Charles Burdett “must on that case let you have” the sister and Burdett “have Sulundie.”¹¹⁵ If Sulundie reunited with her sister in Florida is unknown. However, it is evident that slave dealers active in the intercolonial slave trade were cognizant of West Africans’ Diasporic heritage and acted decisively to sever those bonds.¹¹⁶

In the 1750s, as the colony of Georgia embraced African slavery, the strategy of separating family members arriving in the intercolonial slave trade was rapidly deployed. On 18 April 1753 an auction was held in Savannah for a group of slaves transshipped from St. Kitts. Johan Boltzius attended the sale organized by slave dealer James Habersham who had requested Boltzius’ attendance and promotion of the sale amongst his fellow congregants. Boltzius described the twenty-six captives as “large and small both male and female.” The voyage from St. Kitts was debilitating for the captives. Most arrived “miserable and starved” but after the slave dealers applied their marketplace trickery, having “dressed [them] as cleanly as possible...they all had a good appearance.” Many of the captive Africans arrived as family units, miraculously surviving the Atlantic

¹¹³ John Graham to James Grant, 28 January 1769, *JGP*, Reel 17.

¹¹⁴ John Graham to James Grant, 29 January 1769, *JGP*, Reel 17.

¹¹⁵ John Graham to James Grant, 28 January 1769, *JGP*, Reel 17.

¹¹⁶ Similar female matches include – Solondo (ID 3846); Solunga (ID 3846); Somodie (ID 2559) <http://african-origins.org/african-data/>

passage together and managing to avoid separation in St. Kitts as some were selected out for transshipment to Georgia. “Most of the children had to leave their mothers behind,” Boltzius stated “which must have been just as painful for them as it was for an old Negress at auction who had to see her children sold to different masters.” In addition to captives that arrived from St. Kitts, a slave-owner in Beaufort sent several slaves to Savannah for Habersham to sell. At the auction, Boltzius purchased a “Catholic Christian” man of Congolese origins and four other captives.¹¹⁷ The intercolonial slave trade tended to further alienate the Diasporic relationships and shipmate bonds formed in the journey from West Africa and the Caribbean.

During the first few years of the British settlement of East Florida, the demand for captive Africans drastically outpaced supply.¹¹⁸ Settlers frequently complained that they could not clear the land or cultivate new crops without enslaved African labor. There was little doubt among settlers that “Africans are the only people to do work” in East Florida.¹¹⁹ In addition, British officials resoundingly supported Grant’s request to use the “greatest part of the contingent money” to purchase an unspecified number of slaves to improve the colony’s infrastructure and other public works projects.¹²⁰ However, not long thereafter Grant admitted reluctantly that his “growing passion for black men and women must ruin me in the end.”¹²¹ The fortunes of distant investors and local East Florida planters’ alike hinged on access to, and the delivery of, captive African labor.

¹¹⁷ Samuel Urlsperger, *Detailed Reports on the Salzburger Emigrants Who Settled in America*, ed. George Fenwick Jones (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991), vol. 16:216-19.

¹¹⁸ On demand at St. Augustine see, James Grant to John Graham, 17 March 1767; James Grant to John Graham, 31 August 1767; James Grant to John Graham, 5 September 1767, *JGP*, Reel 2; John Graham to James Grant, 14 March 1768, *JGP*, Reel 14; John Graham to James Grant, 22 August 1768, *JGP*, Reel 15.

¹¹⁹ James Grant to Richard Oswald 31 August 1766, *JGP*, Reel 1.

¹²⁰ Board of Trade to Grant, 4 July 1766, CO 5/563, f. 200.

¹²¹ James Grant to John Graham, 26 September 1768, *JGP*, Reel 2.

In November 1767, Grant wrote that the colony was “much distressed” for slaves as “everything is at a stand by that means.”¹²² “All our planters have been disappointed,” Grant stated, by “Mr. John Graham in the Negro way.”¹²³ A local problem required a local solution. To resolve the labor shortage a West Indies scheme was hatched by recent grantees James Penman, Robert Bisett, and William Makdougall. This scheme sent Captain Benjamin Barton in the schooner *East Florida Packet* to Barbados and Antigua for 60 slaves.¹²⁴ Captain Barton agreed to bring the slaves to Florida for 40 shillings per head and immediately went about transforming the schooner for the “reception” of the captives. The “gentlemen concerned” agreed to provide the ship with provisions and water barrels for the voyage.¹²⁵ Grant admitted that the “West Indian plan” was driven “by necessity for something must go to market.”¹²⁶ Oswald agreed that the “scheme of sending to the West Indies for Negroes was certainly the only one by which the gentlemen could be sure of a supply since Georgia failed.”¹²⁷ The delivery of captive Africans from Georgia to British East Florida was only possible if slave cargoes arrived from circum-Caribbean markets, or directly from West Africa. Although slavery had been legalized in Georgia for over a decade, the first shipment of slaves from the West African coast did not arrive until 1766.

¹²² James Grant to John Graham, 5 November 1767, *JGP*, Reel 2.

¹²³ James Grant to Richard Oswald, 7 November 1767, *JGP*, Reel 2.

¹²⁴ Laurens contracted with William Fisher of Philadelphia to construct the schooner. The *East Florida Packet* arrived in Charleston on July 1765. It was built specifically for intercolonial commerce Governor Grant’s request. It is a strong indication of the nature of intercolonial commercial networks that thrived during this period and made the intercolonial slave trade a reliable avenue for captive laborers. Henry Laurens to William Fisher, 16 July 1765, *HLP* 4:653-54. The 25-ton *East Florida Packet* arrived at St Augustine from Charleston on 22 October 1767. Naval Office Lists, CO 5/573.

¹²⁵ James Grant to John Graham, 5 November 1767, *JGP*, Reel 2.

¹²⁶ James Grant to John Graham, 19 December 1767, *JGP*, Reel 2.

¹²⁷ Richard Oswald to James Grant 19 February 1768, *JGP*, Reel 14.

The scheme to send Barton to purchase slaves in the Caribbean for the beleaguered settlement was only possible through Henry Laurens' intervention on behalf of the strategists Penman and Makdougall. On 8 November 1767, just as the West Indies scheme was being hatched, Laurens received a letter from Penman and Makdougall asking for his help. As newcomers, Penman and Makdougall needed a local patron, or more specifically a financier, to support their commercial venture.¹²⁸ Laurens was willing to vouch for the scheme and wrote two letters of credit each in the amount of £2,000 to the "principal African houses" at Barbados and St. Kitts. Much like a mentor would shepherd an apprentice, Laurens shared his knowledge of Caribbean labor markets and the operation of the intercolonial slave trade. Laurens told Penman and Makdougall that St. Kitts was the "best island in the West Indies to purchase Negroes at tho Barbados gives you a double chance...Antigua is not a proper place; very few Guinea men stop there."¹²⁹ Laurens closed by stating that the "scheme of importing Negroes. Tis not a bad scheme" but advised the young entrepreneurs to be cautious.¹³⁰ The plan could quickly go awry if the captain and crew did not "guard constantly" against the captives. One of Laurens' own, a "fine sloop" was "nearly cut off some time ago with only 22 Negroes on board from the West Indies."¹³¹ Securing laborers through the intercolonial slave trade required access to credit supply networks because large parcels were rarely purchased for cash. Moreover, the shorter intercolonial voyage did not eliminate dangers such as a shipboard uprising, generally associated with the Atlantic crossings.

¹²⁸ On Penman, MacDougall, Bissett, and Jollie unable to tap into credit networks to purchase slaves see, James Grant to Richard Oswald, 7 November 1767, *JGP*, Reel 2.

¹²⁹ Henry Laurens to James Penman and William Makdougall, 21 November 1767; Henry Laurens to John & Thomas Tippling, 21 November 1767; Henry Laurens to Smith & Baillie, 21 November 1767, *HLP* 5:466-68.

¹³⁰ Henry Laurens to William Makdougall, 21 November 1767, *HLP* 5:469.

¹³¹ Henry Laurens to James Penman and William Makdougall, 21 November 1767, *HLP* 5:466-67.

As the largest slave entrepôt in North America, slave sales in the urban black Atlantic port of Charleston were a highly competitive international business.¹³² As customers from East Florida, Georgia and the Caribbean flocked to Charleston's "Negro Yards" to purchase slaves at deflated prices, the violence inherent to capture and transport of captive Africans to the Americas often spilt over into the marketplace.¹³³ Ultimately the intercolonial slave trade increased the violence specifically at slave sales and more generally within colonial society. As the primary supplier of slaves to British East Florida, John Graham was knowledgeable of market fluctuations in Savannah and Charleston. In January 1769, Graham informed Grant that the "first cargoes that arrive at Charleston will sell high of at least £320-£350 for men and £270-£280 for women." Graham cautioned Grant to be a "reasonable purchaser" and wait until the end of summer when the "fiery edge of the Carolina planters will be off and in general all of them pretty well supplied" at which time slaves could be purchased much cheaper. "I should not be surprised" Graham stated boldly "to see choice men selling in September or October at £250 to £280 at most."¹³⁴ By June, when Graham reported that slaves were selling "pretty

¹³² Sean Kelley, "Scrambling for Slaves: Captive Sales in Colonial South Carolina," *Slavery & Abolition* 34, no. 1 (2013): 1–21; Kenneth Morgan, "Slave Sales in Colonial Charleston," *The English Historical Review* 113 (1998): 905–27.

¹³³ William Brisbane to George Whitefield, 10 September 1753, George Whitefield Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC (LOC); Henry Laurens to William Thompson, 19 June 1764, *HLP* 4:315. Savannah merchants Inglis & Hall advertised that the sales for a recently arrived cargo of slaves would "commence in our yard as usual." *Georgia Gazette*, 14 June 1769; Austin & Laurens' yard was massive, capable of holding more than 105 captives at a time. Henry Laurens to Gedney Clark, 31 January 1756, *HLP* 2:83.

¹³⁴ John Graham to James Grant, 28 January 1769, *JGP*, Reel 17. In March 1769, men were selling for £300 and women for £270. In June 1769, the price for men held steady at £300 on the Charleston market. Laurens to Ross & Mill, 31 March 1769, *HLP* 6:422; 14 June 1769, *HLP* 6:590. £300 equaled roughly £43 sterling, suggesting that slaves were likely selling in Savannah for roughly the same price but Graham wanted to go to Charleston because the market offered greater choice and more slaves to select from. However, it also meant that there would be more buyers there. On 15 June 1769, the sale of 140 slaves that arrived on the *Gambia* to place in Savannah. Inglis & Hall sold 20 "new negroes" for £1,440 to Joseph Gibbons, selling on average for £36, equal to roughly £230 SC currency. At least in this single transaction, the Savannah market was cheaper than Charleston's. However, the gender and demographics of the slaves

reasonable” in Charleston, British ships had already disembarked some 4,000 Africans onto the city’s crowded wharves. In July 1769, Graham departed Savannah for Charleston where he planned to purchase as many as 140 slaves for himself, Grant and other Florida customers.¹³⁵

Throughout the circum-Caribbean it was no secret that South Carolina planters were salivating for new slaves after the three year prohibition. In December 1768, several ships with slaves from the Caribbean were waiting in the harbor to deposit captives on shore once the law ran its course.¹³⁶ The advertisement for the *Hannah* is illustrative of how the intercolonial slave trade responded to local market demand for captive Africans. The *Hannah*’s cargo consisted of “130 young men, 38 women, and 21 boys and girls” that were selected out of the *Bance Island*, a ship that arrived at Barbados from the Gold Coast in January 1769. The slave dealers arrogantly boasted that the captives “were so much superior in quality to cargoes generally imported from Africa that they will recommend themselves at first sight to any planter.”¹³⁷ Throughout the first quarter of the year, cargos from across the Caribbean carried small groups of enslaved people to Charleston, but the test for the market came in April when four West African ships arrived.¹³⁸ Only the wealthiest planters came out to the sales, and in general, lacked an

sold in the transaction is unknown. Donnan, *Documents Relating*, 4:625; William Gibbons Jr. Papers, Duke University.

¹³⁵ John Graham to James Grant, 18 June 1769; John Graham to James Grant, 16 July 1769; John Graham to James Grant, 11 September 1769, *JGP*, Reel 17. In the months of May and June 1769, ten slave ships arrived in Charleston.

¹³⁶ Henry Laurens to Ross & Mill, 24 December 1768, *HLP* 6:240.

¹³⁷ *The South Carolina and American Gazette*, 3 April 1769. The slave dealers advertised that the *Hannah* carried 189 slaves but paid import duties totaling £1,315 on 146 captives. According to the voyages database, 243 captives disembarked at Barbados. *Bance Island* ID# 77954.

¹³⁸ Henry Laurens to Ross & Mill, 11 March 1769, *HLP* 6:407. Drawing on the 1769 treasury ledgers, import duties were paid on 663 slaves arriving from intercolonial markets. The largest Caribbean markets delivering slaves to South Carolina were Barbados (265), St. Kitts (153), Antigua (135), and Jamaica (54). On average 24 slaves were carried on each ship from the Caribbean.

“eagerness for buying” despite the “prosperous state” enjoyed by most elites. Many buyers were prone to “stand off” with hopes for cheaper sales later in the season when the market would saturate with captive Africans.¹³⁹ In May 1769 Laurens received “Nine new Negroes” from Jamaica but he could not sell them in Charleston to “any advantage” because the recent “importations directly from the coast makes people despise” captives from the Caribbean.¹⁴⁰

As Charleston quickly transitioned into a bustling port of thousands of new culturally-diverse West Africans again in 1769, the increasing number of foreign black bodies walking about the city was an unsettling sight for many colonists.¹⁴¹ In response to the city’s alarm over its rising African population, a local kangaroo court convicted a “Mulatto fellow” named Dick for his alleged role as an instigator in the death of a white colonist.¹⁴² As punishment, on four consecutive days, Saturday through Tuesday, Dick received 25 lashes at the city’s most prominent intersections each morning and his right ear was removed.¹⁴³ One wonders if the Sunday morning flogging occurred before or after the delivery of the sermons to Charleston’s devout Protestants. Slave executions were carefully planned public spectacles that attracted large crowds. The drama of public

¹³⁹ Henry Laurens to Ross & Mill, 31 March 1769, *HLP* 6:422.

¹⁴⁰ Henry Laurens to Henry Bright, 25 May 1769, *HLP* 6:576. The captives arrived from Jamaica on the *Sally*. In early June, Laurens wrote to Bright informing him that the “second best negro man” had fallen from the ship’s main deck to the “very bottom of the ships hold” and likely suffering from broken ribs and bones agonized for a few days before dying. Remaining were 2 men, 2 boys, 2 women and 2 girls. “There are so many negroes of various cargoes remaining on the merchants hands and often selling at vendue that nobody” offered to buy Bright’s slaves. Henry Laurens to Henry Bright, 2 June 1769, *HLP* 6:585.

Nathaniel Russell informed several Rhode Island merchants that the Charleston market was glutted with slaves and that the price for captives was falling. Nathaniel Russell to Samuel and William Vernon, 18 May 1769, Nathaniel Russell Papers, 1765-1837, Historic Charleston Foundation, (HCF) Charleston.

¹⁴¹ In 1769, on average 14 new Africans arrived every day in Charleston. The officially recorded black population of Charleston was 6,336. Records of the Public Treasury General Tax Receipts 1761-1769, SCDAH. In 1769, Webster estimated the population of Charleston at 5,000 whites and 20,000 blacks. Donnan, *Documents Illustrative*, 4:415n.

¹⁴² On 1 August 1769, the *Gazette* reported that Dolly and Liverpoole, a Negro Doctor, were burned alive on the workhouse green. *South Carolina Gazette*, 1 August 1769.

¹⁴³ *South Carolina Gazette*, 17 August 1769.

floggings instilled terror amongst the poor while buttressing the power of the local elite slave-owning class.¹⁴⁴ The demand for enslaved laborers inundated Charleston with over 5,000 slaves in a single year.¹⁴⁵ Local authorities attempted to maintain social order by utilizing scapegoats like Dick to demonstrate how justice was extracted for recently arrived Africans in their new home.¹⁴⁶

The Charleston slave market was a busy scene. Buyers crammed the streets in search of deals. Officials reported that the hundreds of dead bodies thrown overboard into the harbor turned the city's marshes into heaps of rotting flesh where crabs and buzzards dined from dusk till dawn.¹⁴⁷ One of the slave ships in the harbor was the *Dembia* that arrived from Sierra Leone. Onboard was a "small cargo of about 70" captive Africans. Slave dealers David & John Deas advertised the sale for 3 August 1769.¹⁴⁸ A week before the sale Graham managed to take a pilot boat out to the *Dembia* and examine the captive Africans on board.¹⁴⁹ As demand exceeded supply, it was not uncommon for buyers to resort to extreme measures to retain enslaved African laborers. After attending a particularly violent sale in Charleston, William Brisbane wrote that "the planters [were] ready to fight striving who shall get into the Negro yards first in order to get the first

¹⁴⁴ Peter Linebaugh, *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

¹⁴⁵ According to the voyages database 4,428 Africans disembarked and combined with the 663 that arrived from intercolonial markets totals 5,091.

¹⁴⁶ The execution of the free black harbor pilot Thomas Jeremiah in 1775 is further evidence of how fear and terror underpinned colonial justice. J. William Harris, *The Hanging of Thomas Jeremiah: A Free Black Man's Encounter with Liberty* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); William Ryan, *The World of Thomas Jeremiah: Charles Town on the Eve of the American Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

¹⁴⁷ *South Carolina Gazette*, 1 June and 8 June 1769.

¹⁴⁸ A copy of the handbill circulated for the sales of the *Dembia* is located in the George Plimpton Papers, 1634-1956, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University, New York.

¹⁴⁹ John Graham to James Grant, 26 July 1769, *JGP*, Reel 17.

choice.”¹⁵⁰ Advertisements notified customers that sales would not begin “till the doors...open[ed]” was a measure to prevent “warm quarrels” from erupting among the “very large number of purchasers” assembled. At slave sales there were no delusions of Charleston’s mythical polite society.¹⁵¹ Graham could not have selected a worse time to complete his task of purchasing slaves for East Florida planters.

The arrival of the ship *John* from the “Windward and Grain Coast” with 280 slaves in late August 1769 was the second to last voyage directly from West Africa to arrive in Charleston for over 8 months.¹⁵² The sale of the captive Africans aboard the *John* took place on 7 August. At the event were “three times the number of purchasers attending the sale than there was Negroes” much to Graham’s frustration, “and as few [Guinea] men were expected this season and none the next people were anxious to have them at any price.” The colony’s consumers of African bodies had swarmed on Charleston like starving locusts. According to Graham’s estimation over 800 buyers attended the sale. Chaos and violence ruled the day. Graham intended to purchase “no less than 140” but managed only 53 despite the help of a few attendants and for those he “had to scramble for.”¹⁵³ A frenzied sale was particularly beneficial to a slave dealers profits because buyers “very often...in their hurry take hold of very ordinary slaves as prime overlooking their imperfections.”¹⁵⁴ Having purchased only a third of his intended total, Graham admitted that he was “head over ears in debt for Negroes... and quite sick”

¹⁵⁰ William Brisbane to George Whitefield, 10 September 1753, George Whitefield Papers, (LOC).

¹⁵¹ Donnan, *Documents Illustrative*, 4:412-413n; Laurens to Henry Weare & Co., 6 August 1756, *HLP* 1:312.

¹⁵² Voyage ID# 91451.

¹⁵³ John Graham to James Grant, 11 September 1769, *JGP*, Reel 17.

¹⁵⁴ Laurens to Law, Satterthwaite, Jones, 21 January 1756, *HLP* 2:65-66. The market deceives buyers’ perception.

of Charleston. On 12 October Graham set out with his “whole train,” a coffle of chained African bodies and supply wagons, for the trek back to Savannah.¹⁵⁵

The horrifically violent scene described by Graham was endemic to slave markets throughout circum-Caribbean slaving zones as the demand for laborers climbed in the last decades of the eighteenth century. For example, Thomas Trotter’s eyewitness account of a scramble in Jamaica is particularly valuable. Purchasers “when signal is given” commence by “rushing all at once among” slaves. “This unexpected maneuver” Trotter explained “had an astonishing effect on the slaves. They were crying out for their friends with all the language of affection at being separated.”¹⁵⁶ An account from Barbados described the “*abominable etiquette* of a slave sale” that too often generated “ill humor among the parties and a boxing match” ensued.¹⁵⁷ Moreover, Graham’s speculation about the Charleston slave market was inaccurate, which is surprising given his experience and his numerous lowcountry business associates there. He told Grant that towards the end of the season, when Graham expected demand to be low and all the planters “pretty well supplied,” that he could purchase men for £250. When Graham arrived in Charleston, it was clear he overstated his case. The “fiery edge of the Carolina planters” continued to burn bright and hot.¹⁵⁸ The “five fine fellows” purchased for Grant sold “at no less price

¹⁵⁵ John Graham to James Grant, 11 October 1769, *JGP*, Reel 17. Overland slave coffles were common in colonial British North America. For an example of an overland coffle from Georgia to South Carolina see, Richard Allein’s Account of Carolina Affairs to William Bull, 6 June 1736, Egmont Papers, 14201, f. 245. For an example of an overland coffle from Charleston to Savannah see William Vernon, Jonas Redwood and William Redwood to Samuel Sanford, 7 September 1758, Slavery Collection, New York Historical Society (hereafter NYHS).

¹⁵⁶ Sheila Lambert, ed., *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century: Volume 73* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1975), 87. Trotter was the captain of the *Society* that disembarked slaves in Jamaica in 1774 and 1776. Voyage ID 92015, 92560.

¹⁵⁷ William Dickson, *Letters on Slavery*, by William Dickson, Formerly Private Secretary to the Late Hon. Edward Hay, Governor of Barbadoes... (London: Printed and Sold by J. Phillips, 1789), (original emphasis) 111.

¹⁵⁸ John Graham to James Grant, 28 January 1769, *JGP*, Reel 17.

than £300” each.¹⁵⁹ Predicting the nature of the Charleston slave market was not an easy task. The port was connected to international markets across the Atlantic world and sudden shifts in political alliances or disruptions in supply chains in West Africa could directly impact the Charleston marketplace and, consequently the organization of the intercolonial slave trade.

The 1763 Treaty of Paris signified Britain’s ascendance as the preeminent trading power in the Atlantic. As spoils of war, the frontier plantation zones of Spanish Florida and the Ceded Islands were incorporated into Britain’s expanding imperial administration. New levels of land expropriation and large-scale unpaid labor exploitation magnified the Caribbean’s role within the larger Atlantic World economy as the epicenter of raw material production. New markets were opened up and traditional hubs of commerce and slave procurement in North America grew in import as expanding entrepôts for redistributing captives across the circum-Caribbean. The demand for enslaved African laborers climbed throughout the latter half of the eighteenth century as planters in British East Florida attempted to convert the former military outpost into lucrative plantations. The assimilation of Spanish Florida and other new markets into Britain’s Atlantic empire placed far too great a strain on the structural organization of the transatlantic slave trade to meet colonial labor demands. As a result, the intercolonial slave trade increased dramatically in carrying volume and scope as the number of secondary markets expanded across the circum-Caribbean. In colonial settlements like Charleston and St. Augustine, the intercolonial slave trade was an important avenue for commercial exchange that buttressed trade networks and intra-imperial relationships. The

¹⁵⁹ John Graham to James Grant, 11 September 1769, *JGP*, Reel 17. Despite the large imports to Charleston in 1769, the price for men slaves remained steady, £300, throughout the year.

incorporation of new colonial markets into Britain's empire intensified locally the competitive violence for bonded people, generally heightened levels of violence within port societies, and introduced new cultures into disparately unfamiliar spaces.

"She Would Make Faces and Complaints": Resisting Commodification

Charleston's slave market was particularly violent for captive Africans and potentially destructive for captives' bodies as buyers scrambled to select the most desirable samples of flesh. At opportune times, enslaved people strategized to overcome and resist the market forces that commodified their bodies. Some were more successful than others but the final outcome is not as important as understanding how captive Africans challenged enslavement and specifically the marketplace mechanisms of the intercolonial slave trade. The demand for labor was a powerful economic force that pushed and pulled on enslaved people much like the unrelenting winds of the dreaded hurricane. Despite the natural and unnatural hazards captive Africans deployed the powerful weapon of deception and others at their disposal to repel and counterattack against those that would sever shipmate bonds or remove them from their adopted communities. The following section explains how captive Africans directly engaged and participated in the intercolonial slave trade, how their actions impacted labor patterns and the efficiency of the trade in delivering slaves to secondary colonial markets. By recovering the partial narratives of bonded peoples participation in the intercolonial slave trade, we can better understand how marketplace dynamics impacted larger Atlantic migration patterns and the additional challenges enslaved Africans confronted within the intercolonial slave trade.

In June 1751, two West African men named Pero and Jack from the Caribbean island of Antigua arrived in the Chesapeake.¹⁶⁰ They were just two of the thousands of enslaved Africans carried in the intercolonial slave trade from the Caribbean to mainland North America. Pero and Jack had lived on the island of Antigua for about five years.¹⁶¹ Anthony Fahie sent them to Norfolk merchant Charles Steuart because the Virginia market was selling incredibly well. Virginia's "rising market" had induced many Caribbean merchants to send slaves to the mainland hoping to make a quick buck.¹⁶² Pero and Jack were described as "able likely fellows" but Steuart informed Fahie that Virginia customers assumed that "West India negroes...[were] shipped off for great crimes."¹⁶³ In July 1751, Steuart wrote to Fahie apprising him that the sale of Pero and Jack had gone terribly wrong. The Virginia purchaser told Steuart that Pero and Jack were "not worth half" the purchase price because they had their "guts hanging out at their fundaments longer than the quill we now write with."¹⁶⁴ Steuart reluctantly received Pero and Jack from the disgruntled buyer hoping to save his reputation.¹⁶⁵

Pero and Jack saw an opening and took action. They started behaving as if they were part of the malevolent slave population sent from the West Indies. Steuart tried to sell them but was repeatedly unsuccessful. "Nor will they allow themselves to be sold," Steuart griped, "by pretending to be worse than they are." As buyers intrusively inspected

¹⁶⁰ The 40-ton sloop *Diamond*, Captain Adam Wilson arrived in Hampton Roads from St. Christopher on 19 June 1751 carrying 13 slaves. Thomas Ogilvie & Co. of St. Christopher were the owners of the sloop. The voyage from the island to Virginia took 25 days. Walter E. Minchinton, Celia M. King, and Peter B. Waite, eds., *Virginia Slave-Trade Statistics, 1698-1775* (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1984), 145.

¹⁶¹ Charles Steuart to Anthony Fahie, 15 July 1751, Charles Steuart Letterbooks, 1751-1763, Amb.1599, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP).

¹⁶² Charles Steuart to Thomas Ogilvie, 13 July 1751, Steuart Letterbooks (HSP).

¹⁶³ Charles Steuart to Anthony Fahie, 13 July 1751, Steuart Letterbooks (HSP).

¹⁶⁴ Charles Steuart to Anthony Fahie, 15 July 1751, Steuart Letterbooks (HSP).

¹⁶⁵ Charles Steuart to Thomas Ogilvie, 15 July 1751, Steuart Letterbooks (HSP). Steuart informed Ogilvie that "we endeavor to do justice to the owners without abusing the confidence the buyers repose in us therefore can not insist on this sale."

their bodies, Pero and Jack declared “to all that come to see them that their parents and others of their generation died of the same disorder.”¹⁶⁶ Pero and Jack spoke directly to Virginia buyers and tapped into their Diasporic roots to fend off would-be purchasers. Pero and Jack were quite successful in staving off sale for more than six-months but Steuart grew impatient. Steuart sold Pero and Jack at vendue to a loss.¹⁶⁷ However, Pero and Jack’s intercolonial odyssey does not end here.

A little more than a year after Pero and Jack arrived in Virginia, Steuart wrote to Thomas Ogilvie in a panicked state. At the auction, Jack was sold to a Mr. Brotherson and in an astounding act had “sued his master for his freedom.” Furthermore the suit was supported by a local attorney and the colony’s Attorney General Peyton Randolph.¹⁶⁸ The merits of the suit were unclear but Steuart knew that if the suit went to court he would lose. Steuart was forced to purchase Jack back from Brotherson for nearly double the original purchase price.¹⁶⁹ For a second time, Jack had foiled a market transaction and the authenticity of his commodified status. Jack was then placed on a sloop for the intercolonial voyage back to Antigua.¹⁷⁰ From there Jack was returned to his original owner Thomas Ogilvie.¹⁷¹ Jack made it back to the Caribbean despite astronomical financial and legal odds against him.¹⁷² Notwithstanding his physical illness, Jack

¹⁶⁶ Charles Steuart to Anthony Fahie, 21 August 1751, Steuart Letterbooks (HSP).

¹⁶⁷ Charles Steuart to Anthony Fahie, 28 December 1751, Steuart Letterbooks (HSP).

¹⁶⁸ Charles Steuart to Thomas Ogilvie, 25 July 1752, Steuart Letterbooks (HSP).

¹⁶⁹ Pero and Jack were sold for £43. Jack was purchased from Brotherson for £30. Steuart also had to pay passage fees to Antigua and St. Kitts.

¹⁷⁰ Charles Steuart to Thomas Lessly, 26 July 1752, Steuart Letterbooks (HSP).

¹⁷¹ Charles Steuart to Thomas Lessly, 18 November 1752, Steuart Letterbooks (HSP).

¹⁷² Pero may have returned to the Caribbean. Steuart told Ogilvie that “Pero and his master are both run’d away” but that he would attempt to purchase him if possible. His whereabouts were uncertain at that time. However, Pero turns up again. In 1754 Anthony Fahie married a woman named Mary Pare. John Pare, Fahie’s father-in-law, died in 1757. In Pare’s will he bequeathed “my negro servant Pero” an annual annuity of £4 “during his life of the currency of Antigua as a record for his faithful service.” PRO 11/836/296-97, BNA, Kew.

schemed to manipulate market conditions to his advantage. Although Jack's outcome upon returning to the Caribbean is unknown. Regardless, Jack's story informs several important facets of the organization of the intercolonial slave trade and how enslaved Africans impacted outcomes and challenged their captive status.

For captives like Jack and Pero caught up in the uncertainties of the intercolonial slave trade, there were hundreds of routes and ports to visit in the circum-Caribbean. While ship-captains were instructed to visit specific ports and conduct business with familiar merchants, the moment when captives disembarked for the last time was ambiguous. In April 1754, the 15-ton sloop *Three Sisters* arrived at Nassau, the main port on the island of New Providence in the Bahamas, from Antigua with "36 new negroes."¹⁷³ A grizzled mariner with over twenty years of sailing experience, Captain Isaac Cox generally made two Caribbean circuits annually.¹⁷⁴ Cox landed his cargo of sugar and rum and the following day declared to port officials that his destination was Jamaica and that the *Three Sisters* carried "35 new Negroes."¹⁷⁵ Given that Cox sold only one captive in Nassau, it seems likely that he intended to sell them in a different Caribbean market where demand was greater. By the end of April, Cox returned to

¹⁷³ Bahamas NOSL, CO 27/13, f. 9.

¹⁷⁴ The Cox family were well-known Bermuda mariners. John Cox migrated to the Bahamas in the late 17th century. Isaac had two brothers; Jacob (d. 1764) lived in New Providence and Joseph (d. 1761) in Charleston. Both were very wealthy at the time of their deaths. Probate Inventories, Vol T. pp.630-33, SCDAH; F. Claiborne Johnston and C.F.E. Hollis Hallett, eds., *Early Colonists of the Bahamas: A Selection of Records* (Pembroke, Bermuda: Juniperhill Press, 1996), 60; C. S. Williams, *Descendants of John Cox* (New York: Williams, 1909), 132-34, 233; Henry C. Wilkinson, *Bermuda in the Old Empire* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), 72, 191. For Isaac Cox's activities in Charleston in the 1740s see, SCG 28 Nov. 1741; 14 Jan., 1 June 1745; 9 Feb. 1747; 6 Nov. 1749.

¹⁷⁵ If Cox did stop in Jamaica, he did not sell his slaves in Kingston or Port Royal, the only ports for which ship entries and departures are complete from March-December 1754. Jamaica NOSL, CO 142/16.

Nassau having sold the slaves to Spanish customers in Cuba.¹⁷⁶ Cox returned from Cuba with only ballast in the ship's hold.¹⁷⁷

In May 1754, the *Three Sisters* departed for Charleston carrying over seven thousand pounds of foreign and British sugar.¹⁷⁸ From the sales of his sugar, Cox purchased "17 new negroes" from Jermyn Wright and returned to Providence.¹⁷⁹ As in his previous circuit, it does not appear that Cox intended to sell the captives in Nassau where a large-scale plantation complex had yet to take root.¹⁸⁰ In early August 1754, Cox departed with "26 new negroes," of which many were likely purchased in Charleston, for Jamaica. However Cox did not sell the captives in Jamaica; less than a month later Cox returned from Cuba having sold his slaves to Spanish customers for 170 rough cow hides and eight live cattle.¹⁸¹ Nassau was Cox's base of operations. On the island, captives were collected from Antigua and Charleston and then carried to Cuba where they were sold to Spanish planters. For Cox, the captives transshipped in the intercolonial slave trade represented an important facet of routine trans-imperial commerce. However, for the captives onboard Cox's sloop, the journey from one strange Caribbean port to another was representative of the ambiguities inherent to the lived experience of many enslaved Africans.

¹⁷⁶ Bahamas NOSL, CO 27/13, f. 11, 30 April 1754.

¹⁷⁷ In 1754, two ships departed Jamaica carrying 185 slaves for Havana. Jamaica NOSL, CO 142/16, f. 20, 22. 560 slaves were exported to the 'Spanish Coast,' 387 to Porto Bello, 130 to Cartagena, 102 to Curacao, and 9 to North Carolina. CO 142/16, f. 20-2, 29-31, 41-3.

¹⁷⁸ Bahamas NOSL, CO 27/13, f. 12.

¹⁷⁹ Jermyn Wright received £93.15 in drawbacks for slaves carried to Providence on the *Three Sisters*. Public Treasurer's Journal B, 1748-65, SCDAH; Bahamas NOSL, CO 27/13, f. 13; SCG, 20 June 1754.

¹⁸⁰ A 1731 census submitted by Governor William Rogers counted 935 white men, women and children and 453 "able Negroes and Negro children." Johnston and Hallett, *Early Colonists of the Bahamas*, 22-29.

¹⁸¹ Bahamas NOSL, CO 27/13, f. 13-14. For the voyage to Jamaica/Cuba, Cox outfitted his ship with 10 guns and an additional 2 sailors. The *Three Sisters* usually sailed with 5 sailors and no guns.

As the trade patterns of the *Three Sisters* illustrate, captive Africans were a fundamental component of commerce within the integrated regional markets of the circum-Caribbean.¹⁸² A recent study has shown that as many as 92 percent of the captives trafficked in the intercolonial slave trade were new arrivals that departed soon after first arriving at Caribbean or North American ports.¹⁸³ However, the private correspondence of traders and slave dealers provide a rare glimpse into the strategies utilized by enslaved people to contest market forces that drove the intercolonial slave trade. Captive Africans trafficked in the intercolonial slave trade were knowledgeable of the marketplace because of the time they had spent in Caribbean settlements. Many understood and could speak English. Unlike most Atlantic commodities, captive Africans had the distinct ability to manipulate the terms of negotiation, and rapidly alter their market value. In 1715 when Jeffry arrived in Philadelphia from Jamaica, the mid-Atlantic winter took a toll on his body. By the spring, Jeffry had recovered from his illness, but according to Jonathan Dickinson, had “turned thief” once he recuperated. When potential buyers approached, Jeffry “often threaten[ed] to destroy himself or at least...persuaded many people” that he had suicidal tendencies.¹⁸⁴

That same winter Jonathan Barnett carried a woman from Jamaica to Philadelphia for Dickinson to sell. She too suffered through the seasonal freeze much like Jeffry. “Whenever I had any to view her” Dickinson wrote “she would make faces and

¹⁸² Pons, *History of the Caribbean*, 125.

¹⁸³ O’Malley, *Final Passages*, 21.

¹⁸⁴ Jonathan Dickinson to Jonathan Gale, 30 April 1715, Jonathan Dickinson Letterbook, 1715-1721, Library Company of Philadelphia (LCP). The threat of self-destructive behavior by enslaved Africans was not uncommon. In 1667, John Batten related an account of a captive African man in Maryland who was “married and will not part from his wife. If he had not been prevented, he would have hanged himself.” Quoted in Carl Bridenbaugh and Roberta Bridenbaugh, *No Peace Beyond the Line: The English in the Caribbean, 1624-1690* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 350.

complaints as would prevent their [buyers] proceeding further.”¹⁸⁵ In 1719, when Sarah arrived in Philadelphia, Dickinson noted that “here is some that know her to be a valuable Negro” from their encounters with her in Jamaica. Sarah’s reputation as valuable laborer transcended the geographical borders of the colony and potentially benefitted Dickinson as the seller within the Pennsylvania marketplace. However, Sarah did her best to co-opt Dickinson’s economic venture and “exercised her tongue too large” which “occasion[ed] uneasiness” among prospective buyers.¹⁸⁶ Thomas Riche implored Captain Thomas Charles to take “great care” of an enslaved man he was to sell in the Bay of Honduras or else he’ll “give you the slip.” Charles was instructed to negotiate with a supplier who could “supply the wood soonest...and get 30 tons of wood for the Negro man.” Most important, Charles was to make sure that all the wood was completely loaded on the ship before he sold the man “as he may pretend to be out of his head,” which would ruin the transaction.¹⁸⁷ Enslaved Africans like Jeffry and Sarah skillfully influenced market outcomes to their advantage to delay their sale, much to the frustration of their owners. In doing so, they were innovators in developing effective non-violent strategies that blunted the sharp pangs of the marketplace commodification replicated later by generations of bonded people.

Many captive Africans trafficked in the intercolonial slave trade suffered from debilitating physical illnesses. Sometimes these physical defects were the reason why

¹⁸⁵ Jonathan Dickinson to Enoch Stephenson, 21 April 1715, Dickinson Letterbook (LCP).

¹⁸⁶ Jonathan Dickinson to Moses Cardoso, 7 December 1719. Dickinson was unable to sell Sarah until the following spring and incurred additional costs for her winter outfit and maintenance. Jonathan Dickinson to Moses Susana Cardoso, 1 July 1720, Dickinson Letterbook (LCP).

¹⁸⁷ Thomas Riche to Captain Thomas Charles of the sloop Polly, 8 May 1767, Thomas Riche Letterbook, 1750-1771, Am.9261, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP). For a study of New England traders itinerant activities in the intercolonial slave trade with attention to the Central American coast see, Jennifer L. Anderson, “New England Merchants and the circum-Caribbean Slave Trade,” in Ana Lucia Araujo, ed., *Paths of the Atlantic Slave Trade: Interactions, Identities, and Images* (Amherst, N.Y.: Cambria Press, 2011), 21-48.

owners shipped them off. On some occasions these illnesses were contracted upon arriving at new markets. Infectious diseases like yaws were particularly painful and created fear among whites as the illnesses carried by slaves also lingered in the homes of their new owners. The Anglo-American household was an intimate space that brought whites and Africans into close proximity, where exposed flesh regularly collided with others. In 1716 Jamaican slave-owner John Lewis sent an African woman to John Fischer. Shortly after arriving in Philadelphia, the woman was overcome with the yaws which seemed “terrible” to Fischer “least he and his family should” contract the disease. Moreover, the woman’s illness required Dickinson to share his knowledge of enslaved Africans because Fischer was a “stranger to that obnoxious” disease. Dickinson informed Lewis that he “must advise” Fischer “how to deal with her.”¹⁸⁸

Some Jamaican slaves arrived in Philadelphia “very sick,” often just a few steps from death. Others suffered from “ulcerated” limbs which required the care of an attentive physician for the rest of the “summer and winter.” The long duration of the man’s illness apparently spread through the community because no one residing in the city would make an offer for him. Dickinson eventually sold the enslaved man to a “lower county man” south of the city.¹⁸⁹ The physically debilitating effects of smallpox scarred James for life, leaving him, according to Dickinson, with a “manly ruby complexion.”¹⁹⁰ In August 1762, Thomas Riche was sent “by chance...a new negro boy.” As Riche explained it, the boy had been in Philadelphia less than a week and apparently

¹⁸⁸ Jonathan Dickinson to John Lewis, 15 August 1716, Dickinson Letterbook (LCP).

¹⁸⁹ Jonathan Dickinson to Francis Moore, 18 November 1719; Jonathan Dickinson to Isaac Gale, 20 November 1719, Dickinson Letterbook (LCP).

¹⁹⁰ Jonathan Dickinson to Jonathan Gale, 28 November 1716, Dickinson Letterbook (LCP).

after “making too free with the fruit and watermelons” contracted smallpox.¹⁹¹ Francis Moore was able to sell two slaves in less than pristine physical condition to an inattentive purchaser. The anonymous buyer received an abatement from Thomas Riche after he discovered that an enslaved woman was “full of the yaws” and a man died from a bout of the “gravel.”¹⁹² The illnesses and diseases captive Africans contracted before, during and after the intercolonial migration impacted the markets in which they arrived in important ways.

Deception was an important aspect of intercolonial slave trade. Indeed, deception was deployed by practically everyone – shipper, seller, captive, buyer – caught up in the trade. Each party, when possible, was keenly attuned to subtle market manipulations. In October 1765, Captain John Burroughs carried a small parcel of slaves from Philadelphia to North Carolina consigned to Newbern merchant Samuel Cornell.¹⁹³ As Burroughs approached the coast, “easy weather” permitting, he was instructed to “take care of your slaves and get them shaved and greased.” The hygiene ritual was intended to prevent buyers from discovering the “old age by their head.”¹⁹⁴ Razors and other instruments were regularly listed in ship’s invoices.¹⁹⁵ Evidence that the hygienic rituals were applied across Atlantic world markets indicates that the practice was generally successful in deceiving buyers.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹¹ Thomas Riche to Samuel Tucker, 13 August 1762, Riche Letterbook, (HSP).

¹⁹² Thomas Riche to (unknown), (circa 10-25) February 1764, Riche Letterbook, (HSP).

¹⁹³ For Cornell see, William Stevens Powell, ed., *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), vol. 1:435.

¹⁹⁴ Thomas Riche to John Burroughs, 21 October 1765, Riche Letterbook, (HSP).

¹⁹⁵ Trade book of the *Jenny*, Thomas Leyland Company Account Books, 1789-1793, (WCL).

¹⁹⁶ For accounts of ship captains ritually shaving slaves in preparation for the market display see, Thomas Bluett, *Some Memoirs of the Life of Job, the Son of Solomon the High Priest of Boonda in Africa...* (London: Richard Ford, 1734), 17; “The Journal of the *Mary*, 1795-96,” in Donnan, *Documents Illustrative*, 3: 377; Henry Schroeder, *Three Years Adventures of a Minor in England, Africa, the West Indies, South-Carolina and Georgia* (Leeds: Thos. Inchbold, 1831), 132-33.

In addition to manipulating the physical appearance of captive Africans, slave dealers selectively crafted slave biographies to conceal characteristics that might otherwise prevent or at least hinder, a sale within local markets. An enslaved African man on one of Thomas Riche's Pennsylvania properties was described as "troublesome with the wenches and falls in love" with them. The man then becomes "jealous of all the fellows that comes to the house." The final straw for the enslaved man was his unexpected intrusion into the house "at midnight," which "frightened" Mrs. Riche terribly, forcing her husband to sell him off. None of this particularly personal and pertinent information was conveyed to Cornell. Rather Riche noted that "his master died and I have no use for him" although he was "young stout and willing to work." Undoubtedly, Cornell would "get a good price" for the man who would someday "make a fine slave."¹⁹⁷ This was not a singular episode. Interestingly, there seems to be a pattern of slaves sent to North Carolina from Philadelphia for "keeping with women" in the region.¹⁹⁸ In October 1773, a Grenada planter shipped two enslaved men, Gregory and George, to Charleston for Peter Leger to sell. Gregory and George were allegedly skilled carpenters. However, according to Leger "after a few trials...of the abilities of the two fellows...they are said not to be equal" to expectations.¹⁹⁹ Slave dealers did not shy from intentionally masking African masculinity or embellishing skillsets in an effort to manipulate the market to their advantage.

Shipboard mortality was not limited to the passage across the Atlantic Ocean from West Africa that generally lasted between three or four months. The shorter voyage

¹⁹⁷ Thomas Riche to Samuel Cornell, 7 February 1767; Thomas Riche to Samuel Cornell, 8 February 1767, Thomas Riche Letterbook, (HSP). In the manuscript the 7 February letter is crossed out.

¹⁹⁸ Thomas Riche to Samuel Cornell, 1 September 1761, Riche Letterbook, (HSP).

¹⁹⁹ Peter Leger and William Greenwood to Andrew Irwin, 9 October 1773, Leger & Greenwood Letterbook, 1770-1775, (WCL).

inherent to the intercolonial slave trade did not automatically create more sanitary ship conditions nor produce healthier captives. The captives that survived the transatlantic voyage were largely the strongest and luckiest. Subjecting captives to further transshipment exposed Africans to additional physical peril and psychological hardships.²⁰⁰ For example, in June 1738 Robert Ellis carried 67 slaves on the *Frederica* from Charleston to Virginia. Ellis informed his Charleston-based partners that he “sold all the negroes” except for two that were sick and two that died in route to Virginia.²⁰¹ That Ellis was able to sell the parcel of captive Africans so quickly is remarkable given that over the previous month three ships from the Caribbean had carried 130 slaves to the colony.²⁰² Ellis protested the mortality of the two slaves claiming that they were “very weak” before boarding the ship as well as insufficient provisions to keep them healthy during the passage.²⁰³

In a different venture with Charleston merchant Robert Pringle, Ellis carried two slaves to sell in Philadelphia. Regrettably, one of the enslaved women died from smallpox.²⁰⁴ Indeed New England and the mid-Atlantic colonies proved to be a particularly inhospitable for captive Africans carried in the intercolonial slave trade from Caribbean plantation zones. Two women, sent by Jamaican resident Isaac Gale and

²⁰⁰ In comparison to transatlantic voyages, captives trafficked in the intercolonial slave trade experienced a significantly higher rate of mortality. Factoring in the variable of time the rate of mortality, calculated as deaths per thousand individuals per month, captives died at rate of about 80 individuals per 1,000 per month. For transatlantic voyages, captives averaged 60 fatalities per 1,000 individuals per month. O'Malley, *Final Passages*, 71-72.

²⁰¹ Robert Ellis to Cleland & Wallace, 1 July 1738, Robert Ellis Letterbook 1736-1748, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia (HSP).

²⁰² Minchinton, King, and Waite, *Virginia Slave-Trade Statistics, 1698-1775*, 97.

²⁰³ Robert Ellis to Cleland & Wallace, 1 July 1738; Robert Ellis to Thomas Gadsden, 1 July 1738, Robert Ellis Letterbook, (HSP).

²⁰⁴ Robert Ellis to Robert Pringle, 25 July 1738; Robert Ellis to Robert Pringle, 30 October 1738 Robert Ellis Letterbook, (HSP); Robert Pringle to Robert Ellis, 15 August 1738; Robert Pringle to Robert Ellis, 17 February 1742, in Walter B. Edgar, ed., *The Letterbook of Robert Pringle* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1972), 26, 512.

described as “indifferent,” were unable to survive the hostile Pennsylvania winter.²⁰⁵

Captain Marshall departed from Antigua for Boston with insufficient supplies for the trip, and, as a result “Ted and the New Negro” on board perished. David Greene wrote that they “fell Martyrs to a change of climate” and that their bodies were “interred with as little expense as possible.”²⁰⁶ While maintaining the captive’s wellbeing was the primary objective during transport to alternative markets, the ship itself was a particularly dangerous place. In 1766, an enslaved man was shipped from New York to North Carolina. During the transit the man who was “subject to the fits” received significant injuries after “falling into the fire” onboard the ship.²⁰⁷ Ships were perilous spaces where injury was commonplace. And slaves suffering from debilitating illnesses confronted additional hardships and potentially death during the intercolonial transit.

Merchants, mariners and slave dealers active in the intercolonial slave trade deployed an evolving array of tactics to transport and sell captives across long distances in colonial markets. On occasion traders unflinchingly weaved falsehoods into captive narratives. But more often, they downplayed the negative physical and psychological traits that were undesirable to buyers hoping to extract as much physical labor as possible from bonded people. In addition, captives’ physical appearance was dramatically altered to hide the stressors of mortality, the hardships of bondage and the native marks of their homeland. Captives familiar with their new settings took advantage of their knowledge about market conditions and actively engaged with potential customers. Particularly astute captives like Jack and Pero strategized the conditions of enslavement

²⁰⁵ Jonathan Dickinson to Isaac Gale, 1 June 1719, Dickinson Letterbook (LCP).

²⁰⁶ David Greene to John Rose, 30 October 1784, David Greene Letterbook, 1771-1785, (WCL).

²⁰⁷ Thomas Riche to Samuel Cornell, 11 June 1766, Riche Letterbook, (HSP).

by tapping into their Diasporic roots and understanding of their West African heritage. Others threatened self-destructive ends; a very definitive end that thwarted the latent financial benefits of slave ownership.²⁰⁸ Enslaved Africans spoke directly to customers, demonstrated their linguistic talents, and adaptability to new environments. The ease with which some captive Africans adjusted was disconcerting and threatening for many potential buyers. All the participants, willingly and unwillingly caught up in the intercolonial slave trade, crafted strategies to manipulate the circumstances in which they encountered. The methods and tactics changed over time for all parties involved as each new market and plantation setting presented its own set of challenges to adapt to and overcome.

“A Secret as in Your Own Breast:” The Intercolonial Contraband Trade

The intercolonial slave trade delivered laborers to secondary markets irregularly supplied by the transatlantic ships from West Africa. In general traders in the primary English Caribbean markets, Barbados and Jamaica, would transship captive Africans to secondary markets such as Montserrat, Hispaniola or Vera Cruz. However, in some cases, the rigid organizational structure of the transatlantic slave trade prevented some merchants from participating.²⁰⁹ Consequently, the intercolonial slave trade provided an opportunity for upstart traders to develop reputations and credit standing through which future large-scale slave consignments could develop. For example, ship captains carrying

²⁰⁸ Suicide by enslaved Africans exposed like few others acts the contradictions of slavery. Terri L. Snyder, *The Power to Die: Slavery and Suicide in British North America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015).

²⁰⁹ For larger discussions of these themes see, Nicholas Radburn, “Guinea Factors, Slave Sales, and the Profits of the Transatlantic Slave Trade in Late Eighteenth-Century Jamaica: The Case of John Tailyour,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 72, no. 2 (2015): 243–86.

cargoes to Jamaica received strict instructions to make consignments only to specific merchants through which prior arrangements were established. As a result, “opportunities do not happen” at Jamaica for newcomers to negotiate with ship captains to sell their cargoes. A scheme was hatched to have some slaves “sent down from Barbados” to Jamaica.²¹⁰ The scheme was attractive, because at Barbados it was possible to purchase “cargoes of Negroes at an absolute price of such captains” that were “not consigned to a particular house.” Smaller cargoes transshipped from Barbados were potentially profitable on “account of the difference...in the value between the two islands of some sorts of Negroes.” The venture was most likely to fail if the passage between the two islands exceeded a “run of 10 or 12 days.”²¹¹ Slave-owners that could not sell off runaways on the islands often resorted to the intercolonial slave trade as an avenue for disposal.²¹² During the first half of the eighteenth century, Jamaica and Barbados were the largest markets for slaves in the Caribbean. Both were principally supplied with captive Africans directly from West Africa. Enslaved Africans also arrived at the islands via the intercolonial slave trade by traders attempting to make a break into the more lucrative Atlantic trade.²¹³

The intercolonial slave trade created new opportunities for commerce and wealth for parasitic traders in communities separated by long distances. For merchants and ship captains willing to risk censure or imprisonment, the intercolonial slave trade was also a

²¹⁰ Pares Transcripts, H378, Lascelles & Maxwell to T. Stevenson & Sons, 21 October 1752 in S. D Smith, ed., *The Lascelles and Maxwell Letter Books, 1739-1769* (Wakefield: Microfilm Academic Publishers, 2002). (hereafter *LMLB*)

²¹¹ Pares Transcripts, H378, Lascelles & Maxwell to John & Alexander Harvie, 23 September 1752, *LMLB*.

²¹² Pares Transcripts, H613, Lascelles & Maxwell to John Harvie, 27 November 1752, *LMLB*.

²¹³ The Harvie brothers, John and Alexander, migrated from Barbados to Jamaica in 1751. Two years later Lascelles & Maxwell gave the Harvie brothers a line of credit amounting to £20,000 sterling, allowing them to break into the transatlantic slave trade. S. D. Smith, *Slavery, Family, and Gentry Capitalism in the British Atlantic: The World of the Lascelles, 1648-1834* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 195-96.

corridor for smuggling and illicit commerce. In the 1760s and 1770s, Philadelphia merchant Thomas Riche shipped as many as a hundred slaves or more via intercolonial trade routes to contacts in North Carolina, none of which was more important than Samuel Cornell.²¹⁴ In October 1764, Riche sent Cornell a “fine young fellow and girl” to sell and inquired, “would you give me a hint what you can do with your collector.” Riche stated he “could lead you [Cornell] in a branch...into your port to a great profit” for both men.²¹⁵ Cornell sent Riche a list of the “rates” or payoffs that would be required for any illicit activities to keep officials quiet. Riche implored his comrade that the scheme “be a secret as in your own breast” and to “settle the affair” with the collector so that his ships could unload their cargoes offshore without detection.²¹⁶

The intercolonial slave traded provided numerous cloaks through which illicit commerce could be transacted underneath the guise of legitimate trade. In 1738, Thomas Butcher was the agent assigned to carry a cargo of slaves on the *Triton* to Caracas. The ship left Barbados in late January 1738 and arrived at St. Kitts a few days later. Butcher reported that many of the captives on board were healthy despite departure delays. However, in registering the ship with the customs collector he ran into some trouble. Butcher noted that “in the body of the certificate for clearing” the collector “inserted that the Negroes were imported hither from Barbados” and despite his protest, “would not do

²¹⁴ The extent of Cornell’s illicit activities are difficult to measure but less than a decade after arriving in the colony, Cornell was considered one of the wealthiest merchants in North Carolina. Powell, ed., *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, 1:435.

²¹⁵ Thomas Riche to Samuel Cornell, 11 October 1764, Riche Letterbook, (HSP).

²¹⁶ Thomas Riche to Samuel Cornell, 14 April 1765; Thomas Riche to Samuel Cornell, 21 April 1765, Riche Letterbook, (HSP).

otherwise.” Butcher concluded that “unless we can scratch it out in the passage down” the sales of the slaves would suffer in Caracas.²¹⁷

Butcher’s primary reason for falsifying the clearance certificate was rooted in the perceptions of local buyers within the Caracas market. The “fears of the people in regard to smallpox” carried to Caracas by intercolonial slave trade ships “is so great that on the first appearance of it every family that is able leaves the city.” The report continued that over the past few years the “contagion of smallpox” was carried from Barbados on at least three occasions. The “supply of negroes from a more wholesome Island” was necessary because the disease proved “fatal” to the slaves and Spanish “families.” Local Caracas customers informed Butcher that they “never experienced it [smallpox] in Negroes brought from St Christopher.” Officials agreed that they would only ship slaves from St Christopher in order to “make the people easy” and assuage their association of the Barbadian origins of smallpox.²¹⁸ Assumptions about the origins of captive Africans carried in the intercolonial slave trade impacted the structure and volume of the commerce within local markets.²¹⁹

Spanish perception about the origins of captives carried in the intercolonial slave trade was not limited to Caracas, but was prevalent throughout the circum-Caribbean.

Havana agent John Creigh reported that the “people” here “will imagine” slaves arriving

²¹⁷ Thomas Butcher to Peter Burrell, 4 February 1738, Shelburne Papers, 44, f. 623-24, (WCL).

²¹⁸ Caracas Report, 14 April 1737, Shelburne Papers 43, f. 133. In 1723, the Barbados assembly passed a Quarantine Act designed to “prevent dangers that happen to inhabitants of this island from contagious distempers, brought here by ships, or other vessels.” Sainsbury, ed., *Calendar State Papers, AWI 1722-23*, vol. 33:308, 363; Sainsbury, ed., *Calendar State Papers, AWI 1724-25*, vol. 34:410.

²¹⁹ It seems most logical that the high volume of ships from North America, Europe and Africa visiting Bridgetown meant that the island had a greater statistical chance of encountering deadly diseases, combined with the size of the island made quarantining an outbreak that much more difficult for local officials. Palmer identified 39 vessels arriving in Spanish markets from St. Christopher from 1715-1738. Colin A. Palmer, *Human Cargoes: The British Slave Trade to Spanish America, 1700-1739* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 98.

from Cartagena are “refuse” and consequently reluctant to make purchases.²²⁰ Slaves sent to smaller markets where demand was low tended to find their way to Havana. For example, from 1730 to 1733, the *Dove* carried two cargoes with a total of 40 captives to Campeche. The captain was instructed to sell the slaves for cash but if hard currency was wanting, logwood was acceptable. At Campeche, less than 20 percent of the captives were sold. Over half of the captives endured additional intercolonial voyages to Vera Cruz and Havana where they were sold.²²¹ Thomas Nasmyth carried a cargo of slaves to Campeche aboard the *Fame* and upon arrival discovered that there was “no demand for them” because the region remained well “peopled with Indians.” After five months, only eight slaves were sold and the remaining 12 were sold at Vera Cruz.²²² Attempts to smuggle captives in the intercolonial slave trade were only a viable commercial risk if conditions in the Spanish market were ideal. Creigh stated that the “illicit Negroes is not worth the taking” in Havana. According to Creigh’s calculation, a 30 percent or more profit margin was not enough to induce the smuggling of slaves into the Havana market.²²³ Captives trafficked in the intercolonial slave trade to Spanish circum-Caribbean markets tended to experience multiple transshipments because of regional variations in the level of plantation development dependent upon enslaved African labor.

Jamaica was the primary trading center for receiving and exporting slaves to Spanish Caribbean markets. The intercolonial slave trade was organized according to captives’ ethnic origins and distributed according to larger customer preferences. Ships from “Angola and Calabar bring in three assortments of negroes” John Meriwether

²²⁰ John Creigh to Burrell, nd (circa April 1737), Shelburne Papers, 43, f. 183.

²²¹ Account of the manner of sale of 199 Negroes introduced into Campeche, Shelburne Papers, 43, f. 267.

²²² Thomas Nasmyth to Burrell, 14 July 1736, Shelburne Papers, 43, f. 265.

²²³ John Creigh to Burrell, nd (circa April 1737), Shelburne Papers, 43, f. 183. Creigh calculated that the purchase price plus import duty totaled about 143 while slaves were selling for 180 to 190.

observed. *Asiento* agents had the option to select the most desirable captives first followed by local planters and last were the illicit traders. Captives from the Gold Coast were “to[o] dear for the traders” and those reserved for the Spaniards were if necessary kept “three and four months” before departing again.²²⁴ Jamaica slave dealers Bassnett & Miller informed a London merchant that “Gold Coast and Papaws [are] best approved” by Spanish clients.²²⁵ During the first six months of 1729, thirty-one ships departed Jamaica, carrying 3,237 captives for Spanish markets.²²⁶ Over that same period, 7,799 slaves disembarked on the island from West Africa. This data demonstrates that when Spanish demand for slaves was at its height, 42 percent of the captives arriving at Jamaican ports left shortly thereafter or never set foot on the island.²²⁷ In July 1732, when the *Argyle* arrived at Kingston, there were “upwards of a thousand negroes in the harbor” but the *asiento* agent Edward Pratter was not buying slaves for the Spanish market so, Capt. Hamilton hired a local sloop to carry 52 captives illegally to Cuba.²²⁸

During the early 1730s the Havana slave market was rapidly expanding.²²⁹ Traders residing in Spanish markets like Campeche where demand was low transshipped surplus captives to Havana where buyers yearned for enslaved Africans.²³⁰ Deception and fraud were inextricably tied together in the intercolonial slave trade to Spanish Caribbean markets. Spanish officials were accused of seizing captives at Santiago de Cuba, and rather than hand them over to *asiento* officials made a “sham sale” and pocketed the

²²⁴ John Meriwether to Burrell, 30 September 1737, Shelburne 44, f. 817.

²²⁵ Bassnett & Miller to Humphrey Morice, 9 June 1722, Add MSS 48590 B, British Library.

²²⁶ This data suggests that a ship departed Jamaica for a Spanish market every 5.9 days. However on closer examination, the bulk of the departures occurred in June 1729 when 13 of the 31 ships embarked.

²²⁷ Add MSS 22676, f. 89, British Library.

²²⁸ George Hamilton to Thomas Hall, 1 September 1732, C 103/130, Kew.

²²⁹ Voyages to Havana, May 1730-January 1732, Shelburne 44, f. 811. From November 1730 to January 1732, *asiento* ships delivered nearly twenty-five percent of all the slaves arriving at the island legally from 1715-1738.

²³⁰ Add MSS 25505, British Library.

proceeds.²³¹ In 1738, the Governor of Cuba Juan Francisco de Güemes y Horcasitas was accused of price fixing at local slave sales.²³² English *asiento* agents successfully countered Spanish trickery by supplying substantial bribes that resulted in the recovery of confiscated slaves, “negroes imported with smallpox excused quarantine” and perhaps most significant, “protection against... Ministers of the Inquisition.”²³³ The intercolonial slave trade to Spanish Caribbean markets was a testing ground for strategizing methods and schemes designed to best imperial regulatory measures in place to curb illegal activities.

Jamaica slave-owners relied on the intercolonial slave trade to send off undesirable captives to South Carolina and routinely complained that the sales did not meet expectations. This pattern continued despite repeated warnings from Charleston slave dealers that “the people here...seem prejudiced against West India Negroes.” Moreover, ship captains often attempted to evade payment of additional taxes on Caribbean slaves entering the colony for sale. For example, in 1771 Captain Newbold consigned two women to Felix Warley and entered them as “seasoned slaves.” Shortly thereafter, Captain Henry brought a second parcel from Jamaica and entered them as “new negroes.” Warley was aware of the illegal procedure and refused to “take charge” of the slaves unless they were entered properly. Prosecution was Warley’s primary motivation for observing the law. Had he sold the slaves to a local buyer and news of the illegal entry was discovered, the captive Africans were “liable to be seized at any time

²³¹ Jonathan Dennis to Burrell, 2 November 1731, Shelburne 44, f. 339-441.

²³² Anthony Welden to Burrell, 27 May 1738, Shelburne 44, f. 915.

²³³ Questions regarding Nicholson & Tassell Accounts, 1736-1738, Shelburne 43, f. 155-57.

within the course of twelve months.” As the consignee of Burnett’s slaves, it was Farley, and not the Jamaican slave-owner, that would face prosecution.²³⁴

However, most Charleston merchants could not muster similar scruples for the law. In 1773, a captive African man named Nero was shipped from Granada to Charleston. The ship captain, Benjamin Barton, was a savvy mariner familiar with the regulatory statutes of South Carolina and circum-Caribbean ports.²³⁵ Barton evaded paying an additional “duty of £50” for captive Africans residing in the Caribbean for longer than six months by entering Nero “under the head of a new Negro.” Leger & Greenwood noted that because of Barton’s prohibited entry the “sale will make a better appearance” once the account was settled.²³⁶ Colonial statutes placed prohibitive duties on Caribbean slaves to deter transshipment through intercolonial commerce.²³⁷ Over time, ship captains and merchants identified creative measures to overcome these procedures and thereby increase the profits sustained from slave sales.

The maturation of the intercolonial slave trade and the growth of illicit commerce across imperial borders were inextricably tied together. An important strategy utilized by intercolonial slave traders to hide illicit activities was to pay off local colonial administrators. Port officials and customs searchers were especially vulnerable to bribes. Nothing greased the wheels of capitalism quite like a few Spanish reals. Shipping invoices and bills of lading were easily modified after leaving a port. Ship captains also

²³⁴ Felix Warley to James Burnett, 22 January 1772, Henry Laurens Papers, 1747-1860, MSS 37, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, (SCHS).

²³⁵ For Barton see, *HLP* 5:232, 356; 7:99, 412n.

²³⁶ Peter Leger and William Greenwood to Daniel and Benjamin Ward, 9 October 1773, Leger & Greenwood Letterbook, (WCL).

²³⁷ Alan Karras identified examples of governments that restrict access to goods through imposing high import duties or taxes actually encouraged local consumers to participate in illicit commerce. Alan Karras, *Smuggling: Contraband and Corruption in World History* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012), 78.

carried with them blank shipping papers that were substituted or falsified before arriving at a new port. An inattentive harbor official provided an opening for ship captains to make false entries about the Caribbean origins of captives in customs ledgers. Over the course of the eighteenth century as the intercolonial slave trade expanded to markets across the circum-Caribbean, the ubiquitous nature of transshipping captive Africans with other types of commodities meant that it grew increasingly easier for ship captains to participate in illicit activities. The incentives for wealth extraction and accumulation of personal capital were particularly tantalizing, perhaps irresistible, as the demand for enslaved Africans continued to rise across the region. In sum, as the traffic of captive Africans traded across and within imperial borders of the circum-Caribbean increased over the period, so too did the volume of illicit activities associated with the slave trade.

Conclusion

In a report to London officials, Governor James Glen attempted to explain how South Carolina would remain a profitable overseas possession for Britain despite a bloated trade deficit and lack of hard currency. Notwithstanding the fact that “no gold or silver ever remain with us” Glen elucidated, the colony was “not growing poorer but...every day adding to our wealth for these Negroes are real riches as much as the particular species of gold or silver.”²³⁸ Slave labor was the life blood of colonialism; the pulse of an empire of capital that echoed far into the darkest corners of the Atlantic world. The advancement of Britain’s Atlantic empire was dependent on the successful shipment of thousands of captive Africans to its overseas possessions. In the post-1763

²³⁸ Glen to Board of Trade, nd (circa October 1751), James Glen Letterbook, GD/45/2/1, f. 125, Dalhousie Muniments Papers, 1746-1759 in the Scottish Record Office, SCDAH.

Atlantic world, the intercolonial slave trade played an indispensable role in delivering enslaved people to secondary markets irregularly supplied by ships directly from West Africa. While the organizational structure of the transatlantic slave trade failed to supply all markets equally, the expansion of the intercolonial slave trade demonstrates the systems malleability and adaptability over time to conform to changing imperial conditions. Captive Africans were not passive participants in the creation of the modern plantation regime. Political upheaval, violence and warfare were reference points for dislocated peoples reconstituted amid the Americas slave labor camps searching for the broadest expressions of cultural similarities. At every stage, bonded people challenged the conditions of enslavement and strategized innovative tactics for maintaining social bonds and eventually casting off their yoke. In the frontier plantation zones incorporated into Britain's imperial administration after 1763, captive Africans created hyper-productive plantations out of dense forests that laid the groundwork for the global mechanized industry spawned at the dawn of the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER 5

PERFORMING QUARANTINE: PREPARING AND PROCESSING WEST AFRICAN BODIES FOR MARKET IN THE ANGLO-ATLANTIC WORLD

Arriving at the Niger River Delta in late 1754, Captain Edward Wiltshire brought the 70-ton ship *Matilda* to anchor off the coast near Bonny, an important slave trading center in the Bight of Biafra. Although this was Wiltshire's first voyage to the region as a ship captain, the *Matilda* carried slaves from the Bight of Biafra on three previous voyages, each time disembarking captives in South Carolina. Bonny was attractive to European slavers because of its "wholesale market for slaves" that generally loaded 375 to 400 slaves within two to four months. It is unclear how many slaves Wiltshire purchased at Bonny but it was not enough to meet the quota instructed by the ship's owners. In early 1755, Wiltshire sailed up river a few miles to New Calabar where he completed his cargo.¹ Amid the echoes of clanking chains, some of the slaves began to complain of fever, severe fatigue, and body aches. The ship's surgeon may have suspected that the slaves were suffering from dysentery, commonly referred to as the flux or bloody flux.

¹ Stephen D. Behrendt, A. J. H. Latham, and David Northrup, eds., *The Diary of Antera Duke, an Eighteenth-Century African Slave Trader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 70; G. Ugo Nwokeji, *The Slave Trade and Culture in the Bight of Biafra: An African Society in the Atlantic World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 45–52; A. J. H. Latham, *Old Calabar, 1600-1891: The Impact of the International Economy Upon a Traditional Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973). For the *Matilda* voyage, see the *Voyages* database, ID no. 17371. www.slavevoyages.org

Within a few days the appearance of flat, red spots on the face, hands and forearms revealed the dreaded mystery. Smallpox, unlike many diseases in the early modern Atlantic, left bodies visibly mutilated, scarred, and disfigured.²

The *Matilda* arrived at Charleston on 21 May 1755. Port officials scrambled. The ship was quickly directed to Sullivan's Island where the crew and slaves were quarantined. Joseph Pickering, one of the slave dealers responsible for selling the cargo, reported that the captives were "seized with the small pox immediately after their departure from the coast of Africa" but since the commencement of the quarantine "none of the said slaves had been seized" with the disease.³ In compliance with the colony's rigid public health mandate, the slaves were "landed and properly aired...and the vessel was thoroughly smoked and cleansed." Although Pickering had complied with the colony's laws in processing the slaves, local authorities required an appointed physician to submit a deposition declaring that he had personally visited the ship and inspected the health of the cargo. According to the physician's statement the "pustules" on the slave's bodies were "entirely dried up and formed into pits...and that all the slaves sufficiently purged." To decontaminate the ship, sailors burned brimstone between the decks and scrubbed the surfaces with lime juice. To further purify the slave's bodies all their "clothing [was] thrown overboard."⁴ With the slaves passing the physical inspection, the

² Larry Stewart, "The Edge of Utility: Slaves and Smallpox in the Early Eighteenth Century," *Medical History* 29, no. 1 (1985): 54–70; Richard B. Sheridan, *Doctors and Slaves: A Medical and Demographic History of Slavery in the British West Indies, 1680-1834* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 116–18.

³ My use of dealer here is deliberate. Traditional terms such as merchant or trader do not adequately convey the nature of trafficking and selling humans. These professional terms tend to sanitize the violent exchanges inherent in selling enslaved Africans.

⁴ Evidence suggests that Charleston officials required only Africans clothes to be burned after completing quarantine. In September 1752, the "wearing apparel and bedding" belonging to a group of German immigrants was ordered to "be well washed and aired" after completing quarantine. Council Journal, no. 20, 22 September 1752, South Carolina Department of Archives and History (SCDAH).

dealers turned their attention to preparing the Africans bodies for the scrutiny of the Charleston market.⁵

Ship captains and slave dealers developed a variety of body manipulation strategies. After six weeks exposed to the relentless summer heat, with few provisions, inadequate shelter, and mediocre health care, the naked Africans disembarked in Charleston. In preparation for the sale, Captain Wiltshire ordered the Africans' bodies shaved. The practice of shaving men and women's body was designed to mask any signs of illness, age, or defect. The removal of beards and grey hairs gave dealers the upper hand in negotiations with indiscriminate buyers who did not pay close attention to quality of the goods being purchased. It should be remembered that the painful sores on the slave's bodies had just recently scabbed over. The American market demanded the razors' dull-steel edge to be raked indiscriminately over the unhealed lesions. Whether a sober sailor or the ship's surgeon performed the task is unclear but it is certain that the quarantine ordeal the Africans experienced was an important stage in the commodification of slave's bodies.⁶

The *Matilda* was just one of over a dozen ships that would carry slaves from Africa to South Carolina in 1755. Many more thousands of slaves would follow. On Sullivan's Island, the spit of sand at the mouth of Charleston's harbor, enslaved people from Atlantic Africa disembarked for inspection. Emerging from below the ship's decks struggling to walk, their eyes adjusted to the sun as strange sounds and smells assaulted their senses. Ferried in canoes from the ships at anchor in the harbor, small groups of

⁵ Council Journal, 1-4 July 1755, CO 5/471 microfilm at SCDAH. Kenneth Morgan, "Slave Sales in Colonial Charleston," *The English Historical Review* 113 (1998): 905-27; Sean Kelley, "Scrambling for Slaves: Captive Sales in Colonial South Carolina," *Slavery & Abolition* 34, no. 1 (2013): 1-21.

⁶ A few historians have noted the preparation and marketing of slave's bodies. Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*, 159-61; Rediker, *Slave Ship*, 238-39; Christopher, *Slave Ship Sailors*, 171-74.

Africans disembarked on American *terra firma* for the first time. Historian Peter Wood characterized this space as the “Ellis Island for black Americans” who were searching for tangible site-specific origin of African American culture. In doing so, Wood provided a strong counter narrative against the literature claiming that the origins of black culture were untraceable and offered up a new starting point for recovering the African antecedents of African American culture. My work re-examines Sullivan’s Island as a formative commodification terminal in the lives of involuntary migrants arriving from West Africa.⁷ My research dovetails with Stephanie Smallwood’s compelling analysis of the captives’ experience on English ships in the transatlantic slave trade from the Gold Coast. For captive Africans the island was a liminal space where whites attempted to rejuvenate the bodies that ship captains violently oppressed. Upon arriving in South Carolina, quarantine was the first phase in the commodification process that transformed African bodies into transferable products.

As the largest port in colonial South Carolina, Charleston was the most important entrepôt for ships in the transatlantic and intercolonial slave trades to British North America. Nearly twice as many slaves disembarked in South Carolina than Virginia. By 1807, nearly half of all captive Africans arriving in British North America landed first in Charleston.⁸ Given that the majority of slaves first came ashore at Sullivan’s Island, captive Africans experienced the quarantine process together. Historians have neglected

⁷ Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 Through the Stono Rebellion* (New York: Knopf, 1974), xiv.

⁸ <http://slavevoyages.org/tast/database/search.faces?yearFrom=1514&yearTo=1807&mjstimp=20000>; For the last years of the slave trade see, James A. McMillin, *The Final Victims: Foreign Slave Trade to North America, 1783-1810* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2004) and David T. Gleeson and Simon Lewis, eds., *Ambiguous Anniversary: The Bicentennial of the International Slave Trade Bans* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2012).

the quarantine process and its impression on slave's bodies, the transatlantic slave trade, and the Atlantic marketplace. Understanding how the quarantine process impacted the volume of slaves arriving in South Carolina had tremendous relevance towards the emergence of rice cultivation in the colony. The rate at which slaves could be processed, sold and put to work on tidal rice plantations had short and long-term consequences on the ebb and flow of the Atlantic marketplace. As arriving slave cargoes were delayed from landing at a ready market, revenue streams slowed and would be creditors became outstanding debtors. The loss of enslaved bodies during the quarantine stage deterred some British merchants from sending their ships to Charleston, instead seeking out Caribbean markets where regulations were less stringent or unenforced. Lastly, the quarantine process had immediate and enduring consequences for the Africans arriving in Carolina.

While it's possible the isolation of enslaved bodies may have prevented the spread of epidemic diseases in colonial settlements, at its core, the policy weeded out the weakest, delayed sales, and ultimately increased the mortality rates of slaves after landing.⁹ In 1789, a Jamaican official estimated, "on an average, fifteen days between" when the ship was entered with port officials and "the days of the sales."¹⁰ Colin Palmer estimated that earlier in the century slave cargos arriving in Jamaica were "normally quarantined for eight days."¹¹ Herbert Klein concluded that the "more strict quarantine arrangements in Jamaican ports" delayed final embarkation, an interval that "raised

⁹ On the absence of a smallpox epidemic in Charleston from 1738-1760, Peter McCandless concluded the "town was just lucky." McCandless, *Slavery, Disease, and Suffering*, 210.

¹⁰ Stephen Fuller, *Notes on the Two Reports from the Committee of the Honourable House of Assembly*, (London, 1789), 38.

¹¹ Colin A. Palmer, *Human Cargoes: The British Slave Trade to Spanish America, 1700-1739* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 113.

mortality rates.”¹² Peter McCandless reached a similar conclusion on the quarantine of African ships in Charleston and slave mortality.¹³ Elizabeth Donnan noted that the 1759 South Carolina statute requiring any ship with ten Africans on board to lie at quarantine for ten days was “certainly more drastic than those of the West Indies.”¹⁴ Gregory O’Malley has shown that slaves carried to secondary markets in the British Atlantic via the intercolonial slave trade, “where African arrivals were less frequent,” tended to lack the infrastructure and policies to enforce mandated quarantine.¹⁵

The remainder of this paper falls into four sections. In section one I evaluate the process of enslavement in West Africa by following slaves along the routes and networks that led toward the coast. The commodification process began at the point of capture when Africans were taken from their homes and families. Understanding the physical condition in which Africans arrived on the coast informs the social and political environment in West Africa before slaves departed for the Americas. In section two, I analyze aspects of the commodification process and the manipulation of bodies while slaves were imprisoned in coastal factories and English forts. In section three, I show how ship conditions during the transportation of slaves across the Atlantic corrupted the commodification process with particular attention to women’s bodies. In section four, I discuss the origins of quarantine statutes in British Atlantic colonies and show how this

¹² Herbert S. Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 157–58.

¹³ Peter McCandless, *Slavery, Disease, and Suffering in the Southern Lowcountry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 49.

¹⁴ Elizabeth Donnan, ed., *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America* (Washington, D.C: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1930-35), 4:300n2. For the 1759 law see, Cooper and McCord, *Statute at Large*, 4:78-86.

¹⁵ Gregory E O’Malley, *Final Passages: The Intercolonial Slave Trade of British America, 1619-1807* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 58.

stage impacted slaves' bodies, the volume of traffic in the transatlantic slave trade, and the consequences for Diasporic cultures in South Carolina.

"They are not to be ruled by love but fear."¹⁶

For captive Africans, from the moment of enslavement the fundamental feature of slavery was a radical and intense alienation. The slave experience was driven by ongoing efforts to reintegrate oneself into new social networks.¹⁷ Violence and deception were critical to the process of social alienation. Historians have for decades emphasized the middle passage as the crucible for Africans in the commodification process that fundamentally transformed bodies and minds into transferable goods in the American marketplace.¹⁸ While I agree with this notion, it misses an important aspect of the larger life cycle of enslavement; that is, it practically ignores important political and cultural contexts with West African societies that contributed to the commodification process. In order to better understand Atlantic Africa and the transatlantic slave trade, it is critical, as Paul Lovejoy has noted, that historians begin studies of the slavery in West Africa.¹⁹ By exploring the narratives left by Africans that survived slavery, this paper aims to recover aspects of commodification that began within the distant and remote interior far from the coast.

¹⁶ John Freeman and Henry Glynn, 29 April 1704, T 70/14, f. 65, Kew, BNA.

¹⁷ Joseph C. Miller, *The Problem of Slavery as History: A Global Approach* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 22, 31. Miller stresses the necessity of a historically contextualized definition of slavery and a slave's positionality or liminal status within society over Orlando Patterson's sociological approach rooted in the dynamics of the master-slave relationship and the condition of social death. Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

¹⁸ This tradition is based on certain limitations placed on historians by the available primary sources. The subject most discussed in company, financial institutions and private traders' records are the conditions of the middle passage because this was the stage in which so many millions of slaves perished.

¹⁹ Paul E. Lovejoy, "Identifying Enslaved Africans in the African Diaspora," in Paul E. Lovejoy, ed., *Identity in the Shadow of Slavery* (London: Continuum, 2000), 1-29.

The forced migration of captive Africans in the transatlantic slave trade did not begin when European ships departed from the coast. Africans snared in the slave trader's dragnet traveled long distances on well-secured slaving networks and were often exchanged several times before arriving at the coast. For most Africans, the journey to the coast was the litmus test for purchase. Sibell, "an Old African Female," recalled in the 1790s that her kidnappers "carry, carry, carry, carry, carry me all night and day, all night and day way from my Country." Upon arriving at the coast, Sibell was placed in a "long House full of new Negurs talking and making sing."²⁰ A small child at the time of his seizure, John Joseph along with his sisters were "savagely dragged" from their home.²¹ Taken from his homeland in Bornu, Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, travelled "upwards of a thousand miles" before arriving on the Gold Coast where he was sold to a Dutch ship captain.²² Only about six years old when he was abducted, Venture Smith trekked "about four hundred miles" before arriving at the coast.²³ Ottobah Cugoano was "playing in a field, with about eighteen or twenty boys and girls... when several great ruffians" suddenly "came upon us." The group traveled several days before arriving on the coast. When Cugoano asked why he was kidnapped, his abductor replied "to learn the ways of the *browsow*, that is, the white-faced people."²⁴ Many, if not most, captive Africans were stripped of their clothing shortly after capture or during their treks from the interior to

²⁰ Jerome S. Handler, "Life Histories of Enslaved Africans in Barbados," *Slavery & Abolition* 19, no. 1 (1998): 133. A long house is a barracoon.

²¹ Jerome S. Handler, "Survivors of the Middle Passage: Life Histories of Enslaved Africans in British America," *Slavery & Abolition* 23, no. 1 (2002): 45.

²² Carretta, *Unchained Voices*, page 36-7.

²³ Venture Smith, *A Narrative of the Life and Adventures* (New London: Printed by C. Holt, at The Bee-office, 1798), 373.

²⁴ Ottobah Cugoano, *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species* (London, 1787), 7-9.

coastal ports.²⁵ Abu Bakr reported that on the day of his capture “they tore off my clothes [and] bound me with ropes.”²⁶ African traders transported thousands of slaves annually to trading centers across coastal West and West Central Africa. The psychologically and physically demanding trek to the coast was the first stage in the long migration to the Americas and in the commodification of their bodies. The uncertainty associated with their final destination manifested in captives in many different ways and directly impacted European perception of their value in the Atlantic marketplace.

Captive Africans and their abductors traveled long distances to reach coastal ports where European purchasers waited nervously. In 1704 an English factor at Bunce Island, a small island in Sierra Leone, reported that a “most formidable” trader “with a vast train of attendants” had travelled some three hundred miles to entertain trading terms. The anonymous trader invited one of the agents “Mr. Freeman to his house in the Susa country and to send 100 men to conduct him” there.²⁷ James Wyatt, writing in the 1740s, may have been describing one of “Black merchants who travel into the inland country of Guinea” to buy slaves from the “petty Princes.” Captives traveled a “great way through the woods ...ty’d together and commonly everyone brings something on their head.”²⁸ Inland coffles were well-organized slaving machines. Venture Smith was threatened with severe punishment by one of his captors if he did not comply as instructed. Smith was “obliged to carry on my head a large flat stone used for grinding our corn, weighing, as I

²⁵ Jerome S. Handler, “The Middle Passage and the Material Culture of Captive Africans,” *Slavery & Abolition* 30, no. 1 (2009), 2.

²⁶ Ivor Wilks, “Abu Bakr al-Siddiq of Timbuktu,” in Philip D. Curtin, ed., *Africa Remembered; Narratives by West Africans from the Era of the Slave Trade*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967), 162.

²⁷ John Freeman to RAC, Bunce Island, 26 January 1704, T 70/14, f.60. The Susu were the largest ethnic group extending from the Rio Nunez into the Scarcies River along the coast. Bruce L. Mouser, ed., *A Slaving Voyage to Africa and Jamaica: The Log of the Sandown, 1793-1794* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 73.

²⁸ James Wyatt, *The Life and Surprising Adventures* (London: Printed and sold by E. Duncomb, 1748), 157.

should suppose, as much as twenty-five pounds; besides victuals, mat and cooking utensils.”²⁹ In route to the Atlantic coast, captive “were *used* as slaves as well as *traded* as” slaves.³⁰ The journey was made all the more difficult because some captives were “chained two and two together, by the foot.” The “mangled bodies” of many new arrivals “whose wounds were still bleeding” according to one account “exhibited a most shocking spectacle.”³¹ Damaged goods - injured or maimed captives - were worth only a fraction of their market value.

African traders were all too familiar with the preferences of European customers. After a physically debilitating journey that may have lasted weeks, African traders manipulated captives’ physical appearance to enhance their market value. A Dutch surgeon cautioned against the “stratagems of the shrewd and cunning merchants” because they “employ all possible artifice to disguise and conceal the defects of the slaves.”³² Captives were violently extracted from their inland homes. The transfer from African trader to European merchant signified an important transition of perceived ownership over an African’s body. This initial transaction greatly enhanced a slave’s value in the Atlantic marketplace. The production of African bodies into transferable commodities continued in the forts, factories, and coastal barracoons that pockmarked much of coastal West Africa.

²⁹ Smith, *A Narrative of the Life and Adventures*, 373.

³⁰ Alexander X. Byrd, *Captives and Voyagers: Black Migrants across the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008), 26.

³¹ Carl Wadström, *Observations on the Slave Trade and a Description of Some Part of the Coast of Guinea* (London: Printed and sold by James Phillips, 1789), 5.

³² David Henry Gallandat, *Noodige Onderrichtingen Voor De Slaafhandelaren* (Middelburg: Pieter Gillissen, 1769), 3.

Bills of Mortality

For the majority of the captive Africans arriving at the coast, it was the first time they had ever seen the Atlantic ocean, a white person, or a ship. In addition to the cultural and geographical displacement, the captives were still unsure of their fate.³³ Some began to understand the conversations taking place around them. Others were attuned to the economic transactions between their captors and the white traders and noticed quickly that their guides to the coast disappeared after receiving an assortment of trade goods. Sibell watched helplessly as her captor “took up de gun and de powder” that she was sold for and departed back towards her homeland.³⁴ Gronniosaw over “heard them agree” to the terms of the sale. He was sold for “two yards of check[ered]” cloth.³⁵ Cugoano remembered vividly that his body was equal to the value of a “gun, a piece of cloth, and some lead.”³⁶ The strangeness of coastal West Africa quickly lost its novelty for captive Africans sold into slavery. The painful reality of a new life in a distant land began to slowly sink in.

English merchants in West Africa received detailed instructions on the procedures for purchasing, receiving, and maintaining the health of the bodies in their possession. Only the fittest physical specimens were to be purchased. Officials of the British Royal African Company instructed coastal agents to secure “healthy sound and merchantable” bodies. Company officials were responding to Caribbean market demands. Planters in Barbados and Jamaica cultivating sugar expected laborers to be of a certain commercially acceptable quality at the point of sale. If a slave’s body was not “healthy and sound”

³³ Rediker, *Slave Ship*, 108-09.

³⁴ Handler, “Life Histories of Enslaved Africans in Barbados,” 133.

³⁵ Carretta, *Unchained Voices*, 38.

³⁶ Carretta, *Unchained Voices*, 149.

upon the initial purchase from African traders, it was nearly impossible for a captive to survive the Atlantic crossing.

Undesirable bodies included slaves that were “maimed or defective” over the age of thirty-five or younger than fourteen years old. The buildings and facilities specially constructed for warehousing the slaves were to be “dry, sweet, and airy.”³⁷ According to a 1682 account, the underground containment chamber at Cape Coast Castle was able to hold a “thousand *Blacks*...conveniently.”³⁸ In addition, special wards or infirmaries were raised for “taking care of sick negroes” to prevent the spread of disease and for nursing bodies back to health. Company officials instructed coastal agents to take special care to have “sufficient provisions” for the slaves that they “may have daily their bellys filled with that which is most likely to give them nourishment.”³⁹ Despite the idealistic instructions, thousands of children, many still nursing at their mother’s breast, were shipped to the American markets.⁴⁰ Contradictory instructions abounded as well. Company officials instructed Captain Plater Onley to purchase “as many young slaves boys and girls as you can get” upon arriving at Gambia. In preparation for departure, agents were to take special care to prepare slave’s bodies for next leg of the journey. Slaves were to be “washed and rubbed every day and shaved and oyled every week.”⁴¹

³⁷ Instructions to Nurse Hereford, Cabinda, December 1720, T 70/66.

³⁸ Barbot cited in Lawrence, *Trade Castles*, 184-85.

³⁹ A.P. Kup, “Instructions to the Royal African Company’s Factor at Bunce, 1702,” *Sierra Leone Studies* 6, (1956), 78.

⁴⁰ Gwyn Campbell, Suzanne Miers, and Joseph Calder Miller, eds., *Children in Slavery Through the Ages* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009), 1-14; Paul Lovejoy, “The Children of Slavery – the Transatlantic Phase,” *Slavery & Abolition* 27, no. 2 (2006): 197-217.

⁴¹ Instructions to Plater Onley, Commander of the *Dove*, 13 February 1722, T 70/66; Regulations for preservation of shipping slaves to be observed at Gambia, July 1720. Onley carried 244 slaves to Jamaica in August 1722. The percentage of children that disembarked is unclear. For Onley’s 1722 voyage, see the *Voyages* database, ID no. 75358.

Monrad reported that slaves were “washed daily” at the Danish fort on the Gold Coast.⁴² Captive Africans were thrust into new surroundings and assaulted with strange bodily rituals upon arriving at coastal forts. Europeans’ obsession with a pristine physical body was bewildering. But captive Africans were not passive participants in this human trafficking charade nor were they ignorant of the marketplace or the value of their bodies.

European forts and factories were critical spaces for collecting slaves in anticipation of arriving ships. From a ship’s foredeck anchored off shore, the structures resembled fortified medieval castles signifying a supposed European sovereignty over commerce. The buildings at El Mina, Dixcove, Goree Island and other sites in West Africa were in effect fixed slaving machines designed by “economic incentive to preserve the value of an investment in human capital.”⁴³ In 1704, Cape Coast Castle Governor Dalby Thomas reported that “choice lusty sound and young Negroes” were the best slaves for the Caribbean market. Several months later, Dalby complained of the “great mortality amongst the negroes” because there were no English ships to load them.⁴⁴ Coastal merchants stockpiled slaves in preparation for arriving ships to lessen the time spent on the coast. However, because fort dungeons were wet, dark, and poorly ventilated chambers, countless slaves perished before ever embarking on the ships anchored in the distance.

The sheer volume of captives hoarded into coastal forts created tremendous logistical hurdles, in particular, security and provisions. In August 1689, company agents

⁴² H. C. Monrad, *Two Views from Christiansborg Castle. Volume II, A Description of the Guinea Coast and Its Inhabitants*, ed. Selena Axelrod Winsnes (Accra: Sub-Saharan Pub, 2010), 222.

⁴³ Louis P. Nelson, “Architectures of West African Enslavement,” *Buildings & Landscapes: Journal of the Vernacular Architecture Forum* 21, no. 1 (2014), 101.

⁴⁴ Dalby Thomas to RAC, Cape Coast Castle, 21 August 1704, T 70/14, f.47; Dalby Thomas to RAC, Cape Coast Castle, 16 November 1704, T 70/14, f. 82.

at Sierra Leone loaded the *Little Berkley Castle* with a “choice cargo” of slaves.

However, “if anything lessens their esteem” upon arrival in Nevis the agents protested, it should be attributed to the scarcity of supplies “having for these two months been compelled to the woods for palm tree cabbages and other roots to lengthen out” their sustenance.⁴⁵ Company ships were supposed to bring provisions and trade goods to the forts at regular intervals but when European warfare disrupted Atlantic shipping lanes, the allotment of foodstuffs for slaves dwindled. After taking on 550 slaves at Whydah in 1705, the *Gould Frigate* “stayed a great while on the coast for corn” because the agents failed to properly stock the company warehouses with provisions. The additional time on the coast proved detrimental to the Africans crossing the Atlantic; 148 slaves died before reaching Jamaica.⁴⁶ For many captive Africans, fort dungeons were the last space of confinement before embarking onto the prison ships that would carry them to the Americas. The relative stillness of coastal forts in commodification process stood in stark contrast to the constant motion of the slave ship at sea.

Fort conditions, insufficient provisions, and ship time on the coast all contributed to the destruction of slave’s bodies and higher mortality rates on transatlantic voyages. African traders and captive Africans were also aware of these circumstances and how such conditions influenced a slave’s body in the marketplace. Venture Smith recalled that as he approached in a canoe from shore towards the English ship that would carry him to Barbados, “our master told us to appear to the best possible advantage for sale.”⁴⁷ Monrad described in detail the inspection process before slave’s embarked onto the ships.

⁴⁵ John Case to RAC, Sierra Leone, 31 August 1689, T 70/17, f. 7.

⁴⁶ Richard Willis to RAC, Whydah, 13 August 1705, T 70/14, f. 110. For the *Gould Frigate* voyage, see the *Voyages* database, ID no. 14938.

⁴⁷ Smith, *A Narrative of the Life and Adventures*, 374.

Captives were formed into a circle where the “buyers walk around and undertake the most careful examination. The slave must open his mouth wide, show his teeth; they smell in his mouth, and look very carefully into his eyes; he must perform all manner of movements with his arms and legs; the secret parts are examined, especially young, Negresses.”⁴⁸ Johannes Rask noted that any captives with defects “internally or externally” were rejected by the captain or a lower price was negotiated. Moreover, because slaves were attentive to the processes taking place around them, specifically their inherent market value and ways to manipulate it, “one must hide knives, and everything that is sharp, from the slaves, since it has often happened that they cut off either their fingers, or toes or ears, to avoid being sold.”⁴⁹ The willing destruction of one’s body did not necessarily prevent a captive’s sale. However, the described behavior does illustrate that Africans were aware of their body’s marketable value and that some attempted to decrease the value of their bodies as merchantable products. Slave dealers defined a captive’s market value as the sum of their operative bodily appendages and functionality within a fluctuating labor system. Self-mutilation obscured the equation and a slave’s marketability as a transferable commodity.

Anomalous Intimacies

It is necessary to consider ship conditions in the Atlantic crossing because it was during this stage of the commodification process that the products – slave’s bodies – were further mangled, corrupted, or lost. David Richardson has noted that few if any other

⁴⁸ Monrad, *Two Views from Christiansborg Castle. Volume II, A Description of the Guinea Coast and Its Inhabitants*, 222.

⁴⁹ Johannes Rask, *Two Views from Christiansborg Castle. Volume I, A Brief and Truthful Description of a Journey to and from Guinea*, ed. Selena Axelrod Winsnes (Accra: Sub-Saharan Pub, 2008), 188–89.

eighteenth-century long-distance trades “experienced such levels of ‘wastage’ of cargo” as did the transatlantic slave trade.⁵⁰ The measures Europeans took to ensure healthy bodies before embarkation have already been discussed. Turning captives into commodities was a “thoroughly scientific enterprise.” Ship captains and slave dealers reduced people to the “sum of their biological parts.” Stephanie Smallwood has shown that this process was produced by “scaling life down to an arithmetical equation and finding the lowest common denominator.”⁵¹ The conditions on slave ships transformed youthful, vibrant bodies into sickly corpses and as a result, fundamentally altered their value in the American marketplace. The inherent transportation costs for carrying of slaves from Africa to the Americas “doubled the price of slaves.”⁵² However, the transport of hundreds of captive Africans to the Americas during the middle passage was the fundamental paradox of the transatlantic slave trade. The transport system that doubled the price of human commodities upon arrival in the Americas also “greatly diminished their quality.” The physical violence and trauma required to convert African bodies into transferable commodities simultaneously produced bonded laborers that were the “antithesis of what planters” wanted to purchase.⁵³ Few non-human commodities undergo such a transformation in transport from point of origin to point-of-sale.

There were several contributing factors that effected mortality rates in the transatlantic slave. The causes for the decline in ship mortality towards the late eighteenth

⁵⁰ David Richardson, “The Costs of Survival: The Transport of Slaves in the Middle Passage and the Profitability of the 18th-Century British Slave Trade,” *Explorations in Economic History* 24, no. 2 (1987): 179.

⁵¹ Stephanie E Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2007), 43.

⁵² David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge, UK; Cambridge University Press, 2000), 114.

⁵³ Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*, 157.

century are still debated.⁵⁴ The quality, types, and amount of food slaves received had significant role in determining the number of captives that arrived alive. From his first-hand encounters, Guinea surgeon Thomas Aubrey suggested that a primary contributor was the “very bad food” slaves were served. Poor nutrition destroys bodies from the inside out causing fatigue, muscle decay, and intestinal inflammation. Captives became sick because unhealthy supplements were added and nutritional foods were removed from their diets. The addition of “too much salt... and rotten salt herrings” combined with “not enough palm oil” and water resulted in slaves becoming “costive or griped. They stay betwixt decks and will eat nothing, but cry *yarry yarry*.”⁵⁵ In March 1704, the *Falconberg* departed from Whydah with 510 captive Africans for Jamaica but the beans and corn put onboard were described as “very bad [and] indifferent.”⁵⁶ The Caribbean agents that received the cargoes sent similar reports on the quality of food arriving from on board ships. Any provisions that remained after arriving at port was supposed to be used for feeding the slaves once they disembarked. However, it was not uncommon for a ship captain to send ashore “a boat load of corn which was so worm eaten and rotten that it was not fit for hogs.”⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Robin Haines and Ralph Shlomowitz, “Explaining the Mortality Decline in the Eighteenth-Century British Slave Trade,” *The Economic History Review*, New Series, 53, no. 2 (2000): 262–83; Herbert S. Klein et al., “Transoceanic Mortality: The Slave Trade in Comparative Perspective,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 58, no. 1 (2001): 93–118; Simon J. Hogerzeil and David Richardson, “Slave Purchasing Strategies and Shipboard Mortality: Day-to-Day Evidence from the Dutch African Trade, 1751–1797,” *The Journal of Economic History* 67, No. 1 (Mar., 2007): 160–190.

⁵⁵ T. Aubrey, *The Sea-Surgeon or the Guinea Man’s Vade Mecum* (London: Printed for John Clarke at the Bible under the Royal-Exchange, 1729), 126–29; Kenneth Kiple and Brian Higgins, “Mortality Caused by Dehydration during the Middle Passage,” in J. E. Inikori and Stanley Engerman, eds., *The Atlantic Slave Trade: Effects on Economies, Societies, and Peoples in Africa, the Americas, and Europe* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), 321–337.

⁵⁶ Richard Willis to RAC, Whydah, 3 August 1704, T 70/14, f. 53.

⁵⁷ Edwyn Stede to RAC, Barbados, 31 August 1688, T 70/17, f. 2.

Captive Africans carried with them culturally specific hygienic behaviors that were utilized while aboard slave ships. Such practices may have contributed to lower mortality rates on some voyages. Africans took their fate literally into their own hands. When the cook called out “messie messie,” a slave “boy or two” would carry a bucket of water around to the other captives and “pour a little into the right hand of everyone as they sit, which they wash by moving their thumb and finger, without any assistance from their left hand, as it is never used for feeding, being employed when necessary in removing any dirt or filth and all such occasions.”⁵⁸ While in route to Suriname, the astute observer John Stedman wrote that meals were “sometimes served up in the tubs employed by the Surgeons to void the filth.”⁵⁹ Diet and hygiene were important factors that contributed to the decline of slave’s bodies crossing the Atlantic. Since ship captains’ primary concern was the delivery of as many bodies as possible to American ports, the nutritional value of the provisions served to captives and the hygienic conditions below deck were too often subverted by economic motives.⁶⁰

On board slave ships, water was the elixir of life and a potent poison for the shackled captives. It was also a doorway for slaves to return to their homeland and love ones should they choose to plunge into the depths of the Atlantic. Too much water created damp humid conditions below deck where bacteria and infections thrived. Too little water led to dehydration and organ failure. The holding cells – trunks, fort

⁵⁸ Deidre Coleman, “Henry Smeathman and the Natural Economy of Slavery” in *Slavery and the Cultures of Abolition: Essays Marking the Bicentennial of the British Abolition Act of 1807*, Brycchan Carey and Peter J. Kitson, eds. (Rochester: Boydell & Brewer Ltd, 2007), 143. Henry Smeathman’s manuscript essay ‘Oeconomy of a Slave Ship,’ written shortly after arriving in Tobago from Sierra Leone on board the *Elizabeth* in 1775, remains in a private collection but Coleman has produced a complete transcription.

⁵⁹ Richard Price, *Representations of Slavery: John Gabriel Stedman’s “Minnesota” Manuscripts* (Minneapolis: Associates of the James Bell Ford Library, University of Minnesota, 1989), 26.

⁶⁰ For a 1790s surgeon’s medical log detailing the ailments suffered by captive Africans and the treatments administered see, Medical log of the slave ship *Lord Stanley* from West Africa to Grenada kept by Christopher Bowes, ship’s surgeon, 1792, Royal College of Surgeons of England, London.

dungeons, and barracoons – where slaves were kept before loading onto the ships mirrored in many ways the conditions below deck. Finding the illusive balance between well hydrated bodies and a properly ventilated ship was a symmetry rarely achieved in the middle passage. Some ship captains attempted to keep captives healthy through irregular hygiene rituals at sea designed to manipulate the outer appearance of slave's bodies. Although intended to remove dried blood, excrement, and other bodily secretions, compulsory bathing rituals caused additional harm to captives in their weakened condition.

Aubrey sailed to Calabar in 1717 as a surgeon aboard the Bristol slave ship *Peterborough*. Having “resided many years on the Coast of Guinea,” he observed that the overwhelming ignorance of slaves’ bodies too often resulted in captives’ becoming a “feast for some hungry shark.” An additional “principle cause of their destruction,” Aubrey concluded, was forcing slaves “into a tub of cold water every day and pouring the water” on the captives heads “by the buckets full.” The captives that resisted were pelted with “blows and kicks” from sailors and the notorious cat-o-nine to force compliance. The reason why slaves resisted, Aubrey lamented, was because “sometimes they have gripes,” a condition that induced swelling, high fevers, and uncontrollable diarrhea, which was particularly “prejudicial” to their well-being.⁶¹

Gallandat recommended that slaves should be allowed to “clean themselves at noon” each day but added that it was necessary to “force the unwilling” to participate. Once the bathing ritual was complete it was important to make sure the slaves “take no

⁶¹ T. Aubrey, *The Sea-Surgeon or the Guinea Man's Vade Mecum*, (London: Printed for John Clarke at the Bible under the Royal-Exchange, 1729), 107-08, 130-31.

filth with them below decks.”⁶² However, many of the physical ailments captives suffered during the Atlantic crossing made such conditions practically impossible. On board the *Africa*, an “elderly [slave] woman” suffering from dysentery had done “some dirt upon the deck” for which she was whipped until “her back was as raw as beef steak.”⁶³ In ideal circumstances, while the slaves bathed on main deck, the sailors were below cleaning and scrubbing their holding cells. How successful or how often such procedures took place remains unknown. However, the physical abuse applied to sickly slaves suffering from fevers and dysentery, as Aubrey noted, was not favorable to the captives’ overall health or towards the long-term economic goal of delivering pristine commodities to American markets.

Suffering was a universally shared experience for each slave that survived the sea voyage to the Americas. Shipmate bonds forged on slave ships endured long after disembarking. Once on board, the slaves were isolated according to gender, the men and boys into one room and the women and girls into another. It was believed that the practice would decrease the likelihood of an uprising. But in reality, gender segregation simply made it easier for sailors to rape African women and girls which as one historian has noted “was a very common occurrence.”⁶⁴ The regularity with which African women were subjected to sexual predation on board slave ships fundamentally changed their middle passage experience. Women’s bodies endured substantially more physical and psychological hardships because of the way they were treated by the crew. Cugano recalled that it was common for the “dirty filthy sailors to take the African women and lie

⁶² Gallandat, *Noodige Onderrichtingen Voor De Slaafhandelaren*, 6.

⁶³ Christopher, *Slave Ship Sailors*, 173. Episode drawn from the Admiralty (HCA) records in the BNA.

⁶⁴ David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 93.

upon their bodies.”⁶⁵ Onboard the *Albion*, Jean Barbot wrote that the “female sex” and many of the “young sprightly maidens full of jollity and good-humor, afforded us abundance of recreation.”⁶⁶ Equiano was horrified at the “offensive sight of the violated chastity of the sable females.” Many of the sailors gratified “their brutal passion with females not ten years old; and these abominations some of them practised to such scandalous excess.”⁶⁷ In response to a large-scale uprising on a Dutch ship, a French captain “put the largest part of our Negroes in irons, and even... the Negresses... although because of their beauty they were very dear to the chief officers and sailors who had each given their names to chosen ones.”⁶⁸ Sexual predation often reached the point of fisticuffs between crew members. Robert Barker noted in his memoir that the jealousies between the captain and doctor “concerning a negro girl,” became so heated that they “were determined to cut her in two, the captain to take one half of her and the doctor the other.”⁶⁹

Pregnancy was never the desired outcome of rape on slave ships, although it did occur. In route to Caracas in 1737, slaves aboard the *Elizabeth* came down with smallpox. While at quarantine on an island off the coast of Venezuela, the agent reported that “one of the finest women had been delivered of a mulatto boy.”⁷⁰ All too often, slave women who were victimized by rapacious and predatory sailors did not disembark with their shipmates. The surgeon aboard the *St. Michael* recorded such an incident in his

⁶⁵ Ottobah Cugoano, *Narrative of the Enslavement of Ottobah Cugoano, a Native of Africa Published by Himself, in the Year 1787*, 124.

⁶⁶ P. E. H. Hair, Adam Jones, and Robin Law, eds., *Barbot on Guinea: The Writings of Jean Barbot on West Africa, 1678-1712* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1992), 780.

⁶⁷ Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative*, 80, 205-06.

⁶⁸ Clarence J. Munford, *The Black Ordeal of Slavery and Slave Trading in the French West Indies, 1625-1715* (Lewiston: E. Mellen Press, 1991), 2:344.

⁶⁹ Robert Barker, *The Unfortunate Shipwright*, 24.

⁷⁰ Colin A. Palmer, *Human Cargoes: The British Slave Trade to Spanish America, 1700-1739* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 114.

journal. On 2 August 1727, at “3 am a Succlava woman brought forth a male child.”⁷¹ Only a few hours later another entry read, the “child that was born yesterday” died. The surgeon noted that upon examination, “his body was pretty white everywhere.” Twenty days later, likely suffering from what slave traders called ‘fixed melancholy’ the “woman died who was lately delivered of a child.”⁷² The American marketplace demanded pristine African bodies. Healthy and youthful bodies were above all else the most prized commodities. The predatory sailors that preyed upon female slaves corrupted the commodity they were hired to transport by threatening their future reproductive capabilities. Polluted by white sexual violence, slave dealers were denied the possible profits gained from the sale of healthy bodies. Many of the preparatory techniques utilized by ship captains and slave dealers to mask bodily imperfections originated from the frequency of sexual violence against women onboard transatlantic slave ships.

A gendered analysis of the commodification process is important because of the long-term demographic fluctuations in the transatlantic slave trade that varied by region and over time. Taken together women and children, not men, made up the majority of all captives transported to the Americas. The ratio of male to female captives aboard ships to the Americas varied throughout the entirety of the transatlantic slave trade and these trends tended to reflect the economic and sociopolitical dynamics within West African societies. African elites determined the terms of the trade and the scope of female

⁷¹ The Sakalava are an ethnic group in western Madagascar. Pieter E. Westra and James C. Armstrong, eds., *Slavehandel Met Madagaskar: Die Joernale Van Die Kaapse Slaweskip Leijdsman, 1715* (Kaapstad: Africana Uitgewers, 2006).

⁷² “*Journal of an intended voyage by god’s permission in the good ship St. Michael Charles Burnham commander bound for Madagascar and Buenos Aires in the South Sea Company Service*,” HC 363/1299, Hispanic Society of America, New York. For additional evidence of a mother and child dying shortly after giving birth on a slave ship see, Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*, 142. For a discussion of ‘fixed melancholy’ see, Kenneth F. Kiple, *The Caribbean Slave: A Biological History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 63.

captives carried to the coast. Jennifer Morgan has shown that African women “carried systems of knowledge around the economies of work and family” to the Americas that were largely responsible for the Diasporic cultural continuities that crossed the Atlantic. The violence inherent in the commodification of women’s bodies disrupted and fragmented those traditions. As both producers and reproducers, the role of motherhood in the lives of enslaved African women took on greater significance within the American marketplace and the plantation societies they populated.⁷³

An Atlantic Regime of Commodification

Preparing African bodies for sale in the American marketplace was the most important stage in the commodification process. It was during this period that ship captains and slave dealers attempted to remove the physical markers and implicit signs of the middle passage experience. Commercial success in the American market depended on the transformative power of marketing and convincing buyers that they were not purchasing unhealthy battered laborers.⁷⁴ Beginning in the early 1700s, colonial authorities instituted a new and more complicated process for ships arriving at Charleston from destinations across the Atlantic. Designed to make the settlement more healthy and attractive to prospective immigrants, the local assembly drew upon Old World precedents for quarantining ships carrying passengers with contagious diseases. This new process would dramatically impact slave ships arriving from West Africa and the Caribbean.

⁷³ Jennifer L. Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 50, 59, 200. Ugo Nwokeji has shown that the unusually high number of female captives leaving from the Bight of Biafra was determined by cultural elements within traditional agricultural roles. Nwokeji, *The Slave Trade and Culture in the Bight of Biafra*, 144-77.

⁷⁴ Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*, 157-58.

By temporarily remanding slave ships to “lye at quarantine” before coming to dock at one of Charleston’s dozen wharfs, colonial authorities created a situation in which slave’s bodies underwent additional hardship before marketplace presentation. In doing so, the quarantine process was a liminal stage for slaves arriving in eighteenth-century South Carolina. In the brief migration from the ship onto Sullivan’s Island’s beaches, enslaved Africans crossed a cultural boundary, becoming potential subjects of a new cultural world. For many of the voyagers, Sullivan’s Island was a beginning and an ending.⁷⁵ Far too often the literature oversimplifies the process of slaves arriving and disembarking at ports in the Americas as a forgone conclusion. But the historical experience of captive Africans arriving in Charleston could not be further from the truth. Upon arrival on the South Carolina coast, captive Africans were much closer to death than they were to alive. Throughout the Atlantic crossing, slaves waxed and waned within death’s ever tightening chokehold. Each day that captives remained on the floating prison death’s grip became tighter and their demise that much more certain. Only upon arrival at port, were slaves afforded some relief from predatory sailors and the disease-ridden petri dish that was their temporary nightmare.

Contemporary accounts consistently describe the slaves as “performing quarantine” at Sullivan’s Island. Their performance on this liminal stage was quite often unsuccessful. While undergoing quarantine in preparation for sale, slaves were not yet subjects of colonial society, as chattel property, nor were they physically vibrant subjects

⁷⁵ Greg Denning, *Islands and Beaches: Discourse on a Silent Land, Marquesas, 1774-1880* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1980), 3, 20, 31-32. Denning utilizes “islands and beaches” as a “metaphor for the different ways in which human beings construct their worlds and the boundaries that they construct between them.” For a recent application of Denning’s powerful metaphor see, Kevin Dawson, “Enslaved Ship Pilots in the Age of Revolutions: Challenging Notions of Race and Slavery Between the Boundaries of Land and Sea,” *Journal of Social History* 47, no. 1 (2013): 71–100.

within the temporal world. With each breath, they lingered in a state of limbo between this world and the spiritual realm. Captives that regained their physical strength were marshalled off for sale, while those that gave up the ghost were casually discarded into the harbor. The quarantine stage was a liminal space in the commodification process where slaves either fully-matured into transferable products or succumbed to the limits of their mortality.⁷⁶

For the overwhelming majority of captive Africans the intrusive physical examination they experienced in coastal West Africa was repeated upon arrival at Charleston. The poking of flesh and examination of orifices mandated by colonial statutes was designed to prevent the introduction of deadly diseases rumored to have originated in Africa. When local authorities legislated the colony's first quarantine protocols, they drew upon a well-established tradition that originated in fourteenth-century Italy. Boston officials in the 1640s ordered ships arriving from the West Indies, where an epidemic was suspected, to wait in the harbor for an official inspection.⁷⁷ Early South Carolina statutes simply required suspected ships to remain one mile from the entrance of the harbor. Colonists complained that the statute was harmful and a "hindrance to the trade" of the province. In 1707, authorities approved the construction of a Pest House on Sullivan's Island. The "30 foot long and 16 feet broad...brick house" structure was particular meagre in comparison to similar quarantine structures in

⁷⁶ Dening, *Islands and Beaches*, 157. In June 1769, Governor Montague offered a reward for information leading to the arrest of the persons responsible for the "large number of negroes" that washed up on the marsh. The scene gave an "appearance of a field of battle." 1 June, 8 June, 1769, *South Carolina Gazette*.

⁷⁷ John Duffy, *The Sanitarians: A History of American Public Health* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 7, 24.

Northern colonies.⁷⁸ The quarantine facilities on Bedlow's Island in New York harbor consisted of "four rooms, each 20 feet square," nearly four times larger than the accommodations in Charleston.⁷⁹ Colonial pest houses were designed to prevent the spread of disease, not to provide medical care.

The facilities constructed on Sullivan's Island for the reception of captive Africans were rudimentary at best. How long slaves spent there depended on the enforcement of the quarantine policy. The 1712 law for "Preventing and Spreading of Contagious Distemper" required ships to anchor off Sullivan's Island for twenty days.⁸⁰ The subsequent statute updating the colony's quarantine policy gave wide-ranging discretionary powers to the governor. Any ship identified with sick passengers could be required to stay at the pest house for as long as the governor "shall think fit." The statute was ratified during a period of political turmoil and upheaval in the colony. It would remain in place for twenty three years.⁸¹ By 1744, when the colony's quarantine regulations were updated again, the buildings constructed for receiving slaves were little more than a few pieces of twisted wood planks and rusty nails.

The overhaul of the colony's quarantine law and the appropriation of funds for rebuilding the pest house on Sullivan's Island had long-term consequences for the thousands of captive Africans arriving in the colony. The poor state of the facilities is evidenced by the legislative allocation of £1,000, a substantial amount for the colony's

⁷⁸ Nicholas Trott, "The Temporary Acts of South Carolina, An Act for the Raising a Public Store of Powder for the Defence of this Province," 18-25, MSS, SCDAH.

⁷⁹ John Duffy, *A History of Public Health in New York City* (New York: Russell Sage, 1968), 61.

⁸⁰ "An Act for the More Effectual Preventing and Spreading of Contagious Distemper..." (1712), Cooper and McCord eds., *Statutes at Large of South Carolina*, 2:382-85.

⁸¹ "An Act for Preventing..." (1721), Cooper and McCord, eds. *Statutes at Large of South Carolina*, 3: 127-130. For the colony's political instability see, Michelle LeMaster and Bradford J. Wood, eds., *Creating and Contesting Carolina: Proprietary Era Histories* (Columbia, South Carolina: The University of South Carolina Press, 2013).

tightfisted elites, towards rebuilding the pest house on Sullivan's Island. In 1747, just three years after the law was ratified, the facilities custodian, Thomas Christie submitted a petition detailing the physical state of the buildings on the island. The building amounted to little more than "four rooms of brick work" that lacked "lining, ceiling, or window lights." Two of the rooms lacked doors and most desperately for the Africans sent there, the building was "too airy for any persons afflicted with distempers."⁸²

The updated quarantine statute was particularly punitive on new Africans. Colonial authorities reasoned that since few slaves had arrived in the colony in recent years that the "colony has been much more healthy." Accordingly, no ship with "Negroes from the coast of Africa or elsewhere" was allowed in the harbor before all the slaves were "landed and put on shore" at Sullivan's Island. The most important aspect of the new quarantine procedure was that new Africans touch American soil. Slaves were to remain at the pest house for the "space of ten days, *or* have been carried on shore five days in the said space of ten days." Once the captives were landed, they were to "remain on shore six hours" each day in the summer, and "five hours in the winter...for the better purifying and cleansing" of the slave's bodies."⁸³ By mandating that slaves initially disembark at Sullivan's island colonial administrators established their authority over slave's bodies.⁸⁴ Moreover, the statute demonstrated their conviction in the superiority of

⁸² J. H. Easterby, ed., *The Journal of the Commons House of Assembly, September 10, 1746- June 13, 1747*, (Columbia: Historical Commission of South Carolina, 1958), Thomas Christie Petition, 7 February 1747, 7:161. In December 1742, Robert Pringle sold a new slave boy for £160. A decade later, new slaves sold for about £252 on average. Robert Pringle to Andrew Pringle, 10 December 1742 in Walter B. Edgar, ed., *The Letterbook of Robert Pringle* (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 1972), 2:469.

⁸³ "An Act Preventing..." (1744), Cooper and McCord, eds. *Statutes at Large of South Carolina*, 3: 773-74. For evidence that not all ships complied with the quarantine regulations see, Peter Wood, "Luck of the Fly," *Sandlapper, The Magazine of South Carolina* (December 1971), 55.

⁸⁴ For a description of the quarantine procedure see, William Bull to Egerton Leigh, 23 April 1773, Ward-Boughton-Leigh of Brownsover Papers, CR 1711/78, Warwickshire County Record Office.

American soil and the cleansing power of the air towards making slave's bodies healthy.⁸⁵

Port physician Alexander Garden inspected slave ships regularly at the request of the local merchants. "There are few ships that come here from Africa" Garden noted, "but have had many of their cargoes thrown overboard; some one-fourth, some one-third, some lost half; and I have seen some that have lost two-thirds of their slaves." As a state appointed official charged with safeguarding the public health, Garden was often the first white person to board slave ships in Charleston. "I have never yet been on board one, that did not smell most offensive and noisome, what for filth, putrid air, putrid dysenteries, (which is their common disorder) it is a wonder any escape with life."⁸⁶ Garden's astute sensorial correlation corroborates other reports and verifies the cesspool setting depicted as representative of slave ships arriving in Charleston.

Slave ships were a breeding ground for deadly diseases. In 1755, slave dealer Henry Laurens received reports that smallpox was rampant in the Gambia River, an important slaving zone in West Africa for English ships. This unfortunate turn of events, Laurens lamented, "will induce some of them [slave ships] to stop in the West Indies to avoid our quarantine." Later that year, Laurens expected the arrival of several hundred slaves on the *Mears* purchased in the Gambia River. But when the captain stopped briefly at St. Kitts, the agents there concluded that Jamaica was a "much proper place" after

⁸⁵ The emphasis on slave's bodies touching Carolina soil engages with Sue Peabody's work on the freedom principle in eighteenth-century France. However, in this case, it may be more appropriate to deem Carolina as unfree soil. Sue Peabody, *"There Are No Slaves in France": The Political Culture of Race and Slavery in the Ancien Régime* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). In 2011, *Slavery & Abolition* published a special issue addressing the free soil principle in the Atlantic World.

⁸⁶ Alexander Garden to Stephen Hales, undated, circa 1758-1760, quoted in Edmund Berkeley and Dorothy Smith Berkeley, *Dr. Alexander Garden of Charles Town*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969), 124. Hales' correspondences have not survived.

discovering the “sickly condition” of the slaves on board.⁸⁷ The following summer Laurens speculated that Charleston would be “as good a market as any in America” for enslaved Africans. However, he strongly cautioned Captain Linnecar that if the slaves aboard the *Hopewell* suffered from “any contagious distemper...let the times be as they may.”⁸⁸ Even though market conditions were favorable and demand was high in Charleston, the colony’s most reputable transatlantic slave dealer was unwilling to consign a cargo of sick captives. The colony’s stringent quarantine procedures were a deterrent for English merchants organizing voyages for the African coast. The additional wait time before landing increased slave morbidity.

The quarantine policy often required slave dealers to take hazardous measures to bring ships into Charleston’s harbor safely. The captives that arrived on the *Matilda* languished on Sullivan’s Island for over seven weeks as they performed quarantine. Two ships with apparently healthy captives arrived at the port while the *Matilda* occupied the pest house. After a physician visited the captives aboard the *Pearl* certifying that they were healthy, Austin & Laurens received special authorization for the ship to complete the required ten day quarantine at an unspecified location along the Cooper River. A sudden gust of wind caused the ship to run aground. How many of the slaves were injured in the accident is unclear.⁸⁹ In April 1757, the ship *Anson* struggled mightily to get over Charleston’s notoriously dangerous sandbar that guarded the harbor. Unable to navigate the treacherous natural hazard, Capt. Holden “prudently” put thirty slaves

⁸⁷ For the *Mears* voyage, see the *Voyages* database ID 90555.

⁸⁸ Laurens to Smith and Clifton, 17 July 1755; Laurens to John Knight, 18 December 1755; Laurens to Samuel Linnecar, 8 May 1756, in Philip M. Hamer, C. James Taylor, and David R. Chesnutt, eds., *The Papers of Henry Laurens* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1968-2005), 1:294; 2:43, 179.

⁸⁹ Council Journal, 21 June 1755, p. 228, CO 5/471; Laurens to Thomas Easton & Co., 23 June 1755, *HLP* 1:266.

onboard the pilot boat which took the captives to Sullivan's Island. The next day a dozen sailors were sent to assist the ship, but if unsuccessful the slave dealers were resolved to "put the remainder" of the captives on the pilot boat again if necessary.⁹⁰ The enforcement of Charleston's rigorous quarantine regulations required slave dealers to take actions that placed captive Africans in unnecessarily dangerous conditions.

In the uncertain realms between death or survival, illness or recovery, captive Africans "revealed the boundaries of the middle ground between life and death where human commodification was possible."⁹¹ That middle ground was both a metaphysical metaphor and a tangible geography. For captive Africans, Sullivan's Island was a liminal space where whites attempted to rejuvenate the bodies that ship captains violently oppressed. The quarantine regulations imposed on ships carrying enslaved Africans to British slaving zones was an important stage in the process of transforming African bodies into Atlantic commodities. The statutes limiting the rate at which slaves could be sold effected the dynamics of the local marketplace as well as markets throughout the Atlantic world. The trafficking of enslaved Africans to South Carolina was an essential economic and cultural channel that connected the colony with commercial hubs thousands of miles from its shores. Upon reaching *terra firma*, enslaved Africans moved from the unstable ship, tossed about by ocean swells, to the seasonal shifts of plantation life where whites transitioned African men into commodities of production and African women into manufactures of new laborers.

⁹⁰ Laurens to Helme and Fowler, 18 April 1757, *HLP* 2:521.

⁹¹ Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*, 34.

CHAPTER 6

IN THEIR FOOTSTEPS: WEST CENTRAL AFRICANS AND AFRICAN ETHNICITY IN THE SOUTH CAROLINA LOWCOUNTRY

This chapter reexamines the historiography on the African Diaspora by embracing an Atlantic Africa approach to fluctuations in the ethnic composition of slaves in the South Carolina Lowcountry. It contributes to the literature on African ethnicity in South Carolina by examining the sales of some 3,359 captive Africans disembarking in Charleston between 1750 and 1760.¹ Through an analysis of St. Paul Parish planters, the location of the 1739 Stono Rebellion, the largest slave uprising in colonial British North America that was led by highly skilled ex-soldiers from West Central Africa I argue that planters purchased captive Congolese slaves when alternative laborers were readily available for purchase. By considering the short-term memory of planters who showed little apprehension for carrying large numbers of captive Congolese back to the same plantations and along the same waterways where the Stono Rebellion erupted less than two decades earlier, I illustrate how local market conditions interacted with and effected the distribution of Africans across the Lowcountry. Previous studies have shown that

¹ Austin & Laurens Account Book, 1750-1758, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University (hereafter BRBL). All subsequent references to 'Austin & Laurens accounts or slave sales' are to this source. The catalogue description of the A&L manuscript as an 'Account Book' is misleading. Common in eighteenth-century accounting practices, a rough 'index' precedes the contents of the book. The index lists the type of cargo, captain, origin, and the merchant or firm who shipped the contents. The manuscript account book is 359 pages in breadth, of which 172 are dedicated to the 'sales' of goods and merchandise/Africans the firm consigned from their business partners throughout the Atlantic world. The remaining 187 pages are invoices of the colonial exports the firm shipped to Europe.

eighteenth-century slave sales are important for understanding the “interplay between supply-side factors in the provision of Africans and the components of demand” for laborers in the Anglo-Atlantic marketplace. Placing the dynamics of Charleston’s local market within the larger Atlantic Africa world allows for a broader comparison of the nature of slave sales throughout the Americas.²

This chapter is guided by several important questions. First, how did whites remember the 1739 Stono Rebellion? Second, how did the uprising influence how colonists purchased enslaved Africans in the decades after Stono? In the immediate wake of the rebellion, officials formulated new legislation that established greater surveillance over the movements of Africans throughout the colony and harsh penalties for owners who did not take greater vigilance in caring and providing for their bonds people.³ In addition, whites blamed the Stono rebels for the failed 1740 invasion of Spanish Florida. White authorities rationalized that the manpower devoted to tracking down, capturing, and executing the rebels could have been utilized in planning the assault.⁴ The local newspaper did not carry a single report of the rebellion and while a code of silence was practiced by whites whenever rumors of an uprising or conspiracy spread, not talking

² Kenneth Morgan, “Slave Sales in Colonial Charleston,” *The English Historical Review* 113 (1998): 905. A comprehensive study of the transatlantic slave trade to South Carolina is lacking. The most comprehensive studies include David Richardson, “The British Slave Trade to Colonial South Carolina,” *Slavery & Abolition* 12, no. 3 (1991): 125–72 and Daniel C. Littlefield, “The Slave Trade to Colonial South Carolina: A Profile,” *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 91, no. 2 (1990): 68–99.

³ “Act for the better ordering and governing of Negroes and other Slaves in this Province,” May 1740, in Thomas Cooper and David James McCord, eds., *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina* (Columbia, S.C: Printed by A. S. Johnston, 1836), vol. 7:397–417.; For excerpts of the 1740 Act and accounts of the Stono Rebellion see, Mark M. Smith, ed., *Stono: Documenting and Interpreting a Southern Slave Revolt* (Columbia, S.C: University of South Carolina Press, 2005); Edward B. Rugemer, “The Development of Mastery and Race in the Comprehensive Slave Codes of the Greater Caribbean During the Seventeenth Century,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 70, no. 3 (2013): 429–58.

⁴ John Tate Lanning, ed., *The St. Augustine Expedition of 1740; A Report to the South Carolina General Assembly* (Columbia: South Carolina Archives Dept, 1954), 8–9, 54, 131.

about African unrest did not necessarily ensure tranquility among the African majority. Moreover, as long as slavery existed, whites in South Carolina could never forget Stono.⁵

White authorities were concerned primarily with the actions of the Africans who participated in the uprising. However, their attention was also drawn to the Africans who remained on the periphery and did not join in the perceived atrocities. The committee appointed to investigate the rebellion recommended rewarding some of the Africans who behaved according to slave-owners' idealized expectations. A captive African man named July, owned by Thomas Elliott, received his freedom for killing one of the rebels and for "saving his master and his family from being destroyed."⁶ Three captive Africans belonging to Frederick Grimke were identified by name for assisting whites in tracking down and capturing the rebels.⁷ Like many whites in St. Paul's parish and the surrounding area on that fateful Sunday morning, Elliott and Grimke witnessed the most terrifying spectacle they could imagine; an organized unit of armed Africans seeking justice and freedom.⁸ But rather than join the group of rebels that may have numbered as many as one hundred, some captive Africans not only persuaded the rebels to bypass their homes but also protected their white masters and responded in kind with violence.

Whites were well aware of the fact that some of the Africans who participated in the

⁵ Peter Hoffer, *Cry Liberty: The Great Stono River Slave Rebellion of 1739* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 126–27. For the proceedings of an investigation into an alleged conspiracy in 1749 see, Council Journal, no. 17, pt. 1, 47–168, SCDAH.

⁶ In Elliott's 1761 estate inventory, a man named July is listed along with his wife Maria and their children Prince and Johnny. It is not entirely clear if this is the same July that received his freedom but it is most likely he remained on Elliott's property because his enslaved family members continued to reside there.

⁷ J. H. Easterby, ed., *The Journal of the Commons House of Assembly, Sept. 12, 1739-Mar. 26, 1741* (Columbia: Historical Commission of South Carolina, 1951), 62–5; For short biographical portraits of Elliott and Grimke see, Walter B. Edgar and N. Louise Bailey, eds., *Biographical Directory of the South Carolina House of Representatives* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1974), 226, 293–94.

⁸ Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York: International Publishers, 1943).

rebellion were “brought from the kingdom of Angola in Africa, many of these speak Portuguese.”⁹

Given the very personnel nature of the encounters with armed Congolese and the recent memories of the Stono Rebellion, one would expect as Michael Gomez, Margaret Washington Creel, and others have suggested, that planters in St. Paul’s parish especially, and South Carolina in general, would no longer identify West Central Africans as desirable laborers. However, the purchasing patterns of St. Paul’s planters do not correlate with this interpretation.¹⁰ Remarkably, in September 1753, both Grimke and Elliott purchased a total of eleven Congolese captives that disembarked from the ship *Emperor*. Nearly thirteen years to the day of the Stono Rebellion, planters who had witnessed first-hand the capacity of Congolese military training and organization showed no hesitation in purchasing new Congolese laborers with similar cultural origins.

Moreover, Grimke’s and Elliott’s purchases were not made out of desperation or necessity. When the *Emperor* arrived in Charleston in late August 1753, there were additional West African ships undergoing quarantine and many more were in route to the colony. Earlier that month, on August 9th, Charleston slave dealers Austin & Laurens held an auction for a cargo of Africans that embarked from the “Grain and Gold Coasts.”¹¹ Captive West Africans from these regions of West Africa ranked at the top of

⁹ Anglican missionary Francis Le Jau noted that in his parish there were captive Africans “born and baptized among the Portuguese but speak very good English.” Frank J. Klingberg, ed., *The Carolina Chronicle of Dr. Francis Le Jau, 1706-1717* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956), 69, 102. Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (New York: Knopf, 1974), 177.

¹⁰ Margaret Washington Creel, *A Peculiar People: Slave Religion and Community-Culture Among the Gullahs* (New York: New York University Press, 1988), 35; Michael Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

¹¹ Walter B. Edgar and N. Louise Bailey, eds., *Biographical Directory of the South Carolina House of Representatives* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1974), 44–45, 390–94. My use of dealer

preferred ethnicities by South Carolina planters because of their familiarity with rice cultivation and perceived docility. Arriving in Charleston at the same time as the *Emperor* was the ship *Orrell*. Rather than coordinate and organize two separate sales, the Congolese that disembarked from the *Emperor*, and the Senegambians that disembarked from the *Orrell*, were held on the same day, September 9th. For the dealers, at least, it appears that the auction went extremely well. By nightfall, all 409 captive Africans were sold.¹²

According to the hierarchy of ethnicity if all things are equal, planters with a preference for laborers with experience of rice cultivation would purchase Senegambians over West Central Africans when the market allowed them to make such a choice.¹³ However, that does not appear to be the case with Grimke or Elliott. When given the opportunity to select between Senegambians and Congolese, Grimke selected the later; he purchased three Angolan men and two Angolan women. Thomas Elliott displayed a similar pattern; he purchased two men, one woman, one girl, and one boy. Interestingly, of the planters who purchased Senegambians disembarking from the *Orrell*, none were residents of St. Paul's parish where rice cultivation was widespread. The ethnic origin of

here is deliberate. Traditional terms such as merchant or trader do not adequately convey the nature of selling and trafficking humans. By continuing to utilize such parochial terms to describe traffickers of humans in West Africa and in the Americas we mask the inhumanity of the commerce and further subvert the humanity of the Africans captured in the exchange. Thomas Jefferson was keenly aware of this fact when he attempted to include a clause in the Declaration of Independence that blamed King George for slavery in British North America. This mythology remains very tangible within American folklore. The ship from the "Grain and Gold Coast" was the *Africa* owned by Robert and John Thomson & Company of Lancaster that disembarked 170 captives. Austin & Laurens accounts, BRBL; SCG, 6 August 1753.

¹² Morgan, "Slave Sales in Colonial Charleston"; Sean Kelley, "Scrambling for Slaves: Captive Sales in Colonial South Carolina," *Slavery & Abolition* 34, no. 1 (2013): 1–21.

¹³ Daniel C. Littlefield, "Charleston and Internal Slave Redistribution," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 87, no. 2 (1986): 99. Littlefield states that, "there was a hierarchy of slave preferences and knowing what 'country' the slaves belonged would, other things being equal, definitely encouraged planters to purchase."

the slaves sold in South Carolina was just one of several factors that shaped market patterns and the cultural landscape.¹⁴

For many early settlers, Carolina was an unpleasant experience because few were prepared for the sub-tropical environment and the unfamiliar diseases that thrived there.¹⁵ German traveler Johan David Schoepf wrote that “Carolina is in the spring a paradise, in the summer a hell, and in the autumn a hospital.”¹⁶ One anonymous observer considered the Lowcountry “the sink of the earth.”¹⁷ Despite the dangers of establishing a settlement in a setting that was riddled with physical perils, English colonists expressed an unwavering commitment to African slavery. The origins of the South Carolina colonizing venture were rooted in the Caribbean, especially Barbados where a large percentage of the early migrants re-emigrated from.¹⁸ Many of the first white settlers carried with them captive Africans from the West Indies to clear land, construct dwellings, and plant crops. In 1679, Barbadian migrant Stephen Clay carried five captive Africans named Cassado, Cottobo, Veter, Moheille, and Rose to South Carolina. An African family, John Sr., Elizabeth, and John Jr., arrived with the Sayle family from Bermuda.¹⁹ In 1711, Mary

¹⁴ Austin & Laurens accounts, BRBL.

¹⁵ For the role of tropical disease and medicine in the formation of race see, Nancy Stepan, *Picturing Tropical Nature* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2001).

¹⁶ Johann David Schöpf, *Travels in the Confederation, 1783-1784* (New York: Bergman, 1968), 172.

¹⁷ Harry J. Carman, ed., *American Husbandry* (Port Washington, N.Y: Kennikat Press, 1964), 264; Peter McCandless, *Slavery, Disease, and Suffering in the Southern Lowcountry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

¹⁸ Justin Roberts and Ian Beamish, “Venturing Out: The Barbadian Diaspora and the Carolina Colony, 1650-1685,” in Michelle LeMaster and Bradford J. Wood, eds., *Creating and Contesting Carolina: Proprietary Era Histories* (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2013), 49-72; Agnes Leland Baldwin, *First Settlers of South Carolina, 1670-1680* (Columbia: Published for the South Carolina Tricentennial Commission by the University of South Carolina Press, 1969). Barbados was the primary terminal for trade to South Carolina for much of the eighteenth century. For problems arising from routing goods to the colony from New England vis-à-vis the Caribbean see, Arthur Middleton to Thomas Amory, 15 April 1719, Amory Family Papers, 1697-1882, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

¹⁹ Susan Baldwin Bates and Harriott Cheves Leland, eds., *Proprietary Records of South Carolina. Volume 1: Abstracts of the Records of the Secretary of the Province, 1675-1695* (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2005), 32.

Stratford informed a relative that “there is no living” in Carolina “without slaves.”²⁰

Building on their experiences in the Caribbean, white immigrants to Carolina attempted to replicate the Caribbean plantation regime rooted in the exploitation of thousands of captive African laborers.

Captive Africans arriving in South Carolina during the early stages of the colonization disembarked in small numbers, often singularly or in pairs from the Caribbean. The new African arrivals were not acculturated or “seasoned” Africans but were once captives on ships arriving directly from West Africa and transferred to secondary ships. These captives were a part of the last leg of the intercolonial slave trade from the Caribbean that ended in Carolina.²¹ Many of the West Central Africans that arrived in the Chesapeake were taken as contraband on Dutch and English privateering ventures in the West Indies.²² However, it was not until the 1720s when captive Africans began arriving in Carolina at a consistent rate and volume to exceed the number of Africans arriving from the Caribbean. As the colony became fully integrated into the larger Anglo-Atlantic marketplace, the percentage of captive West Africans living in the Carolina lowlands quickly surpassed the number of whites. By 1751, officials estimated

²⁰ Mary Stafford to Mrs. Randall, August 23, 1711, in St. Julien R. Childs, ed., “A Letter Written in 1711 by Mary Stafford to her Kinswoman in England,” *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 81 (1980), 2-14.

²¹ Ras Michael Brown, *African-Atlantic Cultures and the South Carolina Lowcountry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 48–9; Gregory E. O’Malley, “Beyond the Middle Passage: Slave Migration from the Caribbean to North America, 1619-1807,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 66, no. 1 (2009): 125–172.

²² James H. Sweet, “African Identity and Slave Resistance in the Portuguese Atlantic,” in Peter C. Mancall, ed., *The Atlantic World and Virginia, 1550-1624* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 225-247; John Thornton, “The African Experience of the ‘20. and Odd Negroes’ Arriving in Virginia in 1619,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 55, no. 3 (1998): 421–434; John C. Coombs, “The Phases of Conversion: A New Chronology for the Rise of Slavery in Early Virginia,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 68, no. 3 (2011): 332–360.

there were approximately 49,000 captive Africans in the colony, more than double the number of whites scattered throughout the province.²³

Two contributing factors suggest why the vast region of West Central Africa, the Congo and Angola, has been treated as a continuum in the literature on the African Diaspora. First, although West Central Africa is a vast geographical space, there is significant cultural and linguistic (Bantu speakers) continuities between the peoples inhabiting the western shores of West Central Africa. Second, further complicating matters is the difficulty in distinguishing between the two separate export trades that originated in the Congo and Angola.²⁴ The Kongo were the primary suppliers of captive Africans to the bays along the Loango Coast north of the Zaire River. The Kongo's advantageous regional homeland located between Luanda and Loango, where distinct commercial networks intersected the region, allowed the Kongo to sell slaves to the north or south depending on which outlet was more profitable. However, most of their business was directed north towards the Loango Coast where English manufactured woolens were an important trade item. Captive Africans were gathered from the interior and brought to the coast where African traders sold them to Europeans. After the 1750s, English slaving in West Central Africa was limited to the Loango Coast. Portuguese dominance in the region south of the Zaire River was apparent by the middle of the eighteenth century and few, if any, English ships ventured further south towards Luanda to purchase slaves.²⁵

²³ "Governor James Glen's Report, 1751," in H. Roy Merrens, ed., *The Colonial South Carolina Scene: Contemporary Views, 1697-1774* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1977), 177-91.

²⁴ Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks*, 134.

²⁵ Joseph Miller, "The Numbers, Origins, and Destinations of Slaves in the Eighteenth-Century Angolan Slave Trade," in Joseph E. Inikori and Stanley Engerman, eds., *The Atlantic Slave Trade: Effects on Economies, Societies, and Peoples in Africa, the Americas, and Europe* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), 81-85.

Europeans slaving north of the Zaire River in West Central Africa often encountered multiple vessels attempting to purchase captive Africans. In January 1752, when the *Greyhound* arrived at Malemba, three ships, two French and one London sloop, were waiting to purchase 800 Africans. None of the ships had completed their business with the local elite traders and it would take several months before they would depart from the coast. In route from Europe were two ships from Cadiz and an additional English ship were expected to arrive within the week. Further north, several French ships were purchasing Africans at Loango. According to Captain John Fowler, internal friction among the “somo men” at Cabenda had “entirely ruined” the trade there. The crowded conditions made trading and purchasing slaves very difficult for European trading vessels. Ship captains were required to offer up customary tribute to the “linguister and the greatest traders” to lubricate trading terms in hopes of expediting captive Africans to their vessels waiting off the coast. Despite the competitive nature of slaving on the Loango Coast, and the more problematic internal political conflicts, English merchants continued to send ships to the region with the perspective that the issues would be resolved within the coming year when ships that were being outfitted would arrive on the coast. Some of those ships would carry Congolese to South Carolina.²⁶

The ethnic origins of captive Africans arriving in South Carolina fluctuated throughout the eighteenth century. The majority of the captives carried directly to South Carolina embarked from ports situated in West Central Africa. British ship captains made

²⁶ Richard Meyler to Captain John Fowler, 29 June 1752, in Kenneth Morgan, ed., *The Bright-Meyler Papers: A Bristol-West India Connection, 1732-1837* (Oxford: Published for the British Academy by Oxford University Press, 2007), 253. I have consulted with several Africanists on the meaning of the term *somo men*. Contextual evidence suggests the term may refer to middling traders but James Sweet’s linguistic analysis claims that in a variety of southern African languages the term “msomi” means intellectual or learned person.

the majority of their purchases at Malemba and Cabinda along the Loango Coast.

Between 1730 and 1744, captive West Central Africans constituted sixty-five percent of the Africans disembarking in Carolina. This development was a major shift from the previous two decades when Africans embarking from the Gold Coast represented over half of the slaves arriving in the colony. During the era of the legal slave trade, approximately 74,000 West Central Africans disembarked in the colony. With an end to nearly a decade of European warfare in 1748, Atlantic shipping routes were again safe for British slaving vessels. In South Carolina, the 1750s was a decade of general economic resurgence that coincided with an increased importation of captive Africans to the colony. At mid-century, the ethnic composition of the captive Africans in the Lowcountry would shift again in response to a dynamic Atlantic marketplace that connected West Africa to the Americas and Europe.²⁷



Figure 6.1. Slave dealer advertisements. On 27 August 1753, three African cargoes were listed together; the *Emperor*, *Orrel*, and *Elizabeth*. Source. South Carolina Gazette.

²⁷ David Eltis and David Richardson, *Atlas of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 216; Kenneth Morgan, *Slavery and the British Empire: From Africa to America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Between 1750 and 1760, six documented ships in the transatlantic slave trade purchased captive Africans along the Loango Coast and disembarked captives in South Carolina. The sales accounts for three of those ships, the *Emperor* (1753), *Pearl* (1755), and *Polly* (1758) are recorded in the Austin & Laurens accounts.²⁸ When Charles Gwynn sailed the *Emperor* into Charleston harbor in August 1753, his reputation in the slave trade was already well established. Gwynn was conversant in trading practices of West Central Africa, having purchased Congolese captives there on two previous occasions. Gwynn knew that purchasing in bulk was just one tactic utilized to ensure a profitable venture for Bristol investors.²⁹ Aboard the *Emperor* were 104 men, 70 women, 90 boys, and 63 girls. Nearly half (47%) of the captive Congolese that disembarked were children.³⁰ South Carolina statutes mandated that captive Africans “50 inches or smaller” were assessed a duty of £5 and those larger £10. The Congolese aboard the *Polly* that arrived in 1758 carried a similar ratio of adults to children. One hundred and ninety-five (53%) of the Africans were identified as “boys and girls” and fifty six (30%) were considered “under sized.”³¹ A pregnant Congolese woman received an additional two

²⁸ Voyage IDs 17311, 17375, 17425.

²⁹ Gwynn commanded six slave voyages during his career and delivered on average 399 captive Africans per voyage. Gwynn was an associate in the Kingston trading firm Gwynn & Case. Morgan, *Bright Meyler Papers*, 51.

³⁰ It was not uncommon for ship captains to purchase parentless children. Moreover, surrogate mothers often suckled and nursed small children aboard slave ships. For an account by a former ship’s surgeon see, Sheila Lambert, ed., *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1975), 72:515; Paul Lovejoy, “The Children of Slavery – the Transatlantic Phase.” *Slavery & Abolition* 27, no. 2 (2006): 197–217. For two informative essays discussing children in the nineteenth-century US internal slave trade see, Susan Eva O’Donovan, “Traded Babies:” Enslaved Children in America’s Domestic Migration, 1820-1860,” and Calvin Schermerhorn “Left Behind but Getting Ahead:” Antebellum Slavery’s Orphans in the Chesapeake, 1820-1860,” in Gwyn Campbell, Suzanne Miers, and Joseph Calder Miller, eds., *Children in Slavery through the Ages* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009), 88-104, 204-224.

³¹ *Laurens Papers*, 1:327n, 2:308. Austin & Laurens accounts, BRBL. For the statute that levied according to size of Africans see, Statutes, 3:739-51.

blankets.³² Historian Paul Lovejoy has shown that over thirty percent of the Africans embarking from the Bight of Biafra and West Central Africa were children. In the eighteenth century, prepubescent children constituted over one-fourth of all Africans that disembarked.³³

From the captive Africans that disembarked from the *Emperor*, Henry Laurens purchased a “little boy about three years old” for £36.³⁴ The whereabouts of the little boy are unclear. It is uncertain if his mother, or a family member, was with him when he arrived in Charleston. Ship captains often separated mothers and small children once all the captives were aboard. It was not uncommon for West African traders to sell sisters and brothers together. Only “suckling children” were permitted to remain with mothers during the transatlantic passage.³⁵ Gwendolyn Midlo Hall identified a similar trend among French slave ships that carried nursing children to Louisiana.³⁶ The pangs the little boy must have felt wrenched from his dead mother’s arms or separated from her during the scramble are uncomfortable scenarios to reconcile but this was a reality that captive Congolese and other West Africans confronted upon disembarking. Anglo-Atlantic slave dealers were acutely aware of these circumstances. Moreover, virtually all West Africans who were caught in the snare of the transatlantic slave trade confronted similar circumstances.³⁷

³² When asked about the care of pregnant women and new born infants George Baillie responded that they were exempt from field labor “before their lying-in.” *HCSP*, 73:187.

³³ Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks*, 18, 37; Paul E. Lovejoy, “The Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on Africa: A Review of the Literature,” *The Journal of African History* 30, no. 3 (1989): 384–85.

³⁴ Austin & Laurens accounts, BRBL.

³⁵ *HCSP*, 72:302-3.

³⁶ Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992).

³⁷ Austin & Laurens accounts, BRBL. Richard Ligon noted that “the planters buy” the Africans “out of the Ship, where they find them stark naked, and therefore cannot be deceived in any outward infirmity. They

It is a useful exercise to speculate on the possible whereabouts of the little African boy considering the large Congolese contingency in South Carolina. It is likely that Laurens carried the little boy to his brother-in-law's plantation on the Cooper River where a stable Congolese community was emerging.³⁸ In 1726, John Ball purchased a ten-year-old West Central African girl and named her Angola Ame.³⁹ Throughout her life she lived at Comingtee in St. John's Berkeley parish. Historian Cheryll Ann Cody identified Angola Ame as the matriarch of an extensive family tree that stretched across several Ball family plantations in subsequent generations. Between 1743 and 1758, Angola Ame gave birth to seven daughters. If the little boy was taken to Ball's plantation, he would have had several similarly aged children to grow up with in Ame's family.⁴⁰ A possible alternative is that Laurens took the little boy home that evening after the auction ended. In the 1750s, Laurens' residence in St. Michaels' Alley was only a few blocks from the site of the sale. For the first three years of their marriage, none of the children born in the Laurens home survived beyond the first few months of life. However, in 1753, Henry Jr. was born and it is possible the little Congolese boy stayed in the Laurens home for a time where his closest playmate was a little white boy of similar age.⁴¹

choose them as they do Horses in a Market; the strongest, youthfulest, and most beautifull, yield the greatest prices." Richard Ligon, *A True & Exact History of the Island of Barbadoes* (London, 1673).

³⁸ This is the most likely scenario because Laurens did not own any country property until 1756 when he purchased with John Coming Ball one-half interest in Wambaw Plantation in St. James Santee parish. S. Max Edelson, *Plantation Enterprise in Colonial South Carolina* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 200-10.

³⁹ It was not uncommon for Ball to purchase African children. In June 1756, Ball purchased 6 children between the ages of six and ten. Ball listed the children by name and perceived age; Sancho, 9; Peter, 7; Brutus, 7; Harvey, 6; Balinda, 10; Priscilla, 10. Elias Ball's Plantation Journal 1720-1778, Ball Family Papers, SCHS.

⁴⁰ Cheryll Ann Cody, "There Was No 'Absalom' on the Ball Plantations: Slave-Naming Practices in the South Carolina Low Country, 1720-1865," *The American Historical Review* 92, no. 3 (1987): 563-596; Cheryll Ann Cody, "Slave Demography and Family Formation a Community Study of the Ball Family Plantations, 1720-1896" (PhD, University of Minnesota, 1982), 43-49.

⁴¹ Joanna B. Gillespie, *The Life and Times of Martha Laurens Ramsay, 1759-1811* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 32.

Romantic speculation can blur the violence inherent to the transatlantic slave trade and slavery in Carolina. However, such connections are possible though ever so remotely.

British slave trade organizers and investors continued to send ships to the Loango Coast throughout the eighteenth century because captives from that region sold well in Caribbean and North American markets. When Captain Jefferies departed from Bristol in June 1754, he was instructed to purchase 350 captives. Jefferies was familiar with business of slaving on the Loango Coast. A year earlier, he delivered 351 Congolese to Thomas Mills in St. Kitts. Mills reported that sales were quite brisk for “slaves of that country” and that the “choice” men sold very well. After trading at Malembo and managing the difficult Atlantic crossing, the *Pearl* finally reached the South Carolina coast.⁴² When the *Pearl* arrived in June 1755, Lowcountry residents were battling a deadly smallpox epidemic. Austin & Laurens tried to prevent the Congolese from contracting the deadly disease by avoiding the legally mandated quarantine at Sullivan’s Island. They sent a petition to the governor stating that Sullivan’s Island was an “improper place to land healthy slaves” and requested to send the ship a few miles up the Cooper River where the captives would be “landed and aired” properly.⁴³ Although heavy rains on the morning of the auction prevented a timely start, the slave dealers still managed to sell over 230 (94%) captive Africans on the first day.⁴⁴

During the Atlantic crossing, twenty-five souls perished and an additional eight died after arriving in Charleston. It is unclear if any of the Congolese contracted

⁴² David Richardson, *Bristol, Africa, and the Eighteenth-Century Slave Trade to America, volume 2, The years of ascendancy, 1730–1745* (Gloucester: Produced for the Bristol Record Society by A. Sutton Pub., 1986), 63.

⁴³ Brent Holcomb, ed., *Petitions for Land from the South Carolina Council Journals* (Columbia, S.C: SCMAR, 1996), vol. 4:151.

⁴⁴ Austin & Laurens accounts, BRBL.

smallpox. Prices for “good men” averaged between £270 and £280 but 5 Congolese sold for £290 which was a “most extraordinary affair.”⁴⁵ When compared to the other ships that consigned captive Congolese to Austin & Laurens, the *Pearl’s* cargo was extraordinary – at least in terms of success measured in profit margins. The high rate of sales on the first day demonstrates the firm’s ability to navigate and prevent the Congolese captives from contracting smallpox. Moreover, the sales show that Lowcountry planters continued to purchase captive Congolese despite their association with the violence of the Stono Rebellion.

In early January 1756, Henry Laurens wrote to Gidney Clarke, a Barbadian merchant active in the transatlantic and intercolonial slave trades. Laurens alerted Clarke to an abrupt shift in the Charleston market, stating that “slaves this winter” will not sell well because of low planter demand. Three weeks later when the *Relief* arrived in Charleston, captive Africans carried in the intercolonial slave trade from Antigua were still unsold. Because January was often one of the coldest months of the year, planters often “don’t choose to buy.” It was not uncommon for temperatures in the Lowcountry to reach into the low teens.⁴⁶ That winter seventeen ships from the Caribbean transshipped Africans to Charleston. Many planters imagined that in a “month of two more they shall get them for a song” which made many “stand off that would” normally purchase.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ *Laurens Papers*, 2:38 Austin & Laurens accounts, BRBL.

⁴⁶ Lionel Chalmers, *An Account of the Weather and Diseases of South Carolina* (London: Printed for E. and C. Dilly, 1776).

⁴⁷ *Laurens Papers*, 2: 57, 59n, 63. Between September 1755 and March 1756, nine small cargoes of Africans arrived from Antigua, 3 from Barbados, 2 from Jamaica, 2 from Curacao, and 1 from St. Eustatius. Public Treasurer Journal B, SCDAH.

It appears that Captain William Lightbourne of the *Relief* purchased the Congolese from another ship that had recently arrived from the West African coast.⁴⁸ Gidney Clarke transshipped the Congolese from Barbados to Charleston for Austin & Laurens to sell. The slave dealers speculated that since there “acquaintance with the planters [was] pretty extensive” the captive Congolese would “bring down our friends from the remote parts of the country.” While the firm speculated they would collect a handsome profit from the sales, the captive Congolese aboard the *Relief* could not have suffered more from the horrific conditions within the ship’s hold.⁴⁹

In route to South Carolina, Lightbourn had to make an unexpected stop at Anguilla for repairs to the badly leaking ship. While at Anguilla, six Congolese died and, according to Laurens, many more were “very low and weak” since arriving at Charleston. Lying naked and exposed Lightbourn was “obliged to put their cloaths” on a few days after he left Barbados to “preserve” the captives “from the water that come down from the deck.” Once the ship reached Charleston, the Congolese captives arrived to a glutted market and many of the prospective planters preferred not to “buy at this cold season” because they knew that more Africans were coming in the spring when the majority of the direct imports from Africa began arriving.⁵⁰ The few buyers Austin & Laurens could recruit to attend the auction considered the Congolese a “very indifferent parcel...and much too small a people for the business [labor] of this country” which led many to leave

⁴⁸ The *Relief* is not listed in the voyages database. The ship arrived on 15 January 1756 carrying 140 captives. According to the sales advertisement the captives on board comprised of “prime Angola men and women slaves, chiefly young people and healthy.” Donnan, *Documents Illustrative*, vol. 4:338-39; SCG, 16 January 1756.

⁴⁹ Austin & Laurens accounts, BRBL. S. D. Smith, “Gedney Clarke of Salem and Barbados: Transatlantic Super-Merchant,” *The New England Quarterly* 76, no. 4 (2003): 499–549.

⁵⁰ Daniel C. Littlefield, “The Slave Trade to Colonial South Carolina: A Profile,” *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 91, no. 2 (1990), Table 14.

without making a purchase. On the day of the sale, Austin & Laurens brought into the “yard 105” captive Congolese and the rest that “remained alive were in a bad condition” with dysentery. Since disembarking an additional thirteen Congolese perished and “several more in great danger” of a similar fate.⁵¹

While the Africans aboard the *Relief* performed the required quarantine, Austin & Laurens sent provisions of beef, potatoes, greens, sugar, and tobacco to Sullivan’s Island to revive the captive Congolese.⁵² Additional blankets and firewood were sent as well. Interestingly, an “Angola” nurse was hired for 14 days to care for the sick Africans recovering on Sullivan’s Island.⁵³ It is possible that some of the captive Congolese knew the woman who cared for them. It is just as likely they did not. Perhaps she prepared familiar Congolese medicinal remedies for the ailing Africans, or chanted well-known songs, or performed funerary rituals to comfort the dying, who would not survive to endure the sale. It is also possible she expressed little empathy for the captive Africans. Regardless, the familiarity of an African rather than a white colonist caring for the sick Congolese certainly provided some level of comfort whether their paths diverged towards the plantations of the Santee or a more timely reunion in the afterlife.⁵⁴

Cultural origins and local market conditions proved crucial to the sales of captive Africans in Charleston. Disease was an additional unpredictable factor. The Congolese

⁵¹ *Laurens Papers*, 2:62-66, 82-84, 100.

⁵² The use of ‘performing’ here to describe the Africans aboard the *Relief* is from the manuscript and is an interesting term considering recent historiographical trends towards in the study of race and whiteness studies. See, Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Warren, John T. “Performing Whiteness Differently: Rethinking the Abolitionist Project.” *Educational Theory* 51, no. 4 (Fall 2001): 451–66.

⁵³ Austin & Laurens accounts, BRBL.

⁵⁴ Jason R. Young, *Rituals of Resistance: African Atlantic Religion in Kongo and the Lowcountry South in the era of Slavery* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007), 105-145. Young notes that both whites and blacks acknowledged the effectiveness of African medicinal practices in healing the sick.

aboard the *Relief* encountered this unfortunate contingency upon disembarking. As it just so “unluckily happened,” according to Laurens, many of the captive Africans throughout the province were suffering from an outbreak of “Pereparamina” [pneumonia] and few planters were in the mood to purchase new captives from fear that they would become sick upon returning to the plantations. Eleven of the Congolese that Captain Lightbourne carried to Charleston were “sick in the hospital” and one of the men was “extremely low in flesh.” The poor physical conditions of the captive Africans that disembarked from the *Relief* were a major obstacle for slave dealers to overcome. Slave dealers were often able to push off Africans of poor health through clever negotiations with potential buyers but if they were unable to attract any buyers to the auction, dealers were left with few options. When market conditions pushed “planters produce...so low” they were unwilling to purchase new captives unless it was at a “price proportionate to that of their goods.” Combined with a flooded local labor market from “parcel after parcel” arriving “incessantly” all winter from the Caribbean, few alternatives were available.⁵⁵

When the Congolese aboard the *Emperor* arrived in Charleston, planter demand for new Africans was particularly high and would continue to rise. By the time the Africans aboard the *Emperor* and *Orrell* went up for sale on 5 September 1753, just under a year had passed since two devastating hurricanes struck the colony that destroyed the rice crop and thousands of acres of valuable timber.⁵⁶ According to a contemporary estimate, at least 25 hands were required to manage 40 acres of indigo to produce 450 pounds of the finished commodity. In South Carolina, the demand for new Africans was

⁵⁵ *Laurens Papers*, 2:81-82

⁵⁶ “‘Nothing but Death Before My Eyes’: Mending Broken Spirits and Repairing Defensive Walls in Colonial Charleston.” *Atlantic Studies* 12, no. 4 (2015): 457–81. For evidence of slaves harvesting fallen timber after the storms see, 25-26 September 1752, Elias Ball’s Plantation Journal, 1720-1778, Ball Family Papers, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, South Carolina, (SCHS).

directly related to the rising prices of indigo in Britain. Laurens explained that the “great call for slaves” was to “help people in their indigo many of whom have planted more than they can work.” As the price of indigo continued to climb, many planters converted land reserved for corn and provision grounds for feeding the bonded laborers into indigo fields. Planters residing in backcountry settlements joined St. Stephen’s parish planters in the frenzy to cultivate the dye. Indigo cultivation recovered quickly as a result of the increasing captive African population in the colony. Indigo was selling “extremely well” in London, Laurens observed. Planters across the province had “bent their strength to indigo” and many of them had “planted much more than they can reap and work without an augmentation of their slaves relying on the importation of this summer.” The extreme working conditions the captive African population endured were driven by planter expectations of substantial profits. In just over two years, indigo exported from the colony increased tenfold.⁵⁷

It is clear from sales advertisements, that local competition for slave labor was intense in September 1753. Also, the demand for captive Africans is quite clear. However, because the sales of the *Emperor* and *Orrell* were held simultaneously, it is possible to make a direct comparative analysis of the prices purchasers paid for captive male Africans.⁵⁸ Since the Africans aboard the *Orrell* were of Senegambian origins, and those aboard the *Emperor* Congolese, if we accept the assumption that South Carolina planters preferred Africans with knowledge of rice cultivation from Senegambia and

⁵⁷ *Laurens Papers*, 1:263-65, 290, 308; 2:63; John J. Winberry, *Indigo in South Carolina: A Historical Geography* (Knoxville, Tenn: Southeastern Geographer, 1979), 91-107.

⁵⁸ “On Wednesday the 5th of September next, will be sold, an exceeding fine Cargo of 350 Healthy negroes, just imported in the Ship *Emperor*. Also on the same day as above, will be sold, a cargo of exceeding fine Healthy slaves, just imported in the Brigantine *Orrel*, Capt. *Bennet*, directly from the River Gambia, by Austin & Laurens.” *SCG*, 27 August 1753.

would thus be willing to pay an additional sum for them considering the circumstances of an extremely competitive local market, then this purchasing behavior should be evident in the price indexes.⁵⁹

Table 6.1. Comparison of Sales of Ships that embarked from West Central Africa and Sierra Leone										
Year	Vessel	Market	Embarked	Total number of captives sold	Total number of men	Total men for whom a price could be determined	Avg. Men Price	Avg. Lot size	Max	Total number of lots of ten or more
1753	<i>Emperor</i>	SC	WCA	327	104	51	£246.2	2.95	19	6
1753	<i>Orrell</i>	SC	Sierra Leone	83	46	34	£230.4	4.7	8	0
1755	<i>Hare</i>	SC	Sierra Leone	55	29	14	£229	3.6	9	0
1755	<i>Pearl</i>	SC	WCA	243	116	69	£272.4	2.8	41	4
1756	<i>Relief</i>	SC	WCA	125	66	38	£209	2.6	20	1
1758	<i>Polly</i>	SC	WCA	364	120	15	£213.5	4.7 ^a	55 ^b	3
<i>Source</i> : Austin & Laurens Account Book, BRBL Slavery Collection, NYHS.										
^a The first 114 captives are missing from the original manuscript.										
^b Middleton & Brailsford purchased 40 men, 10 women, and 5 boys; the largest single lot recorded.										

However, an analysis of Table 1 illustrates that Lowcountry planters purchasing patterns does not match cultural explanations for preference of specific West African ethnicities. Comparing the sales of the *Emperor* and the *Orrell* reveals that purchasers were willing to pay an additional eight percent on average for “prime men” the preferred Lowcountry laborer. Although, the sales did not occur simultaneously as in the previous example, a similar pattern appears when comparing the sales of the Congolese that disembarked from the *Pearl* and the Sengambians that disembarked from the *Hare* two

⁵⁹ On the sales of the *Emperor*, Kelley notes that “Had it been a vendue sale, and assuming that one captive could be brought upon the block and auctioned off every 2 minutes, it would have taken 11 solid hours to sell the entire cargo.” Kelley, “Scrambling for Slaves,” 13.

years later. Purchasers paid an additional nineteen percent for Congolese men who disembarked from the *Pearl*. Local market conditions that were driven by abnormally high demand dictated purchasing behavior.⁶⁰

A more narrow analysis of St. Paul's parish purchasers is significant to this discussion. Forty-two colonists who purchased captive Africans from Austin & Laurens between 1751 and 1758 were identified as residing or owning significant acreage within St. Paul's parish. Planters with properties along the Stono and Edisto Rivers purchased 303 captive Africans. [Appendix 4] Eighteen (42%) purchased captive Africans that disembarked from West Central Africa. From this group, ten were repeat customers who made multiple purchases of Africans that embarked from points in Senegambia, Sierra Leone, and the Windward Coast. On average, West Central Africans comprised thirty-two percent of the total captive Africans purchased from this group. In general, one third of all St. Paul's planters' purchases embarked from West Central Africa which would suggest that the memories of the Stono Rebellion did not linger among the local population, or at least they no longer associated the violence with new captive Congolese.⁶¹

Cultural origins and local market conditions proved crucial to the sales of captive Africans in Charleston. On August 30, 1753, six days before the sales of the *Orrell* and *Emperor*, some of the Senegambians that disembarked from the *Elizabeth* were sold. While in route from Barbados to Carolina, the captives suffered "much fatigue from tumbling about" because the captain encountered unfavorable winds and rough seas. A trip that routinely took about fourteen days required five weeks for the *Elizabeth* to safely

⁶⁰ Austin & Laurens accounts, BRBL.

⁶¹ Austin & Laurens accounts, BRBL.

reach Charleston. At this final stage of the middle passage, captive Africans were physically debilitated from the lack of fresh water and provisions. Dehydration was a common cause of death.⁶² On the expected poor sales, the slave dealer complained, “it must be imputed to the slaves not being in that good order as I could wish.”⁶³ Sixteen percent (13) of the Africans sold from the *Orrell* were identified in the sales accounts as “very sick” or “refuse.”⁶⁴ One girl had contracted “Guinea worms,” a very painful skin disease caused by drinking from a contaminated water source. In comparison to the Africans aboard the *Emperor*, less than one percent (26) were identified as “sick with swellings” or “refuse.” From this analysis, it seems clear that the physical health of the captive Africans at the time of the sales were more important to potential buyers than their ethnic origins.⁶⁵

From the sample of St Paul parish purchasers, only a few provide additional evidence for tracing out the movements of captive Africans. This is largely a problem of the limited primary source base combined with the nature of the Lowcountry slave regime designed to eradicate African cultural rituals and ethnic identity that reemerged in the colony. While the task of erasure was unsuccessful and incomplete, pinpointing the African identities and the long-term movement of captives across the landscape remains particularly difficult. However, there are a few methodological approaches applicable to the St Paul sample for further investigation and analysis.

⁶² Kenneth F. Kiple and Brian T. Higgins, “Mortality caused by dehydration during the middle passage,” in Joseph E. Inikori and Stanley Engerman, eds., *The Atlantic Slave Trade: Effects on Economies, Societies, and Peoples in Africa, the Americas, and Europe* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), 321–37.

⁶³ John Guerard to William Jolliffe, 30 August 1753, John Guerard Letterbook, SCHS.

⁶⁴ Austin & Laurens accounts, BRBL.

⁶⁵ William Dampier, *A New Voyage Round the World*, (London: Printed for James Knapton, 1703), 89; Robert W. Harms, *The Diligent: A Voyage Through the Worlds of the Slave Trade* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 279, 309.

The difficulty lies in connecting several distinct types of evidence which do not overlap with each other in the slavery archive. The starting point for tracing out the movements of captive Africans across the Lowcountry begins in West Africa. Scholars have identified reliable methodological practices for studying the African Diaspora.⁶⁶ In the colonial setting, the starting point is the slave dealer's account book which I have interrogated in constructing this chapter. This source identifies the buyer or landowner and the number of captives purchased. Knowing who the buyer was allows for a methodological intervention by using the planter as a proxy for following captives inland to their new homes. The next sources are land grants and property records that detail the wholesale partitioning of the colony. Property records identify the possible locations where captive Africans might have travelled after leaving Charleston. From here the trail often grows cold. Several important pieces of the puzzle remain elusive, in particular plantation inventories which identify the size of the enslaved community. Names, families and the relationships of captive Africans are often included in property inventories. These inventories are much more common for the nineteenth century. Other missing puzzle pieces are parish tax records and censuses. However, in place of these missing records, I have utilized probate records and postmortem inventories that detail

⁶⁶ Paul Lovejoy, "Methodology through the Ethnic Lens: The Study of Atlantic Africa," and Matt D. Childs, "Pathways to African Ethnicity in the Americas: African National Associations in Cuba during Slavery," in Toyin Falola and Christian Jennings, eds., *Sources and Methods in African History: Spoken, Written, Unearthed* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2010), 105-117, 118-145; Linda M. Heywood and John Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Making of the Foundation of the Americas, 1585-1660* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Linda M. Heywood, *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Akinwumi Ogundiran and Toyin Falola, eds., *Archaeology of Atlantic Africa and the African Diaspora* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007).

the material possessions, estates, and chattel property owned by colonists at the time of their death.⁶⁷

Wealthy white elites not only purchased the largest number of captive Africans from Austin & Laurens, but also left the largest paper trail. Perhaps unsurprisingly, additional analysis of the St Paul parish sample begins with Thomas Elliott, the same mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, and the progeny of that expansive clan. The first Elliotts, Thomas (d. 1731) and his brother William (d. 1738), arrived in Carolina in 1690 via Barbados. The two clans were largely discernable from their religious affiliations. William was active in the Baptist congregation whereas Thomas was a part of the Society of Friends congregation, which had strong ties to Pennsylvania. The Thomas Elliott (d. 1760) mentioned earlier who witnessed the Stono Rebellion was a son of Thomas, the immigrant. In September 1752, Elliott purchased a little Congolese girl from Austin & Laurens for £120.⁶⁸ At the time of his death, Thomas Elliott in 1760 was one of, if not the, largest slave owner and wealthiest planter in the colony. His landed estate, some 7,500 acres, stretched across the Lowcountry but his major rice-producing properties were centralized in St. Paul where 445 enslaved Africans managed the land. South of Stono were three cowpens, where some 4,800 cattle roamed the swamps and forests tended by highly-skilled African cowboys.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ A similar methodology was utilized by Walter Hawthorne. However, Portuguese sources are much more detailed and contextually richer in recording the Diasporic roots of captive Africans. Portuguese notaries actively engaged in a dialogue with captives to identify cultural and ethnic origins. Walter Hawthorne, *From Africa to Brazil: Culture, Identity, and an Atlantic Slave Trade, 1600-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

⁶⁸ Austin & Laurens accounts, BRBL.

⁶⁹ Inventories of Estates, vol. T, 554-568, SCDAH.

Several things stand out as distinct in Elliott's inventory. First, of the 445 captive Africans listed in 1761, not one is identified by any ethnic marker of any sort.⁷⁰ [Figure 2.] For such a large slave population not to have a single ethnic designation stands in contrast to occasional references to African ethnicity found in other planter inventories and contemporary sources. Second, it appears that Elliott made a concerted effort to group enslaved people into family, or kinship units on his properties. Further analysis of the groupings provides insight into the methods utilized by Elliott and other Carolina slaveholders to assimilate captive Africans into slavery. The white men who recorded Elliott's inventory ascribed several different types of forced relationships within the enslaved community.⁷¹ Specifically listed are assumed husband-wife relationships and their children and several other pairings. For example, the man-wife-children entry is listed 32 times and the man-wife with no children is listed 19 times. An enslaved woman with one or two children is listed 18 times and a woman with three or more children is listed 6 times. The entries indicating relationships between parents (or a parent) and children account for about 57 percent of all the captive Africans listed in Elliott's inventory.⁷² That the majority of the enslaved people listed in the inventory were identified in relationships indicates a strong proclivity on Elliott's part to rapidly assimilate recently purchased captive Africans into their new environment. It may also

⁷⁰ Although none of the Africans were identified with ethnic markers a few had some interesting modifiers. For example, Ashley River Joe, Cowpen Tom, Mestizoe Joe, Gullah Tom, Beefhead Jack, Whitehead Billy and Bookman Jack. On Gullah as short for Angola see Wood, *Black Majority*, 171-72. For Gullah as a reference to the Gola tribe of the Windward Coast see, Creel, *Peculiar People*, 16-8.

⁷¹ It is not clear if the relationships listed between the captive Africans in estate inventories were voluntary or coerced. The nature of the slave regime, structured on the large-scale accumulation of capital, would suggest that they were not voluntary. I have erred on the side of caution in this instant and tried not to fall into the trap of misidentifying these relationships within the same power structures that governed captive African life in Carolina. Jack P. Greene, "Beyond Power: Paradigm Subversion and Reformulation and the Re-Creation of the Early Modern Atlantic World," in Jack P. Greene, *Interpreting Early America: Historiographical Essays* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 1996), 17-42.

⁷² Inventories of Estates, vol. T, 554-568, SCDAH.

indicate Elliott's personal conviction in his own ability to quickly acclimate new Africans by selecting partnerships that may foster offspring and hence, less likely to abscond or rebel.

While there is little evidence in Thomas Elliot's inventory regarding the Congolese purchased from Austin & Laurens, the inventories of two other St Paul purchasers, John Dart and Thomas Law Elliott, offer up some provocative possibilities. John Dart served as the colony's Commissary General from 1737 until his death in 1754.⁷³ A few months earlier, in September 1753, Dart attended the sale of the Congolese captives that arrived in Charleston on board the *Emperor*. Dart purchased 6 boys and 2 girls on 18 September for £1,200.⁷⁴ One of those two adolescent girls, identified as "Angola Phillis with a child in arms," was listed in Dart's inventory made in March 1755.⁷⁵ When the list of Dart's property was made, Phillis had been in the province about eighteen months, indicating that she became pregnant shortly after arriving at Dart's St. Paul parish property. Since the child went unnamed, it would suggest the infant was very young, likely less than five months old. When Phillis and her seven Congolese shipmates arrived in St. Paul parish, there were about 24 captive Africans on Dart's property. The Congolese cohort would have represented one quarter of the ethnic groups within the community. This large percentage, relative to the rest of the community, would have made it easier for the Congolese cohort to communicate, forge new relationships, share memories and personal histories, and mourn together.

⁷³ Kathleen Staples, "Useful, Ornamental, or Necessary in this Province': The Textile Inventory of John Dart, 1754" *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts: MESDA*, 29 no. 2 (2003), 39-82.

⁷⁴ Austin & Laurens accounts, BRBL.

⁷⁵ Inventories of Estates, vol. R (2), 297-307, SCDAH.

Additional evidence of Congolese captives on St Paul parish properties is derived from the inventory of Thomas Law Elliott, the eldest son of Thomas Elliott (d. 1760) mentioned earlier.⁷⁶ Like John Dart, Elliott also purchased a sizable number of Congolese captives that arrived on the *Emperor* from Austin & Laurens. In September 1753, Elliott purchased 5 captives, 2 men, 1 women, 1 boy and 1 girl for £1,115.⁷⁷ Elliott died just three years later in December 1756.⁷⁸ When his inventory was assembled in April 1757, listed among 90 odd captives was “Angola Dinah and Hercules her child.”⁷⁹ Elliott did not make any additional purchases from Austin & Laurens from September 1753 until the time of his death in December 1756. It is most likely that Angola Dinah is the woman or little girl that arrived on the *Emperor*. In this example, as in Dart’s inventory, we find evidence of a Congolese cohort arriving in St Paul parish with several of their shipmates. On Elliott’s large rice plantation the Congolese cohort would likely not have been representative of the larger ethnic community. Nevertheless, that the Congolese cohort traveled together as a group to their new home would have made it easier to converse, share personal histories and forge new relationships.

Conclusion

Ethnicity did matter to planters but additional factors proved more decisive in determining their purchasing patterns. By the 1750s, rising commodity prices combined with population and indigo cultivation expansion into sparsely settled areas of the colony,

⁷⁶ Walter B. Edgar and N. Louise Bailey, eds., *Biographical Directory of the South Carolina House of Representatives* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1974), 226–27.

⁷⁷ Austin & Laurens accounts, BRBL.

⁷⁸ Mabel L. Webber, "Records from the Elliott-Rowand Bible. Accompanied by an Account of the First Thomas Elliott and of Some of His Descendants." *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 11, no. 1 (1910): 57-71.

⁷⁹ Inventories of Estates, vol. S, 71-75, SCDAH.

contributed to local demand for new captive African laborers.⁸⁰ The evidence from the *Emperor* and *Orrell* suggest that planters were acting in accordance with local market dynamics that fluctuated as contingencies within the Anglo-Atlantic reverberated onto the shores of British North America. In addition to ethnicity, the length of quarantine, the physical health, size of the cargo, and the seasonal timing of the Africans arrival were critical aspects that affected the prices of laborers. Planters weighed the option of paying exorbitant prices, relative to the local market, for laborers with the expectation that the profits from the indigo harvest would exceed the initial investment in African laborers. The labor necessary for reaping the speculated income required physically healthy Africans that could be quickly transported and acclimated to life on Lowcountry plantations. The Senegambians aboard the *Orrell* were in comparison to the Congolese aboard the *Emperor*, in poorer physical health, thereby making them less attractive laborers to planters who planned to work them immediately in cultivating and processing indigo. Moreover, it appears that the memory of the Stono Rebellion did not significantly influence the purchasing behavior of Carolina planters. In summary, the data provided by the account book detailing the transactions of the slave sales conducted by Austin & Laurens reveals the ethnic dimensions of slave purchases in the Carolina Lowcountry and origins of enslaved Africans, but these transactions do not show planter preference was a determinant factor over the high demand for captive labor.

The transition for captive Africans to life in the Lowcountry was particularly difficult for many of the reasons discussed in this chapter. Social alienation from familiar faces made this process even more challenging. However, as I have shown in this chapter,

⁸⁰ Elizabeth Donnan, "The Slave Trade into South Carolina Before the Revolution," *The American Historical Review* 33, no. 4 (1928): 817.

the application of innovative methodologies and techniques to the diverse records within the archive of slavery, demonstrates that some shipmates not only departed from the wharves together but also traveled step-by-step in each other's footsteps to their new homes. The Congolese captives that journeyed inland together were afforded small advantages that may have eased the longing for cultural familiarity. In these remote ethnic enclaves, where relationships were structured around directing labor and commanding property, the ability to pray with a shipmate or discuss memories of their former lives could have made the transition less traumatizing. The social bonds captive Africans forged in the depths of unspeakable suffering could bridge ethnic and cultural barriers. For the captive Africans discussed in this chapter that were able to continue their migration together to St Paul parish, they represented a new generation of Congolese migrants to the properties along the Stono River.

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Cassia	L 350
Nanny & Children Judy Farewell & Jenah	600
Brick Layer Peter & Wife Sue & Child Peter	200
Israel a Boy	200
Gullah Tom & Wife Flora & Children	
Hagar Affler & Monema	400
Hagar & Children Betty & Doll	450
Marion and Moll	300
Grace Affa & Dye	600
Britia and Child Dianna	250
Delia and Child Adly	250
Primus	350
July & Wife Maria & Children Prince and Johnny	800
George	200
Kipsey	250
Abram a Boy	300
Prince and Tammy	150
old Peter	50

Figure 6.2. Thomas Elliott Estate Inventory, 1761. The ways in which enslaved people were grouped together in Elliott's inventory is evident here on this page. Note the lack of ethnic markers. Also July, most likely the man freed after the Stono Rebellion, and his family are listed.

CHAPTER 7

ABEL CONDER AND MAHAMUT: CAPTIVE NARRATIVES AND COLONIAL ERASURES IN THE CARIBBEAN AND EARLY MODERN IBERIAN ATLANTIC

Abel Conder and Mahamut were Muslim men from North Africa. They were informed literate soldiers, capable sailors, willing contractual servants, and reluctant slaves. Their testimony, recorded in the English colony of South Carolina in 1753, offers up numerous possibilities on their predicament. “The histories of these Africans,” James H. Sweet has argued in reference to the experiences of enslaved Africans prior to the 1750s, “deserve to be told, if not for a fuller understanding of the ideas and institutions that shaped their own lives, then to better contextualize the historical processes that resulted in a polysemic, interconnected, and entangled Atlantic world.”¹ Like many Africans, Abel Conder and Mahamut relied on their religion for guidance as they collided with and resisted the juggernaut that was Portuguese and English imperialism at home and abroad. Petitioning the crown for redress was a common behavior by enslaved people throughout colonies in the Portuguese and Spanish Atlantic world. However, few examples exist for the British Atlantic.² By tapping into that memory, their voices become audible, no

¹ James H. Sweet, *Domingos Álvares, African Healing, and the Intellectual History of the Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 5–6.

² The discrepancy derives from an old historiographical debate on the nature of slavery and race relations in Latin America in contrast to non-Catholic nations. In *Slave and Citizen: The Negro in the Americas* (1946)

longer muted in the archive of slavery. Abel Conder and Mahamut made important contributions to the development of the institutions that gave form and meaning to our understanding of labor, justice, and colonialism. They helped create that world by challenging what their enslavement meant and what slavery meant across different porous borders of the early modern Atlantic world.³

Little is known about Abel Conder and Mahamut outside of their petition. They appear and disappear just as quickly from the archive of slavery. Abel Conder and Mahamut's petition, illuminates for a brief moment the circumstances of the enslaved population in Carolina and how without a moment's notice, personal freedoms were lost without negotiation. Abel Conder and Mahamut's petition has been explored tangentially by historians but used only to illustrate the presence of Muslim slaves in eighteenth-century South Carolina. James Hagy first explored the petition in a relatively obscure publication in 1993; the source most widely cited by historians.⁴ Surprisingly, Michael Gomez did not mention the petition, or Abel Conder and Mahamut, in his critical

Frank Tannenbaum demonstrated the centrality of law to understanding slavery in Latin America. Slavery in Spanish and Portuguese America was based on the Justinian code which recognized that slavery was against nature and reason. On this assumption, slaves were worthy of participating in the community, receiving the sacraments, and that their marriages and families were protected by law, custom, and the church. Corporate institutions, such as the military, church brotherhoods, and guilds, were spaces in Spanish colonies where racial differences could be minimized at times. The British Atlantic lacked any legal traditions concerning slavery. Slaves were defined as chattel and as a result lacked many of the avenues for manumission and freedom that were available in Latin America. The breadth and scope of the literature on this debate is staggering but a good place to start for the critiques and debates see, Alejandro de la Fuente, "Slave Law and Claims-Making in Cuba: The Tannenbaum Debate Revisited," *Law and History Review* 22, no. 2 (2004): 339–69; and Herman L. Bennett, *Colonial Blackness: A History of Afro-Mexico* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009).

³ The structure of this chapter is based on an article by Alejandra Dubcovsky who utilized the account of an enslaved Spanish man Tomás De La Torre to reconstruct the world in which he lived. Her work demonstrates that a singular document can be utilized to explain how populations that resisted European hegemony made sense of their circumstances. Alejandra Dubcovsky, "The Testimony of Tomás De La Torre, a Spanish Slave," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 70, no. 3 (2013): 559–80.

⁴ James W. Hagy, "Muslim slaves, abducted Moors, African Jews, Misnamed Turks, and an Asiatic Greek Lady: Some Examples of Non-Europeans religious and ethnic diversity in South Carolina prior to 1861," *Carologue, A Publication of the South Carolina Historical Society* 9 (1993): 12-13, 25-27.

publication on slavery and West African identities in the colonial Southeast. However, Gomez has since included the petition in subsequent a publication.⁵ Hagy and Gomez briefly summarize the broad narrative outline of the petition but fail to consider larger overlapping and interconnected Atlantic themes. Nor do they contextualize how two rather obscure North African Muslim men serendipitously made their way to South Carolina in an era when the enslaved population in the colony was rapidly expanding. Although there are numerous avenues of historical inquiry to approach the petition, historians have nevertheless, neglected an opportunity to explore the petition and what it can tell us about imperialism and resistance against European hegemony, the uncertainties of slavery and freedom, and the fluctuating contingencies across imperial boundaries subaltern populations negotiated in the early modern Atlantic world.⁶

To make sense of Abel Conder and Mahamut's petition, their experiences must be adequately situated in the complex local and global context in which they unfolded, beginning with the production of the testimony itself. The petition was recorded on 3 March 1753 in the journal of His Majesty's Council in South Carolina.⁷ Typically referred to as the South Carolina Royal Council Journals or the South Carolina Council Journals, the original petition submitted by Abel Conder and Mahamut no longer exists. [Appendix 5] The three hundred word petition in the Council Journal was copied by the clerk Alexander Gordon and was not the original. It was normal practice for a

⁵ Michael Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Michael Gomez, *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁶ The historiography on these themes is dense. An important starting point is Rebecca J. Scott and Jean M. Hébrard, *Freedom Papers: An Atlantic Odyssey in the Age of Emancipation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).

⁷ M. Eugene Sirmans, "The South Carolina Royal Council, 1720-1763," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 18, no. 3 (July 1961): 373-92; Robert M. Weir, *Colonial South Carolina: A History* (Millwood, N.Y: KTO Press, 1983), 125-38.

multilingual translator appointed by the council would take the petition, translate it, and return the translated copy to the clerk.⁸ An additional copy of the Council Journal, along with other legislative records were sent to London as a measure of colonial oversight by the metropole. Eventually the journal made its way into the British National Archives. A fair copy of the journal was kept in Charleston. The original fair copy is housed in Columbia at the South Carolina Department of Archives and History (SCDAH). In addition, microfilm copies of the council journal sent to London are located at the SCDAH.⁹ I have consulted both the rough and fair copies of the council journals to crosscheck for inconsistencies or alterations in the text.

This chapter utilizes Abel Conder and Mahamut's petition and their story to challenge discursive notions on the slave trade, enslavement and how people valued by the amount of labor that could be extracted from their bodies contested and transformed the institutions that held them captive. Recent scholarship has demonstrated the value of such projects and importance of identifying the historically muted voices of enslaved people who shaped political discourse and outcomes. Similar to the Atlantic Creoles described by historian Jane Landers, Abel Conder and Mahamut placed their hope for freedom on a "personal relationship with a distant monarch and on centuries-old legal

⁸ Interpreters were commonplace in negotiations and conferences with non-native English speakers. In 1725, when a Spanish envoy arrived in Charleston to settle the boundary between Carolina and Spanish Florida, Edward Croft was appointed interpreter and translator by the governor. Croft received official papers from the Spanish emissaries and returned translations to the clerk. In 1751, the assembly paid Jeremiah Theus for interpreting German letters submitted by indentured servants that had recently arrived in the colony. "Copy of the Journal of the Council from Monday the 6th to Monday 13th of September 1725 relating to the Spaniards." CO 5/428, BNA; Terry W. Lipscomb ed., *The Journal of the Commons House of Assembly, 14 November 1751 - 7 October 1752*, (Columbia: Historical Commission of South Carolina, 1985), 333.

⁹ The petition in the fair copy of the council journal is located in South Carolina Council Journal, vol. 21, pt. 1, 298-99, March 3, 1753, SCDAH. The rough copy sent to London is located in the Journals of His Majesty's Council, BNA CO 5/468-469. I examined the microfilm copies of this series and the bound copy at the SC Archives.

religious and social constructs.”¹⁰ Abel Conder and Mahamut’s understanding of the diplomatic treaties and relationship between their homeland and the British state formed the political basis and humanitarian justification for submitting their petition.

This chapter engages with three historiographies – the Portuguese Atlantic, British Atlantic and African Diaspora – that do not normally converse with each other in the literature. The underlying idea of the Portuguese Atlantic is conceptualized as an expansive socio-cultural and economic network in the Central and South Atlantic, with the Iberian Peninsula as the major hub.¹¹ This chapter proposes that by tilting the axis of the Iberian Atlantic towards North Africa and refocusing the analytical lens towards the Greater Caribbean we gain new understandings of how subjects residing in colonial settlements contested the legitimacy of European imperial power. In short, the case of Abel Conder and Mahamut and their freedom petition was a product of an overlapping, interconnected and ‘entangled’ Atlantic world.¹² In section one, I outline the content and organizing themes of Abel Conder and Mahamut’s petition. In section two, I analyze the strange circumstances that converged to bring Abel Conder and Mahamut to South Carolina. As prisoners of war, captured in battle against Portuguese imperialism, Abel Conder and Mahamut, were representative of the growing motley crowd – the expropriated and impoverished masses - that rejected the rise of capitalism and the

¹⁰ Jane Landers, *Atlantic Creoles in the Age of Revolutions* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 233.

¹¹ Niels Wiecker and Horst Peitschmann, “Portugal’s Overseas Trade during the Eighteenth Century: A Historiographical Survey,” in P. C Emmer, Olivier Pétré-Grenouilleau, and J Roitman, eds., *A Deus Ex Machina Revisited: Atlantic Colonial Trade and European Economic Development* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 133-150.

¹² James H. Sweet, “Slave Convicts, and Exiles: African Travelers in the Portuguese Atlantic World, 1720-1750,” in Caroline A. Williams, ed., *Bridging the Early Modern Atlantic World: People, Products, and Practices on the Move* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2013), 193-202. On the entangled worlds of the Atlantic, see Eliga H. Gould, “Entangled Histories, Entangled Worlds: The English-Speaking Atlantic as a Spanish Periphery,” *The American Historical Review* 112, no. 3 (2007): 764–86.

West's version of modernity in the early modern Atlantic world.¹³ In section three, I provide the setting in which Abel Conder and Mahamut lived as soldiers and subjects in southern Morocco. In their resistance to Portuguese imperialism Abel Conder and Mahamut challenged the political forces that sought to strip their homeland of its natural resources and enslave their families. In the last section, I analyze the whirlwind circumstances that collided and provided an opening for Abel Conder and Mahamut to submit their petition for freedom. I argue that Charleston's growing free African community and Muslim slave population served as a beacon of hope and cultural familiarity for Abel Conder and Mahamut. Only by applying innovative methodological approaches, "comparing different imperial systems, analyzing new sources, and uncovering new narratives," can we better understand the "agency and interconnectedness of Atlantic creoles" and migrants like Abel Conder and Mahamut. The "freedom and equality" that Abel Conder and Mahamut so diligently sought-after "may not have been immediately fulfilled but this does not diminish their importance to the causes they advanced" to quote Jane Landers on what these lives can illustrate.¹⁴ By analyzing Abel Conder and Mahamut's freedom petition we recover a small fragment of their captive narrative and contest the pervasiveness of colonial erasures.

At war with them

The petition, "transcribed from the original in Arabick" begins by identifying Abel and Mahamut as "two Mahumitans."¹⁵ They were born in the "state of Sally on the

¹³ Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 20, 58.

¹⁴ Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 235.

¹⁵ GhaneaBassiri suggests that the original spelling of the petitioner's names are likely Abd al-Qadir and Mahmud. I have retained the corrupted Anglicized spelling for continuity. I tend to agree with

Barbary Coast” where they were “by trade soldiers.”¹⁶ Well aware of the international contingencies and fluctuating state of diplomacy in North Africa and Europe, Abel Conder and Mahamut stated that their country had for many years the “honor and happiness of being at amity with the Crown of Great Britain.”¹⁷ Their unexpected arrival in South Carolina began with a sudden change in the winds of fortune some 15 years earlier near the Portuguese outpost Mazagão, in the modern state of Morocco.¹⁸ Together with about 50 of their “countrymen” Abel Conder and Mahamut were instructed to “patrol the neighborhood” and to “aid hostilities” against the Portuguese with whom they were at war. However, it was their “unhappy fate” to lose a heated battle and to be taken prisoners by the Portuguese who took them to Mazagão, a well-fortified coastal fortification that resembled El-Mina castle in Ghana. For about three months, Abel Conder and Mahamut lingered at the outpost when “Capt. Henry Daubrig came amongst us”¹⁹ and inquired if any of the soldiers were willing to serve “5 years in Carolina” on the condition of purchasing their “freedom from the Portuguese.” Abel Conder and Mahamut were the only soldiers who accepted the captain’s offer.

After arriving in Carolina, the conditions of their contractual service to Daubuz were disregarded and ignored. Instead of serving five years as was agreed, they attended under Daubuz and Mr. Daniel LaRoche for 15 years “serving in all things as though we

GhaneaBassiri’s claim. Kambiz GhaneaBassiri, *A History of Islam in America: From the New World to the New World Order* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 22.

¹⁶ ‘Sally’ could be Sali, Salé, Asilah, or Safi, all in Morocco, and in close proximity to Mazagão. Gomez, *Black Crescent*, 149.

¹⁷ Treaties between Morocco and Britain were signed in 1721, 1729, and 1734.

¹⁸ Mazagão was a Portuguese outpost on the Atlantic Coast of Morocco. The inhabitants were evacuated in 1769 to Lisbon and three years later to Brazil after it was retaken by Sultan Mohammed ben Abdallah.

¹⁹ This is how the name is spelled in the petition. I have identified numerous spellings of this name. Of Huguenot ancestry, the Daubuz family migrated to England in the late 1680s. To maintain continuity, I use Daubuz throughout the rest of the chapter. His will is signed Henry James Daubuz. PROB 11/1031/107, Kew, BNA.

were real slaves and treated no other than the Negroes are.” Despite Daubuz’s duplicitous behavior or “any prospect of liberty,” Abel Conder and Mahamut “often humbly demanded [their] lives” but to no avail. Only after learning that they were to be “sold at public sale with Mr. LaRoche’s negroes” were they able to make their way to Charleston and submit their petition. After the petition was read, the council referred the matter to the attorney general and directed Daubuz or any other persons “claiming right to [their] service” to provide sufficient documentation. Like a flash in the pan, illuminated for a brief moment, Abel Conder and Mahamut disappear.

Enslavement Bestowed or Freedom Renounced

Much like Abel Conder and Mahamut’s biographical history, several gaps in Henry Daubuz’s background story have yet to be fully illuminated. According to an antiquarian history, Charles Daubuz arrived with his mother and three siblings in England in the late 1680s and settled in Yorkshire. What is known about the family derives from one of Charles’s sons, Theophilus, who established himself around 1730 as a middling merchant in Falmouth. In an era when naval supremacy was the order of the day across the Atlantic, the Daubuz family pursued privateering ventures and other activities associated with the seas. In 1744, Theophilus took his privateer on a two month cruise, taking two prizes, and pillaging a town on the coast of Spain. It is most likely that Theophilus and Henry Daubuz were brothers.²⁰ In 1750, Theophilus petitioned to collect

²⁰ Susan E. Gay, *Old Falmouth: The Story of the Town from the Days of the Killigrews to the Earliest Part of the 19th Century* (London: Headley Brothers, 1903), 74. The French name, before it was anglicized, was d’Aubus. When Henry was apprenticed to Francis Aiskell in August 1724, the entry stated that his father Charles was deceased. Some historians have suggested that Henry was Theophilus’ son. 10, August 1724, Board of Stamps: Apprenticeship Books, IR 1/10, f. 51. Kew, BNA.

the bounty for importing naval stores, likely harvested on Henry's property in South Carolina and produced by Abel Conder and Mahamut's labor.²¹

The man that brought Abel Conder and Mahamut to Carolina, Henry Daubuz, was a professional mariner and ship captain. He was at home on the expansive shipping lanes of the Atlantic world that crisscrossed commercial networks and connected disparate peoples in Europe and Africa with people and cultures of the Americas. Shortly after his father's death, Henry began his training for the life of a seaman under the tutelage of Francis Aiskell, mariner, of Rotherhithe.²² His name is generally associated with the founding of the colony of Georgia in the early 1730s. Founded by the soldier turned social reformer James Oglethorpe, the British government authorized the establishment of a new colony Georgia in 1732 on lands claimed by Spain, sandwiched between Saint Augustine and Charleston, and inhabited by thousands of native Creek people.²³ Daubuz was hired by the Trustees in June 1733 to carry migrants and supplies to the colony. Savannah, the proposed town, was little more than a dusty field with a few dozen flimsy-wooden shacks scattered about a former Native settlement. Daubuz's first trip to Georgia was a quick one; by September 1733 he was back in London preparing for another voyage.²⁴ A year later, in November 1734, Daubuz and the *Georgia Pink*, was at Georgetown, South Carolina.²⁵ Apparently, Daubuz was impressed with the area and

²¹ ADM 106/1080/283-284, November 1750, Kew, BNA.

²² 10 August 1724, Board of Stamps: Apprenticeship Books, IR 1/10, f. 51. Kew, BNA.

²³ Herbert Eugene Bolton, *The Debatable Land; a Sketch of the Anglo-Spanish Contest for the Georgia Country* (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 1925).

²⁴ Sarah B. Gober Temple and Kenneth Coleman, *Georgia Journeys, Being an Account of the Lives of Georgia's Original Settlers and Many Other Early Settlers from the Founding of the Colony in 1732 Until the Institution of Royal Government in 1754* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1961), 29, 33-35, 196, 216-17; Benjamin Martyn to George Oglethorpe, 13 June, 15 June 1733 in Kenneth Coleman and Milton Ready, eds., *Trustees' Letter Book, 1732-1738*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985), vol. 29: 16-18, 81.

²⁵ *South Carolina Gazette*, 30 November 1734.

decided to make Georgetown his base of operations in the colony. In February 1735, Daubuz purchased 500 acres on the Sampit River just a few miles north of the spacious Winyah Bay and harbor that empties into the Atlantic.²⁶

In late November 1735, Daubuz arrived in Savannah for a second time carrying supplies and immigrants for the beleaguered settlement. Several children contracted smallpox during the Atlantic journey and a pregnant mother gave birth to a baby girl. All the children miraculously recovered.²⁷ In January 1736, Daubuz ran into a bit of bad luck. With the *Georgia Pink* loaded with a cargo of rice and naval stores, Daubuz set out from Winyah Bay for London. At sea for only a few weeks, the ship encountered “stormy and temptious weather” that severed the bonds of several water-tight beams. Although the crew worked the pumps feverishly, the hold took on three feet of water that could not be expelled. Some fifty barrels of rice had to be thrown overboard to prevent the 138-ton vessel from sinking to the depths of the sea. Miraculously, the ship limped its way back to Charleston where Daubuz petitioned the Admiralty court to condemn the ship and cargo. The court appointed surveyors noted that several bolts in the lower deck were worked loose, portions of the stern apron were cut away to stop leaks in the bow, and that large sections of the sheathing had to be stripped and repaired. The damages to the ship and cargo were significant but the ship was repaired and Daubuz made his way back to London.²⁸

²⁶ Clara A. Langley, ed., *South Carolina Deed Abstracts, 1719-1772* (Easley, S.C: Southern Historical Press, 1983), vol. 1:315. Daubuz paid £750 SC currency for 500 acres in Craven County on the Sampit River. He sold it to Lewis Boshet in 1772.

²⁷ Thomas Causton to Trustees, 7 December 1735, in *Colonial Records of the State of Georgia*, (1904), Vol. 21:62-3; On the ship were 27 indentured servants, 15 men, 12 women and 4 children. Robert G. McPherson, ed., *The Journal of the Earl of Egmont; Abstract of the Trustees Proceedings for Establishing the Colony of Georgia, 1732-1738* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1962), 101.

²⁸ *Henry Daubuz vs. Pink Georgia*, January - March 1736, British Vice-Admiralty Minute Book, SCDAB.

In October 1737, Daubuz was again hired by the Trustees to carry supplies, settlers and servants to Georgia. However, on this occasion Daubuz was instructed to sail to Cork, Ireland where he was to purchase beef and other provisions for the voyage and Georgia settlement.²⁹ In preparation for the voyage, the owners of the *Georgia Pink*, Daubuz and John Govan, registered with the government for a document known as a Mediterranean pass. First issued in the 1660s, the passes were evidence that the English government sanctioned the ship's voyage and vouched for its cargo and passengers. The system of passes was formerly established in a series of Anglo-Algerian treaties and allowed English vessels to sail the Mediterranean and the Atlantic unmolested by Algerian corsairs. On the document was information about the ship's voyage, place of departure, destination and list of the crew's national origins. The passes were issued by commissioners appointed by the Admiralty and were to be returned upon the return of the vessel on forfeiture of a £100 bond. Ship captains were required to swear an oath that two-thirds of the crew were English subjects. The national origins of the crew was important because if English ships carried crew members of a nation that was at war with Algiers (i.e. Portuguese) the ship would be seized for ransom.³⁰ It is on this official document that Abel Conder and Mahamut reappear from the shadows of the archive of slavery.

²⁹ Kenneth Coleman and Milton Ready, eds., *Trustees' Letter Book, 1732-1738*, The Colonial Records of the State of Georgia, v. 29 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985), 230, 240.

³⁰ See David Richardson's introductory essay for the microfilm edition of the passes. *The Mediterranean Passes in the Public Records Office, London* (East Ardsley, England: EP Microform Ltd., 1981); Daniel J. Vitkus, ed., *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption: Barbary Captivity Narratives from Early Modern England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 194, 369.

The Mediterranean pass for the *Georgia Pink* was issued on 8 October 1737.³¹

The ship was authorized to travel to Carolina and from there to Lisbon. The crew was composed of ‘7 British’ and ‘2 foreign’ sailors. I submit that the two foreign sailors identified on the certificate were in fact Abel Conder and Mahamut. The presence of Muslim Moroccan sailors on English ships is not surprising. In 1732, a Spanish warship attacked and forcefully removed about “40 Muslims” aboard the English ship *Eagle* that was trading near Salé.³² Much like the business ledgers and accounting books kept by slave dealers to measure and record the commercial transactions of human trafficking, the Admiralty ledgers record the existence of Abel Conder and Mahamut as numerical abstractions. Nameless and faceless the lives recorded in the ledger books signify the expansion of British imperialism across the Atlantic world. At the same time - their humanity sterilized with the swipe of pen - symbolized the rapid stitching of subaltern groups onto the branches of racialized capitalism that was rapidly seeping deeper into the fertile soils of the Americas. Imperial officials applied management strategies that transformed human bodies into numerical extractions recorded in accounting ledgers. In doing so they systematically reduced colonial subjects and conceptually erased the humanity of the population under observation.³³

Abel Conder and Mahamut did not stay very long in Georgia. In March 1738 they departed on the *Georgia Pink* with Daubuz and returned to London. In June Daubuz met

³¹ ADM 7/82/82, Kew, BNA.

³² J. F. P. Hopkins, ed., *Letters from Barbary, 1576-1774: Arabic Documents in the Public Record Office* (London: Published for the British Academy by Oxford University Press, 1982), 58-9; P. G. Rogers, *A History of Anglo-Moroccan Relations to 1900* (London: Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 1970), 89. The forty Muslims were not slaves but sailors or passengers. It was in fact the Spanish who sold the Muslim men into slavery. Nor was it uncommon for English ships to carry Spanish or Portuguese passengers.

³³ Jenny Shaw, *Everyday Life in the Early English Caribbean: Irish, Africans, and the Construction of Difference* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2013), 47.

with the Trustees to report on his voyage and the progress of the colony. Much to John Percival's dismay, Daubuz supplied a quite discouraging account of Georgia. He reported that there were "but 3 industrious men in the whole colony" and that political factions were fracturing the government. The hundred or so houses in Savannah described by Francis Moore were in fact by and large empty. The much hoped for experimental public garden was in a "miserable condition" as little would grow in the nutrient deficient soil.³⁴ The philanthropic colony, where debt liberation set colonists free to concentrate solely on sobriety and industry, was slowly washing away on the banks of the Savannah River.

For reasons that remain unclear, the Georgia Trustees did not retain Daubuz's services for a fourth voyage to the colony. Perhaps Percival was unhappy with his disappointing account of the colony. However, it does not appear that the decision was driven by any negative conduct reported against the poor whites that he carried across to Georgia. Colonial official Thomas Causton wrote that upon arriving in Savannah the new settlers praised Daubuz in unison for the "tenderness and humanity" shown towards them on the journey.³⁵ On his last visit to Savannah in 1738, the Lutheran cleric Johann Bolzius told Daubuz that his "good treatment" of the passengers would "serve as material for the praise of God."³⁶ The fragmentary records suggest that Daubuz was not a ruthless ship captain and treated the passengers on his ships with dignity and perhaps that

³⁴ John Perceval, *Journal of the Earl of Egmont, First President of the Board of Trustees, from June 14, 1738, to May 25, 1744* (Atlanta, Ga: The Franklin-Turner Co, 1908), 39.

³⁵ Thomas Causton to Trustees, 7 December 1735, in Allen D. Candler, ed., *Original Papers. Correspondence, Trustees, General Oglethorpe and Others. 1735-1752*, The Colonial Records of the State of Georgia, v. 21 (Atlanta, Ga: C.P. Byrd, state printer, 1910), 62-3.

³⁶ Samuel Urlsperger, *Detailed Reports on the Salzburger Emigrants Who Settled in America*, ed. George Fenwick Jones (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1968), vol. 5:16. Irish immigrants suffered greatly at the hands of sadistic ship captains. For depositions accusing a captain of beating and drowning elderly passengers, excessive overcrowding, raping young girls, and the miscarriage by a pregnant woman see, Holcomb, ed., *Petitions for Land from the South Carolina Council Journals* (Columbia: SCMAR, 1996), vol. 6:97-100.

treatment was extended to Abel Conder and Mahamut. For the next few years, Daubuz services continued to be in demand by London merchants needing skilled ship captains to carry cargoes across the Atlantic. In December 1741, Daubuz arrived in Naples with a shipment of cod harvested from the abundant Grand Banks of Newfoundland. In the summer of 1744, Daubuz captained the *Joseph* to London with a shipment of Carolina produce and returned to Georgetown.³⁷ By 1745, if not before, Daubuz was a permanent resident of Georgetown as a planter improving his property on the Sampit River. The *Joseph* was likely a small vessel that was able to traverse the intercoastal waters between Charleston and Georgetown as well as the high seas of the Atlantic. A few years later Daubuz was identified as the master of the 60-ton *Endeavour* that was registered in Georgetown and owned by Andrew DeLavillette, Daniel Laroche and David Montaigt three prominent merchants of the town.³⁸ Abel Conder and Mahamut likely continued to serve with Daubuz on these transatlantic voyages. The moment they transitioned from the relative freedom of the ship's deck to the confines of the Pee Dee River swamps, where labor was governed by the ebb and flow of the tides, remains unclear.

According to the information in Abel Conder and Mahamut's petition, about 15 years had passed since the two men were taken prisoner after losing a heated battle with Portuguese soldiers near Mazagão. It was about that time, perhaps in 1737 or 1738, that Daubuz purchased their freedom from Portuguese officials. Abel Conder and Mahamut's historical reckoning coincides with a period when Daubuz would have had the opportunity to have done just as they claim. In March 1736, the Charleston court ruled in

³⁷ *Lloyds' Lists*, December 1741; 12 May 1744; 30 May 1744.

³⁸ R. Nicholas Olsberg, "Ship Registers in the South Carolina Archives 1734-1780," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 74, no. 4 (October 1973), 221.

Daubuz's case and repairs on the vessel commenced. Daubuz would have left Charleston as early as April 1736. The destination of the ship is unknown but the paper trail on Daubuz's Atlantic wanderings picks back up in October 1737 when he returned to London. That leaves roughly an eighteen month window when Daubuz would have secured Abel Conder and Mahamut's freedom. As mentioned earlier, it was in preparation for Daubuz's trip to Savannah in late 1737 that an Admiralty pass was registered which indicated that Abel Conder and Mahamut were sailors on the ship. The reemergence of Abel Conder and Mahamut on the Admiralty pass is an astounding and remarkable occurrence within the archive of slavery. The Admiralty pass is an important piece of the puzzle that provides a valuable clue for understanding Abel Conder and Mahamut's lives beyond the petition. All too often this is not the case for the millions of West Africans forcibly removed from their homelands and transported to Caribbean sugar factories.³⁹ But there is more that can be extracted from Abel Conder and Mahamut's petition, in particular a deeper understanding of the circumstances and conditions under which they chose to take up arms against the Portuguese.

Mazagão and the Iberian Atlantic world

Portuguese expansion into North Africa in the fifteenth century originated from deep-seated religious differences between Iberian Catholic, Jewish, and Muslim populations.

³⁹ Gaspar analyzes the account of two Cape Verde men stolen by an English ship captain in 1724 and their attempts in Antigua to regain their freedom. Gov. Hart repatriated the men to Cape Verde on a private vessel. The governor stated that the men were "free subjects of the said King of Portugal with whom we are in perfect amity." David Barry Gaspar, "Subjects of the King of Portugal" Captivity and Repatriation in the Atlantic Slave Trade, (Antigua, 1724)," in Elizabeth Mancke and Carole Shammas, eds., *The Creation of the British Atlantic World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 93-114.

The political and social disorder that ensued on the peninsula sparked an exploration of the western seas on an unprecedented scale. The transition from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic Ocean as the primary commercial space of exchange and production had begun. In 1492, Al-Andalus rule on the Iberian Peninsula ended and for the next three centuries Portuguese imperialism in North Africa was driven by a combination of religious crusade and economic exploitation. Portuguese political involvement in Morocco deepened in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century as existing garrisons were strengthened and coastal towns were systematically subdued and annexed.

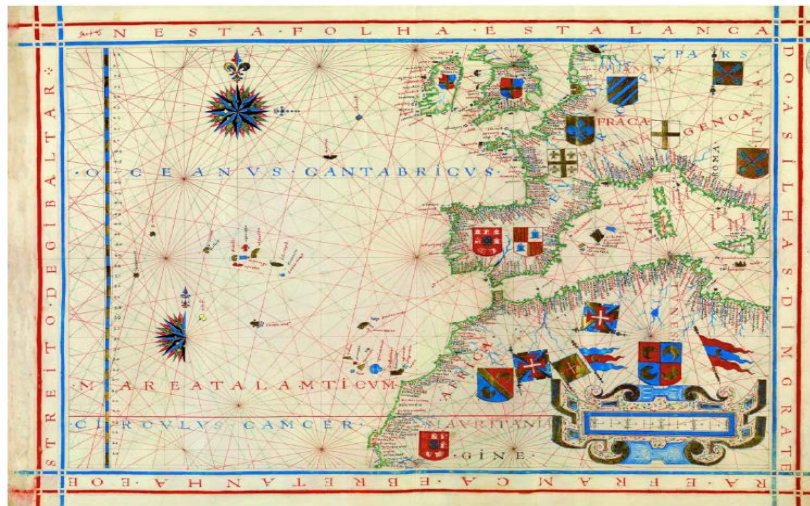


Figure 7.1. Mazagão. In 1571, Portuguese cartographer Fernão Vaz Dourado produced this map of Europe and Northern Africa while residing in Goa, India. The Portuguese settlements are indicated by the sites where the flags of the Order of Christ have been placed: Arzila, Ceuta and Mazagão on the Moroccan coast, were Portugal's most important military strongholds. Manuel Moleiro, ed., *Universal Atlas of Fernão Vaz Dourado: 1571* (Barcelona: M. Moleiro, 2013).

In 1508, the Portuguese *feitoria* at Safi was converted into a fortress. Five years later the settlement at Mazagão was expanded. In 1541 construction on the Mazagão citadel began as Portuguese engineers applied new Renaissance military designs and architecture that would be replicated at Mozambique, Lagos, and Bahia. But Mazagão was distinct in that it was a fusion between the fort and the city, built inside the walls,

structured around a trapezoidal central square. Portuguese military strategy in North Africa was based on the model used during the peninsular Reconquista; the construction of a steadily expanding chain of strategically-located coastal fortifications. However, despite significant financial allocations, Portuguese expansion in Morocco was relatively short-lived. By 1542, Portuguese possessions in Morocco were reduced to just three strongholds, Ceuta and Tangier in the north, and Mazagão in the south. Changing dynamics among Portuguese and Hapsburg dynasties had drastic effects on the imperial outposts in North Africa. Ceuta was ceded in 1640, followed by Tangiers as a part of the dowry of Catarina of Braganza in 1661. Mazagão lingered on for another century, when the population was relocated to northern Brazil. The presidio at Mazagão continued to function because a select few, young Portuguese noblemen gained appreciably by their service there, as well as, ambitious governors who maximized opportunities of economic exploitation inherent to their office.⁴⁰ Rooted in Iberian religious wars, Portuguese imperialism in North Africa was driven by Atlantic currents which simultaneously bore out segments of the population that resisted outsiders and their conflicting worldview.

While imperial administrators gazed covetously on the natural resources arriving from Brazil and the Far East, a heterogeneous community was emerging at Mazagão comprised of military personnel and their families, fortune seeking nobles, artisans, and exiled *degradados*. In 1541, the crown granted municipal status to the outpost indicating

⁴⁰ A. R. Disney, *A History of Portugal and the Portuguese Empire: From Beginnings to 1807* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), vol. 2:2-26; Francisco Bethencourt, "European Expansion and the New Order of knowledge," in John Jeffries Martin, ed., *The Renaissance World* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 118-139.

recognition of a stable Portuguese community there.⁴¹ The objective of coastal forts like Mazagão was the creation of a long-distance network of fortified posts that would control maritime movement both within the region, West Africa and the south Atlantic. However, Portuguese presence in the region reached a zenith in 1549, when two brothers, Mohammed ash-Sheikh and Ahmad al-Araj, forced Portuguese withdrawal from Mogador, Safi, Azemmour, Alcacer Ceguer, and Arzila and established the Saadi dynasty in Morocco. Mazagão remained isolated from the nearest Portuguese outpost Tangier some 300 miles away.⁴²

Portuguese Morocco depended on the Atlantic. Cut off from inland caravan routes the vessels that travelled along the coast were the lifeblood of the outpost. Soldiers, provisions and construction materials all arrived by the sea. Well-constructed forts guaranteed access for vessels returning to Portugal with cargos of textiles, wheat, dates, wax, precious metals and indigo. Lisbon merchants re-exported Moroccan commodities to markets across Northern Europe.⁴³ Beginning in the 1560s, English merchants began trading in North Africa along with Dutch, French, and numerous Castilian traders peddling tin, iron, and swords for gold, sugar and copper.⁴⁴ Unlike the Spanish and French, the English carried on a rather brisk trade with Morocco that was officially conducted under the auspices of a corporation but interlopers were never far behind. The English were only concerned with the results from trading and not the legitimacy of the

⁴¹ A.J.R. Russell-Wood, "Patterns of Settlement in the Portuguese Empire," in Francisco Bethencourt and Diogo Ramada Curto, eds., *Portuguese Oceanic Expansion, 1400-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 179-180.

⁴² Francisco Bethencourt, "Political Configurations, and Local Powers," in Francisco Bethencourt and Diogo Ramada Curto, eds., *Portuguese Oceanic Expansion, 1400-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 230.

⁴³ A.J.R. Russell-Wood, "The Portuguese Atlantic, 1415-1808," in Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan, eds., *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 87.

⁴⁴ Weston F. Cook, *The Hundred Years War for Morocco: Gunpowder and the Military Revolution in the Early Modern Muslim World* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 199, 241-42.

commercial transactions. At Tétouan the English had a near monopoly on commercial exchanges where they traded heavily in woolens textiles and spices handled at Salé, Agadir, and Safi.⁴⁵ A trading alliance between Ahmad al-Mansur and Elizabeth I led to the establishment of the Barbary Company in 1585 for the purpose of exclusively trading at Moroccan ports. A few years later English factors were sent to Safi and Agadir. Despite the militant policy towards Christians, especially Catholics, Protestants were deemed a lesser evil, European merchants traded with and were given protection in Morocco. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, commercial trends fluctuated but principal staples traded were Moroccan sugar for English cloth.⁴⁶ During the War of Spanish Succession, an Anglo-Dutch force captured Gibraltar and over the next century served as a military base of English operations in the region. The importance of maintaining sound diplomatic relations with Morocco was magnified because it was a source of food, supplies and provisions for the garrison. Moreover, it was cheaper to purchase live cattle from Morocco than ship salted beef from Ireland.⁴⁷ In 1710, French emissaries abandoned Salé and Tétouan, leaving the posts vacant for over forty years. With European gaze squarely upon Caribbean sugar production, English traders filled the vacancies in Morocco and expanded commercial operations and networks throughout the eighteenth century.⁴⁸ It was in this setting that pockets of the local population began to

⁴⁵ Charles André Julien, *History of North Africa: Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, from the Arab Conquest to 1830* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1970), 257-263.

⁴⁶ Nehemia Levtzion, "Northwest Africa: From the Maghrib to the fringes of the Forest," in J. D. Fage and Roland Anthony Oliver, eds., *The Cambridge History of Africa* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 146.

⁴⁷ Matthew Anderson, "Great Britain and the Barbary States in the 18th century," *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 29, (1956), 93.

⁴⁸ Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 218-19, 233.

see aspects of their culture and way of life compromised by European presence in the region. A response and the means to affect their goals were already underway.

Information on early English commercial expansion and trade with Atlantic Barbary, modern Morocco, can be found in Richard Hakluyt's publications. Beginning in the 1590s English ships made numerous raids on Spanish and Portuguese fishing fleets operating off-shore near Cap Blanc. The fish and other stolen goods served as provisions for voyages to America or Guinea.⁴⁹ In 1566, an English ship traded with local merchants at Agadir in southern Morocco.⁵⁰ The importance of Moroccan trade to English commercial expansion grew in the late sixteenth century. For example, Roger Bodenham, a "Hispaniolised Englishman,"⁵¹ proposed an Anglo-Moroccan alliance and the construction of an English naval base/fortification at Mogador to threaten Portuguese trade at the Canaries and Indies.⁵² The proposed scheme did not receive the necessary support from the Crown but political and military events in Morocco had tremendous importance for Europe in the late sixteenth and seventeenth century. In 1578, the death of the Portuguese King Sebastian in the Battle of Oued El Makhazeen, which took place in Northern Morocco, resulted in a succession crisis and the eventual unification of the Spanish and Portuguese crowns.⁵³ In 1600, Moroccan diplomat Abd el-Ouahed ben Messaoud visited England to negotiate an alliance against Spain. In conjunction with the

⁴⁹ P.E.H. Hair, "Morocco, the Saharan coast, and the neighboring Atlantic Islands," in David B. Quinn, ed., *The Hakluyt Handbook*, (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1974), 190.

⁵⁰ Richard Hakluyt, "The Voyage of M. George Fenner to Guinea and to the Isles of Capo Verde, An. 1566," in *The Principal Navigations Voyages Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation* (Cambridge University Press, 2014), vol. 6: 266-284.

⁵¹ Kenneth R. Andrews, *Elizabethan Privateering: English Privateering During the Spanish War, 1585-1603* (Cambridge: University Press, 1964), 12.

⁵² P.E.H. Hair, "Morocco, the Saharan coast, and the neighboring Atlantic Islands," in David B. Quinn, ed., *The Hakluyt Handbook*, (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1974), 194.

⁵³ Hamel discusses how the battle was terrible tragedy for Portugal but brought wealth, prestige, and slaves to Morocco. Chouki El Hamel, *Black Morocco: A History of Slavery, Race, and Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 143-46.

diplomat's visit the first English version of Leo Africanus's *Geographical Historie of Africa* was published which provided extensive descriptions of Morocco, including the presidio at Mazagão.⁵⁴ Although the much discussed Anglo-Moroccan assault on Spain did not materialize, the importance of Atlantic Barbary and Mediterranean commerce to the growth of English influence in the Atlantic world was well-established.⁵⁵

In contrast to the Portuguese in the early fifteenth century and the Europeans that followed, Moroccan politics and commerce remained oriented towards the land (east) rather than towards the ocean (west). But this began to change in the 1660s as the Iliq Zawiya in southern Morocco and the Moriscos at Rabat-Salé sought diplomatic relations with Europeans to bolster their political and economic positions. These groups placed a premium on the sea more than the land and relied to a greater extent on maritime trade and piracy.⁵⁶ The capture of Gibraltar in 1704 was a watershed moment in the formation of Anglo-Moroccan commercial links. The development of diplomatic relations was vital for supplying the garrison and for the security of English shipping in the Mediterranean and Atlantic. During the reign of Mawlay 'Abd Allah, British influence in Morocco was unrivalled, partly because of its strategic position at Gibraltar. The two countries renewed and extended five treaties in the first half of the eighteenth century. Over the same period only the Dutch signed a treaty with Morocco.⁵⁷ Shortly after completing the 1721 treaty,

⁵⁴ Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *The Jamestown Project* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 38-39; Oumelbanine Zhiri, "Leo Africanus's *Description of Africa*," in Ivo Kamps and Jyotsna G. Singh, eds., *Travel Knowledge: European "Discoveries" in the Early Modern Period* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 250-66; Nabil Matar, *Britain and Barbary, 1589-1689* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005), 39.

⁵⁵ Alison Games, *The Web of Empire: English Cosmopolitans in an Age of Expansion, 1560-1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁵⁶ James A. O. C. Brown, *Crossing the Strait: Morocco, Gibraltar and Great Britain in the 18th and 19th Centuries* (Boston: Brill, 2012), 30-31

⁵⁷ James A. O. C. Brown, *Crossing the Strait: Morocco, Gibraltar and Great Britain in the 18th and 19th Centuries* (Boston: Brill, 2012), 34-38.

King Ismail noted that the “English have praiseworthy traits” and in contrast to other European traders “do not take any Muslim captive.”⁵⁸ Despite the growing influence of European commerce, traditional Moroccan oriented trade routes to the south and east remained important. An English account states that the caravan route to Timbuktu was frequented by “Arabic” speaking “white Spanish Moors” transporting guns and other trade goods.⁵⁹ As the eighteenth century progressed, the Moroccan state gradually sent fewer and fewer pirate vessels to raid the coast.⁶⁰ Accounts of eighteenth century Morocco show that African slaves lived in communities throughout the country. Contacts with Senegal and the Sudan were common and according to Bennet, “every tribe held a small number of Negroes.”⁶¹ Enslaved Africans in these communities were utilized primarily in domestic roles. The degree of interaction or the relationships Abel Conder and Mahamut developed with enslaved West Africans is unclear but their knowledge of the institution of slavery and its role in the domestic and foreign economies of their homeland is certain.

After the 1550s Mazagão was a relatively secluded Portuguese outpost on the Moroccan coast. Provisioning the outpost was directed in Lisbon where administrators assigned two-year contracts to Portuguese traders and foreigners. Jewish traders dominated the trade for much of the sixteenth and seventeenth century but were gradually replaced by the Dutch and English. Supply vessels arrived infrequently at Mazagão and

⁵⁸ J. F. P. Hopkins, ed., *Letters from Barbary, 1576-1774: Arabic Documents in the Public Record Office* (London: Published for the British Academy by Oxford University Press, 1982), 51.

⁵⁹ Shelburne Papers, vol. 111, f. 235-236. William C. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

⁶⁰ Norman R. Bennett, “Christian and Negro Slavery in Eighteenth-Century North Africa,” *The Journal of African History* 1, no. 1 (1960), 71.

⁶¹ Norman R. Bennett, “Christian and Negro Slavery in Eighteenth-Century North Africa,” *The Journal of African History* 1, no. 1 (1960), 74; Paul E. Lovejoy, “Trade between Salaga and Kano in the nineteenth century,” in Paul E. Lovejoy, ed., *Ecology and Ethnography of Muslim Trade in West Africa* (Africa World Press, 2005), 266.

in order to supplement the irregularity of supplies from Europe, relationships were forged with the local population. Portuguese soldiers drilled regularly but there was also much down time. Some set their muskets down and cultivated gardens. Others bartered with traders for foodstuffs and locally manufactured goods. Some of the local elites were interested in cultivating mutually beneficial relationships with the Portuguese at the outpost. But many more, like Abel Conder and Mahamut wanted to expel the Portuguese completely from Moroccan soil. Military ritual governed life at the outpost, occasionally interrupted by sporadic skirmishes and heated battles.⁶²

The rhythm of life at Mazagão was typified by cycles of confrontation, kidnapping, and ransoming of captives. The size and complexity of a Moroccan force is demonstrated in a 1730 account of the army's movements on the Niger River. For example, in preparation for a battle over one hundred boats were utilized to transport approximately 800 fusiliers.⁶³ While the citadel's fortified walls provided the presidio with protection from besieging armies, the towering redans and bastions also denied the soldiers and colonists of the necessary provisions to survive on the periphery of the Portuguese empire in Northern Africa. Items such as firewood, seeds, and farming instruments were in constant demand and because supply caravans were inconsistent at best, colonists bartered and traded with local inhabitants. While at times this relationship benefitted both the colonists and indigenous Berber population, it also provided opportunities for kidnapping and ransoming. The cycle of foraging, ambush, and ransom typified life at the presidio for nearly two hundred years. As a result, the capture of Abel

⁶² Laurent Vidal, *Mazagao, La Ville Qui Traversa L'atlantique: Du Maroc à L'amazonie, 1769-1783* (Paris: Aubier, 2005), 22-23.

Conder and Mahamut by the Portuguese and subsequent purchase by Captain Daubuz, may have been more representative than exceptional. In addition, the purchasing of Abel Conder and Mahamut's freedom demonstrates that Mazagão was a space in Portugal's vast empire that received and exported prisoners, exiles, and *degredados* throughout the Atlantic world and beyond.⁶⁴ From the familiarity of Moroccan governance, to transients of Portuguese colonialism, and lastly participating in British colonial bureaucracy, Abel Conder and Mahamut demonstrated a keen ability to navigate disparate political and cultural spaces of the Atlantic world. It was the latter that would eventually grant or deny the freedom that was their natural right.

Standing Unsteadily in LaRoche's Wake

The moment that Abel Conder and Mahamut arrived in South Carolina is unclear. The detailed information on the property holdings of Daubuz and LaRoche strongly suggests that the majority of their time in the colony was spent in Georgetown and Prince George Winyah parish. In the 1730s large-scale plantation agriculture expanded rapidly in the Pee Dee River delta because of the favorable soil conditions, the influx of thousands of captive Africans, and the numerous streams and waterways that ebbed with the tides.⁶⁵ In 1761, the slave population in Prince George Winyah parish was approximately 3,100 souls. Clearly Abel Conder and Mahamut experienced the slave regime on a large scale before arriving in Charleston in 1753. However, in contrast to the dispersion of enslaved

⁶⁴ Timothy J. Coates, *Convicts and Orphans: Forced and State-Sponsored Colonizers in the Portuguese Empire, 1550-1755* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 56–60; Alida Metcalf has explored the roles of *degredados* and others as cultural brokers in Portuguese exploration and colonization of Brazil. Alida C. Metcalf, *Go-Betweens and the Colonization of Brazil, 1500-1600* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005).

⁶⁵ S. Max Edelson, *Plantation Enterprise in Colonial South Carolina* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

laborers across the Georgetown region and its expansive plantation hinterland, in Charleston the colony's primary entrepôt, Abel Conder and Mahamut would have experienced a dense and growing population of captive Africans that numbered in the thousands.

The port of Charleston was for much of its history an important urban center of the Black Atlantic that received thousands of captive Africans each year. Most slaves were destined for rural agricultural sites but many remained in the city.⁶⁶ In addition, the city supported a stable yet growing community of free Africans. For example, from 1761 to 1764, the number of free Africans officially registered by the state doubled from 53 to 118.⁶⁷ While this number may represent an increasing frequency of manumissions for enslaved Africans, it also demonstrates the movement and fluidity of the free African population that traveled with regularity in and out of Charleston. Moreover, in the weeks leading up to Abel Conder and Mahamut's petition being read, the enslaved and free African community displayed a general lack of regard for the colony's regulatory statutes. Charleston residents expressed concern for the "many disorders committed by sailors, Negroes and other disorderly persons in the night time."⁶⁸ Although the free African population in the lowcountry represented about 1 percent of the population, those that resided in Charleston were an important community and resource for people like

⁶⁶ Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, Matt D. Childs, and James Sidbury, eds., *The Black Urban Atlantic in the Age of the Slave Trade* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013). For reasons beyond the control of the editors, an essay on Charleston as an urban center of the Black Atlantic was not included in this volume.

⁶⁷ Records of the Public Treasury General Tax receipts 1761-1769, SCDAH. This number drastically underestimates the free African population.

⁶⁸ Council Journal, vol. 21, pt. 1, 298-99, 3 March 1753, SCDAH; Terry W. Lipscomb ed., *The Journal of the Commons House of Assembly 21 November 1752- 6 September 1754* (Columbia: Historical Commission of South Carolina, 1983), 88, 140.

Abel Conder and Mahamut whose ambivalent status concerned the remaining ninety-nine percent.⁶⁹

The important cultural and commercial connections between the early modern Portuguese Atlantic world and the English colonies in British North America, specifically South Carolina have yet to be fully revealed. To date, the literature connects the rice trade from Charleston to Lisbon and Oporto in the latter half of the colonial period but few other examples have been explored that connect Iberia with Carolina.⁷⁰ Despite this oversight, subjects of Portugal, or of Portuguese ancestry, migrated with their families to South Carolina in the first half of the eighteenth century. These examples are particularly important for Abel Conder and Mahamut's story because it provides additional evidence of cultural familiarity and perhaps relationships that they could have tapped into for assistance. For example, in 1719, Fayal merchant Thomas Amory sent a 12 year-old African boy to Charleston who, though lacking strong command of English, spoke "very good Portuguese."⁷¹ In 1735 a man named Frank, described as a "Portuguese fellow" brought a slave to the Charleston goal after running away from his owner.⁷²

A few years later, Joam Baptista, apparently skilled in wine cultivation, was in the colony for six years when he was released from his services to vintner Charles

⁶⁹ Robert Olwell, "Becoming Free: Manumission and the Genesis of a Free Black Community in South Carolina, 1740–90," *Slavery & Abolition* 17, no. 1 (1996): 1–19.

⁷⁰ Walter Hawthorne has illustrated connections between South Carolina and Portugal within the Atlantic rice trade that were more sophisticated than commercial and subsistence based. According to Hawthorne, the dark-grained rice grown in the Amazonia region of Brazil was unappealing for its color and the sophisticated Portuguese palate. Walter Hawthorne, *From Africa to Brazil: Culture, Identity, and an Atlantic Slave Trade, 1600-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 149-154; Kenneth Morgan, "Transatlantic Rice in the European Market in the Eighteenth Century," in Simonetta Cavaciocchi, ed., *Prodotti E Tecniche D'oltremare Nelle Economie Europee Secc. Xiii-Xviii Atti Della Ventinovesima Settimana Di Studi, 14-19 Aprile 1997* (Le Monnier, 1998), 465-475.

⁷¹ Thomas Amory to Arthur Middleton, 8 July 1719, Amory Family Papers, 1697-1882, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

⁷² Frank, *South Carolina Gazette*, 19 Feb 1735.

Sheppard.⁷³ Manuel Lorenzo was in the colony in 1741 as well as another Portuguese “man and his son” in May 1742.⁷⁴ Patrick Welsh, known to locals as John English, was reportedly fluent in Spanish and Portuguese. An indentured Portuguese man “about 40 or 50 years old” described as having “Black hair and looks much like a Spainard” and his 12 years old son were reported to have absconded from a Ashley River plantation. They apparently fled in a boat with Bristol, a slave and experienced sailor. Both the Portuguese man and Bristol were described as “lame in the hip, and walked limping” perhaps from ill treatment that spirited their flight. In that same year, Captain Anderson carried a “Portuguese negro” back to Charleston as spoil from an intense sea battle waged off the Northern Coast of Cuba.⁷⁵ In 1756, an 18-year-old “Portuguese born” girl stole a large quantity of goods from her owner and was reportedly in route to rendezvous with her lover or family on a neighboring plantation⁷⁶

In addition to the large free African population and Portuguese migrants residing in Charleston in the early eighteenth century, Abel Conder and Mahamut would have encountered fellow Muslims and Arabic speaking Africans. Captive Africans from Senegambia and Sierra Leone were in great demand for their agricultural skills. In these regions of West Africa there was a significant Muslim presence and many Africans snared in the slaver’s dragnet were Arabic speakers and devout followers of Islam. Runaway slave advertisements from colonial newspapers provide evidence of the Muslim

⁷³ Secretary of State. Miscellaneous Records, Vol. EE, pp. 139-140

⁷⁴ Manuel, *South Carolina Gazette*, 26 Feb 1741; Man & Son, *South Carolina Gazette*, 22 May 1742.

⁷⁵ Anderson, *South Carolina Gazette*, 22 Aug 1742.

⁷⁶ Homer, *South Carolina Gazette*, 19 Feb 1756; Warren B. Smith, *White Servitude in Colonial South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1961), 47.

presence in Charleston and South Carolina.⁷⁷ For example, in 1738, an advertisement was placed for “two Gambia Negroes...Walley, the other Bocarrey, (Bukhari or possibly Bubacar from Abu Bakr)” are clear references to Muslims.⁷⁸ About the same time that Abel Conder and Mahamut were in Charleston an advertisement was placed for a Gambia Muslim man named “Walley...has remarkable grey eyes, or rather of a yellowish white, smooth skin.” A similar advertisement described a man named “Mamado” who absconded about the same time and likely arrived with “Walley” in Charleston.⁷⁹ An early nineteenth century inventory of enslaved people on a St. Helena Island plantation recorded the names and families of several Muslims. Among the names listed were “Dido a fifty-six-year-old ‘Moroccan’” woman, an African born man “Mamoodie” and several children “Fatima” and “Hammett (Hamid or Ahmad)” with Muslim names.⁸⁰ These examples are a small sample of the Muslim presence in South Carolina during the era when Abel Conder and Mahamut lived there and attempted to regain their freedom in Charleston. Seeing another yellow skinned African or hearing a person speak Arabic in one of Charleston’s numerous markets would have been momentarily comforting and yet a chilling reminder for Abel Conder and Mahamut of the distance from their homeland. Moreover, the sheer density of Africans in Charleston would have reminded them of the

⁷⁷ Few have exploited the intellectual gold-mine of runaway slave advertisements for African ethnicity and culture better than Michael Gomez. See Gomez’s *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998). For earlier important works that demonstrated the potential cultural wealth of newspaper advertisements see Daniel C. Littlefield, *Rice and Slaves: Ethnicity and the Slave Trade in Colonial South Carolina* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981) and Sterling Stuckey, *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

⁷⁸ *South Carolina Gazette*, October 19, 1738.

⁷⁹ *South Carolina Gazette*, February 3, 1757; *South Carolina Gazette*, June 23, 1757; Lathan A. Windley, *Runaway Slave Advertisements: A Documentary History from the 1730’s to 1790* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983).

⁸⁰ Gomez, *Black Crescent*, 152. The Frogmore inventory is from the John Stapleton Papers, South Caroliniana Library.

centrality of slavery in Carolina and the challenges facing them in regaining their freedom.

The fortuitous reemergence of Abel Conder and Mahamut in the dense dimly-lit forest that is the slavery archive, was only possible through the collapse of Daniel LaRoche's commercial and planting empire. Brought on by years of poor economic decisions and LaRoche's sudden flight from the colony, Abel Conder and Mahamut seized the moment to strategize for their freedom. As indicated in Abel Conder and Mahamut's petition, a "prospect of liberty" was offered only when the trustees for LaRoche's estate prepared to sell off his assets at "public auction." As the dark sham of bankruptcy quickly approached, LaRoche surrendered his vast properties to his former business partner George Saxby and his brother-in-law, Elias Foissin. In addition to LaRoche's plantation, Saxby advertised the sale of several tracts of land totaling over fourteen thousand acres, eight Georgetown lots, 130 slaves, cattle, horses, coastal barges and boats. LaRoche ruined the careers of several merchants and the lives of many more families, black and white, in South Carolina.⁸¹

Considering the number of ships and coastal vessels LaRoche and his business partners owned, it is unsurprising that LaRoche relocated to the Bahamas after fleeing his creditors. Historians have overlooked evidence demonstrating that LaRoche relocated to the Bahamas where he traded and infrequently contacted his family back in Carolina.⁸²

⁸¹ Secretary of State. Public Register. Vol., KK (1751-52), 74-94; *South Carolina Gazette*, February 26, 1753.

⁸² In April 1763, Charleston merchants Newman & Smyth consigned a cargo to Daniel LaRoche at New Providence, Bahamas. Newman & Smyth Manifest Book, 1761-1793, Guignard Papers, South Caroliniana Library. LaRoche died intestate in February 1766. The administration of his estate was granted to Rush Tucker. F. Claiborne Johnston and C.F.E. Hollis Hallett, eds., *Early Colonists of the Bahamas: A Selection of Records* (Pembroke, Bermuda: Juniperhill Press, 1996), 66. On the Bahamas as a an unfavorable market

Amazingly, LaRoche married after leaving South Carolina but her name or if he had any children remains a mystery.⁸³ To his niece in 1760, LaRoche wrote that he recently recovered from a debilitating fever and apologized for the ‘long silence [due] to that unhappy cause’ which prevented a frequent correspondence.⁸⁴ LaRoche was not the only merchant wrapped up in his web of debt and deceit to unexpectedly depart the colony. His former partner Andrew DeLavillette took his slaves and escaped his creditors by clandestinely heading north where he boarded a ship in North Carolina and sailed to “Barbitian.” LaRoche and DeLavillette’s flight from the province was possible because of their extensive trading networks and, the relatively slack port officials at Cape Fear. Coastal schooners and sloops frequently made the short trip between Georgetown and Cape Fear. Moreover, LaRoche and DeLavillette’s flight was so regrettably extraordinary because their creditors and estate trustees did not intend to indict them or confiscate their property. Rather than prosecuting and sending them to jail for fraud, among numerous other charges local merchants and planters wanted to negotiate repayment schedules at reduced interest rates. Even then, their creditors would still have suffered greatly by their leniency.⁸⁵ LaRoche’s cowardice opened a window for Abel Conder and Mahamut to potentially regain the freedom denied them.

for commercial expansion but safe haven for debt dodgers see, Thomas Tuttridge to Peter Manigault, 12 June 1755, Manigault Family Papers, South Caroliniana Library.

⁸³ Some historians suspected that LaRoche fled to North Carolina. Elizabeth Oliveros and Joseph Rivers, *Searching for the Ancestors of John and James Laroche Who Came to Carolina About 1690* (Charleston: J.L. Rivers, 2011); *Laroche Family History and Genealogy Research Files*, 30-4, SCHS.

⁸⁴ Daniel LaRoche to Polly Ouldfeld, May 1760. Thomas Middleton Papers, Middleton Place, Charleston, SC. The Middleton Family Papers at Middleton Place were microfilmed and placed on deposit at the South Carolina Historical Society. However, as I have shown here some manuscripts were not included in the microfilm edition. I have not determined the full extent of this oversight.

⁸⁵ John Guerard identifies John Swan as LaRoche’s business associate at Cape Fear. Guerard to Cornelius Harnett, 14 October 1752, Guerard Letterbook, SCHS; Henry Laurens to Robert Stuart, 28 April 1756. *Henry Laurens Papers*, vol. 2: 175. Since Laurens wrote to Stuart at St. Kitts and Governor De Windt at St. Eustatius about DeLavillette’s flight and debt, I suspect ‘Barbitian’ is the island of Barbuda. DeLavillette

LaRoche's flight from the colony was unexpected by his peers in Charleston. However, in recent years as the colony's economy slowed to a crawl, one merchant wrote that "breaking [bankruptcy] is become so much the fashion here of late that the most cautious can't clear of them."⁸⁶ Before fleeing in September 1752 several well-established merchants took necessary measures to shore up LaRoche's debts.⁸⁷ Between June 1751 and February 1752, John Guerard, George Austin, Henry Laurens, and Isaac Mazyck cosigned bonds in excess of £11,000.⁸⁸ As members of Charleston's exclusive merchant elite class, they stood to lose a great deal if LaRoche were to default on his contractual debts.⁸⁹ Throughout the province, LaRoche's reputation seemed rather firm, having been an active trader for thirty plus years over which time he acquired a "handsome fortune" and was considered a "ruling man" in the colony. In Georgetown "many suffer[ed]" from his departure, an act that "astonished" many throughout the colony.⁹⁰ Andrew Johnston, one of LaRoche's business partners, had "absolute confidence in his [LaRoche's] integrity" and had little reason to suspect any malfeasance.⁹¹ Whereas Guerard, who perhaps had less to lose than Johnston noted that LaRoche had "greatly abused [his] confidence" having taken a substantial loss against his

was described as a 'gentile brown man.' Stuart alluded to Laurens in a previous letter that he may be able to track down DeLavillette. John Guerard to William Jolliffe, 21 October 1752; John Guerard to William Jolliffe, 29 December 1752; John Guerard to Cornelius Harnett, 9 January 1753; John Guerard to Alexander Hume, 24 January 1754, Guerard Letterbook, SCHS.

⁸⁶ John Guerard to Robert Stebbing, 19 July 1750, Robert Stebbing Papers, Essex Record Office.

⁸⁷ I suspect LaRoche may have used the socially chaotic situation churned up by two hurricanes that collided with Charleston in September 1752 as a cover to make his escape.

⁸⁸ Guerard, Austin, and Laurens were the largest slave dealers in the colony. Mazyck was the only planter to agree to take on a share of LaRoche's debts. Austin & Laurens, "Account Book, April 1750 – December 1758", Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University (hereafter BRBL).

⁸⁹ For the problems Charleston merchants faced and the strategies utilized to collect debts from Georgetown residents see, George Appleby to Nathaniel Tregagle, 21 October 1761, Aswarby Muniments Lincolnshire Record Office.

⁹⁰ John Guerard to William Jolliffe, 21 October 1752, Guerard Letterbook, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston (hereafter SCHS).

⁹¹ John Guerard to Alexander Hume, 24 January 1754, Guerard Letterbook, SCHS.

private trading company.⁹² Several of the properties in the Pee Dee River delta that LaRoche managed for an absentee land-owner were fraudulently mishandled. LaRoche pocketed rent funds and improved some of the lands for his private use without prior authorization. Several of the tracts of land described by LaRoche as potentially valuable for cultivation or timber harvesting were in fact “very ordinary” and upon official survey, deemed much less valuable than initially professed. LaRoche’s capital deception was a “scene of iniquity” that was not limited by geographical borders but spread far out into the Atlantic.⁹³

After Abel Conder and Mahamut’s petition was read the council referred the matter to James Wright, the attorney general. Wright was instructed to take proper steps to “oblige Mr. Daubrig or any other person [LaRoche] claiming right to the service of the said petitioners to prove their right to their service.” It is not at all clear if James Wright had a dispassionate interest in hearing Abel Conder and Mahamut’s case, that is, if he even heard the case. The attorney general was the colonial official responsible for settling suits concerning private property or the transfer of chattels.⁹⁴ However, in April 1752, LaRoche transferred outright a large tract of land on the Black River to Wright. It is unclear at this point if this land was unimproved or in a semi-productive site. It is probable that LaRoche used this stretch of land to harvest timber for naval stores production.⁹⁵ Since LaRoche transferred the Black River property to Wright before he

⁹² John Guerard to William Jolliffe, 21 October 1752, Guerard Letterbook, SCHS. Johnston’s estate was seized and sold off by the state.

⁹³ John Guerard to Alexander Hume, 24 January 1754, Guerard Letterbook, SCHS.

⁹⁴ Just the week prior, the Council referred William Simpson’s petition regarding the transfer on an official appointment to Wright. Council Journal, 28 February 1753, CO 5/468, f. 286.

⁹⁵ Secretary of State. Miscellaneous Records, Vol. 2L: 21-31. SCDAH. LaRoche owed Wright £1,442. The most detailed description in the indenture states that 3,000 acres along with the “houses, outhouses, edifices, buildings, barns, stables, yards, gardens, orchards, fences, garden, timber and timber trees, woods,

fled the province, it seems likely that this transaction settled the majority of the outstanding debt between them. LaRoche was intimately familiar with South Carolina courts. He was fully aware that after his departure, creditors would seek redress and that those cases would eventually be settled by James Wright, the colony's attorney general. Since LaRoche's obligation to Wright was fulfilled, it would have been in Wright's best interest, as well as the public's, to rule in favor of LaRoche in the case involving Abel Conder and Mahamut's freedom.⁹⁶ By determining that LaRoche had the "right to the service" of Abel Conder and Mahamut, or that they were his slaves, Wright ensured that a small amount of chattel property remained a part of LaRoche's estate, although it was in the hands of trustees, could continue to exploit their labor and in the process pay off some of his debts. Moreover, by ruling in favor of LaRoche's estate, Wright limited the number of free blacks in the colony, a growing threat to the expansion of enslaved African labor in the colony, further safeguarding the institution of slavery and the preservation of British hegemony in North America.⁹⁷

Despite the legal constraints, the rigid racial hierarchy in Carolina and the astronomical odds that conspired against Abel Conder and Mahamut, their petition convinced the governing authorities of the authenticity of their captive narrative. If Abel Conder and Mahamut or their petition was considered by Wright is unknown. It is likely that Wright did review their petition in the coming week since about 60 days passed

waters, and watercourses" were included in the mortgage assignment which would suggest a degree of land improvement.

⁹⁶ There are no extant records of the attorney general for the colonial period. My interpretation is based on a larger examination of the private and public records involving all other parties caught up in LaRoche's web.

⁹⁷ For works examining white fears of free blacks and the violent response see, J. William Harris, *The Hanging of Thomas Jeremiah: A Free Black Man's Encounter with Liberty* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); William Ryan, *The World of Thomas Jeremiah: Charles Town on the Eve of the American Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). For the alleged 1759 conspiracy involving two free blacks Philip Jones and John Pendarvis see Olwell, *Becoming Free*, p3.

between the Council referring it to Wright and Glen issuing their passports. The authenticity of Abel Conder and Mahamut's account was recited in Glen's decree setting them free from bondage in Carolina. As natives of "Barbary" they were made prisoners "of war by the subjects of the King of Portugal about 15 years ago since which time" they were "unjustly" detained "in this Province by some evil disposed persons." The unnamed offender was obviously Daniel LaRoche. "Having now obtained" their "Liberty" they desired to return to their "own country." To achieve their objective of returning home "all officers civil and military and other his Majesty's subjects in this Province" were "require[ed]" as well as "all others where" they "may arrive to permit" them to "pass...without let or molestation."⁹⁸ [Appendix 6] Likely considered dead by loved ones and family members in their North African homeland, Abel Conder and Mahamut summoned the power, harnessed their knowledge and resources and were miraculously resurrected from the cavernous depths of slavery where so many perished. Their skill and agility demonstrates the perseverance, adaptability and unwillingness to yield to the mounting pressures of European imperialism spreading rapidly across the Atlantic world.

Conclusion

Abel Conder and Mahamut's story and the paper trail that documents their adventures as brave soldiers, capable sailors, contractual servants, and reluctant slaves is potent evidence of the roles Muslims and people of West African descent played in shaping the structure of the Atlantic world. Often hiding in the dark, dimly lit shadows of the slavery archive, the lives of Abel Conder and Mahamut and so many other captive Africans like

⁹⁸ CO 5/386, f. 65-67. A passport was issued individually to 'Hamet' and 'Guylance' and may represent the first rendering of their actual names, supposing that they were consulted before the passes were distributed.

them remain hidden. We know they were in colonial South Carolina because as LaRoche's personal empire crumbled Abel Conder and Mahamut tapped into their knowledge and experience with European colonialism and attempted to regain the freedom that was denied to them. Only when the world of their alleged owner collapsed, was a window opened that allowed them to convert their knowledge into action and petition to local authorities for justice. By seeking redress through representatives of a foreign monarch, they attempted to utilize the structures of British colonial bureaucracy to their advantage. Their petition was a subtle subversive act that contested the legitimacy of European imperial power and tested the frayed seams of the institution that held them bound. Abel Conder and Mahamut demonstrated the strength of the personal relationships that developed within the centuries-old legal institutions of Morocco embedded in the religious and cultural fabric of the lived experience.⁹⁹ Abel Conder and Mahamut set an early precedent for captive Muslims in the colony as later in the century slaves would utilize the state's courts to access mechanisms for manumission that shaped legislation and produced legal consequences.

⁹⁹ Khrisat shows how Arabic slave narratives were acts of protest against slavery that suffered from two drawbacks; the original text was in Arabic and that the accounts were published by abolitionist reformers. Abdulhafeth Ali Khrisat, "Authenticity of Arabic Slave Narratives," *Damascus University Journal* 21. 1-2 (2005), 73-96.

1737	1621	Oct 6	Brig	Delight	Scutts	80	Scutts	W. Moore	5	Antick	Siberia	Swedish
1622	4	Apr	Ship	Hope	Lond	70	Lancr	Ken Simpson	10	2°	Bulador	—
1623	7	Aug	Ship	Neptune	Spain	150	6	Spain	Henry Mays	10	2°	Swedish
1624	2°	Ship	Elizabeth	Lynn	200	10	Lynn	Mountain	12	2°	Siberia	—
1625	5	Aug	Happy Return	Shes	10	—	Perman	Spa Liddra	5	2°	Siberia	—
1626	10	Aug	William	Lond	130	6	Thomas	Freeman	9	2	2°	Siberia
1627	8	Ship	Priscilla	2°	150	10	2°	Platerson	9	3	2°	—
1628	5	Brig	Prigintinnia	Bene	80	—	Good	Rob Banks	8	—	2°	Swedish
1629	12	Aug	Lark	Scutts	100	—	Thomas	John Maltby	7	2	2°	—
1630	10	2°	Olive Branch	Whitby	200	—	2°	John Malt	9	3	2°	—
1631	8	Brig	Hanning Delacy	Lond	80	—	2°	John Daking	5	1	2°	Swedish
1632	10	Aug	Endeavour	Whitby	200	—	2°	Ben Lundy	8	2	2°	Swedish
1633	8	2°	Georgia	Lond	100	2	2°	Henry Malt	7	2	2°	Swedish
1634	10	Brig	Severa	Whitby	170	14	Brig	W. Clapperton	20	—	2°	—
1635	8	Aug	Bullock North	Malt	120	—	Malt	John Sharp	1	—	2°	—
1636	7	Ship	Antelope	Lynn	60	10	Lynn	Aug Clark	8	—	2°	Swedish
1637	2°	2°	Martin	Whitby	150	—	2°	W. Cates	12	—	2°	Swedish
1638	13	2°	Elizabeth	Lond	150	2	Thomas	Edw. Mervell	8	2	2°	—
1639	5	2°	Unity	Dumf	60	—	Dumfries	John Gibb	9	—	2°	Swedish
1640	12	Brig	Rose	Bene	100	6	Brig	Edw. Paken	6	1	2°	Swedish

Figure 7.2. The pass for the Georgia Pink, Captain Henry Daubuz is no. 1633. The information on the page from left to right is pass number; date; build; ship name; place ship registered; burthen; # of guns; place pass registered; captain's name; # of British sailors; # of foreign sailors; primary destination; secondary destination. ADM 7/82/82, Records of the Admiralty. Register of Passes, Kew, BNA.

CONCLUSION

The transatlantic slave trade transformed the early modern world by providing a near limitless supply of African laborers to the massive agro-plantation regimes concentrated in the Caribbean. In doing so, it created burgeoning ideologies traveling around the Atlantic world concerning consumption, wealth, ethnicity and perhaps most importantly the place of Africa, Africans and African-descended people in the history of the modern world. Africa's influence in the evolution of human civilization and the historical contributions Africans made in the formation of the modern world, or the lack of contributions as some argued, was directly shaped by the history and the perceptions of the transatlantic slave trade. For example, emerging from the fires of revolutionary France, Constantin Francois de Volney published *Les Ruines*, a treatise on the philosophy of history that paid particular attention to Africa. Volney, writing with a rare clairvoyance lacked by many of his peers in the 1790s, observed that civilization began in Africa:

It was there that a race, (now regarded as the refuse and outcast of society, because forsooth their *hair* is naturally *frizzled* and *woolly*, and their *skin black*,) studied the laws and phenomena of nature, and borrowed from thence the archetype and model of those civil and religious systems, which still obtain, with some variation, in every nation of the globe.

Volney's personal encounters with Africans and North African culture in the 1780s demonstrated the enduring contributions Africans made to the politics, science and civil society. Volney attempted to show that Africa continued to have a place in modern

European history despite the historical shift from a Mediterranean to an Atlantic-centered world economy.¹ Slave-produced commodities consumed by Europeans supplemented caloric deficiencies and at the same time reinforced racial ideologies that deemed slavery was the rightful place for Africans who lacked a meaningful history.² Volney's treatise spoke directly to the ways in which the transatlantic slave trade created and connected disparate peoples and cultures of the Atlantic world. Moreover, Volney showed that the human casualties and slave productivity shaped the cultural, intellectual and ideological legacies of the transatlantic slave trade.

Only a few years later, German historian Georg Hegel produced a challenging counter narrative to Volney's treatise that Africa was the origin of modern political and scientific institutions. In the early nineteenth century, European knowledge of Africa and understanding of African history was generally limited to the transatlantic slave trade and slavery. The descriptions of pre-colonial West and West Central Africa that "cultured" Europeans read were most often authored by European slave traders and proslavery economists such as Jean Barbot, William Snelgrave, Robert Norris, Archibald Dalzel and Malachy Postlethwayt.³ Colonialism and the exploitation of African labor brought

¹ The Geneva edition was published in 1791. The most widely distributed edition appeared a year later. Constantin Francois de Volney, *Les Ruines, ou, Méditation sur les Révolutions des Empires* (Paris: Chez Desenne, Volland, Plassans, 1792). Quotations drawn from *The Ruins; Or, Meditation on the Revolutions of Empires and the Law of Nature* (Albany: S. Shaw, 1822), 35-6.

² Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Viking, 1985).

³ P. E. H. Hair, Adam Jones, and Robin Law, eds., *Barbot on Guinea: The Writings of Jean Barbot on West Africa, 1678-1712* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1992); William Snelgrave, *A New Account of Some Parts of Guinea and the Slave-Trade* (London, 1734); Robert Norris, *Memoirs of the Reign of Bossa Ahádee, King of Dahomy, an Inland Country of Guiney* (London: W. Lowndes, 1789) Archibald Dalzel, *The History of Dahomy: An Inland Kingdom of Africa* (London, 1793); Malachy Postlethwayt, *The National and Private Advantages of the African Trade Considered* (London: Printed for John and Paul Knapton, 1746). For Norris' writings on Dahomey and African history see, David Ross, "Robert Norris, Agaja, and the Dahomean Conquest of Allada and Whydah," *History in Africa* 16 (1989): 311-24; Robin Law, "The Slave-Trader as Historian: Robert Norris and the History of Dahomey," *History in Africa* 16 (1989): 219-35. On Dalzel see, I. A. Akinjogbin, "Archibald Dalzel: Slave Trader and Historian of Dahomey," *The Journal of African History* 7, no. 1 (1966): 67-78.

significant political power and capital to Britain and other European nations. As a result, the place of Africans as valid historical subjects was deemed inadmissible and unworthy of study. In 1830, Hegel articulated a philosophical approach to African history that became the major tenet of historical orthodoxy for the next century.

At this point we leave Africa, not to mention it again. For it is no historical part of the world... What we properly understand by Africa, is the unhistorical, undeveloped spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature, and which had to be presented here only as on the threshold of the world's history.⁴

According to Hegel, the transatlantic slave trade and slavery eliminated Africans from the community of historical peoples who contributed to the progression of human development. As the ideology developed more fully in the nineteenth century as scientific racism gained widespread legitimacy in major research universities, Africa was bifurcated from history.⁵

European imperialists naturally embraced the idea that Africa lacked a history as the violent annexation and partition of the continent quickened at the end of the nineteenth century. The ideology that Africans made no meaningful contribution to history was a loud refrain for imperial propaganda. By espousing that Africans were a separate lineage of humanity, King Leopold and his ravenous capitalist contemporaries were comforted that their transgressions were insignificant in the larger progression of human development. However, opposition soon mounted to disrupt and dislodge the politics of power, war, violence and greed that governed much of the world economy.

⁴ Georg W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007), 99. The first English translation appeared in 1857. *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* (London: H.G. Bohn, 1857).

⁵ For Hegel, Africa did not have a recoverable past. Though Hegel acknowledged that 'historical' events took place in Africa, these events were not historical 'developments' in the sense of a progressive change and that such events had no connections with modern world history.

Few were stronger advocates of Africa's place in modern history than the African American historian W.E.B. Du Bois.⁶ Completing his doctoral studies from Harvard in 1895, the topic of Du Bois' dissertation was the transatlantic slave trade.⁷ The title of his masterful documentary history, *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade to the United States of America, 1638-1870*, is somewhat misleading because the suppression of the trade is not discussed until chapter eight. Rather Du Bois explores one of the paramount paradoxes of US history; the slave trade flourished under the guise of its suppression. A more accurate title of Du Bois' dissertation might have been the 'Failure of the US government to suppress the Slave Trade.'⁸

Although Du Bois is best known as a central figure in the Pan-African movement and anticolonial nationalism in Africa, modern Africanists have since acknowledged that Du Bois also made pioneering contributions to African historiography. For example, Du Bois' first book to explore African history, *The Negro* (1915), is a racial rather than a continental history. But it begins in Africa and then moves through an exploration of the slave trade to the Americas.⁹ Though eight of its twelve chapters are grounded in African

⁶ William Winwood Reade (d. 1875) and Leo Frobenius (d. 1935) predated Du Bois in challenging Hegel's view of Africa. William Winwood Reade, *Savage Africa* (New York: Harper, 1864) and *The African Sketch-Book* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1873). Leo Frobenius, *The Voice of Africa; Being an Account of the Travels of the German Inner African Exploration Expedition in the Years 1910-1912* (London: Hutchinson, 1913). Originally published in German as *Und Afrika Sprach* (Berlin: Deutsches Verlagshaus, 1912).

⁷ W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade to the United States of America, 1638-1870* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co, 1896).

⁸ W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States of America, 1638-1870*, ed. Henry Louis Gates (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), xxv-xxix. Introduction by Saidiya Hartman.

⁹ Robin Law, "Du Bois as a Pioneer of African History," in Mary Keller and Chester J. Fontenot, eds., *Recognizing W.E.B. Du Bois in the Twenty-First Century: Essays on W.E.B. Du Bois* (Macon, Ga: Mercer University Press, 2007), 14-17.

history, Du Bois anticipated recent approaches to the study of the Diaspora by framing it in 'global' terms and foregrounding his work in West African history.¹⁰

Throughout the body of Du Bois' scholarship, the transatlantic slave trade was a reoccurring theme for illustrating the importance of African history in creating the modern world. On the slave trade Du Bois stated: "the most magnificent human drama in the last thousand years of human history is the transportation of ten million human beings out of the dark beauty of their mother continent into the new-found Eldorado of the West."¹¹ In preparing one of his early books dealing with Africa's past, Du Bois responded to a Texas man's inquiry on the history of Africa with "no one can write [only] a few words about Africa because Africa is three or four times the size of the United States and no one word would be true of all parts of it."¹² More than 25 years before Eric Williams' seminal publication *Capitalism and Slavery*, Du Bois argued persuasively about the impact of the slave trade on the European economy and the role of Africans in creating modernity.¹³

Modern world commerce, modern imperialism, the modern factory system and the modern labor problem began with the African slave trade. The first modern method of securing labor on a wide commercial scale and primarily for profit was inaugurated in the middle of the fifteenth century... The survivors of this

¹⁰ Kristin Mann, "Shifting Paradigms in the Study of the African Diaspora and of Atlantic History and Culture," in Kristin Mann and Edna G. Bay, eds., *Rethinking the African Diaspora: The Making of a Black Atlantic World in the Bight of Benin and Brazil* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2001), 3-21; Patrick Manning, "Locating Africans on the World Stage: A Problem in World History," *Journal of World History* 26 (2015): 605-637.

¹¹ W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction: An Essay toward a History of the part which Black Folk played in the attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1935), 727.

¹² W. E. B. Du Bois to H.M. Jackson, 9 December 1925, W. E. B. Du Bois Papers, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries. Most likely originating from a clerical error, the statement should read "not one word would be true of all parts of it."

¹³ In the foreword to *The World and Africa* (1946), Du Bois acknowledged "Eric Williams' new and excellent work, *Capitalism and Slavery*." W. E. B. Du Bois, *The World and Africa; an Inquiry into the Part Which Africa Has Played in World History*, (New York: The Viking Press, 1946).

wholesale rape became a great international laboring force in America on which the modern capitalist movement has been built.¹⁴

Du Bois' powerful counter narrative to Hegel demonstrated unequivocally the central role Africa and Africans played in constructing institutions that gave shape and form to the modern world.¹⁵ Du Bois pulled back the veil and testified to the world that the "Labor Wars" and the politics of power, violence and greed shaped not only the transatlantic slave trade, but also the ideological underpinning of those who would erase Africa's past to hide their own culpability.¹⁶

In similar ways, the political forces that attempted to erase Africa's past from modern history were also the key structural features for organizing the transatlantic slave trade. From its modest beginnings in the 1550s to its peak carrying capacity in the 1780s, the transatlantic slave trade, fueled by an increasingly monetized, capitalist Atlantic world ignited large-scale social upheaval in every part of the hemisphere. Unsuspecting societies located far from the coastal trading centers where the primary exchanges took place were dragged unwilling into the spider web-like commercial networks that stretched across the Atlantic world.

Free migrants and captive Africans shared the dense shipping lanes that brought new laborers to the Americas. Coerced and voluntary migration were intractably tied together in forming the early modern Atlantic world. Scholars, however, all too often separate these migratory streams from each other. This untangling distorts important

¹⁴ W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Negro's Fatherland," *Survey* 39 (10 November 1917), 141, W. E. B. Du Bois Papers, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.

¹⁵ For Du Bois' other works on Africa and African history see, W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Negro* (New York: Henry Holt, 1915); *Africa, Its Geography, People, and Products* (Girard, Kansas: Haldeman-Julius Publications, 1930); *Africa Its Place in Modern History* (Girard, Kansas: Haldeman-Julius Publications, 1930).

¹⁶ W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1903).

aspects of the narrative, and, in doing so, offers up an ahistorical account of Atlantic migration. However, as I have shown in chapter one, the uncertainties of locality and contingency often shaped many of the outcomes inherent to transatlantic migration. Throughout the eighteenth century, the politics of power, violence and greed whipped the vortex of the Atlantic economy into a turbulent frenzy with little regard for the people swept up in its wake.

For such a massive unwarranted migration to take place over nearly 400 hundred years of human history required a great deal of political power buttressed by imaginative systems of violence and oppression. In the 1830s, as Hegel was postulating his thesis on Africa's non-history, that political power was held largely by Europeans, particularly Britain and its campaign to suppress the Atlantic slave trade. However, that was not the case for much of the eighteenth century at Whydah, the largest and most important embarkation center on the Slave Coast of West Africa. As I analyzed in chapter two, trading elites at Whydah wielded a tremendous degree of authority and political power that extended to every level of society and dictated minute aspects of European commercial exchange. European trade representatives cultivated mutually beneficial commercial relationships with Whydah elites, but these associations fluctuated with regularity.¹⁷ High degrees of deference and regular offerings of customary tribute were necessary for Europeans to maintain a preferred status with Whydah elites. When breaches of cultural protocol were violated, the consequences were often severe for local European trade representatives, but because of the breadth of the slave trade, the magnitude of the penalties were felt far from the epicenter. Joseph Blaney's violation of

¹⁷ To some West African elites, participating in the slave trade made sense because obtaining captives and the disciplining of labor occurred externally beyond their power base. Frederick Cooper, *Africa in the World: Capitalism, Empire, Nation-State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 17-18.

Whydah political authority resulted in his eviction from the Slave Coast and a consolidation of the Royal African Company's (RAC) factories in the region. This incident was devastating for the RAC because the company expected to purchase an increasing number of slaves from Whydah elites in the coming years, especially for *asiento* ships. Rather than strengthening political relationships with trading elites on the Slave Coast, company representatives at Whydah contributed to the RAC's loss of their contract with the South Sea Company (SSC), and to the eventual collapse of the company several decades later.

In 1713, as the cannons were silenced and the final body count was at long last tabulated, it was clear that Britain had emerged victorious from her first 'labor war' in the War of Spanish Succession (1701-1712) as I discussed in chapter three. The spoils included St. Kitts from France, Gibraltar and Minorca from Spain along with the *asiento* contract, the driving cause of the decade long war. With the commercial keys to the Spanish Indies transferred to the SSC, Britain's highly-specialized slave trade grew even more complex; the RAC serving the labor demands of the Caribbean and North America while the SSC serviced consumers in Spanish America. But the operation of the *asiento* trade to Spanish America is best understood in light of the African side of the trade where the politics of power and violence directly impacted the flow of captives to the coast. Increasing demand for captives in West Africa, stressed labor supply centers to their maximum capacity and pushed the SSC out. In response to a limited labor market, the company developed an unconventional solution to overcome the labor shortage in West Africa. They sent *asiento* ships to East Africa where ship captains forged new commercial relationships with Malagasy elites on the island of Madagascar. Although the

strategy was an ephemeral solution, the SSC's decision to pull out of East Africa was once again, dictated by the African side of the trade and not only European political or military power alone. Britain's ruthless rise in the eighteenth century as lords of the sea may have forced Spain to capitulate on its long-held exclusionary economic policy but in West Africa during the operation of the slave trade, that power never made it past the beaches.

Fifty-years after the Treaty of Utrecht (1713), Britain concluded its third imperial war of the century and emerged ever more in control over disciplined labor regimes. The Seven Years' War (1756-1763) was Britain's largest global crusade to date and the campaigns in West Africa proved crucial to the victory. Domestic policy makers seductively intertwined an ambitious imperial policy abroad with the public's insatiable appetite for accumulation of international capital in the quest for global domination. As discussed in chapter four, in the wake of the war, Britain's new overseas acquisitions were a bastion for the expansion of African slavery in the untilled regions of North America. Further, following the Seven Years' War witnessed a notable expansion of the intercolonial slave trade, the seedy offspring of the Atlantic trade. In the eighteenth century, more captive Africans were carried in British ships to the Americas than any other European carrier, and Albion's expanding American empire had a radical effect on the geography of slave arrivals. Imperial warfare, the intercolonial slave trade and Caribbean plantation productivity were so deeply intertwined, untangling one from another would ultimately sever the arteries of the others and bring about a complete collapse of the colonial complex. However, in Spanish Florida, where Britain's surrealist capital-engineered dreamscape gleamed brightest, the organizational inefficiencies of the

transatlantic slave trade could not supply the captive African laborers necessary to convert the landscape into profitable plantations. Accordingly, the expansion of the intercolonial slave trade to British East Florida illustrates the operational malleability and adaptability of the slave trade over time to conform to changing imperial conditions.

At the heart of the transatlantic slave trade is an agonizing human story engineered from systemic racial violence in the quest for accumulation of international capital. The slave trade specialized in progressively repressive forms of sadistic violence that was imaginatively recreated year after year primarily because of African resistance. This violence was necessary to alter captive Africans' bodies into transferable commodities for the Atlantic marketplace. Coerced migration across the Atlantic was a powerfully transformative process but the voyage was not the end of the journey. Upon arriving, captive Africans underwent a new ordeal outside the ship called the quarantine process. Sullivan's Island, a sandy spit at the mouth of Charleston harbor where captives disembarked, was as a formative commodification terminal in the lives of African migrants. As discussed in chapter five, the island was a liminal middle ground, a metaphysical metaphor and a tangible geography, where whites attempted to rejuvenate the bodies that ship captains violently oppressed. Here the physical transformation was intensified as body modification rituals were applied. These rituals were specifically designed to cleanse the flesh of outward abnormalities and other dregs of the voyage in preparation for the market. The oceanic voyage was a distinct feature of the transatlantic slave trade that took a destructive physical toll on the bodies of captive Africans. The quarantine stage of the larger commodification process was an outgrowth of the destructive processes that made the slave trade possible. It represents an evolution of the

transatlantic slave trade where British imperial financiers and colonial merchants responded collectively to consumers who demanded that captives' bodies be sanitized, sheered bare, and polished for presentation. For the white sailors who had known the captives personally since departing the coast, it was one of the last acts of dehumanization that captives were subject to before they were sold off, which were then followed tragically by yet another series of dehumanizing acts delivered by New World masters.

The captive Africans arriving in South Carolina via the transatlantic slave trade were of varied geographical origins. Their ethnic origins represented some of the most culturally dynamic and diverse regions of Diasporic Africa. Many variables, particularly those derived from interactions with Native America and European elements, influenced identity formation in Carolina. As discussed in chapter six, one critical factor that contributed and at the same time limited, African cultural retention was the purchasing patterns of lowcountry planters. After completing the quarantine process, captives were, once again, quarantined off at the slave dealer's residence or a designated location in further preparation for public sale. Next, the captives endured a 'scramble,' in which dealers allowed buyers to enter the yard at a designated time. When the signal was given, buyers rushed in upon the captives in a violent and chaotic manner, quite literally grabbing, tearing and pulling away captives in a rush to claim the prize first. Afterwards, captives journeyed inland to their new homes where daily life was guided by the rhythms of the labor regime. On occasion, planters purchased between five, ten and sometimes more captives at a time, or as few as one. The number of shipmates that journeyed inland together to the same property was a critical factor impacting cultural and identity

formation. The bonds formed in the crucible of crossing the Atlantic were lasting relationships unlike any other. After leaving the ship, the number of familiar faces decreased exponentially and with each step they became increasingly isolated from one another. But on occasion, as I discussed in chapter six, pockets of shipmates did travel together to their new homes. In these rare geographical enclaves, it would have been easier for captive Africans to communicate, forge new relationships, share personal histories and mourn.

For the overwhelming majority of captive Africans snared in the slaver's dragnet, freedom was a dream that never became a reality. The politics of power, war, violence and greed inherent to the operation of the transatlantic slave trade also played a critical role in the divisions between enslaved and free. The nightmare that was enslavement was eased only by the relationships, Diasporic bonds, and families enslaved Africans forged in resisting the brutal regime that held them captive. For captive Africans in British colonies, in contrast to Spanish American colonies, it was much more difficult to break free from the shackles of slavery because of the juridical traditions in which the colonial slave codes drew inspiration. Consequently, examples of captive Africans utilizing British political instruments to their advantage and successfully regaining their freedom are particularly rare for the mid-eighteenth century. In chapter seven, I discussed at length Abel Conder and Mahamut's freedom petition and the governor's decree that they were freemen with approval to leave the colony and return to their homeland in Morocco. Amazingly, they remained undaunted in seeking their freedom despite the tremendous hurdles and challenges they had to overcome. At the time, Britain was riding a wave of successes in its imperial vision of global conquest and the statutes governing captives in

South Carolina were designed to both strengthen planters' command over the enslaved population and magnify British hegemony across the region. By responding favorably to Abel and Mahamut's petition, the colonial government acted counter intuitively to Britain's larger imperial designs. That two Muslim men from Portuguese Morocco overcame the rigid racial hierarchy that structured every facet of colonial South Carolina society, demonstrates that enslaved Africans listened attentively, strategized aggressively and acted decisively to transform the institutions that held them captive.

The broad geographical focus of this dissertation is a reflection of the organization and operation of the early modern transatlantic slave trade that evolved and adapted over time. It has given particular attention to the African side of the trade in the operation of the transatlantic slave trade where the politics of power, war, violence and greed directly impacted the flow of captives to the coast. The transatlantic slave trade and the millions of captive Africans carried to the Americas drastically altered the trajectory of the modern world. The quest for the accumulation of capital was paralleled by the relentless search for labor. In Africa, Europeans realized the potential of commercial exchange with West African elites in their larger pursuit of capital. The transatlantic slave trade was the lynchpin in the formation of modern capitalism that gave birth to industrialization. It was the oxygen that fueled the fire of capitalist accumulation. At every step, West Africans and captive Africans made important contributions to the formation of the modern world. Although the colonial slave regime did its utmost to erase African ethnic identities and enslaved peoples' bonds with Africa, captives retained important aspects of their Diasporic cultural tapestry in the Americas. The very same politics of power, violence and greed that gave form to the slave trade also colluded

together in the formation of a racialized world order. These themes: capitalism, labor, violence, modernity and racism continue to inform our understanding of the present as much as the past.

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APPENDIX A – SHIPBOARD UPRISING ON THE ST. MICHAEL, FEBRUARY 1727.¹

15 February. Being the first day of Lent, at 2 [in the] morning when most of the watch were employed in passing along the lead and the line to sound the Negroes took an opportunity to rise upon us. One of them who came up to piss knocked down the centrie at the fore hatch way who lost his cutlass and narrowly escaped, and in one instant the greatest body of the men got upon the main deck which obliged our people on the main deck to retire to the quarter deck for arms and soon alarmed all of us who were asleep. They attacked the quarterdeck and stationed bulkhead by the pumps several times but were as often repulsed. We fired a great many pieces among them at first loaded with peas only but afterwards with swan shot and bullets yet they kept the main deck about 1/2 hour and every time we fired made fresh shouts and noise until at last in a body we rushed down among them from the quarter deck with cutlasses where several of them stood and fought desperately with billets of wood, a cutlass, the cooks spit, and a hatchet until they were severely wounded and we could not force them below without doing an abundance of mischief. Then we found to our great regret George French our chief cook dead upon the main gratins and his mate and two more of our men wounded. He was asleep in the forecastle and at first being surprised by their noise ran out onto the main

¹ Journal of Saint Michael, 15-16 February 1727, HC 363/1299, Hispanic Society of America (HSA), New York.

deck where they barbarously killed him for when we found him his skull was beaten to pieces.

As soon as day light appeared being well armed we brought the Negroes upon the deck again and found 24 of them wounded. One received a wound in the occipitus with the cutlass which cut through the bone the length of 2 inches. Another was very much cut in the back and side and shot in the thigh which seem to be in a great danger, and several were wounded in the head and other parts. Most of the wounds were given with cutlasses and was not near so much execution done with firearms as we expected, for the night was very dark and they sheltered themselves from the shot behind the mainmast, etc. They certainly fought very obstinately and I believe there is scarce one instance where such a small number of Negros persisted so long in such an obstinate attempt for there was not in all above 150 men among them, and as for the women and boys being in different apartments from the men they did not attempt to rise.

They wounded two of their guardians who came to us for protection. After all was over we found four of them hanging over the bow by the cable. These and all were found out of irons to the number of 20. We tied them up, whipped them severely and then scared them and scrubbed them with spirits. We kept them tied up till night and whipped them again and put them all in double irons. The two men who came first upon the deck we kept tied up all night without any food. One of them having knocked down the centrie and the other by the testimony of all, was the principal actor in killing our cook. One of them who broke his irons when he found that they were overcome, jumped overboard and was drowned for at that time we were out of sight of land and it blew fresh and there run a high sea.

16 February. This day we had very hard gales from the ESE with very high sea so that we could not look near the land. When we dressed the slaves we found the man whose skull was cut pretty hearty without any delivery or any other bad symptoms which could attend such wounds but the wound in the back and thigh seem to be in much danger, though his wounds did not penetrate into the thorax.

Most of the ship's company were pressing to have that fellow executed who killed the cook and the Capt. at last agreed to it, not so much out of a desire of revenge as to deter the rest from any such attempt for the future. Therefore it was determined that he should suffer, at 4 PM all of us standing to our arms, the Negroes were all brought up on deck, and the Capt. having declared to him and them (by the mouth of David Briton, who spoke their language) the occasion of his proceedings they day cut off both his ears and then hanged him up at the starboard forearm until he was dead. This fellow continued swollen and obstinate to the last. He certainly deserved death, for several of them declared that they saw him knock down the cook as he came out of the fore castle and then follow him to the main gratins where he killed him with his own hatchet. This day some of the Ramomis slaves confessed that they were encouraged by some of his people to revolt from the white men, and if they could kill them he would make them all free and give them guns and other necessities.

APPENDIX B – SLAVE PRICES AT MORONDAVA, DECEMBER 1726²

For one man, woman, boy, or girl.
One Black stock gun, one trading gun; 30 shot, 30 flints, and one quart tankerd of powder.
Or
One long buccaneer gun, one trading gun; 30 shot, 30 flints and one quart tankerd powder.
Or
One short buccaneer gun, one trading gun. 30 shot, 30 flints and one quart tankerd of powder.
Or
Two Buenos Aires guns, 30 shot, 30 flints, and one quart tankerd powder.
Or
1200 shot or 112 pounds of small shot.

² Journal of Saint Michael, 4 December 1726, HC 363/1299, Hispanic Society of America, New York.

APPENDIX C – PURCHASE DEED OF CABENDA, 1721³

This indenture made the fourteenth day of July in the year of one thousand seven hundred twenty one between Masucas, Mazenjeu, Mabuca, Malambuasa, Malaubeal, Mazenja, Bullensua King of the one part and Nurse Hereford Governor of Cabenda upon the Southern coast of Africa on the behalf of the Royal African Company of England of the other part. Witness that we the said Masucas, Mazenjeu, Mabuca, Malambuasa, Malaubeal, Mazenja and Bullensea King for and in consideration of two hundred pieces of goods as also in consideration of the mutual friendship we hope to enjoy from the said Company have granted bargained and sold and by these presents do grant bargain and sell unto the said Nurse Hereford his heirs and assign forever but to the only proper use I behoofe of the Royal African Company of England aforesaid and their successors forever all such land and ground situate on the southern coast of Africa in the Kingdom of Anjoy to build a fort thereon for the use of the said company and their successors as also so much land and ground adjoining thereunto as the shot of the guns as shall be placed on the said fort shall peak when fired, to have and to hold the said land or ground unto the Royal African Company of England and their successors forever. In witness whereof we the said natives and King have to these presents confirmed and satisfied the same unto the said Royal African Company of England and their successors forever by setting out hands here unto the day and year aforesaid.

Bullensea X mark

Masucas X mark

Malambuasas X mark

Malambelas X mark

Witness hereto

James Rouse⁴

Charles Salisbury

³ Daniel Parish Jr. Slavery Transcripts, Folder 23, New York Historical Society, New York.

⁴ Will of James Rouse, RAC chief merchant at Cabenda, PROB 11/585/378.

APPENDIX D – ST. PAUL PARISH PURCHASERS

Table D.1. St. Paul Parish Purchasers								
	West Central Africa	Senegambia	Sierra Leonne	Windward Coast	Bight of Biafra	Bight of Benin	Gold Coast	Total
John McQueen	9	28	8				1	46
James Hartley	12	4	5	14				35
Lachlan MacIntosh	5		4	12			6	27
Samuel Wainwright	10	2	10	2				24
John Ash		15	2					17
Algernon Wilson	7	2		2		4		15
Jehu Elliott	4			10				14
Joseph Perry	1		4				4	9
John Dart	8							8
Thomas Ferguson							8	8
Joseph Ash			7					7
Francis Yonge		6						6
Frederick Grimke	5	1						6
James Christie	6							6
James Donnom	6							6
William Butler				6				6
Royal Spry (estate)	1			4				5
Thomas Law Elliott	5							5
George Sommers	2		1		1			4
Humphrey Sommers		4						4
James Pendarvis		4						4
Samuel Elliot					4			4
William Fabian	4							4
Benjamin Seabrook			2	1				3
Francis Brice			3					3
James Graves		1	1				1	3
Thomas Elliott Sr.	1			2				3
William Trunker		1	2					3
Charles Odingsell				2				2
John Findley				2				2
Philip Smith				2				2
William Glaze			2					2
Archibald Stobo							1	1
Charles Lowndes			1					1
David Crawford		1						1
Jacob Rumph		1						1
John Pinney	1							1
Jonathan Fabian				1				1
Mr. Quaterman						1		1
Royal Spry		1						1
Samuel Lowle	1							1
Thomas Rose			1					1
	88	71	53	60	5	5	21	303

APPENDIX E – ABEL CONDER AND MAHAMUT’S PETITION,
MARCH 1753.⁵

Read the Petition of Abel Conder and Mahamut transcribed from the original in Arabick and directed to his majesty viz.

May it please your Excellency,

Your most humble petitioners Abel Conder and Mahamut are of a place called Sally born subjects to the state who have long had the honor and happiness of being at amity with the Crown of Great Britain beg leave to prostrate ourselves before your Excellency in the most submissive manner and acquaint your Excellency that about 15 years ago we together with about 50 of our countrymen, being soldiers were commanded to patrol in the neighborhood of a place called Magason belonging to the King of Portugal to aid hostilities against them, being at war with them and it was our unhappy fate to lose a battle and be taken prisoners of war by the Portuguese who led us captives into Magason where we remained about three months when Capt. Henry Daubrig came amongst us and inquired if any were willing to serve him 5 years in Carolina on condition of his purchasing or obtaining our freedom from the Portuguese and the petitioners were the only two that accepted his offer and accordingly came with him into this country where instead of 5 years we have served him and Mr. Daniel LaRoche 15 years serving in all things as though we were real slaves and treated no other than the Negroes are. We have often humbly demanded our life but cannot obtain it and instead of any prospect of liberty, we understand that we are very shortly to be sold at public sale with Mr. LaRoche’s negroes. We most submissively fall down and prostrate ourselves before your Excellency, pray for your most gracious protection and with the utmost humility submit ourselves in our most miserable circumstances to your Excellency’s most sublime goodness and may the almighty God guide your Excellency in the fervent prayer of your lowest servants.

Abel Conder and Mahamut.

On reading the said petition it was ordered that it be referred to the Attorney General and that he be directed to take the proper steps to oblige Mr. Daubrig or any other person claiming right to the service of the said petitioners to prove their right to their service.

⁵ South Carolina Council Journal, vol. 21, pt. 1, 298-99, 3 March 1753, SCDAH.

APPENDIX F – ABEL CONDER AND MAHAMUT’S FREEDOM PAPERS, MAY 1753

By His Excellency James Glen Esq. Governor in Chief and Capt. General and over his Majesty’s said Province and Vice Adm. of the same,

To all to whom these Presents shall come Greeting

Whereas Hamet native of Tetuan in Barbary who was made a prisoner of war by the subjects of the King of Portugal about 15 years ago since which time he has unjustly been detained in this Province by some evil disposed persons and now having obtained his Liberty is desirous of returning to his own country. These are therefore to require all officers civil and military and other his Majesty’s subjects in this Province and to request of all others where he may arrive to permit the said Hamet to pass to Tetuan aforesaid without let or molestation he behaving himself peaceably

Given under my hand and the great seal of this his Majesty’s said Province the 18th day of May 1753, James Glen.⁶

By His Excellency James Glen Esquire Governor in Chief and Captain General and over his Majesty’s said Province and Vice Admiral of the same,

To all to whom these Presents shall come Greeting

Whereas Guylance a Native of Tetuan in Barbary who was made a prisoner of War by the subjects of the King of Portugal about fifteen years ago since which time he has unjustly been detained in this Province by some evil disposed persons and now having obtained his Liberty is desirous of returning to his own Country. These are therefore to require all Officers Civil and Military and other his Majesty’s subjects in this Province and to request of all others where he may arrive to permit the said Guylance to pass to Tetuan aforesaid without let or molestation he behaving himself peaceably

Given under my hand and the great seal of this his Majesty’s said Province the 18th day of May in the twenty sixth year of his Majesty’s and in the year of our Lord 1753, James Glen.⁷

⁶ Colonial Office, 5/386, f.65, Kew, BNA.

⁷ Colonial Office, 5/386, f.67, Kew, BNA.