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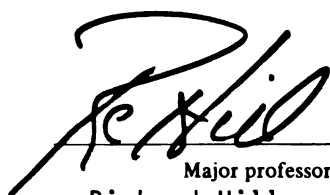
Slave Trade, Black Immigration, Social structure and  
economic development in France during the  
seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

presented by

Evelyne Lucia-Lopez

has been accepted towards fulfillment  
of the requirements for

Masters degree in Sociology



Major professor  
Richard Hill

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SLAVE TRADE, BLACK IMMIGRATION, SOCIAL STRUCTURE  
AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN FRANCE  
DURING THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

By

Evelyne Lucia-Lopez

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## ABSTRACT

### SLAVE TRADE, BLACK IMMIGRATION, SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN FRANCE DURING THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

By

Evelyne Lucia-Lopez

In this research we look at the beginning of the slave trade linked to the European Expansion; we examine the political context of the slave trade; we explain its linkage with the process of colonization in the context of Mercantilism; we evaluate the profitability of the slave trade; and we discuss its social and economic impact in France as well as its repercussions on the evolution of the status of Blacks.

This is essentially an historical and documentary research. We also use secondary quantitative data to figure the volume and profits of the slave trade.

From our historical description of the slave trade we conclude that besides its profitability, its contribution to industrialization and to the development of a merchant aristocracy, the slave trade must be understood as the key element in the development of the colonies - the backbone of mercantilist policy.

The slave trade fostered the development of commercial and colonial capitalism and had a major role in the emergence of the concept of race as determinant of social positions.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. Research Objectives

Our study, situated between the Fifteenth Century and the end of the Eighteenth Century, tries to explain the reasons of the forced migration of Blacks to Europe and to America from Africa. We look also into the social and economic consequences that this uprooting had for the black men who were the objects of the trade and for those who carried out the traffic.

This research is part of a larger one about the historical study of the black migration to France. In our opinion this migration gains to be viewed from an historical perspective, so we can perceive how ties between Europe (France in our case), Africa and America were established and of what kind were they.

These ties were initiated with the Atlantic slave trade. In our present work we focus on the role that slave trade played in England and France. It allows us to show how a set of doctrinal threads, later called Mercantilism, emerged and conditioned the initial relationships between Europe and its trade partners. One of its major effects was the process of colonization and its consequences: among them the black

migration through the slave trade and later through the "free labor market."

Our purpose is to show that this first migration of Blacks to France, although largely different from the current black migration, has a common background which can be described as the constant characteristics or principals of the French colonization: 1) State Intervention, 2) Prevalence of the economic and political interests of the Metropolis, and 3) Complementarity of the economy of the colonies serving the development of the Metropolis. These principals applied since the beginning of the development of the colonies, as we will show, and were now and again used to serve different interests in a more and more sophisticated economic system.

They had some consequences on the development of the territories concerned: a heavy and expensive bureaucratic control was developed, all industrialization was undermined and the plantation economy became predominant.

Two other major consequences were evident. First, the immigration of labor to develop these plantations, that we describe in our study with its ramifications which produced the first black immigration in France. And second, beginning in the Nineteenth Century and increasingly in the mid-Twentieth Century, a black immigration towards the Metropolis once the decline of the plantation economy begins.

The social and economic structures of these territories will not be able to answer to the endemic unemployment, and

there will be no willingness from the Metropolis to reorient this economy. To the contrary, in the French Antilles for example, in 1960 the State took charge of the immigration of the workers to the Metropolis, once again following the same principals that we have listed above.

Thus our present research attempts to understand how this system emerged and why, who benefited from the slave trade and slave labor, and what were the consequences for the economic and social development of France.

We can distinguish three parts in our study. The first part is a historic which describes the beginning of the slave trade linked to the European Expansion. We examine the case of France to observe how slave trade was used to implement a policy, that of Mercantilism, of which the principal aims were to affirm the French presence abroad, to conquer new markets and to use the production of the colonies to develop the French commerce and industries.

Mercantilism during the Seventeenth Century in France encouraged the establishment in the Antilles, raising simultaneously the problem of labor needed to exploit these territories. So, when we explain the role of the slave trade in the social and economic development of Western Europe, we see how this role is part of a system on account of which slave trade was serving complex purposes and interests. More precisely, the expansion of the commercial market linked to the slave trade was the base on which colonialism was established.



Then we describe the evolution of the French Legislation on slavery and the struggle of the abolitionists, thus setting the political context of the slave trade.

In the second part we discuss the issues of Mercantilism, colonialism and their relationships with slave trade. Then we make an evaluation of the volume and profit of the slave trade to get an idea of what could be its impact.

The question of profitability of the slave trade, raised by Engerman and others, challenging William's research defending the important role of the slave trade in the English Industrial Revolution, is assessed in our research, since scholars who deny it want to prove that the slave trade and, for some of them, the colonies were not profitable and were an economic and social anomaly; ultimately their purpose being to separate the origin of capitalism from such commitment. To the contrary our contention is that the development of the slave trade and of the colonies was an important phenomenon which contributed to the emergence of the new social and economic order. In constructing our argument about the profitability of the slave trade, we make a comparison between England and France for practical reasons, since available data and research are more abundant for England.

Then we attempt to show that both cases have enough similarities to assume that the impact of the slave trade in England could be compared to its impact in France, particularly in its role in the primitive accumulation of early capitalism.

Finally, we present the social and economic impact of the slave trade in France.

The third part deals with a description of the beginning and evolution of the black immigration in France, and we look at the emergence of the notion of race as a legal concept, related to the development of a set of interests linked to the emergence of the plantation economy.

We hope in these three parts to have presented three aspects of the slave trade in France: its political context; its social and economic impacts; and the emergence of a black immigration in France. In so doing we will be able to better understand the evolution of the relationships of France and its colonies and consequently the economic and political reasons which explain the black immigration in France, and finally we will be able to discern the linkage of the current immigration to these first economic developments.

## B. Methodology and Organization of the Study

### Methodology

Our study is essentially a historical and documentary research. I used secondary qualitative and quantitative data when this last type was available and reliable. For example, for France the research on the importance of the slave trade is at its beginning and it would be necessary to consult "archives from the admiralties, chambers of commerce, chartered companies and the colonies (kept in Paris or on the spot), to the private papers of ship owners or slave-ship captains,

not to mention sources to be found in foreign European countries and printed matter (books and newspapers) of the time",<sup>1</sup> to get some good figures. However, these investigations would demand at least three years, and are well beyond the scope of this research. So we limited our ambition to the research already done which is nevertheless sophisticated enough to sustain our hypothesis.

Our bibliography was partly books and documents found in bookstores during a trip in France: in the sections of Colonial History, Africa, etc. were ranked volumes like "L' Expansion Européenne (1600-1870)" by Frédéric Mauro, "Antilles, Guyanes, La Mer des Caraïbes de 1492 a 1789" by Michel Devéze, etc. However, the majority of our sources resulted from a previous research in the MSU library. Three tools were essential for this study: the Card Catalog (searched after establishing a list of key words), the Encyclopaedia Universalis (French Encyclopedia) which allowed us to verify dates of events when we felt it was necessary and, in general, to get a quick access to the chronology of the events, and finally five major reviews: Revue Française d' Histoire d' Outre Mer (R.F.H.O.M.) which gave us an extensive survey of all articles and commentaries of books about the French Oversea Territories. It has been published from 1913 (then Revue d' Histoire des Colonies until 1958) to now.

Annales-Economies-Sociétés-Civilisation (since 1929); it is less specialized than R.F.H.O.M., but it offers a good

complement.

Journal of African History (since 1960) published by the press syndicate of the University of Cambridge; this review gave us some articles for our present study and it will be particularly valuable later when we study the impact of the Atlantic slave trade in Africa.

Economic History Review (since 1927) ". . . is devoted to the study of all aspects of economic and social history of economic thought, and related disciplines" following its own definition. Particularly helpful for our comparative case England/France.

Business History Review, published from 1926 (then "Bulletin of the Business Historical Society" until 1953) to now. It is a good complement to the previous review.

This list is not exhaustive but gives us the principal reviews used. One inconvenience was that we could not find some books at the library; for example, the research of F. Meyer about Nantes "L'Armement Nantais dans la 2<sup>ém</sup> Moitié du 18<sup>ém</sup> siècle" (Paris, 1969). We hope that these absences will not result in flaws in our study as other sources gave us information that we expected to find in these documents.

### Organization of the Study

As we have already pointed out, this study, being part of a larger one concerning the Black Diaspora in France, benefitted from some previous basic research. It was this

basic research which led to the formulation and organization of our study.

In our preliminary work we had described the beginning of the black migration to Europe (particularly to France), and it became evident that this migration was an aspect of a larger process which was the European Expansion in the world. We described the phenomenon stressing the French case more relevant to our subject which was the black migration to France; but still it was a descriptive work without theoretical framework. Then one of the books found in France suggested several questions that we decided to develop. The book is Esclave-Facteur de Production by S. Mintz, which is a selection of articles about slave trade, and its consequences in Africa, America and Europe. Its purpose is to offer to the French public some publications previously edited in English about the subject. The preface written by S. Mintz gave us the main themes for our theory and a basic bibliography with authors like: Anstey, S. Engerman, Frederickson, Fage, etc. Reading these authors we could visualize all the historical processes that we had already described and that we will expand in this thesis in our second chapter. These authors provided also elements to critically handle the interpretation, and to begin our own synthesis, that we now offer in this paper.

We organized our study in the following manner: in this first chapter we present the research objectives, methodology and organization. The second chapter firstly describes the

European Expansion, the different French trade policies, particularly the emergence of Mercantilism linked to the slave trade, both bases of the French colonialism which brought a rapid social and economic development for France; secondly we look at the French legislation on slavery and at the political struggles surrounding the slave trade.

In the third chapter we present a definition of Mercantilism and we try to show how it shaped the process of colonization, particularly in France, and ultimately implied the development of the slave trade. In a second part we make an evaluation of the volume and profits of the slave trade. A comparative analysis of England and France is made . Finally we present the social and economic impact of the slave trade in France. The fourth chapter is an examination of the status of Blacks in France as a consequence of the whole system. The fifth chapter is the conclusion, where we try to offer a synthesis of our principal findings and to assess the limits and possible future lines of research.

## Chapter II

### SLAVE TRADE IN EUROPEAN SOCIETY: CASE STUDY OF FRANCE

#### A. Background: European Expansion

The European expansion in the world started in the Fifteenth Century. Portugal, Spain and the Netherlands were the leading countries from the Fifteenth Century to the mid-Seventeenth Century. Then, France and England disputed this place to them and during the Eighteenth Century there was a constant struggle between French and English for the supremacy on the world trade and on the colonial territories.

At the beginning the positions of Portuguese, Spaniards and Dutch in South Atlantic Ocean determined English and French to find a way through the Northwest (North America) and to settle in small islands neglected by Portuguese and Spaniards in the Caribbean Sea.

Portuguese and Spaniards, after the re-conquest of their territories over the Moors was accomplished, began to explore first Africa and Asia, then America, from the first part of the Fifteenth Century to its end. In 1493, the Pope Alexandre VI Borgia ratified these "discoveries" by issuing the papal-bull "Inter-Coetera." The papal-bull shared the world in two parts through the Atlantic between Spain and

Portugal. This division was discussed again between the two partners and sealed by the treaty of Tordesillas, the 7th of June, 1494.<sup>2</sup> The most important was that this treaty of Tordesillas excluded all the other European countries from the benefit that could be drawn from (and rights over) these new territories.

At the beginning of the Sixteenth Century Portugal obtained part of its resources from these areas: sugar from Madeira, wood from Brazil, gold from the south coast of Ghana, spices from Asia, guinea-pepper and slaves from Africa. In Africa they had already the Fort d' el Mina on the Gold-Coast (Ghana) and settlements in Cape Verde and São-Tomé Islands<sup>3</sup> (c.f. Map I, p.19).

At this time the slave trade was a minor trade. It began by the practice of abduction (Arab, Berber and Black captives) and the wars with the moors, along with the exploration of Africa. At first the explorations were motivated to find gold but when the gold prospect failed to materialize it appeared that the slaves were very lucrative commodities which could justify by themselves the expeditions.

The slaves were needed to work in Portugal; they were even conveyed in Spain and Italy. But most of all they responded to a sharp need of labor in the sugar plantations of Madeira Island and in the uninhabited islands of São-Tomé and Cape Verde which were settled by the Portuguese. Consequently the development of the first Portuguese sugar cane plantations was linked to the development of the Atlantic slave



trade. Later we will see a prolongation of this phenomenon in the introduction of the plantation slave labor system in America.

By the same process slavery was reinstated in Europe and Catholic Portuguese and Spanish (as well as later other countries involved in the trade) felt the need for an ideological justification. The justification was now and for centuries after, with slight changes, that the opportunity was given to these men to become Christians and to discover "Civilization." So, even if many of them died during the trade and after, at least it was considered better for them to die Christians than to live free as pagans or "uncivilized." We have a striking illustration of the prolongation of this spirit given by Aimé Césaire who quotes the Colonial Council of Bourbon Island (Réunion):

. . . slavery of the Negroes by the  
Whites is the first visit of God to  
the black race . . . <sup>4</sup>

So, from the practice of abduction and the slavery of the war prisoners, a purposely, although still limited, slave trade began between Portuguese and the African chiefs. Still, raids for slaves were practiced when it was necessary or easier, now and later on, by all the Europeans.

After Christopher Columbus explored the Caribbean Islands (first trip in 1492) and Central America for Spain, black Africans were enrolled in the army for the conquest of these territories. Others were employed as servants and later

on they were also used to work in the gold mines. Finally in the mid-Sixteenth Century the manumission of the Indians in Latin America increased the need of labor and the practice of triangular trade appeared.

In 1580 when Philippe II, King of Spain (asserting his right of succession) became King of Portugal, the slave trade for Spain was facilitated, as it got access to the African possessions of Portugal. The Guinea coast (from Senegal to Gabon) supplied the Spanish colonies in Latin America while the coasts of Congo, Angola and Mozambique supplied the Portuguese colonies, especially Brazil (c.f. Map 1, p. 19).

There is no other figure which shows better the evolution of the slave trade than the table in Philip D. Curtin's book: The Atlantic Slave Trade - A Census does (p. 116, Table 33):

Table I

ROUGH ESTIMATES OF THE ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE,  
1451-1600, BY IMPORTS OF MAJOR IMPORTING  
REGIONS(000 Omitted)

Region	1451- 75	1476- 1500	1501- 25	1526- 50	1551- 75	1576- 1600	Total
Europe	12.5	12.5	12.5	7.5	2.5	1.3	48.8
Atlantic Islands	2.5	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	2.5	25.0
São Thomé	---	1.0	25.0	18.8	18.8	12.5	76.1
Spanish America	---	---	---	12.5	25.0	37.5	75.0
Brazil	---	---	---	---	10.0	40.0	50.0
Total	15.0	18.5	42.5	43.8	61.3	93.8	274.9
Annual average	0.6	0.7	1.7	1.8	2.5	3.8	1.8
Mean annual rate of increase		0.8%	3.3%	0.1%	1.3%	1.7%	1.5%

We see the decrease of the importation of black slaves in Europe, simultaneously to its increase in America. From 1601 to 1700, this forced migration to Europe will be reduced to a total of 1,200 for the whole period (c.f. Table p. 119 Curtin).

The other European countries were concerned about the Spanish and Portuguese hegemony. But even if they attacked the Portuguese and Spanish ships to get a part of the booty, they were not yet in a position to compete, except for the Dutch who loaned funds to Charles Quint (1500-1558) to buy slaves.

The end of the Sixteenth Century is considered to mark the wane of the Iberian domination and the Seventeenth Century corroborated this change of power. First Dutch and English took away from them the trade of spices in India. Then the Dutch in the first quarter of the Seventeenth Century settled in the Northeast of Brazil chasing the Portuguese. In Africa they were present in S n gal (Gor e, 1621), Axim (Ghana) and they got hold of the principal Portuguese possessions on the Guinea coast from the Cap Palmas to the Cap Lopez during the second quarter of the Seventeenth Century; they took hold also of S o-Tom  and Luanda (c.f. Map 1, p. 19). However in 1640, Portugal, newly independent from Spain, stopped the conquests of the Dutch. A treaty was signed in 1641. The Dutch withdrew from Brazil and settled in the Antilles where they developed the sugar cane, entering in competition with Brazil. The Dutch also lost Angola and

São-Tomé, but in 1652 they founded a colony in South Africa (the Cap), and they kept Fort d' el Mina chasing the Portuguese from this area (c.f. Map 1, p. 19).

So began the slave trade and the migration of the Africans in the world tied to the European expansion and simultaneously to the search of gold and already to the development of the sugar cane plantation.

The principal tools for this expansion were the foundations of large companies. At the beginning, familiar enterprises or individual merchants (often bankers at the same time) with a network of agents in different countries, controlled the trade. Their scope was limited and the trade risks were very high. Then the companies were constituted by union of merchants, becoming later anonymous companies of stock holders under state control. Their organization varied according to the country, but all were influenced by the necessity to defend the ships against pirates and corsairs, and so unified versus individual enterprises were favored. In Portugal they were controlled by the King; in Spain they opted for a system of "semi-state shipping"; in Netherland they were controlled by the "Bourgeoisie"; in England there was an alliance between the King, the Nobles and the "Great Bourgeoisie". Finally, in France they were an instrument to implement the state policy, and their principal preoccupation was to find enough capital when a general indifference existed for their enterprises.

Until the mid-Eighteenth Century they had a semi-public or public character but their tendency was to become private. They were granted "charters" which were privileges, often monopolies of trade in one territory. They played a dominant role in the triangular trade and the process of colonization.

Now it is time to introduce the English and the French who took on from the mid-Seventeenth Century, the principal roles. They began their settlement in America at the beginning of the Seventeenth Century. British in Virginia, and French in Acadia (North America - Canada). In 1619 it was the Dutch who supplied the slaves necessary for the British colony of Virginia. Then, English and French, at the same period, went towards the Caribbean Sea where they divided the territory of St. Kitts (St. Christophe).

In what concerns the English, they proceeded on their way by settling Barbados where they developed the sugar cane; the slaves were still supplied by the Dutch. In 1655 they got hold of Jamaica chasing the Spaniards, victory related to a temporary alliance with the French. In 1661 the English sought a strategic alliance with the Portuguese to fight Spain. In 1674 they signed a peace treaty with Netherland.

In Africa they explored the Gambia River (1630) and in 1664 they built Fort St. James<sup>5</sup> in a small island close to the coast. From then on they controlled the trade around Gambia despite numerous attacks of the French who several times got hold of the Fort. The Portuguese in this area were now confined to the Cape Verde Islands and the region of

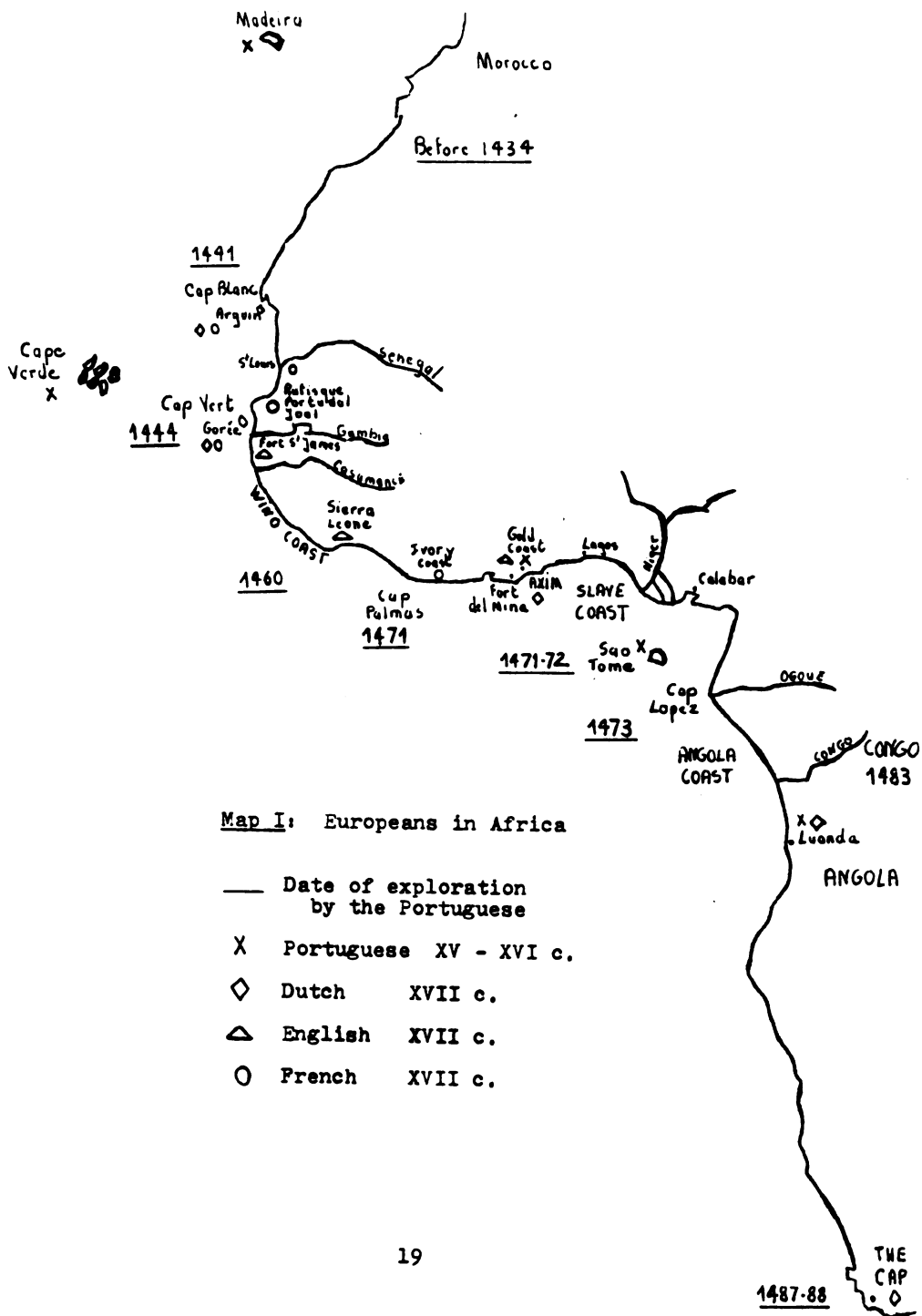
Casamance. The English also added to the Fort of Gambia, forts in Sierra-Leone and in Gold Coast. All these possessions allowed them not to rely any more on the Dutch for supplying their American colonies with slave labor.

Simultaneously, the French destroyed several times the Dutch possession of Arguin, and took hold of Gorée (1677) which became the center of the French trade activities on the small coast (Rufisque, Portudal, Joal). They founded St. Louis (1658) in Senegal, tried to settle in the Ivory Coast and to trade on the Slave-Coast (actual Benin).<sup>6</sup> In 1702 they got a monopoly (El Asiento) from Spain to supply slaves to the Spanish colonies in America.

During these laps of time the struggles between English and French resulted in many territories changing hands from one to the other power (c.f. Map I, p. 19). However, the English were in general dominant, and in 1713 the treaty of Utrecht between the principal European countries marked the ascent of the English. In 1763 the treaty of Paris which closed the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) was a recognition of the English dominance.

An important detail for us is that the treaty of Utrecht gave to the English the monopoly (that the French had since 1702) to supply the slaves to the Spanish colonies in Latin America. So by means of wars, alliances and treaties the English discarded all serious competition and became a major partner of the Portuguese and Spanish colonies. Partnership which was not limited to the slave trade and was the first

step to the English supremacy on the world trade.





## B. France's Case

### Colonial Doctrines and First Colonies<sup>7</sup>

In France until the mid-Seventeenth Century there was not really a colonial policy. But already individuals like Samuel Champlain in Canada for example, who sought from 1603 to 1635 to settle this territory, affirmed the willingness to out-grow the national frontiers. From 1624 to 1642, Cardinal Richelieu (1585-1642), Prime Minister of Louis XIII, concretized these new ventures by giving a base to the French colonial policy. He created four companies; one for the territories of North America (Compagnie des Cent Associés, 1626), one for the Antilles (Compagnie de St. Christophe, 1626, which became Compagnie des Iles D'Amérique, 1635), one (composed of three companies) for West Africa (first "comptoir" in Senegal in 1638) and another one for the East Indies through Madagascar (Compagnie Française des Indes Orientales, 1642).

Simultaneously the French expansion in the world progressed. In the Indian Ocean, Madagascar was not colonized until the Nineteenth Century because of the resistance of the native population. However, there were French trade establishments used as provisioning posts by the ships going to India. Then during the Eighteenth Century the island supplied rice, beef and slaves to the Mascarene Islands.<sup>8</sup> Mascarene Islands were colonized and preferred to Madagascar because of their favorable climatic conditions and most of all because

they were uninhabited. The first one, Réunion (l' Ile Bourbon) was settled by a small group of French since 1638, but did not become an important colony before 1665.<sup>9</sup> The second one, Mauricius Island (Ile de France), became French in 1721. It was a strategic place to launch the colonization of the Seychelle Islands, the trade with India, and the slave trade on the coast of Mozambique and Madagascar for its own plantations. Autonomous during the French Revolution, Mauricius Island became officially a British colony in 1814.<sup>10</sup> The Seychelle Islands were occupied by the English in 1810, and were a British colony by 1827.

In the Antilles for what concern the principal territories, the French were settled in Martinique and Guadeloupe since 1635.<sup>11</sup> However, Martinique was English from 1762-63, then from 1793-1801, and Guadeloupe from 1759-63, then from 1789-94.

The French had also a colony established by buccaneers and freebooters on the West Coast of St. Domingue. This part will be the independent republic of Haiti from January 1804. During the Eighteenth Century St. Domingue was the most prosperous French colony.<sup>12</sup> Finally they settled, facing harsh competition by English and Dutch, in Guyane (French Guiana) during the Seventeenth Century.<sup>13</sup>

At the end of the Seventeenth Century, beginning Eighteenth Century, in this area, France possessed besides Guadeloupe, Martinique, St. Domingue and Guyana, a group of tiny islands in the Caribbean Sea. With Louisiana and Canada



As for the English, the expansion in the West Indies brought a demand for labor in these territories, simultaneous to the development of sugar and tobacco plantations. The French sailors began to bring some slaves from Africa and finally the slave trade was authorized in 1642 by Louis XIII.

The main preoccupations of Richelieu were to encourage the settlement of the colonies (only the Catholics had the right to settle, however, thus reducing the chance to quickly increase the population by the immigration of Protestants, then persecuted in France), to build military forts and to Christianize the indigenous. The whole strategy was conceived principally in order to compete with the establishments of Portuguese, Spanish and Dutch in the new world. The Monopolistic State Companies had to finance these operations with the benefits of the trade.

After the death of Richelieu (1642), Mazarin, who then became prime minister, was absorbed by the French interior problems; the colonies were left on their own, and the Antilles were sold to some rich French noble families settled in these islands. They grew more independent from France till the nomination of Colbert. From 1661 to 1683 as defined by Colbert, a colonial policy with some specific economic principles emerged.

This policy, along with the political and military aims to affirm the French presence abroad, which Richelieu had already pursued, had two other priorities: the conquest of new markets, and the use of the production of the colonies

to develop the French commerce and industry. These sets of policy objectives and policies were later called Mercantilism.

Mercantilism was a policy elaborated to strengthen the wealth and power of the state. It was first a plan for the development of production inside the national territory through the increase in the monetary reserve which was considered making the strength of a country.

There were three objectives: protect the internal markets, strengthen manufactures and marine, then pursue colonial or commercial conquests. To realize this plan, it was necessary to stimulate exportations and limit importations. In this context the role of the colonial territories which supplied raw materials and goods that France lacked (without expense of currency) and absorbed the manufactured products made in France was critical. The absorption role was reinforced because they were a reserved market for France and were forbidden to trade with other countries (Loi de l'exclusif). This policy often hurt the interests of the settlers in the Antilles but served the interests of the French entrepreneurs in the national territory. In any case it fostered the development of colonies of plantations based on slave labor, allowing the cost of production to remain low. It discouraged the industrialization of the colonies, forbidding the trade with other countries and imposing high taxes on any product processed in these territories and exported to France.

Therefore Colbert, who affirmed constantly the necessity to import the less possible and to increase the exportation in order to grow the monetary stock, gave to the colonial system its economic base. Similarly to Richelieu's policy, the state controlled the process through the Monopolistic State Companies.

Two companies were created to serve this policy; one for the trade in the Indian Ocean (Compagnie des Indes Orientales), and another for the trade in the Atlantic Ocean (Compagnie des Indes Occidentales). These companies were societies of stock holders, but closely controlled by the government. The first results of this policy were the improvement of Canada's economy (indirectly because Canada was not considered worthwhile for France; it did not furnish colonial products or raw materials, so the policy was to help to improve its self-reliance), which led to the exploration of the Mississippi River basin and the annexation of Louisiana which was then under Spanish control. In 1718 the French founded New Orleans and they occupied Louisiana until 1763. The treaty of Paris divided Louisiana between Spain and England (in 1800 Louisiana was returned to France which sold it in 1803 to the U.S.). Finally, the West Coast of St. Domingue was added to the colonial possessions and the French control was re-established in the Antilles.

One problem remained, and that was the failure to bring into these territories enough settlers, and particularly settlers who could form a labor-force. Because of the work conditions, very few French workers were candidate. The

planters also preferred African slave labor, as such labor was less expensive (though the French enlisted were also a cheap force of labor), considered more efficient and seemed to better resist the harsh conditions of the colonies. Consequently the efforts of the French government to maintain an equilibrium between white and black populations were jeopardized, and the slave trade from Africa increased. From 1650 to 1700, only in the French Antilles, it was estimated that more than 150,000 slaves were imported. In 1701 there were 44,000 blacks against 22,000 whites (2 to 1),<sup>14</sup> and at the end of the Eighteenth Century the proportion was 10 blacks for one white.

In 1685 the "Code-Noir" was written under fear of a revolt of slaves which could be very difficult to repress considering their increasing number. In its text the "Code-Noir" attempted to limit the abuses of the planters and gave them some obligations towards their slaves. At the same time it controlled rigorously the behavior of the slaves aiming at the perpetuation of the system with a lower risk of revolt. In fact it did not relieve much the condition of slaves and did not stop the revolts. But it legislated and recognized slavery in the colonies and simultaneously marked the position of Blacks in a white society.

As we will see, one problem was how to deal with the fact that in France slavery was not accepted and with the pressure of the planters to reinstate it de facto when they brought with them their slaves on the national territory.

Although slaves were brought in France in small numbers their mere presence served to exacerbate the debate on the legitimacy of the slave trade and slavery in general.

After the death of Colbert (1683) the Western India Company was fractioned, only the Eastern India Company outlived. Then all the companies were reunited into a single company "Compagnie des Indes" (in 1719) which lasted until 1769 when its exclusive privilege was abolished. Actually since the beginning of the Eighteenth Century, the tendency was to allow free entry in industry and commerce to private capital. The monopolistic companies often ill-managed, involved in financial scandals were highly criticized. They had fulfilled their role extending the market all around the world to the profit of their respective nations; now, the ideology of private entrepreneurship and free-market emerged, carried by merchants who never accepted the privileges given to the Monopolistic State Companies and by the colonists who could not accept the regime of the "exclusif" which totally submitted the colonies to the interests of the Metropolis.

### Economic Growth Before the French Revolution

The expansion in the Antilles and in Louisiana was parallel to the expansion of the French in Africa which was as we have already pointed out the source of slave labor for the colonies. The French during the mid-Seventeenth Century and Eighteenth Century opened more "comptoirs" in (what are





now called) Senegal, Mauritania, Gambia, Ivory Coast, Guinea and Benin. The slave trade was the principal activity. The slaves were exchanged against cotton clothes, guns, iron and knick-knacks, etc.

One exception was the trade between Dieppe, Rouen (French Harbors) and Senegal, from 1558 to 1687-88. In these cases, slave trade was minor and commodities from Africa were gum, leather, bees-wax, ostrich feather, gold dust and ivory.<sup>15</sup> Apparently these commercial activities between Africa and France lasted beyond 1688. Another source<sup>16</sup> gives us a list of ships (established by P. Darde) which from 1715 to 1723 were not involved in the slave trade and imported gums from Africa. These exceptions were later given as examples by the supporters of the abolition of the slave trade and slavery to prove that economic interests and relationships with Africa could be formulated in another way. They contended that abolition would not bring an economic crisis in France against the opinion of planters and slave traders who threatened the French opinion with the falling off of the economy if they approved of this thesis.

The political positions of planters and traders were very strong, related to the importance of the colonies during the Eighteenth Century. The colonies supplied sugar, tobacco, cacao, cotton, indigo and finally coffee. To have a complete understanding of the political and economic importance of these territories at the end of the Eighteenth Century we quote H. Deschamps:

The improvement by the plantations of commercial products and its development by the capitalist concentration of a system based on slavery bring in the islands an extraordinary prosperity. They feed one third of the French commerce and constitute an important part of the national patrimony. They are the colonies by excellence, for which all the others are sacrificed: Canada, Louisiana, Inde. In 1789, they are alone, the settlements in Senegal and Guinea being only annexes to recruit slaves. However this triumph is not unmixed: difficulties with the Metropolis and uneasiness due to the social structures.<sup>17</sup>

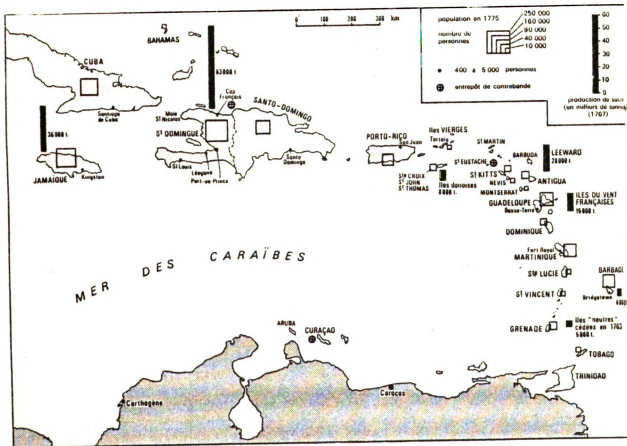
In summary, just before the French Revolution, France's economy and wealth were strongly dependent on its colonies. However, this economic prosperity was constantly threatened by wars, one of the most unfortunate being for the French the Seven Years' War. The conflict ended by the treaty of Paris (1763) to the advantage of England. Even if by the treaty the French recovered Guadeloupe (exchanged against Canada) Martinique and St. Lucia (St. Lucie) (contested since 1714, and center of smuggling activities), to the loss of Canada could be added Louisiana, Dominica, St. Vincent, Tobago, Antigua, Montserrat, St. Kitts (St. Christophe), Barbuda, Barbados, Grenada and the Grenadines. Furthermore in Africa only Gorée was rescued; the other French settlements in Senegal were relinquished against the right of trading freely on the African coast. France will recover Tobago and the settlements of Senegal only after 1783.

In the second part of the Eighteenth Century after the treaty of Paris, France will decide to reinforce its colonial policy. Slave trade was encouraged and following the example

of Nantes, other Atlantic ports as Bordeaux, Le Havre-Rouen centered on colonial and slave trade activities, became leaders of a modern economic development. St. Domingue was the principal source of this new wealth, producing the cheapest and largest quantity of sugar exported in Europe (see Map 3, p. 30). In 1767 its production reached 63,000 T. of sugar (against 35,000 T. for Jamaica), attaining 80,000 T. in 1789.

### Map 3

Sugar Cane Production in the Antilles in 1767. In P. Léon "Histoire Economique et Sociale du Monde" (V. 3 carte, p. 76).



In England we see the same process taking place; however, its development was not interrupted as it was in France with the French Revolution (1789). Indeed in the case of France, the revolution reached its colonies, and in the interval of three or four years nothing was left of their ancient prosperity. In the Metropolis, gradually most of the colonial and slave trade activities slowed down; for example, in 1785 105 ships were destined to the triangular trade, in 1791 there were only 31, and in 1792 only 28.<sup>18</sup>

We have to underline the importance of the colonies in the English and French economies in order to understand the difficulties and weakness of the abolitionists' political positions through the Eighteenth Century. They could only oppose moral arguments against indifference, ignorance or strong interests. This group was not able to win the abolition of slave trade and slavery until the revolts of the slaves (particularly in St. Domingue), coupled with a changing economic and political situation, undermined the whole system.

### C. Slavery Legislation and Political Context of the Slave Trade

#### French Legislation on Slavery

The status of Blacks in France was linked to the development of the colonies based on slave labor. The planters tried to reinstate, for their personal use, slavery in France, bringing with them slaves from the colonies. These are facts

that we have already pointed out. Now to understand how this situation could be created we have to look at the laws related to slavery during this time.

In Europe slavery disappeared with the changing economic and social conditions, and was slowly substituted by serfdom. Before this change Slavs were the principal source of labor for Western Europe, but progressively as the Slavs adopted the Christian faith, there was a tendency to look for another source or to another system. But if slavery disappeared, there were no laws enacted to condemn or forbid its practice. This absence explains why it was easy to use slaves in the colonies and occasionally in Portugal, Spain and Europe in general, during the Fifteenth Century.

In France the edict of 1315, issued by Louis X, declared that all slaves setting foot on French soil should be immediately freed, according to the law of the kingdom.<sup>19</sup> In fact if slavery was abolished in some regions and in general between Christians, it has to be signaled that France, Italy, Spain and the papal territory, for example, used muslim slaves (particularly Turks)<sup>20</sup> to work on the galleys until the Eighteenth Century.

We should also mention that the Catholic church was remarkable by its weak intervention in the progress of this legislation. It really did not condemn slavery, often limiting its action to preach compassion and charity in the way slaves should be treated. St. Augustin, and then St. Thomas d' Aquin during the Middle Age, justified slavery and said

that it represented the divine sanction of payment of sins. In France, until the Middle Age, the Church used slaves on its properties (they will have the same attitude later in the colonies) and forbade their manumission even if paradoxically they encouraged the landlords to free their own slaves. It was not until the 3rd of December, 1839, that a papal-bull (Gregoire XVI)<sup>21</sup> condemned and forbade explicitly slavery, ratifying a de facto situation. It means also that if we want to know who led the abolitionist movement we have to look elsewhere, at the actions of philosophers, philanthropists, black slaves and freed slaves themselves (this will be the object of the third part of this chapter).

Let us now continue on the evolution of the legislation. By the end of the Seventeenth Century slavery was largely established in the colonies and not unusual in Europe, with a particularity, this time the majority of slaves were black Africans. By the same token, the Code which legislated slavery in the French colonies was named the Black Code ("Le Code Noir"). The representatives of a society, enriched by the colonial and slave trade activities, elaborated this code under the impulse of Colbert (himself belonging to a commercial and financial Bourgeoisie); the texts were finished after his death (1683) in 1685. By then the preoccupation was not the forbidding of slavery in France and authorizing it in the colonies, but rather recognizing who were slaves. The reality showed that it was not a question of nationality (slaves born in Martinique or France were slaves like those

born in Africa), of noble birth (so African Aristocracy could be slaves), sex or religion (slaves, in general, were Christianized), but only of color. Colbert said:

Slavery has printed an indelible stain on the future descendants of the Negroes, and consequently their descendants can never get into the class of the Whites.<sup>22</sup>

To be black was to be entitled to be slave and it was the only fact which justified the difference of rights and conditions with the other men. The "Code Noir" recognized and reinforced this discrimination.

This text was the only set of laws in France about slavery during the whole period. However, as soon as 1691,<sup>23</sup> a royal edict forbade to bring slaves to the French territory; the authorities were alarmed that a similar situation to that of the colonies could be created in France (risk of revolt, disorder, etc.). The planters counterattacked and obtained with another edict in 1716, enregistered in 1738, the right to have slaves in France.<sup>24</sup> However, the slaves could only stay during a period of three years maximum (they had to return to the Antilles after this lapse of time) and they had to be registered within three months of their arrival in France. One argument of the planters to get the right to bring slaves was that the slaves had the possibility of learning a craft during their service, and thus were more useful when they returned to the plantation. In reality very few of them were ever trained for this purpose; they were principally used as servants. Some of them won during their stay in France their freedom, but that was still a minority.



So, in a way, slavery was again recognized in France. The old principle from the edict of Louis X, that we mentioned earlier, stating "all slaves setting foot on French territory should be immediately freed according to the law of the Kindom", was partially abolished. Partially, because if the parliaments of the Atlantic regions which practiced the triangular trade recognized the edict of 1738, the parliaments of the inland regions and Paris opposed it.

At the same period the French government reinforced its control on the slave trade and on the colonies. The conditions of the slaves worsened, submitted to two authorities and interests (colonies' and France's): in the Antilles in 1713 the manumission of slaves was submitted to the decision of the general governor, so to the authority of the French government; in 1724, in Louisiana, marriages between white and black were prohibited and, in 1736, another edict from the King forbade to free a child whose mother was a slave.<sup>25</sup> Finally in France, in 1738, it was forbidden that slaves get married or freed on the national territory. All these laws restricted considerably<sup>26</sup> the possibility for a slave to win his freedom and to accede to the status of the white men.

However, the presence of black slaves in France was increasing; nobles, bourgeoisie, even craftsmen were using them. They were sold on the market place. The public opinion became alarmed, and again the French government feared revolts and disorder. Considering the proportion that this forced migration was taking, several edicts issued in 1777<sup>27</sup>

aimed to drastically reduce the presence of the black men in France and stop all possibility of "miscegenation." These edicts first re-established the freedom of slaves on the French territory in order to discourage the planters to bring slaves in France; secondly these edicts ordered the planters to re-embark their slaves towards the colonies; and finally, they forbade all priests to celebrate any marriages between whites and blacks or mulattos. These edicts were hardly respected and the black population increased until the French Revolution. By this time it was even possible for the army to constitute a regiment "les Hussards de St. Domingue" with the free Blacks recruited in the ports and Paris.

From what we said above we can assume that the status of the Blacks in France was not dissociable of its fate in the colony, and the example of some successful black writers, military men, craftsmen, painters, etc. does not counterweight the position in society of the black man. To the contrary these examples will be used as evidence by the white society to deny discrimination and racism when it will be politically necessary.

### The Development of the Abolitionist Movement

Montesquieu (1689-1755) was born in Bordeaux (important colonial and slave trade center) and we can assume that there was an interaction between his own experience and the publication of "l'Esprit des Lois" in 1748 where he set forth a

base for the positions of the abolitionists. Montesquieu stood against slavery, at least in the European countries (in other countries such as Africa, America, etc., his positions were more ambiguous), and he made a considerable effort to contribute to the abolition. But even if now his ideas seem too moderate and in some way obliging, particularly when he suggested not to abolish but to limit the excesses of slavery, he was then ahead of his time. His chances of success could not be very strong if we consider the groups which sustained slavery. We now give a description of the participants or profiteers of the slave trade; we distinguish three groups and point out their divergences.

First are the aristocratic planters in the Antilles, and the new French Bourgeoisie (merchants) enriched by the slave trade. This group represented two antagonist classes in two ways: one, an aristocracy against Bourgeoisie; and two, seller against buyer (conflicts over the prices of goods, French protectionism, and the unilateral, Antilles - France, trade imposed on the colonies).

A second group was the French government whose policy was determined by the situation inside France. As we have seen, one of its concerns was to maintain order and not to let anyone (even the planters or merchants) disturb an established society, particularly by the reinstatement of slavery in France (marginally tolerated) which could profoundly shake the economic and social order.

Thirdly is the emergence of the industrial Bourgeoisie which blocked the industrialization of the colonies; thus the role of the colonies as we have seen was defined according to the mercantilist theory. In the long term this theory ruined the colonies and the power of the planters, but this did not happen until the mid-Nineteenth Century, coinciding with the abolition of slavery.

All these different groups were favorable to maintaining slave trade and slavery. However, they had within and between them divergences of interests that the abolitionists eventually could use to lead their struggle. In fact, they succeeded in maintaining slavery and slave trade until 1794. The abolitionists could impose their ideas only when the French Revolution conjugated with the slave revolts, particularly in St. Domingue (massive slave insurrection in August, 1791), the English blockade, the loss of Guadeloupe (English from 1789-1794) and Martinique (English from 1793-1801), ruined the colonies. The most important loss was St. Domingue, which after a long struggle, became independent.

As we said Montesquieu was the first in the Eighteenth Century to fight for the abolition. His arguments paralleling the government reasoning about the social and economic order focused on the inutility of slavery in Europe. He thought that if the laws were fair there would be no task that men would refuse to perform; furthermore, the use of machines would facilitate all kinds of work. His point was also that slavery would encourage laziness and lust of the masters and

would be contrary to the interest of the public, and in the long run, to the wealth of a nation. So the government was confronted with the inutility of slavery, particularly in France, and with its immorality, in any place and any case.

There was also Father Reynald who published in 1770 a book "Histoire Philosophique et Politique des Etablissements et du Commerce des Européens dans les 2 Indes." Guillaume Reynald was an independent spirit. He was not against colonialism, but condemned slave trade and slavery (though its disappearance had to be progressive) in terms and with a vehemence never encountered until now.

So there was a minority of people who condemned the slave trade and slavery, but nothing in regard to the economic and political situation in the French society was favorable to their position, and most of the time they were crushed by the arguments and political clout of partisans of slave trade and slavery.

This powerlessness was broken by the "Society of the Friends." This movement, born in England, had a religious base; the Quakers which were the first during the Seventeenth Century to conduct an abolitionist policy in America and West Indies, formed again the majority of this Society in England. The Society created in 1787 a "Committee for affecting the abolition of slave trade" under the impulse of Thomas Clarkson (who decided to devote his life to this cause) and Granvill Sharp who was elected president of the Committee. One of the first victories of the "Society of Friends" was

obtained in 1772 "in securing the famous judicial decision that as soon as any slave set foot on British soil he became free."<sup>28</sup> This decision was not minor because slavery in England was even more important than in France. We recall that the same law in France was reinstated by the edict of 1777, and rarely followed. Finally in 1783, always in England, "The Society of Friends submitted to Parliament the first petition for the abolition of the slave trade."<sup>29</sup> William Wilberforce was another important figure of this group; he was member of Parliament and he was a friend of the Prime Minister Pitt. But despite the high positions of some of the Society's members in the Parliament and the commitment to a limited and practical action against slave trade without considering abolishing slavery, the Committee did not win their battle until 1807. Victory was possible because of the English supremacy and its control of the oceans which allowed them to limit the slave trade that could be carried on by other countries, and to negotiate its general abolition. To summarize our perspective we quote R. Anstey:

The possibility that abolition came essentially as a necessary expression of the change from protection to free trade, that is of a structural change in the British economy, must be considered. Also to be reckoned with is the possible effect of the slump in West India prosperity from about 1804 onwards and of the possible loss by the West Indians of some of their ancient charm . . . <sup>30</sup>

So by virtue of these circumstances (without dismissing the role of the abolitionists) England which was the leading country of the slave trade, became the champion of the

abolition.

In France after the intervention of Montesquieu and Raynal in the debate, authors like Rousseau (1712-1778), Diderot (1713-1784), Voltaire (1694-1778) condemned the slave trade and slavery, but it was a marginal part of their work; humanitarian contribution to a remote cause. We must point out that Voltaire did not mind buying shares from a slave trade company. This fact reminds us that the French society benefitted too much from this trade to bargain with its abolition merely because of some humanitarian reasons and free spirits.

This quasi indifference will finish to the eve of the Revolution. Two factors were important:

First the arrival in France of Raimond, a mulatto (writer and politician) from St. Domingue. Born in a family of wealthy planters, he wanted to gain the same rights for the free mulattoes that were acknowledged to the whites. The mulattoes (or people of color) were not against slavery; the wealthy ones used slaves on their plantations, and consequently did not claim the abolition. Valerie Quinney describes their situation in St. Domingue:

There were about 26,666 men of color in St. Domingue, 35,440 whites, and 509,642 blacks. People of color owned one-fourth of the land and one-third of the slaves, according to estimates. They had to endure numerous injustices. To mention a few examples only, they had to serve in the militia but in segregated companies, and their officers had to be white. Many professions were closed to them. They could not be surgeons because they would

carry knives. There were restrictions on their activities and dress. The free man of color believed that if they had the vote they could get these restrictions removed and gain equality with white citizens.<sup>31</sup>

Second, Clarkson, a member of the "Society of Friends" in England, came to France trying to promote a similar society. This filiation was later used by the planters to denounce the abolitionist's movement in France as a sect established by England to undermine France's economy.

These two factors conjugated, and under the impulse of Brissot (Chief and Deputy of the Girondins: the Girondins were the right wing at the Legislative Assembly during the Revolution), Clavière and Mirabeau (partisan of a constitutional Monarchy) the "Society of Friends of the Blacks" was created in 1788. Other famous members were later: Condorcet, Father Grégoire, Lafayette, etc. In fact, after Raynal, progressively since the third part of the Eighteenth Century the majority of the intellectuals and liberal politicians were against slave trade and partisans of a progressive abolition of slavery. However, despite the attempts of the friends of the blacks, no progress was made, and the Revolutionary Assemblies preferred to avoid the problem. Furthermore, a very strong opposition emerged against the agitation of the abolitionists. Three organizations represented this opposition: The Colonial Committee composed of six deputies from St. Domingue which stopped all laws in favor of the abolition; the Massia Club (Royalist) which



represented the planters and particularly the aristocracy; and finally, the Colonists who wanted a form of self government for the colonies and the dismantling of the mercantilist principles. Even if this coalition was not too homogeneous and was only temporarily associated with the metropolitan merchants and manufacturers, we can summarize their arguments with this quotation read at the assembly the 25th of February, 1791:

The orator from Bordeaux presented the stock argument for slavery . . . "the colonies cannot exist without slavery and the slave trade. The commerce of France would be annihilated if the colonies ceased to exist. Commerce is the necessary agent of navigation, agriculture, and the arts. Abolition of slavery and of the slave trade would mean the loss of the colonies; the loss of the colonies would strike a mortal blow at commerce, and the ruin of commerce would paralyze navigation, agriculture, and the arts."  
 . . . . .  
 He drew an alarming picture of the misery which reigned at Bordeaux and the tremendous falling off in its commerce - 1,419 fewer vessels in 1789 than in 1788 - and attributed the depression to the uncertainty concerning the future of the slave trade . . . .<sup>32</sup>

Even the friends of the Blacks were sensitive to this reasoning. They decided to limit their claims to the abolition of the slave trade, considered a first step, and concentrated also on the equal rights for free mulattoes. The 11th of August, 1792, C. O. Hardy tells us that they obtained the cancellation of the subsidies which fostered the slave trade:

On August 11th the assembly voted to suppress the bounty of forty livres per ton which had been paid to French vessels engaged in the trade. Whether this law also suppressed the bounty of from 160 to 200 livres per slave which was paid in addition to the tonnage bounty, is not clear though it is evident that such was the intention of the Assembly.<sup>33</sup>

In fact it was even more tricky, and there was quite a confusion surrounding the debate in the assembly. J. Vidalenc tells us that it was uncertain that this proposal was voted at this time. However, September 1, 1793, it was specified that bounties were accorded to any but the slave trade.

Then with the agitation in the colonies, the events took another trend, and finally it was the revolt of slaves of St. Domingue which was decisive. In the impossibility of stopping the revolt, the superintendent of police (Santhonax), delegate of the National Convention, proclaimed the immediate freedom of all slaves in St. Domingue. In February 1794, the National Convention ratified the decision of Santhonax, which was un-animously confirmed by the Assembly; implicitly, the slave trade was abolished and the slaves had henceforth the same rights as the white French citizens.

There are several interpretations about this quick and astonishing victory. First, the assembly decided to abolish slavery with the hope of keeping St. Domingue, as considering the situation in France, it was not possible to send more troops to re-establish order. Nevertheless, the French lost St. Domingue. Second, the members of the Friends of the Blacks almost all Girondins, were killed during the "Terror"

(beginning in September, 1793 and ending in July, 1794), and many of them had already left the Society; so the Montagnards (the left wing of the Legislative Assembly), then the dominant group, saw the opportunity to recuperate this cause and take the credit for the abolition.

Probably both theories have some truth in them; nevertheless, neither of them could be decisive, if it was not for the economic and social falling off of the colonies and France, at this time. In fact only Guadeloupe, where the proclamation of slavery incited a revolt against the English occupancy (1789-1794) and Guyana applied the abolition. For what concern the Mascarene Islands they refused to apply it, and Martinique was still under the English rule (1793-1801).

In 1802 Napoléon reinstated slave trade and slavery, although in 1814, during the "Cent jours," slave trade was again abolished, probably to please the English, who then tried to spread its abolition all over after their decision of 1807. From 1794 to 1831 the texts on the abolition were revised seven times, and it was not before 1848 (linked to the insurrection of February, 1848) that slavery was also definitively outlawed. The French abolitionist episode ended then, after a not too-edifying history.

The next period, begun with Napoléon, will see the conquest of Africa. For what concerns the Blacks in France the migration slowed down, but it was just a rest; during the Twentieth Century another migration of Blacks from Africa and West Indies will relay the former movement.

## Chapter III

### POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF THE SLAVE TRADE

#### A. Mercantilism, Plantation Economy, and Slave Trade

In the title above we have three elements: Mercantilism which has already been described as an economic policy; plantation economy, a form of colonization fostered by Mercantilism; and slave trade, the indispensable support of the plantation economy.

In our description of the European Expansion and the French expansion in particular, we could observe how these three elements were constantly linked. We now propose to develop in more depth, 1) the definition of Mercantilism, and 2) how it related with the other two phenomena.

#### A Definition of Mercantilism

Most of the authors agree that Mercantilism does not exist as a doctrine, but that Mercantilism is better defined as a set of thoughts, born in Europe after the Middle Ages. We follow the definition given by Eli F. Heckscher:

Mercantilism never existed in the sense that Colbert or Cromwell existed. It is only an instrumental concept which, if aptly chosen, should enable us to understand a particular historical period more clearly than we otherwise might.

. . . : it is a phase in the history of economic policy . . . .

It deals with the economic policy of the time between the Middle Ages and the age of laissez-faire. Even though this period begins and ends at quite different dates in the various countries and regions concerned . . .<sup>34</sup>

This definition is general enough, and therefore safe enough, to avoid entering into the numerous polemics around the interpretations of Mercantilism which is not our subject. It allows us also to observe that Mercantilism begins when state formation and the rise of a national entity became an issue; in fact it searched solutions to such practical problems as deep and general indebtedness of still-weak governments, of an economy impaired in its functioning by numerous and complex taxes, customs and privileges inside and between countries, of the persistence of a feudal system challenging the state power, etc.

Mercantilism was the means for a country to fight particularisms and divisions, and state power was the executive agent which took charge in this evolution. England and France, from the Fifteenth Century to the Eighteenth Century, were the two countries where these principles were the most achieved.

For these countries Mercantilism was a strategy aimed to answer this particular situation, identifying and focusing on some of the problems.

One of these problems for the state was of monetary nature, since only with increasing wealth could the state

power establish its authority inside the national territory and abroad.

The difficulties for the government to obtain its share of the taxes from the aristocratic landlords, and the price of incessant warfare at a time during which national territories were not yet well established, juxtaposed with a rudimentary system of credit where gold had a fundamental role, incited England and France to search for gold, following the example of the successful attempts of Portugal and Spain.

It was only progressively, and because few countries encountered the same success that Portuguese and Spanish had in their frenetic search for gold, that agricultural development of the colonies was encouraged and soon considered as a source of wealth equal to the extraction of raw materials. At the same time mercantilist policy reached its high point, led in France by Colbert (1619-1693) and in England by Cromwell (1599-1658), and gave to the colonization a specific framework from which some of its fundamental principles were established.

### Mercantilism and Colonization

We saw the attempts of Richelieu and then of Colbert to lead the French Colonization. In 1615 Montchrestien in "Traité d' Economie Politique" defended the development of merchant marine and exterior trade: "We have to make rich the realm, exporting a lot and importing the less possible

from abroad, hence the utility of the colonies."<sup>35</sup>

In a simple way this defined the colonial policy under mercantilist principles. Indeed the need for money, upon the failure to get gold from the new territories, encouraged the re-examination of the old attitudes incarnated by the Spanish model. It was believed then that the other possibility to increase the wealth of the nation and so to get the biggest monetary stock possible was to develop trade and have a positive balance of trade.

The development of the colonies, particularly of the Antilles which were sources of products complementary to the metropolitan products, could aliment a trade very beneficial for the Metropole and its balance of trade. For this it was important to set some important rules. The most important was the "loi de l' exclusif" which established that only the Metropole could trade with its colonies in order to expand and protect the national trade. At this time the Encyclopedia defined the word colonies as "established only for the utility of the Metropolis." <sup>36</sup>

We already explained how this measure fostered the development of a very specialized agriculture and a specific system, the plantation economy, which used slave labor.

### Mercantilism, Slave Trade and State Power

Consequently with the emergence of the plantation economy, slave trade became one of the most important trading activities, from which origin was rooted in the mercantilist

policy. Slave trading was one of the principal activities of the Monopolistic State Companies. In England and France the Companies represented a means for the governments to control the trade activities and, so, to increase its wealth and power, following the description given by P. Léon:

Financiers and economists from the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries have some common themes: support for work and exchanges, close attention given to the trade balance, affirmation of national and state power. Mercantilism exalts work in manufacture, trade and colonial ventures . . . .

Without doubt people are resigned to the quasi stagnation of agricultural techniques and to the inelasticity of production, without doubt also the landed predominance of the nobilities obstructs the state intervention. It is with the trade and manufactures that a willingness of enrichment and control will be realized.<sup>37</sup>

The first part of this description gives us some main themes of Mercantilism, and in its second part the new role of the government in the European states is outlined. The Monopolistic State Companies were partly financed by public funds, and partly by private funds (bankers, merchants, nobles, etc.). These enterprises aimed at the expansion of trade on a world scale and at the conquest of new markets. Because the amount of financial resources required and the risk involved (warfare, competition with other countries, construction of forts in Africa, etc.) were beyond the possibilities of private capital, it required an active intervention of the state in typical mercantilist fashion.



In England state intervention was a success and enough private investment was raised for these new ventures; in France, it was more difficult as merchants and manufacturers were often suspicious of a very centralized and bureaucratic state control. Parallel to this situation, the French aristocracy was still looking with contempt at these activities, when at the same time merchants looked for respectability in buying lands and offices. The consequence was that in England, contrary to France, a consensus was created:

Mercantilism is a continual, empirical and national creation . . . the same processes are used to favor the production, marine and exterior trade impulse . . . . The big merchants of London, Bristol, represented at the Parliament, are consulted by the commissions of the private council, associated since 1695 with the work of the Board of Trade, brought their constant support to the power, but the representatives of other social classes participated also to manufacturing and commercial enterprises. Members of great families, squires of provinces . . . .

The big names of the beginning political economy were almost all of them, in England, associated with the colonial and maritime activities. It was the case of Thomas Mun and Josiah Child, directors of the Eastern Indian Company, of Charles Davemant, of Dudley North, merchant and mayor of London, of William Petty, scholar, physician, but also successful speculator. They advised in their writings the protection of agriculture, diversification of industrial production and colonial expansion.<sup>38</sup>

Nevertheless a similar process was going on in France, with less consensus and more authoritarian state intervention. Towns like Bordeaux, Nantes, Le Havre-Rouen became prosperous through the development of their slave and colonial trade,

simultaneously to the development of a manufacturing sector.

The Eighteenth Century (after 1713) saw the results of the mercantilist policy, the surplus extracted from these activities, going to the state, merchants and manufacturers, allowed them to realize and develop their economic and social potential. The state affirmed its authority, merchants became involved in political decisions and an important industrial sector was taking its first impulse. However, after the mid-Eighteenth Century, facing the opposition of the "Physiocrates" (school which favored the development of agriculture, to the detriment of trade and industrial activities) and the willingness of the merchants to liberate the trade (as long as it was in their interest), Mercantilism was strongly challenged. One of the results was the elimination of the state monopoly companies (officially in 1769). However, state power and control was still playing an important role and its intervention (protection) was demanded in numerous cases by the merchants and manufacturers (groups which did not always share the same interests and so had different views on the kind of protection which was necessary). State intervention was required for the protection of merchant ships, the maintaining of the "exclusif" (in the context of Mercantilism the interests of the merchants were protected and prevailed over the interests of the colonists) and of the slave trade attacked by the abolitionists:

The same general arguments which supported the "exclusif", the monopoly of trade to the colonies, also supported the slave trade. The colonies existed for the glory and good of all Frenchmen. Private investment and privately financed shipping deserved public protection because the favorable balance of trade to the West Indies added to France's wealth . . . .

. . . . .  
Yet there was a more specific slaving interest in the Atlantic ports; an interest which stemmed from the economic factors peculiar to the slave trade. In addition, the "négrriers" themselves, the shipping merchants who specialized in cargoes of black captives, had certain exclusive characteristics.<sup>39</sup>

We have to explain these characteristics (sometimes privileges) of the slave traders, which added to the ones that they had just because they were part of the colonial trade, are well understood when we recall that the prosperity of the colonies were dependent of the supply of slaves, and that through the re-exportation of the colonial products (particularly sugar), the economic prosperity of France was dependent on the production of the colonies. It was a circle, where the "purchase" and "use" of slaves, which solved the problem of labor--keeping costs of production low-- was necessary to maintain the system.

For the French traders, here was an opportunity; colonies needed slaves and France needed the production of its colonies. Because the State Companies were not able to furnish enough slaves to the colonists, the traders were ready to be the intermediaries, and to supply slaves and sugar, if it was profitable.

As it saw its advantage, the French government for its part was ready to concede some privileges to the slave traders. They were partially exempted of the duty on the sugar imported from the Antilles; however, a tax of 15 £ to 30 £ on every slave imported had to be paid to the government or to the state company.

This system had several advantages for the government. First, the duty exemption encouraged the slave traders to prolong the existence of the triangular trade which insured supply of labor to the colonies and allowed to buy sugar from them without expense of currencies at a time when the maximization of the quantity of money in the economy was the primary goal of the mercantilist economic policy. Second, the monopoly of the state companies were protected. It was their decision to give rights of trading on the African coasts, and the slave traders which obtained these rights had to pay for them. When the state companies were eliminated, the government appropriated this tax for itself; tax which finally disappeared only when duty exemption on sugar was cancelled. The booties, in 1784, paid to French vessels engaged in the trade, had the purpose of compensating for the last measure. However, the slave traders of Nantes were opposed to it, as they estimated that the duty exemption were more profitable even if they had to pay a tax on the imported slaves. Thirdly, the traffic of slaves and sugar were guaranteed, and most importantly were kept under control of the Metropolis. To reinforce this last condition the

number of ships equipped by the colonists, which were authorized to export their products in France, were limited, monopoly of the trade on their own coast that they asked for was refused, and finally they did not have the right to practice the slave trade. These measures greatly favored the French slave traders, but at the same time, and most importantly, realized the mercantilist policy against the colonies.

#### B. Profitability of the Slave Trade

The recurrent debate concerning the role of slave trade on the economic development of Western Europe reached a new high with the book "Capitalism and Slavery" (1944) by E. Williams. In this book, E. Williams described how the profits from slave trade and plantations in England were a major source for the financing of the Industrial Revolution (not denying other sources). One criticism made to his study (besides the ones who simply denied his theory) was that the part the slave trade played, as distinct from the part of the plantations, in the process of accumulation in England was not made clear. And consequently, Williams' presentation did not allow to determine if slave trade by itself was profitable. The next step in this criticism will be to question the profitability of the plantations; and finally to present the whole system as an economic and social anomaly. We strongly oppose this last view, as we saw the role of the slave trade not at all an anomaly, in implementing

a specific colonial policy following the Mercantilist principles.

Now our purpose is to determine if the slave trade was profitable in France, and then to put in evidence its role in the emergence of a powerful Bourgeoisie and in the development of industries localized in the Atlantic towns which were then involved in this trade.

For this we trace the researches done in England, which are more numerous, and compare them with researches done in France. We want to determine if we can accept Williams' hypothesis and in what measure we can apply it for the case of France. In this perspective we introduce two quantitative problems; evaluation of the slave trade (comparison between England and France) and of its profits. Then we also introduce, without developing it, as it would be necessary to devote too much time to this part, the role of plantation system in the primitive accumulation. We hope proceeding in that way to distinguish slave trade and plantations, but at the same time showing their unavoidable linkage as it was evident in our discussion of Mercantilism.

### Volume of the Slave Trade

If we want some realistic measure (until now not really challenged) about the number of Africans brought across the Atlantic by the Europeans, we have to refer to the work of P. D. Curtin "The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census" (1969). He was the first, with the help of primary data (archives of

colonies, registers of ports, etc.) and secondary data collections (different census of colonies, comparison; sugar production, etc.), to try systematically to trace down the importance of the slave trade for each country, the origin of the slaves and their destination. P. D. Curtin says himself:

. . . this book is not intended to be a definitive study, only a point of departure that will be modified in time as new research produces new data, and harder data worthy of more sophisticated forms of calculation . . . . Let it be said at the outset, then, that most of the quantities that follow are wrong. They are not intended to be precise as given, only approximations where a result falling within 20 percent of actuality is a "right" answer--that is, a successful result given the quality of the underlying data.<sup>40</sup>

So research is still necessary, but we are not sure it would ever be completed if we consider the enormous flaws of the sources. For our purpose we selected some figures from Curtin's Census: first an estimation of the slave trade between 1451 to 1600 and 1601 to 1700, to give a rough idea of its first development; then, from 1701 to 1800 we give a total estimation, but we were particularly interested by the English and French's cases. So, we looked for their respective participation and evolution during the Eighteenth Century period at which the peak point of the trade was attained.

Table II

GLOBAL ESTIMATION\* OF THE ATLANTIC  
SLAVE TRADE FROM 1451 to 1810

1451 to 1600* <sup>1</sup>	
(Imports of major importing regions)	274,900 ( 3.6%)
1601 to 1700* <sup>2</sup>	
(Imports of major importing regions)	1,341,100 (17.5%)
1701 to 1810* <sup>3</sup>	
(Imports into American Territories: Caribbean, North and South America)	6,051,700 (78.9%)
Total	7,666,700 (100%)

\* P. D. Curtin "The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census"

\*<sup>1</sup> Table 33, p. 116; \*<sup>2</sup> Table 34, p. 119; \*<sup>3</sup> Table 65, p. 216.

Table II confirms that the Eighteenth Century was the high period of the slave trade, so 78.9 percent of it took place between 1701 to 1810 (slightly less if we had considered the Nineteenth Century). From 1651 to 1675, the British territories were second after Brazil in the number of slaves imported, surpassing the Spanish territories. At the end of the Seventeenth Century, in decreasing order Portuguese (41.8%), Spanish (21.8%), English (19.7%) and French (11.6%) overseas territories (c. f. Curtin: Table 34, p. 119) were the principal slaves' importers.



When Portugal freed itself from the Spanish domination (1640), the Dutch tried to substitute its illegal trade for the trade monopoly given as "Asientos" by the Spanish; these attempts were partially successful. For Curtin

. . . the increased flow of slaves in third quarter of the century can be attributed to the Dutch and some minor carriers, while the last quarter's increase probably owed more to the entry of the French and English.<sup>41</sup>

Between 1701 and 1810, French and English were responsible for carrying out more than 50 percent of the total Atlantic slave trade. If we want to know the other participants we can refer again to Curtin's data to extract Table III.

Table III

FROM 1761 TO 1810, ESTIMATION (OR PROJECTION)  
OF THE SLAVE TRADE OF PRINCIPAL CARRIERS  
IN 000's EXPORTED FROM AFRICA\*<sup>B</sup>

England	1,385.3 (estimated)	(41.5%)
France	546.4 "	(16.4%)
Portugal	1,010.4 "	(30.2%)
<hr/>		
Dutch	173.6 (projected)	( 5.2%)
Danes	56.8 "	( 1.7%)
U.S. (after 1783)	166.9 "	( 5.9%)
<hr/>		
Total	3,339.4	100%

\*<sup>B</sup> P. D. Curtin "The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census" Table 64, p. 212.

Table III stresses the role played by Portugal. In the total Atlantic slave trade Portugal came second after the

English during the Eighteenth Century. We can relate this to the fact that Portugal never relied upon other countries, giving "Asientos" like Spain did, to supply slaves to its colonies (principally Brazil). However, since the beginning of the Eighteenth Century slaves were transported by Brazilian ships, the Metropolis being involved only indirectly in this trade. This was opposed to the attitude of the French for example who forbade the planters of their colonies to go to Africa to buy slaves, in this way protecting the monopoly given to the slave traders of the Metropolis. Now we look at the English and French participations:

Table IV

ESTIMATIONS OF SLAVES EXPORTS FROM AFRICA  
DURING THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY\* BY ENGLISH  
(based on sugar production, population,  
recorded imports, and declared destinations  
of ships sailing from England) AND FRENCH  
(based on shipping data)

	<u>English</u> * <sup>1</sup>		<u>French</u> * <sup>2</sup>	
1701-1710	119,600			
1711-1720	140,900		46,100	
1721-1730	141,600	744,300	86,200	337,700
1731-1740	207,000		114,200	
1741-1750	254,800		91,200	
1751-1760	230,800	504,100	72,500	187,900
1761-1770	273,300		115,400	
1771-1780	196,000		98,800	
1781-1790	<u>325,500</u>	847,000	<u>271,500</u>	429,900
1791-1800	325,500		59,600	
1711-1800		2,095,400		955,500
1801-1807	266,000			
1701-1807	2,481,000			

\* P. D. Curtin "Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census"

\*<sup>1</sup>Table 41, p. 142; \*<sup>2</sup>Table 49, p. 170

In our table we first distinguish the period between 1701 and 1750. We don't have an estimation for the period 1701-1710 for the French slave trade. It seems that during this period the French did not play a major role in the slave trade which they did only after the Treaty of Utrecht (1713):

In spite of the French diplomatic success in securing the asiento privilege from the Spanish Crown the slave trade of these years must have been insignificant.<sup>42</sup>

This absence probably reflected the fact that the French navy was not yet in a position (and it will rarely be) to meet the labor demand (among others) of its colonies and to a greater extent the demand of the Spanish colonies even if since 1701 France had obtained the "Asiento." It was Dutch, British and Danes which most of the time supplied illegally (so it was supposedly a reserved French market) all these territories, including the French ones's. After the treaty of Utrecht it was England which got the slave trade monopoly (Asiento); at this point England became incontestably the hegemonic country and its trade activities, in particular, slave trade, steadily increased with two recessions between 1751-1760, and 1771-1781 which correspond to the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) and the American Independence War (1775-1783) respectively. But these recessions did not really affect the trade which increased the following years. France was more affected by the Seven Years' War, as its trade stopped completely from 1755 to 1763.

. . . the use of these formal decennial totals tends to obscure the annual variation, but a decade is not long enough to smooth out the variations caused by war and peace in Europe. France and England were, after all, at war in 1689-97, 1702-13, 1739-48, 1755-63, 1779-83, 1793-1802, and 1803-15. In each period of warfare where control of the sea lanes was

contested, the slave trade declined, but the unfilled demand of the American colonies was supplied in the peace time years that followed. This explains the high level of the trade in the 1760's and 1780's following the temporary drop of the 1750's and 1770's.<sup>43</sup>

Finally there is a last period between 1771-1807 which could be considered as of full development of slave trade, but which announced also its decline for the English as well as for the French. It has to be stressed that the peak years of the slave trade coincided in England, with the period considered as the starting point of the Industrial Revolution: from 1780 to 1850 per capita growth in national income rose from less than 0.5 percent during the first part of the Eighteenth Century to 1 or 1.5 percent,<sup>44</sup> and the importation of raw cotton went from around 1,250T in 1772 to 5,000T in 1782 to reach near 30,000T in 1802;<sup>45</sup> in France this period coincided with the Revolution of 1789, which did not affect the slave trade and colonial trade in general before 1791.

Now we can register the simultaneity of the high points in the development of the slave trade with the period (Industrial Revolution in England and Political Revolution in France) characterized by far-reaching social and economic changes. This gives us a first indication to evaluate the importance that the slave trade could have had during the Eighteenth Century, in the French and English societies. A further step to estimate the impact of the slave trade in England and France, is to raise the question of its profits.

## Profits of the Slave Trade

Again we are confronted to an estimation problem here; how to evaluate these profits. We can guess that it is a very hazardous attempt as we know for example that a reliable estimation of the volume of the slave trade is hard to calculate impaired by problems as the illegal trade. We are also confronted with the imprecise estimation of slave's price, the "mistakes" of the registers' books, etc. However, many authors undertook this task, and as we would have expected, very few agreed on the same conclusion, their results depending on an arbitrary choice of data, or an approximative evaluation. S. Engerman is one of these authors. In his article "The Slave Trade and British Capital Formation in the Eighteenth Century: A Comment on the Williams' Thesis," he doesn't seem fully convinced of Williams' demonstration, and tries with the help of a neo-classical approach to prove that slave trade was not profitable and so did not make any major contribution to British industrial development. The neo-classical approach:

. . . tends to focus on a world of full-employment of resources. Then the encremental contribution of any activity, such as the slave trade, would be the excess of revenues generated by that activity above the value that the resources it uses would have had in other activities.<sup>46</sup>

This approach is opposed to Williams' assumptions:

The model implied by Williams, on the other hand, is one based upon unemployed and otherwise unemployable resources. Thus the benefits to England from the slave trade are measured by the gross value of all resources used in the trade. Thus among the benefits Williams includes the labor and other resources used in the manufacture of goods used to purchase slaves, the labor and capital involved in shipping, and, for the plantation economy case, the use of resources in shipping and manufacturing further the materials produced by slave labor.<sup>47</sup>

For us it seems that the Williams' hypothesis is more justified. Regarding the economic situation during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, we can fairly assume that it was not "a world of full employment of resources."

Agriculture was the overwhelmingly dominant productive sector and was periodically submitted to catastrophies as wars, bad climactic conditions, etc. which led to periodic subsistence crises followed by epidemic and famine. In fact famine, prostitution and crime were the common lot of a majority of people, as wages--reflecting the existence of a high proportion of redundant labor--did not rise above the subsistence level (e.g., in England from the end of the Fifteenth Century to the mid-Seventeenth Century, the purchasing power of the agricultural laborers decreased by two thirds).<sup>48</sup> The situation worsened during the Seventeenth Century when the small peasantry running into debt was depossessed from its land to the profit of nobles and enriched merchants. The movement increased after the mid-Eighteenth Century, particularly in England with the acceleration of "Enclosures". Then the ruined peasants constituted a mass

of workers looking for jobs that agriculture would no longer offer.

In order to fully develop our point it would be necessary to conduct an exhaustive description of England and France's economies in the Eighteenth Century, but this research would be beyond our project. However, our first criticism on the neo-classical theory, is that its analysis is built on an ideal situation which does not match the real facts, and furthermore does not allow to understand the dynamic of the different groups involved.

Now we present a comparative analysis of different evaluations of the impact of slave trade in British capital formation, analysis which will lead to our second criticism. S. Engerman is still our first reference and for a moment we accept his methodology. He attempts to estimate the profit per slave and so the total slave trade profit (S.T.P.) to establish its contribution to British National Income (B.N.I.). This, in order to determine the "contribution of slave trade profits to capital formation" and particularly to industrial capital formation (I.I.). His first conclusion is that "For 1770 . . . slave trade profits contributed about 54 percent of industrial capital formation."<sup>49</sup> This result shows a very high participation, and would dismiss his theory that slave trade was not a major factor in the English Industrial Revolution.

In Appendix A we assess Engerman's calculations and we try to challenge them. Several points emerge from these quantitative manipulations: the results obtained are very



sensitive to the choice of the data (c.f., see calculations according as it was taken a ratio of investment of 3%, 5%, or 7%); the data are always approximative with a high error possibility and disparity, for example the estimation of the British national income is ranging from 62.8 to 130 (£ millions). Finally, to reject the theory of Williams, it is necessary for Engerman to use the lowest total S.T.P. figure given by Anstey that we will discuss.

In conclusion, the attempt to evaluate the impact of the slave trade on the British Industrial Revolution with in background a neo-classical perspective, reveal themselves as artificial and furthermore cannot convincingly in our opinion refute Williams' theory.

The critical point in Engerman's approach is embodied in his basic hypothesis: he wants to determine the part of the slave trade in the formation of the industrial capital, so as to evaluate its impact on the Industrial Revolution. However, many scholars now discard the hypothesis that there is one privileged causal factor of the Industrial Revolution, to consider different factors as the agricultural revolution, demographic factor, colonial expansion, rise of prices, etc. which through a complex arrangement, led to the Industrial Revolution and one of its first illustrations the development of cotton industries. Looking from this perspective it is not evident that to ask the part of the slave trade in the industrial capital formation is a perspicacious question; and conversely we would consider the slave trade as a

trade monopoly for the English and French traders during the Eighteenth Century, and we would ask what was its place in the arrangement which led to the industrial revolution. Then, the problem is not to know whether slave trade profits were reinvested in the industry, but to determine its whole economic and social impact. Only one aspect of which will be the profitability of the slave trade. So before we proceed on this discussion we have to look at how the profits of the slave trade were calculated.

We wondered why S. Engerman did not use Anstey (except marginally) as the principal author to sustain this theory since we could observe that with the figure 7% given by Anstey, the impact of the slave trade on the industrial capital formation dropped dramatically to the point of challenging Williams' hypothesis. We find the answer when we examine the calculations of Anstey that we report in Appendix B.

Anstey begins by reviewing the previous findings which evaluated the S.T.P. Some arrive to a profit rate of 140 percent which is enormous and probably whimsical, while others get a figure over 30 percent. The last figure seems to gather a consensus among the scholars and means that the slave trade was a very profitable activity. In his principal calculations Engerman used the 30 percent figure but in the last paragraph he rejected it to favor Anstey's calculations which were based on a profit rate of under 10 percent. We see in the calculations reported in Appendix B that this

figure could be acceptable if it pretended to represent the individual profits of a slave trader, but not if it is used for the profit of the slave trade in general and considered to calculate the part of the slave trade in the industrial capital formation. It would not be worthwhile to continue this criticism; we think we have exposed the principal pitfalls of these calculations and showed how data can be adapted to the needs of a particular theory.

From the beginning of our presentation of Williams, Engerman and Anstey, we differentiated two different levels: the first one concerned the choice of the theoretical framework used to analyze the impact of the slave trade; the second one focusing on the problem of profitability of the slave trade concerned the methodology, choice of data and how these elements could produce some completely opposed conclusions. Though we do not reject a quantifiable approach which could give us some precise indications, we are conscious of its limits and dangers, particularly when scholars use it as "scientific" evidence to sustain their theory. In fact this approach which seeks the "truth" in some uncertain figures avoids carefully the debate that we try now to expose.

## C. Social and Economic Impact of the Slave Trade

### Comparison Between English and French' Cases

Certainly it is now necessary to reinstate Williams' perspective. As far as we know, Williams does not limit the debate on the slave trade to an imperfect estimation of its profitability and to the contribution of its profits to the industrial capital formation. Williams considers all activities involved through the development of the slave trade (industries which constructed ships, produced arms and cotton clothes for Africa, etc.); and, in its turn the slave trade is seen in the context of the development of the plantations in the colonies.

We have a sharp description given by R. B. Sheridan which shows perfectly the intertwined interests of slave traders, plantation owners, and manufacture owners:

Two Manchester families had broad-ranging interests that encompassed cotton manufacturing, the slave and sugar trades and plantation enterprise. From the supply of checks and imitation Indian cottons to the Royal African Company, the Hibbert family came to own the largest slave factorage business in Jamaica, acquired sugar estates in that island, and established a leading West India commission house in London. Samuel Touchet and his brothers had one of the leading check-making firms in Manchester, engaged in the Liverpool slave trade and the London sugar trade, and owned plantations. In 1751, the brothers were concerned in about twenty West India ships. Samuel helped to equip the expedition that captured Senegal in 1758. He was M.P. for Shaftesbury from 1761 to 1768, and left a large fortune at his death in 1773.<sup>50</sup>

Following this perspective we can ennumerate at least six important economic consequences on the British economy (but also valuable for France with some difference as we will see) linked to the slave trade.

First the slave trade supported the plantation economy (without the slaves, the system probably would never have emerged); second the development of the slave trade and the colonies create a demand which contributed to the commercial and industrial development of the center:

The tropical trades contributed to changes in the structure of industry. Since slave traders and slave-holders required quantities of standardized textiles, utensils, tools, and heavy equipment, it was easier for manufacturers to substitute machines for handicraftsmen, and to engage in massive production rather than cater to discriminating markets. Moreover, the tropics were an important outlet for such light weight textiles as linen, fustians, and particularly cottons.

. . . . .

Negroes slaves were purchased in Africa by the British merchants with a variety of goods. Birmingham manufacturers took advantage of the opening of the African trade in 1698, and their exports of all sorts increased enormously. Large quantities of cutlery ware, gum, barrels and other articles found a market in Africa. The British Linen Company was chartered in 1746 with the principal intention of supplying the merchants trading to Africa and the American plantations with the like kinds of linen cloth as they were before obliged to purchase of foreign nations. The African market was long supplied with East India cottons which were re-exported from London. However, by 1769 the home industry had become competitive and nearly one-half of the British exports of cotton piece goods were marketed in Africa.<sup>51</sup>

Again R. B. Sheridan gives us an excellent illustration of

all the ramifications of the slave trade; third the colonial products imported to the center decreased labor cost (i.e., wage good become cheaper, so wages can stay at a low level to the profit of the entrepreneur); fourth the reduction in labor cost enhanced the comparative advantage of the British industry; fifth, the enhanced comparative advantage allowed the specialization of England in industry and released the agricultural constraint; sixth, the reduction in wage goods implied an increase on the demand for industrial goods further contributing to the expansion of the manufacture industry.

We are particularly interested in the first two consequences that we will develop in the case of France. Before that we have to consider that there are at least three apparent differences with the English case which could authorize to dismiss any impact of the slave trade in France and consequently any comparison with England: first, the volume of the slave trade is considerably lower so we can expect that the impact will be more restricted; second, the industrial revolution in France will occur later around 1815-1820, so it will be impossible to establish a direct link between slave trade and the Industrial Revolution; third, the slave trade was always organized in the context of the triangular trade which benefitted from privileged fiscal policies: equipments options, exoneration of taxes on imported sugar etc., and in 1785 there was a system of subsidies attached to the slave trade in form of booties given by the government to

the slave traders. We now have to challenge these differences in order to justify our comparison, but also the pertinence of looking at the social and economic impact of the slave trade in France.

The first difference concerning the volume of the slave trade in France is still questioned. J. Mettas (1941-1975) reopened the problem. He thought that to know the exact volume was not crucial. For him the critical points were to know the rhythm of the slave trade, the places of predilection of this activity etc., to determine its impact in Europe as well as in Africa. J. Mettas made a harsh criticism of P. Curtin's research on the French slave trade. He pointed out that the data of P. Curtin were drawn essentially from two books, one of Gaston Martin, and the other from Dieudonné Rinchon. J. Mettas showed that these two last authors although very valuable, had themselves limited sources. They focused on one particular port: Nantes, and were not exempt of consequent mistakes. For example, P. Curtin on the basis of these two authors' studies estimated that 3,800 slaves were drawn from Sierra Leone between 1763-1770. This was an estimation based on the slave trade of Nantes. However, although Nantes was quite representative (and will be worthwhile to look at when analyzing the impact of the slave trade in France), other ports such as Honfleur, Le Havre, etc. went to Sierra-Leone as well. Considering them, J. Mettas suggested that it was necessary to triple the numbers, and consequently to reconsider the impact of the slave trade in this

region. Converse mistakes were also found. J. Mettas concluded that the estimation of 955,500 exported slaves by the French from 1711-1800 obtained by P. Curtin, was really a very wild guess; and finally, that the history of the French slave trade was yet to be written, but for this it was necessary to undertake a careful analysis of primary data which were abundant and available.

We retain from J. Mettas, besides the fact that no exact figures can be given, that all numerical comparisons between countries are uncertain, but up to a point this uncertainty does not matter. The exact volume of the slave trade is secondary. Efforts must be made to disclose the organization, the existing conditions and the economic and social environments of the slave trade. Then, for example, we can contrast its impact in Portugal, which authorized Brazil to take in charge the slave trade, and in Spain which distributed the Asientos, with its impact in England and France, which were very jealous of their monopolies, and excluded from the slave trade other countries and also their own colonies.

This example demonstrates that it is quite superficial and inexact to reduce the impact of the slave trade to its volume. A more important fact is that France and England were both inspired by the mercantilist theory implying specific relationships between colonies, metropolies and other countries that we have to look at closely.

It is also necessary to nuance the second difference between England and France. Even if the industrial development



of France was inferior to England during the Eighteenth Century, some authors like Paul Bairoch (c.f., "Révolution Industrielle et Sous Développement") thinks that a first industrial impulse took place in France between 1770-1780. Other authors reject totally the difference; for example T. J. Markovitch stresses that during the Eighteenth Century, but before the French Revolution, the economic development of France and England (considering the fact that accurate data in both cases are rare) was quite similar. He gives the example of the wool industries which enjoyed a growth rate of 145 percent during the Eighteenth Century in France against 150 percent in England.<sup>52</sup>

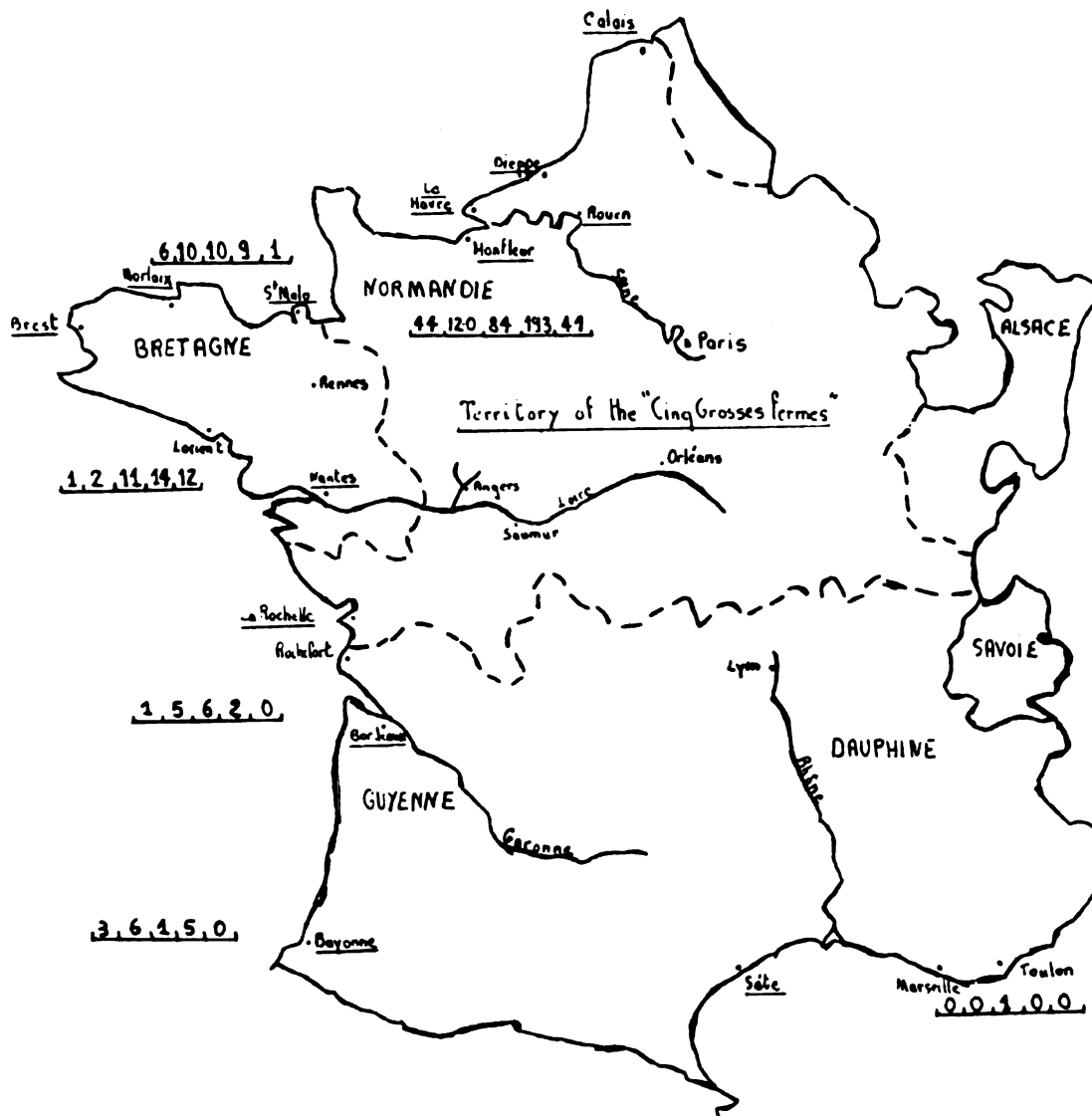
There is also a consensus of scholars which recognize that important activities were engendered by the French Atlantic ports through the colonial trade, and furthermore that inland regions had benefitted from this development:

Also, like F. Crouzet underlined it, the important ports during the Eighteenth Century which participated in the colonial trade in English America as well as in North West Europe, developed their own industries and those of their inland regions. The progress of the American plantations explains that the French maritime provinces were then the most industrialized, while the influence of the ports penetrated far inside the provinces. P. Léon showed how the industries of Dauphine, province very distant, were much interested in the Antillais trade. The example of Bordeaux demonstrates how the colonial economy could stimulate the development of a whole active hinterland: the river basin whose waterway is the Girondin port. Besides the industrial sector, the plantation engendered also in the Metropolis some specific agricultural activities; thus the progress of commercial agriculture in Moyenne-Garonne were highly linked to the needs of cereals, wines and fruits of the Caribbean colonies.<sup>53</sup> (c.f., Map 4, p. 76)

Map 4: FRANCE (XVII - XVIII Centuries)

Places of construction and numbers of ships built in  
1751-60, 1761-70, 1771-80, 1781-90, 1791-1800, by decennial periods  
 Source: P. Léon "Aires et Structure du Commerce français au XVIII<sup>e</sup> a." p 230-31

— Principal Slave Trade Ports



Finally the third difference concerns the organization of the slave trade. The term of specificity seems more appropriate. We have to read these specificities in their context, the French slave trade in this case, to see for example, that the booties given to the slave traders in 1784 resulted from a struggle between merchants and government. The booties were a substitute for the suppression of the exoneration of tax on the sugar imported by the slave traders. According to that suggesting that booties reflected the low profit of the slave trade and the necessity to sustain it is quite simplistic. Interpretation not at all innocent and similar to the process of rejecting the impact of the slave trade in France, arguing its lesser volume and that there was no Industrial Revolution as in England.

#### The Rise of a Bourgeoisie and Economic Development in France

Now we have to determine to what extent the Bourgeoisie (merchants and manufacturers) and more generally the French economy, benefitted from the slave trade.

Authors which defend the theory that slave trade was not profitable in France (often the same authors who argue it was not profitable because it did not lead to an industrial revolution) base their arguments on the study of Nantes' slave trade after 1763. Gaston Martin stopped his study of Nantes in 1774; he believed that after this date the decline of the French slave trade had started. After G. Martin's

studies, other scholars deepened further into the issues. In our opinion, one of the most brilliant pieces of research is offered by Pierre H. Boulle. P. H. Boulle follows the development of Nantes, then Le Havre-Rouen and shows the impact of the slave trade in these towns which were in turn the leading slave trade centers:

But did an industrial base develop in European countries as a result of the slave trade? . . . .  
 . . . the most thorough examination of this question is provided in the case of France by Pierre Boulle who suggests that until the Seven Years' War which interrupted the Atlantic trade and ruined Nantes, profits from the slave trade were used to open new areas of commerce and create new industries in Nantes, as they were used in the 1780's to develop industry in Le Havre and Rouen.<sup>54</sup>

Pierre Boulle sees three main factors which determined Nantes to become the major port of France involved in the slave trade (besides its geographical situation). The first one was that Nantes (as Bordeaux, Marseille, etc.) did not belong to the customs union (the "Cinq Grosses Fermes": c.f. Map 4, p. 76) later on called "the General Farms" which "encompassed much of Northern France," So Nantes was considered as a foreign country and all products coming in or out of its frontiers paid a tax. The advantage was that:

. . . Nantes enjoyed significantly reduced duties on goods leaving Brittany (Bretagne) and on merchandise remaining in the province. The effect was to encourage Nantes to seek its fortune on the Ocean.<sup>55</sup>

The second one was the construction in 1666 of a Fort in Lorient (close to Nantes: c.f., Map 4, p. 76) which centralized the royal colonial activities. Nantes offered its service to organize the sales, since the town had numerous facilities, buildings, hotels, etc. Consequently, besides the boost given to its trade, Nantes had a direct access to the products, particularly textiles from India, which at the beginning of the slave trade were the major goods exchanged against slaves. Indian cloths cheaper than French fabrics were forbidden in the territory of the General Farms; their counterfeit or their imprint were also forbidden except for Nantes. Nantes which had access to these Indian cloths, at first printed them, and then preferred to make a counterfeit, finding a lucrative market for them in Africa through the slave trade. Finally, the third factor (which it shared also with La Rochelle, Bordeaux) was that Nantes had a large protestant population which kept privileged relationships with other European protestant countries (especially Netherlands) where part of that population had escaped to during the religious wars.

. . . since the Sixteenth Century, thanks in part to the religious affinity of the two populations the efforts of Colbert to eliminate the Dutch from French trade seem to have had no impact on Nantes, nor does the revocation of the Edict of Nantes.<sup>56</sup>

This factor was important because the Dutch were very useful in supplying goods for the slave trade which Nantes manu-

factures and French manufactures, in general, were not yet in a position to produce. So Nantes, with the combination of these three factors, had a kind of destiny in the slave trade. We can see through the study of Nantes (in parallel with other towns as Le Havre-Rouen, La Rochelle, Bordeaux and Honfleur), first the role of the slave trade in the rise of a Bourgeoisie linked to this trade, and secondly its role in the economic development of France.

### The Rise of a Bourgeoisie in the Atlantic Ports

Until the Seventeenth Century nobody was much concerned about the slavery or slave trade except those who already benefitted from them. The development of the colonies, and simultaneously the intensification of the slave trade during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, changed the situation. During these centuries there was a consensus in France that the prosperity of the colonies depended on the number of slaves and the use of slave labor, and consequently on the development of the slave trade.

Until 1716 only four ports were given the trade monopoly with Africa (Rouen, La Rochelle, Bordeaux and Nantes); in 1717 the authorization was extended to the ports<sup>57</sup> of Calais, Dieppe, Le Havre, Honfleur, Saint-Malo, Morlaix, Brest, Bayonne and Sète<sup>58</sup> (c.f., Map 4, p. 76). All these ports became very prosperous and a wealthy bourgeoisie developed there. Some members of the upper classes (Church, Army and Law Aristocracies) did not refuse to be engaged in this

trade; but in France, contrary to England as we saw, this participation was limited. The wealth of this society was reflected by the edifications of numerous monuments, luxurious buildings and the creation of new industries in the Atlantic cities, the best examples being Nantes and Bordeaux. G. Martin gives us the following description:

Every port to which the slave ships returned saw the rise of manufacturers in the Eighteenth Century--refineries, cottons, dyeworks, sweet-making--increasing numbers which testified to the advance of business and industry. In Nantes, for instance, there were founded in the course of the Eighteenth Century 15 refineries, 5 cotton manufacturers . . . , two big dye works, two sweet-making establishments . . . . Industries created, private fortunes increased, the public wealth of the cities transformed, the flowering of a new class--the big merchants eager to play a part in public affairs--these are the essential features which the slave trade marked the evolution of France in the Eighteenth Century.<sup>59</sup>

Who were engaged in the slave trade? To understand that it is necessary to keep in mind that this trade required an important investment (ship, cargo, insurance, part of salaries, etc.); investment which could be blocked more than two years before the return of any benefit. Furthermore the total payment for the slaves could last as long as ten years, considering the financial problems or ill-will of some planters. It was also to be considered that it was a very risky activity where many vessels were lost at sea without benefit at all. So at least two conditions were necessary for this new venture to get underway: first, individuals willing to

engage in the slave trade had to control a capital; and second, the existence of an environment-family and fellow merchants to provide informal insurance against the high risks involved in the trade.

Most of these individuals came from modest origin (although there were exceptions: two Nobles and one individual from the high Bourgeoisie of Nantes): artisans from Paris like the Montaudoin in Nantes or merchants from small villages around the Atlantic ports in Bordeaux and La Rochelle. However, though modest, they controlled a starting capital, and they quickly formed small associations. J. Meyer told us that from 1748 to 1756 in Nantes there were no more than about fifty slave traders (about thirty families) which ran the slave trade activities, and three families (Grou, Michel and Bouteille) equipped more than half of the slave ships (85 ships out of 150).<sup>60</sup> The concentration of capital increased as the century progressed. However at the end of the century, after 1783, small investors reappeared. The same phenomenon had also occurred after 1763. These two periods, 1763 and 1783, correspond to the after-war years, when the shortage of slave labor in the colonies due to the wars increased demand and prices. So even small investors could find the opportunity to rapidly increase their capital. However, except for some of the leading families who went bankrupt or had reinvested their capital in manufactures or plantations, the slave trade was still controlled by a dominant oligarchy throughout the Eighteenth



Century. These families formed a merchant aristocracy (the most important fortunes in Nantes, Bordeaux, La Rochelle belonged to them), and concentrated wealth accumulated through this commerce:

Of the eighteen individuals who were assessed at more than 100 livres in 1743, ten were slave traders; of the five who were asked to pay over 150 livres, four were engaged in this commerce . . . <sup>61</sup>

They lived in the same area, they intermarried and:

In this way, they formed an interwoven clan, protecting each other, helping each other investing in each other's ventures, keeping the profits concentrated in their own hands.<sup>62</sup>

They sought also nobiliary titles, and in general succeeded. In Nantes most of the families were ennobled during the reign of Louis XV (ruled 1715-74). This reflected the prestige and the political and economic power they had won. Another characteristic that we already mentioned in the case of Nantes is that these families were primarily protestant. In Bordeaux between 1756 and 1792 thirteen (out of a total of sixteen) firms related to the slave trade belonged to protestant families. In La Rochelle "thirteen of the fourteen leading firms were Huguenot."<sup>63</sup> Their religion did not jeopardize their efforts to win the administrative posts which gave access to political power--another evidence of their economic importance.

Increasingly from the mid-Eighteenth Century the slave traders were willing to seek political positions in order to defend their economic interest and to enhance their social status. Allied with the "Bretons" manufacturers in Nantes, they campaigned with success against the "Compagnie des Indes" and the textile regulations. They also created an agricultural society to encourage:

. . . new textile manufactures through the dissemination of agricultural and industrial techniques relevant to their success . . .<sup>64</sup>

G. Martin tells us that in Nantes, during half of the period from 1736 to 1791, six major slave traders occupied the mayoralty office. In La Rochelle the same intrusion:

In 1789, when the city protested the plans to end the slave trade, her mayor . . . was a slave trader; the special deputy from the chamber to the national Assembly was Jean-Baptiste Nairac; and the city's leading "négrrier," Daniel Garesché (thirty seven slaving ventures from 1769 to 1792) was sitting in the National Assembly for a neighboring town. Thus the slave trade and the Protestant slavers dominated the city's commercial life on the eve of the Revolution, . . .<sup>65</sup>

They succeeded in protecting the slave trade until 1794, but failed after the radicalization of the revolution. We already have some elements that allow us to understand why they did not succeed in preserving their activities.

The comparison of France with England showed that in England Nobles took part in the slave trade (often buying important shares of the State Companies) at the side of the

Bourgeoisie; consequently they were present during the industrial revolution and able to follow and adapt themselves to the changing economic and political order. In France very few Nobles compromised themselves in these activities, whereas for the petty bourgeoisie, it became first an access to wealth and then to nobility.

Slave traders in France were strong enough to thwart the abolitionist movement until 1794, although from 1792, with the arrest of Louis XVI, many of them felt uncomfortable. Even if these families were by their social origin, activities and ideology (they read the "Encyclopédistes" and from 1789 named their slave vessels "La Révolution", "Le Voltaire" and "Ça-ira"--a revolutionary song--or "Le Contrat Social") partisans of the overthrow of the absolutism, they had compromised themselves with the "Ancient Regime," asking for titles of nobility, and some supporting a constitutional monarchy. These attitudes put them in a dangerous position when the revolution radicalized (1793-94), and some of them chose to flee out of France with the royalists. Finally the end of the trade came with the revolt of St. Domingue, which precipitated the decision of the National Assembly to abolish slavery and consequently the slave trade. Traders and the French economy were cut out of one of their principal activities. We see now what was meant by this loss.

### Economic Development

Pierre H. Boulles in two articles examines thoroughly the effects of the slave trade on the economic activities of Nantes and Le Havre-Rouen, trying to show the link between commercial capital and manufactures.

Since the beginning of the Eighteenth Century Nantes had a reputation based on the slave trade:

In short, by the second quarter of the Eighteenth Century, Nantes had organized its commerce along very rational lines, the key element of which was the slave trade.<sup>66</sup>

However, after the crisis of 1763, Nantes lost its dominance and shared this trade with Le Havre-Rouen and three other important trade centers: Bordeaux, La Rochelle, Honfleur. There were at least four dimensions of the colonial and slave trade which contributed to the development of the industry

The first one shipyards and industries related ("foundries and cordage," "rigging and caulking" material). On Map 4, page 76, we can see the number of ships built from 1751 to 1800 (fractionated in five dicennial periods). Normandie (especially Le Havre with around 260 and Honfleur with around 87 ships) was the principal constructor, followed by Bretagne (especially St. Malo, 36, and Nantes, 22). There were two high periods (particularly apparent in Normandie) between 1761-70 and 1781-90 (after war periods). The first one corresponded to the beginning of the participation of Le Havre in the slave trade. Then 1791-1800 showed a dramatic decline.

The second dimension was the productions developed to meet the demand of the colonies. For example Rouen (Normandie) in the first part of the Eighteenth Century, before specializing in the slave trade, had a very prosperous cotton industry which supplied the Antilles. We already saw that in the case of the inland region of Bordeaux which produced cereals, wines and fruits for the Antilles, farming could also profit from this demand.

The third dimension, in some aspects complementary to the second (for example cotton imported from the Antilles could be transformed and re-exported towards these same islands) was the industries transformed or created to process the new raw materials brought from the Antilles (in part by the slave trader in the context of the triangular trade). The predominant product was raw sugar, refined in France since the colonies were not authorized to refine their sugar. Since 1670 Nantes took the lead in the refining sugar industry, reaching at its best moment to about twenty refineries. After 1713, on the upper section of the river Loire (c.f. Map 4, p. 76) other refineries were built, especially in Angers, Saumur and Orléans. Orléans reached Nantes size to a total of twenty refineries in the middle of the century. By then Nantes had been taken out of this industry, its last refinery closing around 1730. In second position was cotton, which ran a harsh competition against the locally grown hemp. The local textile industries had to transform and adapt their production to this new material. This was what

happened in Normandie:

The Normand sector of cotton industries created at the end of the precedent century, became important during the 1730-1740 period, epoch when its production quintupled. It is also the period of development of the Antillais commerce, whose exportations to Rouen increased tenfold. The importations of raw cotton knew one of the most remarkable growth, going from 83,000 livres weight in 1730 to 1,884,000 in 1740, figure around which they stayed until the end of the century.<sup>67</sup>

There were also cocoa and sugar which contributed to the creation of the sweet-making industries. Finally (although this list does not pretend to be exhaustive) indigo used to die textiles outmarketed other products coming from Southern France which were more expensive. There was also the case of some scarce products, such as gold used by jewelers, coming from Africa.

Now let us insist on the fourth dimension, where we have the industries which grew directly out of the needs of the slave trade. It could be observed in this case a direct intervention of the slave traders which either were at the origine of these new industries or invested in the realization. P. Boulle develops an interesting view, stressing that goods for the slave trade were, in general, inexpensive items and furthermore, large quantities of small variety of types were needed. This provided an ideal condition for a manufacturing system of "mass production" to emerge.

In Nantes, there was a very spectacular example of adaptation of the regional production to this demand. In 1727

a slave trader (whom we already mentioned: René Montaudoin) associated with six other individuals (two of them were also involved in the slave trade) and created "La Grande Manufacture":

. . . ; already it employed in 1733, four years after its transformation, some 1,000 workers, producing primarily for the slave trade over one-half million livres' worth of textiles on some 100 looms.<sup>68</sup>

However, the investments of the slave traders were in general confined to their towns, and the development of the industrial production, though noticeable, was not sufficient either to aliment the exportations necessary to the slave trade or to give a solid base to a more sustained industrial development.

One proof of these limitations was that the importation of textiles, guns, etc., from foreign countries destined to the slave trade continued to increase. The French government tried to reverse this situation by imposing, as it did in 1769 with firearms, heavy taxes on the imported goods, while at the same time making an effort to get the industry to increase the quantity and improve the quality of the French production. The successes were limited, however, and as we can expect, slave traders were totally opposed to such measures which increased the price of the goods that they exported to Africa.

The complex of Le Havre-Rouen also gives a good example of industrial success related to the slave trade, although still localized. We already mentioned the cotton production

(using raw cotton from the colonies) destined to the exportation toward the Antilles, which was the major activity of this region until 1755. Then, this industry disappeared almost completely to the profit of other manufactures which counterfeited Indian cloths destined to the slave trade:

. . . it is possible that the decline of the textile industries in Rouen between 1763 and 1783, with the exception of Indian-cloths, have been less the result of bankruptcy than a purposeful transfer of capital from one sector in decline to another one, more promising. In this case, the slave trade would have allowed to Rouen and its region to go one step farther towards the industrial revolution, because it is principally in the cotton industry that the machinism was developed and that a more advanced concentration of capital was possible. It is also to help the cloth printage that some chemical industries (production of sulfaric acid for example) were created in Rouen from 1770. These industries would play a role in the next stage of the industrialization.<sup>69</sup>

So Le Havre-Rouen took its impulse after 1763. Conversely Nantes, after the treaty of Paris never recovered its hegemonic position. Slave traders after this period, which had perturbed for seven years the slave and colonial trades, tried to diversify their investments and to choose more secure placements even if it was less profitable. The merchant aristocracy of Nantes still invested in the slave trade but did not participate directly in it, and new slave traders had a tendency to reinvest their profits in land particularly in the West Indian plantations rather than in the manufactures.

In short, smaller amounts were available as risk capital for industry. And it was on such capital that the industries associated with the



slave trade had been developed. With the elimination of the more important slave trading houses and the emergence of a more cautious spirit, manufacturers had to rely on themselves, forming their own class with its own interests, sometimes at odds with the slave traders. The link which had begun to be established in the 1740's between commercial and industrial capital was shattered. The days of Nantes as an innovating center was over.<sup>70</sup>

And it was the complex Le Havre-Rouen which substituted Nantes in its role of leader of French modern economic development. This leadership lasted for a relatively short period because, as in the case of Nantes, an exterior factor impaired the possibility of the manufacturers to profit from the development of the slave trade.

In 1786 France signed with England a treaty which suppressed duties on goods imported from England (the reverse was not true; England kept duties on goods imported from France). Slave traders who could take advantage of cheaper English goods did not oppose the treaty. The French manufacturers who still faced a protected English market, lost also their interior market in this way. This treaty was signed as the Physiocrats gained momentarily political hegemony over the Mercantilists, the former seeing no interest in the development of the industry which they considered an unproductive activity by itself. Slave trade was not immediately affected; but already undermined by the polemics of the abolitionist movement and the divergence of interests between slave traders and the manufacture industry, its impact on the French economy quickly lessened.

We will not develop further these points. Before going ahead in our conclusions, we still must see the effects of the slave trade on the status of the Black men in France.

## Chapter IV

### BLACK IMMIGRATION IN SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES FRANCE

#### A. African Presence in France

In our preceding chapters we already explained how the presence of Africans in France emerged simultaneously with the European expansion and the beginning of the colonial French empire.

Indeed as we saw in our historical background, trade and war between Portugal and Africa intensified African presence first in Portugal (Lisbonne had one of the largest black communities in Europe during the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries), then the Netherlands (Antwerp), and later in the rest of Europe (Spain, Italy, England and France).

We saw also that P. Curtin estimated that from the mid-Fifteenth Century to the end of the Sixteenth Century a total of 48,800 Africans were uprooted and brought into Europe in the context of the slave trade, but during the Seventeenth Century this figure fell to 1,200.<sup>71</sup> Afterwards, the most important migration of black Africans was from Africa to the West Indies and America through the slave trade. The migration to Europe which preceded this large scale uprooting was, by the Seventeenth Century, just a side effect of it. And because the social and economic environment of Europe was not favorable (despite several attempts and the fact that

slavery was tolerated in France and England as in Portugal or Spain), slavery kept a limited scope there.

We will focus on the French black community which can be divided into two groups:

One from Africa: Black slaves brought into France by captains, traders, explorers etc.; African ambassadors; students; merchants.

One from Antilles: Black slaves, most of them brought by the planters; soldiers; freed-slaves.

Since 1480 French captains had already navigated near Cap Vert and had started commercial activities with the Africans. J. Mathorez tells us:

One century after the beginning of our commercial relationships with Senegal, in 1594, the Portuguese Alvarez d' Almada wrote in a trip report: "Many negroes speak very well the French language and have even been to France."<sup>72</sup>

At that time slavery was not yet an issue in France; however, merchants trading men might be prosecuted, although as Frederickson describes (in the case of England during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries) matching our own description of the French legislation on slavery.

. . . there was no general bias against slavery as a condition; it was widely assumed that, by one means or another, most men must be compelled to work and that coercion was the main-spring of any economic system.<sup>73</sup>

But as yet any (white or black) could be a slave, and until the end of the Seventeenth Century (1685, "Le Code Noir")

there is not an institutionalized discrimination towards Blacks. Africans coming in France were in general treated according to their rank in their own society. J. Mathorez tells the history of Zaga-Christ (son of the overthrown Negus of Ethiopia) who exiled in France in 1635 under the reign of Louis XIII, was treated (and subsidized since he had no money) as a member of the Aristocracy. Louis XIV (1638-1715) received, again from the King of Ethiopia, elephants, horses and ten male and female black slaves.

However, the deterioration of the relationships between blacks and whites slowly progressed.

The larger communities of blacks in the Eighteenth Century were found in the Atlantic ports (Bordeaux, Nantes, etc.) where captains, traders, planters had their residences. But Paris was also a center, and since the Sixteenth Century many aristocrats had black servants, buffoons or escorts.

We do not have even an approximative number of the Africans in France during the Eighteenth Century. We would have it if the law of 1738 which obliged to register all blacks debarked in France had been followed, which was not the case. Consequently we have to rely on some fragmentary figures which can nevertheless give us an idea of their number, occupation and social status. For example 3,000 Blacks were registered in Bordeaux during the Eighteenth Century; among them three out of four were servants while the others were craftsmen, most often cooks, wigmaker, and cooper. From 1737 to 1746 one out of twenty-one was a free man, this ratio

increasing later to one out of every six.<sup>74</sup> In 1777 65 Blacks were registered in La Rochelle, 15 in Bayonne, 13 in Marseille, 3 in Dieppe, 6 in Honfleur, 5 in Calais and 158 in Bordeaux (with its periphery).<sup>75</sup> Hans Debrunner describes the circumstances which led the Africans to France:

At the beginning of the Eighteenth Century, captains were in the habit of bringing at their own expense "one or two" young Africans with each vessel to France "in order to learn the language and later be sent back to serve as interpreters and inform their people better about French ways."

. . . . .  
However, most Africans in Nantes were not students but servants. Gaston Martin, the historian of Nantes in the Eighteenth Century, states from his profound knowledge of the local archives that captains had brought back African lads as personal servants, that some planters in the West Indies kept a house in Nantes and supplied it with African servants and that Nantes traders who also had offices in the Caribbean brought Africans to Nantes. He sees in the argument that these slaves were to be apprenticed in crafts useful for St. Domingue merely an excuse for bringing in Africans as prestige goods. "But a very few of these returned to the isles; the others were either enfranchised from one day to the other or became really some sort of family furniture . . . ." <sup>76</sup>

Even after 1777 when it was officially forbidden to bring black men in France, the practice continued. If the overwhelming majority was servant and slave, coming from Africa or the West Indies there were other interesting cases.

First, the case of a mulatto girl named Louise Marie Thérèse (born in 1656 called "La Mauresse de Moret") believed to be the sister or the illegitimate daughter of Louis XIV. She was protected by the royal family and died in 1732, yet even now nobody knows the exact truth about her origin.

Another famous case of illegitimacy was Alexandre Dumas born in 1762 at St. Domingue. His father the marquess "de la Pailleterie" sent him to France to have an education. He began a career in the army, but as a mulatto he could only start as a common soldier; however he rose in the ranks, to become a general during the Revolution, and his son and grandson were both famous writers.

A second case is the "consumption of prestige goods." We have already mentioned that it was fashionable for the aristocracy to have Blacks in their service. Mrs. Du Barry (1750-93), mistress of Louis XV, reinforced and generalized this custom at the court. The Knight Stanislas de Boufflers, governor of Senegal in 1775, satisfied these "exotic demands," sending to the court black and moorish children, in addition to parrots, ostriches, exotic birds, etc. However, in general when the children grew up, they were sent to the Antilles to be sold as slaves, though less-typically they might be set free in France.

Thirdly is the case of African ambassadors or chief's sons in Europe. Apparently they were sent by African kings hoping to increase the slave trade in their country. Again we let Hans Debrunner tell us about their presence in France:

. . . At the court of Louis XIV, the arrival of envoys from Africa was noticed with satisfaction and sometimes did lead to increased trade between France and the lands of the chief who had sent the ambassador.

. . . . .  
Amoysy, the chief of Commenda, sent ambassadors to Louis XIV in 1672 and in 1686. Amoysy drew up a

treaty giving land to the French. In 1687, as a result of this treaty, there was "granted a considerable site for a fort for the conservations of my kingdom," "be it against European nations or the kings, our neighbours" stating clearly that no tribute was to be paid to the French.

.....  
The Dutch of Elmina, however, were quick to see the threat to their power in the region and attacked Commenda, killing Amoysy.

.....  
Another attempt of a West African chief on the coast of modern Ghana to attract French trade was made by the chief of Anomabu. In the Eighteenth Century, a son of John Corantee, chief of Anomabu, was sent to France, where Louis XV received him graciously, sending him back with many presents, finely dressed and convinced of the splendour of the French.

.....  
The English, however, counteracted by sending William Ansah, another son of Chief Corantee, to England.<sup>77</sup>

Another practice, harsher than the previous one, was to take into hostage the chief's son. He was educated like a French noble with the same honour and then sent back to his country when his father died. Such was the story of Aniaba (1673- ? ; in France from 1688 to 1701)<sup>78</sup> who was named an officer in the Royal Cavalry. However in this case the project failed, and it was even rumored about by the French who were disappointed that Aniaba was from slave origin and not the son of the African chief of Asini;<sup>79</sup> however, when Aniaba returned he attained a high rank in the African court.

These different stories indicate that even though England, and France in particular, in the Seventeenth Century were not yet leaders of the trade in Africa they

were already busily trying to broaden their role. They tried to assert their presence establishing relationships with the dominant African classes. This was the first attempt to a policy (a kind of rehearsal) which will become systematic during the African colonization. At this time, the goal was to find more slaves necessary to meet the increasing demand of labor in the West Indies and North America (Louisiana, Virginia).

The Mulattoes also played an important role in the trade because of their knowledge of African and Portuguese or English language (these last two considered as the usual slave trade languages). Some companies trained Africans in Europe, but this was a limited experience because the operation was considered too expensive. The increasing need of translators was solved by the creation of schools in Africa.

A fourth case is that of the African merchants in France. There were testimonies of their presence, but we do not have much information about them except that they apparently were not engaged in the slave trade. Their activities were related to the trade between Senegal and Dieppe or Le Havre-Rouen that we already mentioned in our preceding chapters. The documents about these activities were destroyed.

Our last case refers to the presence of African soldiers. The first black regiment was the regiment of the "Maréchal de Saxe" which incorporated in 1746 26 black soldiers, all of them riding white horses! However, except for this particularity and the fact that they were considered more as a



personal escort (although there are divergent testimonies on this point), they received the same treatment as the other soldiers and were enlisted on the same terms.

From 1646 there were black kettle-drummers, trumpet-players or drummers in the European Army.

. . . since the XVII Century, it was usual in some Army Corps to possess a black kettle-drummer attached to the first company of the regiment. In 1929 the Sabretache's notebook signaled five black kettle-drummers having served during the XVII Century

. . . . .  
The first one was Léger Henry, born in Paris in 1628, enlisted in 1646, . . .

. . . . .  
I found about twenty of them in the muster roll of the troops in the first half of the century. . . . Others are trumpet players. We found also two drummers of "dragons" . . . . Their presence was usual enough for that in the "Royal-Pologne" in 1768, the kettle-drummers received the obligatory nickname of "négre" even if he was white.<sup>80</sup>

However with the creation of the regiment of the "Maréchal of Saxe," it was the first time, but not the last one (Senegalese sharpshooters in 1914-18, Blacks' regiments during the World Wars and colonial wars-Indochine, Algeria, etc.), that a black unity was constituted. What was their origin? A. Corvisier tells us that:

Actually out of 100 known black soldiers, only 40 are said born in African countries. It is possible that in this figure, some had come already in France for other reasons, and may be also to the Islands. Fifteen were said born in Europe, 39 in America, 7 in Asia. For 6 of them, their origin is undetermined or unknown. It is probable that most of them were recruited in France. We know that 7 of them were recruited in La Rochelle and 2 in Bordeaux.<sup>81</sup>

It was very difficult for the Maréchal of Saxe to recruit these men, especially because of the opposition of the colonists which feared the formation of leaders able to conduct revolts in the colonies. A letter of Maurepas (minister of the French Navy) to the Maréchal of Saxe explains clearly the situation:

I even cannot let you, ignore more time, M., that the establishment of your troop of negroes has already given rise to a lot of troubles on that account to the inhabitants of the islands. I tried to calm them explaining that they could be confident in your care to prevent the potential danger of the negroes that you would not have killed in the service of the King, but I confess that I am not undisturbed myself by this. Our colonies would have infinitely more to fear from the superiority of the slaves if they had some chiefs able to make them know it and use it, than all the efforts that all the enemies could make against them (colonies).<sup>82</sup>

As we know these fears were quite prophetic.

Finally after the death of the Maréchal of Saxe (November, 1750) and because of the restless pressure of the colonists, the regiment was dissolved and its soldiers or officers were dispersed in the army. They recovered a more "traditional role" as trumpet-players, kettle-drummers or to the service of an officer. Their return to the Antilles was carefully prevented. It seems that this experience could not succeed on a large scale until slavery was abolished, or at least until the colonists' political clout was eroded enough to prevent it.

Until the revolution we find just scattered examples of African soldiers in France (African officers were a rarity in

the Eighteenth Century). We mentioned the cases of Aniaba during the Seventeenth Century, and of Alexandre Dumas after the mid-Eighteenth Century. There was also the case of Vincent Olivier (Afro-American from St. Domingue) who lived in France from 1700 to 1720, and finished his career as captain general of all Afro-American militia in the region of Cap-Haitien.

After the abolition of 1794 which proclaimed freedom and equality of rights for the black men, and until 1802, the status of the Africans improved. They were allowed to participate in the political life during this period. Some of them were members of the National Convention or of the Constituent Assembly. They were admitted to the Liancourt school (previously reserved for the orphans of the colonial aristocracy). For example Toussain Louverture (leader of the insurrection of St. Domingue) sent his two sons there. They also could get married to a black or white person in France.

It was just before this period that J. Raimond (the same person previously-mentioned who came to France to defend the rights of the free Mulattoes in 1784) began raising funds from the Mulattoes of Paris and created in 1792 the most famous "Black Legion" (named also "Hussard of St. Domingue," "Legion of the Americans," "National Legion of the South" or "Legion St. George"). It was a cavalry regiment of 100 free Africans and Mulattoes under the command of the Chevalier of St. Georges (1745-1799), himself a free Mulatto from Guadeloupe.

Alexandre Dumas also served in this regiment.

As we said J. Raimond created his regiment in 1792, before the abolition, when France's hope of redressing the situation in St. Domingue had not been abandoned. In 1793, under the "Terror", he was imprisoned for two reasons: ". . . a) that he had incited the negroes to revolt, [and] b) that he was a friend of Brissot, the leader of the Girondists."<sup>83</sup>

He was lucky enough to be released after 1794, and in 1797 he was the representative in France of the government of Toussain Louverture (now governor of St. Domingue); by then J. Raimond had shifted towards less-conservative positions and was allied with the slave emancipation movement, as it appeared that equal rights for the free Mulattoes was not dissociable of the status of the black Africans in France and in the colonies. In 1801 he returned to St. Domingue: ". . . this hasty retreat was probably connected with Napoleon's threat against St. Domingue's Afro-American leaders."<sup>84</sup>

For what concerns his regiment, it had a short career. Because of their refusal to fight in the West Indies they were sent to fight the royalist insurgents in Vendée (North West Atlantic coast of France). Finally, involved in a massacre of slave traders (revenge of the intervention of the latter in St. Domingue) in Nantes, the unit was dissolved in 1795. Nevertheless a military career during the Eighteenth Century, although confronted with strong opposition, appeared as a rare

opportunity for the black man.

Even Bonaparte, reluctant as he was to promote black Africans (for example he treated Alexandre Dumas with contempt) and who re-established slave trade and discriminatory measures in France toward Blacks after 1802, did not hesitate to enlist them. During the campaign of Egypt (1798-1801), eager to increase his troops, he arranged to buy young black slaves for the army. He also created a black unit (1802-1804), the "Compagnies d' Hommes de Couleur," later named the "Pionniers Noirs" which ended its career "at the service of the King of Naples under the name of Royal Africain."<sup>85</sup>

We believe we have briefly described the evolving social status, as conditioned by French political developments, of the black men in France from the Seventeenth Century to the end of the Eighteenth Century. We can now try to draw some conclusions.

#### B. Evolution of the Status of the Black Men in France

Until the Eighteenth Century, the status of the Blacks in France is mixed. The African can be an exotic or mythic image relevant of the same curiosity that could arouse Indians or Chinese people. We saw also that Africans could be considered as equal.

Their representations in the religious painting (the black Wise Men, African women in the Garden of Delights, etc.), or in Durer, Rubens, Gerard Dou's paintings, and even in the

literature and sculpture (e.g., Virgins of the main porch of the cathedral of Berne sculptured in 1466-1480) often reflect the ambiguity of their status. However, since the Sixteenth Century Africans were increasingly seen as a valuable commodity meeting an actual need of labour in the colonies, they were less and less an exterior and remote image.

We encountered a seemingly conflicting situation in the court of Louis XIV. We saw that black children were often treated as exotic objects (a curiosity!) then sold as slaves, while on the other hand we witnessed a black aristocracy treated on equal terms, and whom ambassadors received to develop promising relationships.

During the Eighteenth Century this ambiguity disappeared. We exposed the evolution of the law about slavery in France in our second chapter. We saw that with the "Code Noir" and the Edicts of 1738 and of 1777, the status of Blacks were more and more associated to their condition in the colonies, as most of them came to France through the intermediary of planters or slave traders.

Colonists were powerful enough to tilt the French legislation in their favor. They had two preoccupations: first, that when Blacks were brought into France they would not have the opportunity to recover their freedom. For this, slavery had to be recognized in the Metropolis. Second, that the laws of the kingdom would not protect the "Maroon" slaves.

However, in general, all the texts were inspired by fear of revolts in the colonies or of potential revolt which could

be imported by slaves or freed slaves returning to the colonies. The opposition of the colonists to the black regiment was one example of this fear, and their reluctance to repatriate slaves who had been in France in contact with other ideas, and a different system was another example.

The colonists were supported in their demands by the slave traders who themselves were very eager to have slaves at their service. In their social competition with the French Aristocracy, they sought the prestige attached to ownership of black servants.

Against them they found the Parliament of Paris and of some other regions. These Parliaments, formed by a group of magistrates ("Noblesse de Robe") without interest in the slave trade, and often hostile to the parvenue merchant aristocracy, objected and often did not recognize the royal edicts which granted rights to the planters and slave traders. Consequently, the laws concerning the black Africans could be very different from one province to another, and a slave always had the possibility of claiming his freedom and winning it (we have several examples during the Eighteenth Century of such processes).

We saw that the first jurist-philosopher to defend a position similar to that of the magistrates was Montesquieu. His principal point was that slavery in France was dangerous, and furthermore, a social and economic aberration.

All these groups, colonists, slave traders and magistrates influenced in turn the French legislation on slavery

and consequently the status of the Blacks.

The edict of 1777 was a compromise between these interests. It did not allow slavery in France, nor did it accept the presence of Blacks (free or slaves) in France. It reinforced discrimination and segregative laws against the Blacks who were not, for several reasons, repatriated in the colonies as it was enjoined in the law.

Slavery and slave trade were abolished only after a long struggle. If both were not specific to the commercial capitalism they were nevertheless for a long period associated with its development.

More importantly and totally new was that from 1685 to 1777 a social hierarchy based on race emerged in France (and also in the rest of Europe and in America) parallel to the old system based on religious faith and Nobility. At the bottom of this hierarchy were the black Africans who seemed suited for slavery (fulfilling the need of labor of the colonies), and for occupying the lowest social position (particularly as servants) in France.

During the revolution and following the revolt of St. Domingue, as we saw earlier, there was a short period between 1794-1802 where an attempt to reverse this trend and to improve the status of Blacks was momentarily successful. During this period France did not have any major colonial interests, and slave trade was abolished. The most wealthy colony (St. Domingue) was on its way to independence, while the others were either under British control or in provisory



scission with France.

This period and the one that follows illustrate how race as a legal and ideological element determining an individual's status is closely associated to the development of a system of economic interests, relying on the use of forced labor, and how when these interests disappear, the need for racial regulations controlling the use and ownership of enslaved labor is no longer necessary, making race as a legal concept obsolete.

We may conclude then that the emergence of race as determinant of social position was a phenomenon specific to the Eighteenth Century and to the development of commercial and colonial capitalism.

After the break of 1794-1802, Bonaparte's period will see new racially-minded regulations being enacted in France. His new colonial conquests particularly in Africa, plus the emergence of the interests of industrial capitalism will induce Napoleon to change and reinforce segregative and discriminative policies toward blacks. Finally, between Africans and Europeans, other races will be ranked according to how they would fit in the political, social and economic system.

## Chapter V

### CONCLUSION

We have now the task of drawing conclusions from the different points which we have developed. Our first conclusion relates to what we call the general impact of the slave trade.

We saw that the development of the slave trade was parallel to the exploration of Africa and the settlement of new territories in Africa and America by the Portuguese. From our historical review it appeared that from the beginning the forced immigration of the Africans was linked to the needs of labor in the European (Portuguese and Spanish) colonies.

One important fact was that Portuguese and Spanish did not attempt to control the slave trade; they either left their colonies to undertake this commerce, as in the case of Portugal, or they gave Asientos to other countries, as did Spain. Slave trade, in both cases, was not integrated into the economic and social development of the Metropolis, it remained a marginal phenomenon.

This was a striking difference from England and France, both of which used slave trade to create and to gain new markets and to affirm their presence abroad, settling new territories with the help of an essential factor of production: black enslaved labor. Slave trade can be considered

then as a tool to implement a particular policy: Mercantilism whose principal features were protectionism, market expansion and industrial development facilitated by the exploitation of the colonies to the profit of the Metropolis.

We see at least two reasons why Portuguese and Spanish did not follow a similar policy: first, they got an early access to the new markets, and were in a situation of "right" since the treaty of Tordesillas (1494), and secondly gold and silver were still the essential commodities which motivated their expansion, the development of the colonies being a marginal aspect of their expansion at the beginning.

It was from the second part of the Seventeenth Century that France launched its colonial policy, organized around two important lines:

- the authorization of the slave trade (in 1642) which was kept under the control of the Metropolis and of the State Companies until 1769.
- the elaboration of Mercantilism one important aspect of which, we recall again, was the subjection of the interest of the colonies to those of the Metropolis. Essentially, the colonies were to supply new products, as sugar, cotton, coffee, etc. in abundance and at a low price.

The systematic organization and development of the slave trade with the purpose of supplying the colonies with forced labor had another major consequence which was the emergence of an international labor market.

Finally, from our overall description of the slave trade, in its historical context, we conclude that besides its profits or its contribution to the industrialization

both considerable respectively in the development of a merchant aristocracy and the take-off of a modern industrial sector, slave trade must be understood as the key element of the development of the colonies, backbone of the mercantilist policy.

In our third chapter we were interested in reviewing the question of the profits of the slave trade because our argument about its contribution to the emergence of a wealthy merchant aristocracy could not be sustained if it was proved that slave trade was not profitable. Nor could it be sustained in regard to its multiple role in the French economy, which we pointed out.

We used the evaluation of slave trade profits in England because there were not similar studies and data for France, and because similarities as to development level and policy (Mercantilism) design and goals seemed to us to warrant the analogy.

In our assessment of the "profit" debate we checked the quantitative analysis of Engerman and Anstey, and we think we have shown that they were too sensitive to an arbitrary choice of data and critical parameters.

Our main conclusion on this point is, besides the fact that Engerman did not convince us that the slave trade was not a profitable trade and so that its social and economic impact was very limited, that he reduced the debate to two aspects (volume and profit of the slave trade) and therefore failed to show the role of the slave trade as a supplier of

an essential factor, forced labor for the development of the colonies.

Although it was not our major concern, we also tried to evaluate the role of the slave trade in the primitive accumulation, sketching a comparison between England and France, since both countries as we already pointed out followed a similar policy (Mercantilism) contrary to other major slave trade countries as Portugal.

Finally we tried to prove that the different arguments (lower volume and different organizations of the French slave trade, and the fact that there was not an Industrial Revolution in France at this time) which could prevent us from accepting similar conclusions about the role of the slave trade in France, were not justified. It allowed us to develop the different impacts of the slave trade and then to understand the circumstances and reasons of the black immigration and the repercussion of the slave trade on the status of the Blacks, not only in the colonies (quite evident) but in Europe and France in particular.

This analysis led us to stress once again that slave trade was part of a larger system and had one main role: It supported the plantation economy, and by its development and the development of the colonies created a demand which contributed to the commercial and industrial development of the center.

From this last consequence we draw three major effects on the French society which also justified our analysis of

the economic and social impact of the slave trade, because ultimately they allowed us to better understand the process of black immigration in France.

The first effect was the rise of a Bourgeoisie. Enriched by the slave trade, this Bourgeoisie was able to play a major political and economic role at the eve of the Revolution. Their general successful struggle with the aristocratic planters, and in another case with the magistrates (victory more mitigated), reflected the fact that money could then obtain nobility and would soon prevail over any title.

The second effect was linked to the economic development of the Atlantic towns where the slave traders undertook their activities. Industries were created to answer to the specific market of the slave trade, and others to transform the products coming from the colonies. In both cases, these industries and their new methods led to different conceptions of production beyond corporatism and craftmanships: the modern manufactures still of a limited scope and impact emerged under the influence of the slave trade.

The third effect was the place of the slave trade in the political debate of the French Revolution. It revealed the ambiguity of a class, the Bourgeoisie, whose revolutionary principles "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" could not apply to all men as it was claimed. The merchants, a major element of this revolution, entered into conflict with the intellectuals, philosophers, etc., who had some painful moments to

conciliate their ideal with the reality. This reality was in fact that the colonies (with slave and slavery) were part of and responsible for this new economic and social order, and from this reality the seeds of revolutionary change grew. Consequently, the leaders of the Abolitionist movement had to accept more or less and share with the merchant Bourgeoisie the paradox of fighting in France for liberty and to tolerate slavery in the French colonies.

The evolution of the status of the Blacks during the Eighteenth Century reflected the evolving economic importance of the colonies whose development was based on black enslaved labor, the activities and power of slave traders, and consequently the general weakness of the abolitionist movement.

We showed the evolution of the concept of race as a legal concept (e.g., "Code Noir") linked to the development of a set of interests (colonists, traders, industrialists, etc.) relying on the use of forced labor, and we think we showed how, when these interests vanished, the need for racial regulations were no longer necessary.

We may then conclude again that the emergence of race as determinant of social position was a phenomenon specific to the Eighteenth Century and to the development of commercial and colonial capitalism.

We believe our contribution in general consists in having made a brief synthesis of the literature about the impact of the slave trade in France, viewed in a historical

framework that brings diverse elements, as the French expansion, the development of its colonies in the context of the mercantilist policy, and the beginning of the black immigration in France together.

We think that this research has enhanced our knowledge of the early black immigration in France, its dynamics and its economic and social causes, thus providing a clear starting point for further analysis regarding late process of black immigration to Europe.



## **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX A

First we give the data that S. Engerman uses to obtain his results for the year 1770.

Table V\*

SOME FIGURES TO EVALUATE THE PROFITABILITY OF THE  
SLAVE TRADE IN ENGLAND

	Annual Average Exports (000) of Slaves	West African Price (£)	Jamaica Price (£)	Estimated Profit Per Slave
From 1761- 1780	(a) 28.0	(b) 16.08	(c) 37.73 (31.25)	(d) 12.22 (1.58)
	(1) Total Slave Trade Profits (000)	(2) British National Income (£ million)	Ratio = (1)/(2)	
1770	342.2 (44.2)	(e) 62.8 or	.0054 (.0007)	
	342.2 (44.2)	130	.0026 (.00034)	

(a) 1761-1807: Anstey "The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition," p. 39

(b) Bean "British Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade," p. 72.

(c) Bean "British Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade," p. 77.  
In the "( )" Anstey data

(d) "Computed by deduction on quarter from the Jamaica price as an allowance (probably too low) for freight costs and slave losses in transit." In "( )" Anstey data

(e) 62.8 "Figure taken from their index numbers of Eighteenth Century real output (p. 78) with the use of the

\*Engerman: "The Slave Trade and British Capital Formation"  
Table I, p. 436; Table II, p. 438; Table III, p. 440

Schumpeter-Ilboy consumer price index to get current dollar estimates (B.R. Mitchell, with the collaboration of Phyllis Deane, Abstract of British Historical Statistics (Cambridge, 1962), p. 468-69),"

- 130 "Figure taken from Phyllis Deane and W.A. Cole, British Economic Growth, 1688-1959, 2nd Edit. (Cambridge, 1969), pp. 156, 282."

His calculations are also based on a constant ratio of investment to national income (I) in Britain of 5 percent, mean of data given by Deane and Cole ("British Economic Growth," p. 259-264) who gave a variation from about 3 to 7 percent between 1688-1800.

For the purpose of our demonstration we develop some new calculations:

#### Formula

$$\frac{\frac{STP}{BNI}}{\frac{I}{BNI}} = \frac{STP}{I} = \text{Contribution of Slave Trade Profit to Capital Formation}$$

$$\frac{\frac{STP}{I}}{\frac{II}{I}} = \frac{STP}{II} = \text{Contribution of Slave Trade Profit to Industrial Capital Formation}$$

$\frac{II}{I} \rightarrow$  Estimation by Deane and Cole (British Economic Growth, p. 269-277) at about 20% (.2) at the end of the Eighteenth Century.

CalculationsFor the Year 1770

With a Ratio  $\frac{I}{BNI}$  of 3% and .0054  $\frac{STP}{BNI}$

$$\frac{.0054}{.03} = 0.18 \quad \frac{.18}{.2} = \underline{0.9}$$

With a Ratio I of 5% and .0054

$$\frac{.0054}{.05} = 0.108 \quad \frac{.108}{.2} = \underline{0.54}$$

With a Ratio I of 7% and .0054

$$\frac{.0054}{.07} = 0.077 \quad \frac{.077}{.2} = \underline{0.39}$$

With a Ratio of 3% and .0026

$$\frac{.0026}{.03} = .087 \quad \frac{.087}{.2} = \underline{.43}$$

With a Ratio of 5% and .0026

$$\frac{.0026}{.05} = .052 \quad \frac{.052}{.2} = \underline{.26}$$

With a Ratio of 7% and .0026

$$\frac{.0026}{.07} = .037 \quad \frac{.037}{.2} = \underline{.19}$$

S. Engerman points out that these calculations were done in the optimum conditions:

. . . that no profits from the slave trade flowed into agricultural investment, into West Indian plantations, nor, despite its presumed profitability were they reinvested in the slave trade.<sup>86</sup>

We only partially agreed with him, when he presents these conditions as optimum conditions; the problem appears more complex. We have two examples: in England the Hibbert's family of Manchester began the trade supplying checks and Indian cottons to the Royal African Company, then they were directly involved in the slave trade, owned sugar plantations, finally had one of the most important W.I. commission houses in London. This demonstrates that slave trade and plantations were closely linked and so it is almost impossible to determine what part of the profit came from the slave trade and how much was invested in the industry. However, this example supports the fact that slave trade was the engine which contributed to the development of the cotton industry. In France, the Montaudoin's family (Nantes) reinvested its fortune in the cotton industry. This family was one of the most important slave traders of Nantes from 1713-1725:

The Montaudoin, for example, keeps (of the slave trade's activities) only what is necessary to supply in capital and raw material (indigo) their cotton industry.<sup>87</sup>

Let us now discuss our figures. Our first result 0.9, means that the contribution of slave trade profits to industrial capital formation was 90 percent, which is enormous! Engerman offers only the second result 0.54, so he seems to consider it as calculated with the more realistic data. In fact all the figures obtained from 90 percent to 19 percent (even considering the optimum conditions) do not allow to

dismiss the hypothesis that slave trade was a major factor in the British Industrial Revolution, to the contrary, they tend to corroborate this hypothesis. S. Engerman seems very annoyed with his results so he rejects his own calculation to give blandly the results of Anstey (only partially developed in Engerman's footnotes). We see in the Table V, that for Anstey the total STP in 1770 is 7.7 times less than the figure chosen by Engerman (342.2 against 44.2). Doing the same calculations that preceded but only with a ratio I of 5% and a ratio (last column, Table V) of .0007 then .00034, we obtain first the result of 0.07 which means that STP contributed about 7 percent of the industrial capital formation (it is the figure given by S. Engerman to refute his own findings) and our second result is (.034) 3.4 percent. These figures are low enough to contest a major role supposedly played by the slave trade in the British Industrial Revolution, but never to refute completely the hypothesis.

## APPENDIX B

Anstey proceeds as follows: from the year 1761 to 1807 he gives the number of voyages, the tons that they represented (in general a slave ship was between 150T and 300T, but could have a minimum of 45T), the number of slaves landed, the average gross sale price to figure the gross receipts on slaves. From this gross receipts he subtracts the "net receipts," "the net receipts after discounting," "the outset less 5% for produce number (#)," he adds the "residual value less 5% for produce," to finally find the profit (%) of the slave trade.

Our objections come from what he considers as deductions. First, the "net receipts" which counts as 18 percent of deduction. It is defined by Anstey as:

These were, notably, the captain's, mate's, and surgeon's commissions, the commission payable to the slave factor and on the remitting home of the bills of exchange given in payment for the slaves, and various disbursements made by the ship's captain.<sup>88</sup>

In fact it is not reasonable to put in the deductions, the captain's, mate's and surgeon's commissions, which may be deductible from the slave merchant profits, but not from the slave trade profits. Furthermore we know by Anstey himself that ship-owners had a maritime background in 12 or 13 percent of the cases for Liverpool and in 40 percent of the cases for Whitehaven.<sup>89</sup>

So we can assume that an important part of these commissions were saved and then used to buy slave ships or shares in the slave trade; consequently they were an integral part of the slave trade profits.

It is difficult to estimate the percentage that the captain's, mate's, and surgeon's commissions represented in the 18 percent deduced, since Anstey does not give any details. But with different sources: for example, J. Mettas in "Pour une Histoire de la Traite des Noirs Françaises" who estimates that the captain had a 3 percent commission on the price of every slave sold, plus the right to sell one or several slaves on his own account and finally his salary (p. 45), we estimated this percentage to amount roughly to 6 percent, allocating arbitrarily 1.5 percent commission for mate and surgeon. This estimation does not pretend to be accurate; it is just an approximative figure emerging from our different sources and that allows us to contrast Anstey's calculations.

Second, "the net receipts after discounting." The slaves were traded against bills of exchange most of the time. In other cases typical products (sugar, coffee, etc.) were exchanged against slaves (third leg of the triangular trade). However, in the case of England it seems that the barter system was an exception after the mid-Eighteenth Century, and bills of exchange became usual. But even cashed after two years it was not a loss for the slave merchants, but just another form of payment to substitute the barter



system which was not always advantageous because of the time necessary to charge the colonial products in the islands. The capitalized value of the interests forgone during the payment delay were in general accumulated to the slave price (higher price). In fact Anstey first gives the slave trade profit without deducting the discounting, but after that calculates the percentage of the slave trade profit with the deduction! (see Table VI)

Third, the "outset less 5% for produce." We globally accept the outset deductions which are ship, outfit, cargo and 6 percent insurance less 5 percent for produce. This 5 percent represents the profit made by the merchants who sold products from Africa (ivory, camwood, gum, etc.) other than the slaves.

Each time Anstey discounts the price of the whole ship, but this is compensated when he adds the "residual value, less 5% for produce." The residual value "indicates value of ship and equipment at the termination of a voyage" (p. 44, c.f., Anstey). It seems that Anstey considers that a ship made two or three voyages on average in its career. G. Martin estimated in his study of Nantes, that a slave ship could make up to five or six voyages maximum. If we take these last numbers it would increase the residual value and consequently the slave trade profit, but we chose just to point out this fact. Finally, we figured that the 5 percent for produce subtracted to the residual value corresponded to the 5 percent for produce subtracted at

the outset, so if it was kept in the residual value it would have been twice added to the slave trade profit.

Now after having, we hope, clarified the terms of the evaluation, we present our own estimation (c.f., Table VI) in parallel to Anstey's. His aggregates are calculated from the year 1761-1807; in fact we can object that in order to evaluate the impact of the slave trade profit on the Industrial Revolution (period of take-off fixed between 1782-1802 by W.W. Rostov) we have to consider the years just before (1761 to 1780) as did Engerman; but this only if we agree with Engerman's perspective; we consider also the years 1761 to 1800 which are for England (as for France) the peak years of the slave trade. The years from 1800 to 1807 corresponded to the end of the slave trade (for France since 1794). The regulations and the blocus consequence of the Napoleonic Wars decreased the profits. Anstey gives 3.5 percent profit for 1800-1807, the lowest of the five decennial figures (respectively 8.2%; 12.1%; 10.7%; 13%; and 3.5%).

In our Table VI we obtain a minimum profit of 19 percent and a maximum of 30.6 percent. So the 9.5 percent profit given by Anstey is comparatively quite low, and at best seems to correspond to the slave merchant profits. As far as we can rely on the data, our findings with a mean of 25 percent would affirm the incontestable profitability of the slave trade.

Table 6: Volume and profitability of the British Slave Trade

	1761-1807 Anstey's aggregate*	1761-1807 without discounting(8)	1761-1780 without Discount- ing(8)	1761-1780 without (8)less12 *(18%-6%)	1761-1807 without (8)and less 12%	1761-1800 without (8)and less 12%
1-Voyages	5693	5693	2448	2448	5693	4785
2-Tons	930642	930642	273658	273658	930642	711952
3-Slaves Landed	1428701	1428701	517876	517876	1428701	1211145
4-Slaves Landed per Ton	1.54	1.54	1.895	1.895	1.54	1.77
5-Average Gross Sa- les Price £	42	42	32	32	42	37.5
6-Gross receipts on Slaves £	60005356	60005356	16416656	16416656	60005356	46951996
7-Net receipts £	49204392 ( less 18% = 82% )	49204392	13461658	14446657 ( less 12% = 88% )	52804713	41317756
8-Net Re- ceipt Di- scounting	44096168	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
9-residual Value less 5% for Produce £	6428674	6428674	1472637	1472637	6428674	4454997
10-Total Credit £	50524842 (cols8+9)	55633066 (cols7+9)	14934295 (cols7+9)	15919294 (cols7+9)	59233387 (cols7+9)	45772753 (cols7+9)
11-Outset less 5% for Produce	46153166	46153166	12583114	12583114	46153166	35059022
12-Profit £	4371676 (cols10-11)	9479900 (cols14)	2351181 (cols10-11)	3336180 (cols10-11)	13080221 (cols10-11)	10713731
13-Profit 12/11	9.5	20.5	19	26.5	28.3	30.6
14-Resour- ce Incre- ment £	9479900 (cols7+9 -11 )					

\* (c.f. Anstey Table I, p.47)

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Jean Mettas, "Pour une Histoire de la Traite des Noirs Françaises: Sources et Problèmes," p. 46 (summary).

<sup>2</sup>Encyclopédia Universalis, Vol. 2, p. 728 (ed. Paris, 1968).

<sup>3</sup>Hubert Deschamps, Histoire de la Traite des Noirs de l' Antiquité à nos Jours (ed. Fayard, 1971), p. 42-45.

<sup>4</sup>Victor Schoelcher, Esclavage et Colonisation: Introduction par Aimé Césaire, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup>Histoire Générale de l'Afrique Noire, Tome I, des origines à 1800, ed. P.U.F., Paris, 1970, p. 222-224.

<sup>6</sup>Histoire Générale de L'Afrique Noire, Tome I, des origines à 1800, ed. P.U.F., Paris, 1970, p. 224.

<sup>7</sup>Hubert Deschamps, Les Méthodes et les Doctrines Coloniales de la France (du XV Siècle à nos Jours).

<sup>8</sup>Encyclopédia Universalis: vol. 10, p. 272.

<sup>9</sup>Encyclopédia Universalis: vol. 14, p. 186.

<sup>10</sup>Encyclopédia Universalis: vol. 9, p. 633.

<sup>11</sup>Encyclopédia Universalis: vol. 10, p. 570 & vol. 8, p. 570

<sup>12</sup>Encyclopédia Universalis: vol. 5, p. 754.

<sup>13</sup>Encyclopédia Universalis: vol. 8, p. 177-178.

<sup>14</sup>Hubert Deschamps, Histoire de la Traite des Noirs de l' Antiquité à nos jours (ed. Fayard, 1971), p. 66.

<sup>15</sup>Debrunner Hans. W., Presence and Prestige - African in Europe . . ., p. 73

<sup>16</sup>Jean Mettas, "Pour une Histoire de la Traite Française," p. 22.

<sup>17</sup>Hubert Deschamps, Les Méthodes et les Doctrines Coloniales de la France, du XVI s. à Nos Jours, p. 61-62.

<sup>18</sup>Hubert Deschamps, Histoire de la Traite des Noirs de l'Antiquité à nos Jours, p. 86.

<sup>19</sup>Russell Parsons Jameson, Montesquieu et l'Esclavage, p. 24-25.

<sup>20</sup>R. Parsons Jameson, Montesquieu et l' Esclavage, p. 171.

<sup>21</sup>R. Parsons Jameson, Montesquieu et l' Esclavage, p. 112.

<sup>22</sup>Michel Devèze, Antilles, Guyanes, la Mer des Caraïbes de 1492 a 1789, p. 193.

<sup>23</sup>Hubert Deschamps, Histoire de la Traite des Noirs, p. 139.

<sup>24</sup>Hubert Deschamps, Histoire de la Traite des Noirs, p. 139.

<sup>25</sup>R. Parsons Jameson, Montesquieu et l' Esclavage, p. 72.

<sup>26</sup>R. Parsons Jameson, Montesquieu et l' Esclavage, p. 73.

<sup>27</sup>Jules Mathorez, Les Etrangers en France sous l'ancien Régime, p. 398.

<sup>28</sup>Charles Oscar Hardy, The Negro Question in the French Revolution, p. 6.

<sup>29</sup>C. O. Hardy, The Negro Question in the French Revolution, p. 6.

<sup>30</sup>Roger Anstey, The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, 1760-1810, p. XXIV.

<sup>31</sup>Valerie Quinney, "The Problem of Civil Rights for Free Men of Color in the Early French Revolution," p. 55.

<sup>32</sup>C. O. Hardy, The Negro Question in the French Revolution, p. 27.

<sup>33</sup>C. O. Hardy, The Negro Question in the French Revolution, p. 73.

<sup>34</sup>Eli F. Heckscher, Mercantilism, p. 19-20.

<sup>35</sup>Hubert Deschamps, Les Méthodes et les Doctrines Coloniales de la France, p. 22.

<sup>36</sup>Hubert Deschamps, Les Méthodes et les Doctrines Coloniales de la France, p. 67.

<sup>37</sup>Pierre Léon, Histoire Economique et Sociale du Monde, Vol. 2, p. 198-199.

<sup>38</sup>Pierre Léon, Histoire Economique et Sociale du Monde, Vol. 2, p. 204.

<sup>39</sup>Perry Viles, "The Slaving Interest in the Atlantic Ports, 1763-92," p. 529-530.

<sup>40</sup>Philip D. Curtin, The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census, p. XVIII.

<sup>41</sup>Philip D. Curtin, The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census, p. 126.

<sup>42</sup>Philip D. Curtin, The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census, p. 171.

<sup>43</sup>Philip D. Curtin, The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census, p. 154.

<sup>44</sup>Pierre Léon, Histoire Economique et Sociale du Monde, Vol. 3, p. 318.

<sup>45</sup>Tihomir J. Markovitch, "La Croissance Industrielle sous l' Ancien Régime," p. 645.

<sup>46</sup>Stanley L. Engerman, "The Slave Trade and British Capital Formation in the Eighteenth Century: A Comment on the Williams Thesis," p. 434.

<sup>47</sup>Stanley L. Engerman, "The Slave Trade and British Capital . . .", p. 434-435.

<sup>48</sup>Pierre Léon, Histoire Economique et Sociale du Monde, Vol. 2, p. 464.

<sup>49</sup>Stanley L. Engerman, "The Slave Trade and British Capital Formation in the Eighteenth Century: A Comment on the Williams Thesis,," p. 440.

<sup>50</sup>Richard B. Sheridan, Sugar and Slavery, p. 478.

<sup>51</sup>R. B. Sheridan, Sugar and Slavery, p. 476.

<sup>52</sup>Tihomir J. Markovitch, "La Croissance Industrielle sous l' Ancien Régime," p. 647.

<sup>53</sup>Pierre Léon, Histoire Economique et Sociale du Monde, Vol. 3, p. 53.

<sup>54</sup>Walter E. Mincheton & Pieter C. Emmer, "The Atlantic Slave Trade: New Approaches. An Introduction," p. 17.

<sup>55</sup>Pierre H. Boulle, "Slave Trade, Commercial Organization and Industrial Growth in Eighteenth Century Nantes," p. 77.

<sup>56</sup>Pierre H. Boulle, "Slave Trade, Commercial Organization . . .," p. 79.

<sup>57</sup>R. Parsons Jameson, Montesquieu et l' Esclavage, p. 57-58.

<sup>58</sup>Sète a Mediterranean port.

<sup>59</sup>Ernest Mandel, Marxist Economic Theory, V. 2, p. 444.

<sup>60</sup>Jean Meyer, "Le Commerce Négrier Nantais (1774-1792)", p. 123.

<sup>61</sup>Pierre H. Boulle, "Slave Trade Commercial Organization . . .," p. 85-86

<sup>62</sup>Pierre H. Boulle, "Slave Trade Commercial Organization . . .," p. 87.

<sup>63</sup>Perry Viles, "The Slaving Interest in the Atlantic Ports, 1763-1792," p. 535-536

<sup>64</sup>Pierre H. Boulle, "Slave Trade, Commercial Organization . . .," p. 103.

<sup>65</sup>Perry Viles, "The Slaving Interest in the Atlantic Ports, 1763-1792," p. 537.

<sup>66</sup>Pierre H. Boulle, "Slave Trade Commercial Organization . . .," p.81.

<sup>67</sup>Pierre H. Boulle, "Marchandise de Traite et Développement Industriel dans la France et l' Angleterre du XVIII siècle," p. 317.

<sup>68</sup>Pierre H. Boulle, "Slave Trade, Commercial Organization . . .," p. 94.

<sup>69</sup>Pierre H. Boulle, "Marchandises de Traite et Développement Industriel dans la France et l' Angleterre du XVIII siècle," p. 320-321.

<sup>70</sup>Pierre H. Boulle, "Slave Trade, Commercial Organization . . .," p. 108.

<sup>71</sup>Philip D. Curtin, The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census, p. 116 and 119.

<sup>72</sup>Jules Mathorez, Les Etrangers en France sous l'Ancien Régime, p. 388.

<sup>73</sup>George M. Frederickson, Toward a Social Interpretation of the Development of American Racism, p. 245.

<sup>74</sup>André Corvisier, "Les Soldats Noirs du Maréchal de Saxe," p. 375.

<sup>75</sup>Hans W. Debrunner, Presence and Prestige - Africans in Europe, p. 90.

<sup>76</sup>Hans W. Debrunner, Presence and Prestige - . . . ., p. 89.

<sup>77</sup>Hans W. Debrunner, Presence and Prestige - . . . ., p. 67-68.

<sup>78</sup>Hans W. Debrunner, Presence and Prestige - . . . ., p. 70-71.

<sup>79</sup>Hans W. Debrunner, Presence and Prestige - . . . ., p. 71.

<sup>80</sup>André Corvisier, "Les Soldats Noirs du Maréchal de Saxe," p. 378.

<sup>81</sup>André Corvisier, "Les Soldats Noirs du Maréchal de Saxe," p. 384-85.

<sup>82</sup>André Corvisier, "Les Soldats Noirs du Maréchal de Saxe," p. 385.

<sup>83</sup>Hans W. Debrunner, Presence and Prestige - . . . ., p. 131.

<sup>84</sup>Hans W. Debrunner, Presence and Prestige - . . . ., p. 132.

<sup>85</sup>André Corvisier, "Les Soldats Noirs du Maréchal de Saxe," p. 399.

<sup>86</sup>Stanley L. Engerman, "The Slave Trade and British Capital Formation," p. 440.

<sup>87</sup>Gaston Martin, Nantes au XVIII Siècle: L' Ere des Négriers (1714-1774), p. 205.



<sup>88</sup>Roger Anstey, The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition 1760-1810, Appendix 2, p. 417.

<sup>89</sup>Roger Anstey, The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition 1760-1810, p. 8.

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