# Intra-European Trade in Atlantic Africa and the African Atlantic

Anne Ruderman

WHEN it came to "succeeding" in the slave trade, John Roberts had the formula all figured out. "The secret of the African trade l[ies] mostly on the choice of a good proper cargo and managing the same cleverly on the coast," Roberts told Rhode Island merchant William Wansey in the mid-eighteenth century. Of course, in the inverted dichotomies of the eighteenth century, a "successful" voyage entailed a tremendous loss of freedom and of life, but both parts of Roberts's secret formula are important for understanding how Europeans traded on the African coast. In the uncertain and disease-ridden world of African commerce, a "good proper cargo" was paramount.[1] "You are dispatched for 450 slaves, but we flatter ourselves that through the beauty and abundance of

Anne Ruderman is an assistant professor of economic history at the London School of Economics. The author is grateful for research support from the Economic History Association, the American Historical Association, the John Carter Brown Library, the Center for History and Economics at Harvard University, the Gilder Lehrman Center, the MacMillan Center, the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, and the Program in Economic History at Yale University. For their comments and suggestions on earlier versions of this article, the author would like to thank Sunil Amrith, Shane Bobrycki, Kenneth Banks, Mariana Candido, David Eltis, Malick Ghachem, Amanda Gregg, Robert Harms, Naomi Lamoreaux, Jon Levy, Seth Rockman, Emma Rothschild, Edward Rugemer, and Melissa Teixeira, as well as the participants in the September 2013 conference, "Commerce, Corporations and the Law," at Princeton University. The author is also grateful for the detailed feedback from the anonymous readers for the *William and Mary Quarterly*.

[1] [John Roberts] to William Wansey, Oct. 7, 1745, T70/1478, fol. 9v, National Archives of the United Kingdom, Kew (NA). There is some ambiguity in the date of the letter. The manuscript letter clearly states Oct. 7, 1745, but alludes to events that occur between 1750–52 and appears between letters with dates in October 1752. This letter is also quoted in Jay Coughtry, *The Notorious Triangle: Rhode Island and the African Slave Trade, 1700–1807* (Philadelphia, 1981), 103, who dates it Oct. 7, 1752. For the language of "success" in framing slave voyages, see Jane Webster, "'Success to the Dobson': Commemorative Artefacts Depicting 18th-Century British Slave Ships," *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 49, no. 1 (June 2015): 72–98. In archival quotations, abbreviations, such as "yt" for "the," have been modernized for readability. All other original spelling has been left intact. All translations are the author's.

*William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 77, no. 2, April 2020
DOI: https://doi.org/10.5309/willmaryquar.77.2.0211

your cargo, you will attain a greater number of captives," the outfitters of the slave ship the *Bonne Société* told Captain Gabriel David in 1783, on the eve of his trip to Loango.[2] Not only was a slave ship's cargo the single largest investment that outfitters made in the slave trade, but, as European merchants on the African coast testified again and again, having the wrong or improper goods meant that they simply could not trade.[3] The Royal African Company's factors at Cape Coast Castle reported falling forty-five slaves short of the target number for a ship in 1715 "for want of a sufficient quantity of vendable goods" (Figure I).[4]

By a "good proper cargo," slavers usually meant two things: quality and assortment. Although the transatlantic slave trade displaced 12.5 million African people over more than three centuries, the purchasing of enslaved individuals and the loading of slave ships happened incrementally: with each transaction Europeans and Africans exchanged an assortment of goods for a small number of captives.[5] The first purchase of enslaved people by the slave ship the *Suzanne Marguerite* at Cape Lahou in March 1775 is typical. The boat exchanged a bundle of goods—including a large barrel of gunpowder, two pieces of colorful cotton cloth called indiennes, eight low-grade weapons, two pieces of a thin white cloth, three handkerchiefs, two portions of brandy, and eight trimmed hats—for one man, whom the crew then branded with the ship's initials LSM.[6] Although a single slave ship could load more than four hundred captives, European traders purchased enslaved people from African merchants individually or in small groups, exchanging a mixture of European and colonial goods in each transaction. Experienced slave-ship outfitters understood the competitive edge that came with getting these assortments exactly right. In a bid to convince the Old Regime to open French trading posts south of the Congo River, an anonymous French writer

[2] "Ordres et Instructions pour servir à Monsieur George David," July 5, 1783, MS 2290, fols. 8–10 (quotation, fol. 8), Médiathèque Michel-Crépeau (MMC), La Rochelle, France. David was called both George and Gabriel.

[3] For trade goods as the largest portion of an outfitter's expenditure, see Liliane Crété, *La traite des nègres sous l'Ancien Régime: Le nègre, le sucre et la toile* (Paris, 1989), 63; Éric Saugera, *Bordeaux, port négrier: Chronologie, économie, idéologie, XVIIe–XIXe siècles* (Paris, 1995), 239–41.

[4] Gerrard Gore, James Phipps, and Robert [Bleau] at Cape Coast Castle (CCC) to London, June 11, 1715, T70/19, fol. 9, NA.

[5] David Brion Davis, "Foreword," in David Eltis and David Richardson, *Atlas of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New Haven, Conn., 2010), xvii–xxii, esp. xvii. See also "Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade—Estimates," Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database (Voyages), https://slavevoyages.org/assessment/estimates.

[6] Joseph Crassous de Médeuil, "Journal de traitte," *La Suzanne Marguerite*, 1775–76, EE 280, Archives Municipales de La Rochelle (AMLR), La Rochelle, France. For similar examples from Gambia and Loango, see "Book Containing Orders & Instructions for William Clinch commander of the Judith Snow. . . . ," 1721, M7/7, Bank of England (BE), London; and "Journal de traitte du navire la Bonne Société," 1783, MS 2291, MMC.


Figure I

The extent of the transatlantic slave trade on the West and West Central African coasts. Drawn by Rebecca Wrenn. Thanks to David Eltis, Emory University, and Mark Heller, Wentworth Institute of Technology, for supplying geocodes used to help create the map; see also Eltis and David Richardson, *Atlas of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New Haven, Conn., 2010).

argued that African traders in the area would prefer doing business with the French, whose cargoes were "without comparison better assorted."[7] Quality mattered too. In contrast to an older historiography that understood Africa as the dumping ground for the refuse goods of Europe, historians over the past three decades have increasingly acknowledged the sophistication of

[7] "Observations sur la traite des nègres en Guinée XVIIIe siècle," M1030, dossier 7, fols. 6v–7, Archives nationales (AN), Paris.

African sensibilities with regard to product quality and design.[8] Merchants and travelers knew as much at the time: "They have so great judgment & insight into Merchandise, they will distinguish whether a piece of Saye be dyed at *Leyden* or *Harlem*," the seventeenth-century traveler Nicholas Villault, Sieur de Bellefond, wrote.[9] The demands of the African consumer marketplace made it critically important to satisfy the first part of Roberts's formula, assembling a trade cargo that was carefully selected and assorted.

The second part of Roberts's prescription, "managing it cleverly on the coast," was equally important. European traders negotiated with African merchants, of course, often making multiple stops along the coast in order to purchase captives, buy commodities—such as ivory and pepper—and acquire food and water. Thus, the *Suzanne Marguerite* of La Rochelle purchased ivory, gold, food, and slaves at a number of points on the Ivory and Gold Coasts before buying the bulk of its captives at Ouidah in the Bight of Benin.[10] As they traded with various African merchants, slave ship captains strove to strategically handle their cargo of trade goods, mindful of injunctions not to "unsort" their cargo by selling out of some items and upsetting the balance of merchandise aboard.[11]

But slave ship captains also negotiated with other Europeans in Africa, exchanging merchandise among each other. This layer of intra-European trade in the African Atlantic constituted a secondary market, facilitating European-African exchanges by enabling slavers to more efficiently interact with their African trading partners. Intra-European trade was a crucial part of the African Atlantic marketplace both for merchants who arrived in Africa with an imperfect assortment of European goods and for those whose cargo consisted almost entirely of a single colonial commodity, such as New England rum. Trade between Europeans on the African coast and in the African Atlantic was essential to trade between Europeans and Africans because Europeans needed to acquire goods from one another that they could not furnish themselves in order to assemble the correct assortment

[8] For the older historiography, see Gaston-Martin, *Nantes au XVIIIe siècle: L'ère des négriers (1714–1774)* (Paris, 1931), 47, 55; Pierre H. Boulle, "Slave Trade, Commercial Organization and Industrial Growth in Eighteenth-Century Nantes," *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer* 59, no. 214 (1st Quarter 1972): 70–112, esp. 81. For a key articulation of the sophistication of African tastes, see John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400–1800*, 2d ed. (Cambridge, 1998), 44–45.

[9] [Nicholas] Villault, Sieur de Bellefond, *A Relation of the Coasts of Africk Called Guinee. . . .* , 2d ed. (London, 1670), 216 (quotation). European slave ships often brought more than one grade of a given good. See "Facture des marchandises qui Compose la Cargaison du Navire le Joujou," Livre des comptes d'armement et désarmement de navires partis du port de Bordeaux 1782–1802," 1S Armements, fol. 38, Archives Municipales de Bordeaux (AMB).

[10] Joseph Crassous de Médeuil, "Journal de traitte," *La Suzanne Marguerite*, 1775–76, EE 280, AMLR.

[11] For example see "Orders from Speers, Tuohy and Co. to master, Luke Mann, and manifest for a slaving voyage to Angola," Apr. 5, 1774, 380 TUO 4/7, fol. 6, Liverpool Record Office (LRO), Liverpool.

of merchandise with which to purchase slaves. Intra-European trade on the African coast is notable in part because the norms and practices governing European-African trade extended to trade between Europeans.[12] Even though Europeans could have purchased goods from one another in specie or with bills of exchange, the way they purchased commodities in other venues, in Africa they bargained with one another with goods for goods in much the same manner as they traded with African merchants. In the African Atlantic, European slavers adopted a mechanism of cross-cultural trade, even when trading with one another.[13]

Intra-European trade is also notable because it enabled eighteenth-century slavers to mitigate a series of constraints and risks in their acquisition of people on the African coast. Intra-European trade arose as a response to: the structure of the transatlantic slave trade, where people were exchanged for a bundle of assorted goods; the need for speed in the African Atlantic, as slavers tried to trade as efficiently as possible to ward off the risks of revolt or disease; an international trading arena, where national specializations in trade goods meant that slavers from different countries brought slightly different wares; and a series of path-dependent institutional constraints, such as the presence or absence of European forts, the existence or evaporation of monopolistic trading companies, and the restrictions, or lack thereof, of mercantilist states. In managing these constraints and risks, European slavers faced pressures everywhere they looked: from European states and trading companies, which had rules and regulations about commercial organization and the sourcing of trade goods; from the nature of the African Atlantic itself, which had become a crowded, international, and competitive maritime space; and, most critically, from African states and societies, which controlled the supply of captives to the coast and dictated the terms of trade.

African geopolitical realities and economic institutions fundamentally shaped the transatlantic slave trade. Trade networks and military campaigns in the West and West Central African interior determined the flow of enslaved people to the coast in terms of both quantity and direction. The interplay between the transatlantic slave trade, the trans-Saharan slave trade, and domestic slave systems shaped decisions about which captives would be funneled to European buyers and which captives would be reserved for other

[12] For African trading norms dominating European-African exchanges, see Karl Polanyi, "Sortings and 'Ounce Trade' in the West African Slave Trade," *Journal of West African History* 5, no. 3 (1964): 381–96, esp. 82; Paul E. Lovejoy and David Richardson, "Trust, Pawnship and Atlantic History: The Institutional Foundations of the Old Calabar Slave Trade," *American Historical Review* 104, no. 2 (April 1999): 333–55.

[13] Cash transactions between Europeans did occur on rare occasions. For example, see Robert Louis Stein, *The French Slave Trade in the Eighteenth Century: An Old Regime Business* (Madison, Wis., 1979), 81. For an analytic summary of the literature on cross-cultural trade, see Francesca Trivellato, "The Historical and Comparative Study of Cross-Cultural Trade," in *Religion and Trade: Cross-Cultural Exchanges in World History, 1000–1900*, ed. Trivellato, Leor Halevi, and Catia Anthunes (Oxford, 2014), 1–23, esp. 13.

markets.[14] African economic structures, trading practices, and institutions dominated the way that European and African traders interacted as they exchanged trade goods for human beings.[15] Throughout Atlantic Africa, the commercial medium of assortment bargaining, the practice of exchanging a bundle of diverse goods for a small number of captives in a series of repeat transactions, characterized the slave trade. The influence of structures and conditions in the African interior extended even beyond the coast, shaping rates of revolt and slave mortality rates during the Middle Passage.[16]

The feature of the African marketplace that most directly shaped intra-European trade was the diverse, localized, and highly specific nature of African consumer demand, as African merchants purchased goods in exchange for captives. From Arguin in the north to the Congo River in the south, the West and West Central African coast consisted of a series of segmented marketplaces, each with its own constellation of consumer demand.[17] Although broad regional patterns influenced African consumer

[14] For the interaction of different slave markets in broad terms, see Patrick Manning, *Slavery and African Life: Occidental, Oriental and African Slave Trades* (Cambridge, 1990). For a specific instance of market interaction—in this case, the preference for enslaved women among the Aro and the subsequent male-dominated flow of captives into the Bight of Biafra in the late eighteenth century—see G. Ugo Nwokeji, "African Conceptions of Gender and the Slave Traffic," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 58, no. 1 (January 2001): 47–68. Atlantic Africa consisted of a heterogeneous mix of polities, from strong states such as Asante, Oyo, or Dahomey, to coalition governments such as the Fante in Ghana, to small confederations and pluralistic communities such as the Vili traders of the Loango coast, or the small states of the western slave coast to trading diasporas such as the Aro. African political organization affected the way merchants dealt with European traders. For the Dahomey state, see Robin Law, *Ouidah: The Social History of a West African Slaving 'Port' 1727–1892* (Athens, Ohio, 2004). For the Fante, see Rebecca Shumway, *The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (Rochester, N.Y., 2011), 2. For the Vili, see Stacey Jean Muriel Sommerdyk, "Trade and the Merchant Community of the Loango Coast in the Eighteenth Century" (Ph.D. diss., University of Hull, 2012), 38, 142. For the pluralistic western slave coast, see Silke Strickrodt, *Afro-European Trade in the Atlantic World: The Western Slave Coast c. 1550–c. 1885* (Suffolk, U.K., 2015), 86. For the Aro, see Nwokeji, *The Slave Trade and Culture in the Bight of Biafra* (Cambridge, 2010), 17.

[15] For controlling the terms of trade, see Ty M. Reese, "'Eating' Luxury: Fante Middlemen, British Goods, and Changing Dependencies on the Gold Coast, 1750–1821," *WMQ* 66, no. 4 (October 2009): 855–58.

[16] For the impact of a specific African port of departure on mortality rates during the Middle Passage, see Herbert S. Klein et al., "Transoceanic Mortality: The Slave Trade in Comparative Perspective," *WMQ* 58, no. 1 (January 2001): 93–118, esp. 109. For regional effects on slave ship revolts, see David Richardson, "Shipboard Revolts, African Authority, and the Atlantic Slave Trade," *WMQ* 58, no. 1 (January 2001): 69–92, esp. 89.

[17] The structure of Euro-African trade in the area south of the Congo River differed significantly from the structure of the slave trade in the rest of Atlantic Africa due to the institutionalized Portuguese presence in Luanda and Benguela and the bilateral Portuguese trade between these West Central African ports and Brazil. See Mariana P. Candido, "Merchants and the Business of the Slave Trade at Benguela, 1750–1850," *African Economic History* 35, no. 1 (2007): 1–30, esp. 13–14; Roquinaldo Ferreira, *Cross-Cultural Exchange in the Atlantic World: Angola and Brazil during the Era of the Slave Trade* (New York, 2012), 88–125. For this reason, intra-European trade was far less common

preferences—metalworks had a more robust market in Senegambia than in West Central Africa, for example—demand was subject to geographic and temporal variations between and within regions, and precision in trade goods mattered.[18] In African marketplaces, trade goods were not perfectly substitutable for other trade goods at the same price point. Goods and enslaved people were generally valued in units of account, but just because two textiles, a long ell and a blue baft, may have each been worth half a trade ounce, that does not mean that a slave ship captain could automatically substitute the baft for the ell in a specific market at a given moment.[19] For European slave ship captains and fort agents, intra-European trade emerged as a local solution to the difficulties associated with this paradigm. As the African Atlantic became a crowded trading arena with the influx of

in Luanda and Benguela, if it existed there at all, as British, French, and Dutch ships limited their trade to the Loango coast from Cape Lopez to Cabenda. For a compelling critique of the geographic category of "West Central Africa" in the era of the transatlantic slave trade, see Filipa Ribeiro da Silva and Stacey Sommerdyk, "Reexamining the Geography and Merchants of the West Central African Slave Trade: Looking behind the Numbers," *African Economic History* 38 (2010): 77–105.

[18] For specificity in slave trade goods, see "Nouvelles observations sur les qualités des marchandises qui ont cours à la concession du Senegal," June 10, 1736, C6/11, Archives nationales d'outre-mer (ANOM), Aix-en-Provence. For seasonal variation in consumer demand, see Warehouse Keepers account for CCC month of May (1706), T70/22, fols. 10–11, NA. For segmented marketplaces, see Compagnie du Sénégal notes on differences in consumer demand within Senegambia, "Estat general des marchandises qui se peuvent traitter a la Coste," Apr. 2, 1704, C740, Archives départementales de Loire-Atlantique (ADLA).

[19] Example taken from "Account of the Prices of Goods as they Sell Upon the Coast of Africa," 1729, M7/12, pp. 3–4, BE. Assortment bargaining functioned alongside prices for enslaved people, measured primarily in bars in Senegambia, ounces on the Windward, Gold, and Slave Coasts, and pieces in West Central Africa. Goods had prices as well: the outfitter Humphrey Morice included a list of trade goods and their prices in his instructions to several of his captains. See "Book Containing Orders & Instructions for Thomas Hill Commander of the Anne, Galley," 1730, M7/13, BE. Humphrey Morice's name is also spelled "Humphry." Some of the goods that Europeans traded to Africans became currencies once they entered domestic African economies, most notably cowries on the Slave Coast, but also at times beads, textiles, and manillas. Despite the presence of prices and the fact that some goods functioned as domestic currencies, a competitive assortment could still be difficult to achieve. An enslaved man might be worth ten ounces, but the combination of goods to make up that ten ounces was subject to on-the-spot negotiation. For the relationship between assortment bargaining and bar prices, see Curtin, *Economic Change*, 247–53. For the ounce, see Marion Johnson, "The Ounce in Eighteenth-Century West African Trade," *Journal of African History* 7, no. 2 (1966): 197–214. For the development of the peça, or pièce d'inde, in West Central Africa, see Linda M. Heywood, "Slavery and Its Transformation in the Kingdom of Kongo: 1491–1800," *Journal of African History* 50, no. 1 (2009): 1–22. For the role of cowries as currency on the Slave Coast, see Robin Law, *The Slave Coast of West Africa, 1550–1750: The Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on an African Society* (Oxford, 1991), 49–52. For textiles as currency, see Colleen E. Kriger, *Cloth in West African History* (Lanham, Md., 2006). For the argument that Euro-African trade created inflation in domestic economies, see Toby Green, *A Fistful of Shells: West Africa from the Rise of the Slave Trade to the Age of Revolution* (Chicago, 2019), esp. 471–72.

private British and French traders in the early eighteenth century, European traders began to engage in what seemed to them to be a spontaneous set of trading practices. Over the course of the century, these African-derived trading practices became routinized and normalized, to the point where skillfully engaging in intra-European trade developed into something of an art.

Europeans did not trade with one another in Africa out of proto-pan-Europeanism or any sort of racial, national, or religious solidarity. Intra-European trade was part of a strategy for beating rivals and quickly fleeing a dangerous disease environment. The transatlantic slave trade unfolded in a climate of intense international competition (which African merchants knew and endlessly exploited) and ideological uncertainty about the best way to enhance national wealth.[20] European merchants and policy makers alike considered edging out foreign rivals in the African trade to be key. As one French diplomat wrote, the "masters" of the slave trade were the masters of all European commerce.[21] But Europeans of the same nation also competed in Africa. State-sponsored monopolies such as the Royal African Company (RAC) found their fiercest rivals to be private English traders. And private merchants, even from the same city, could be commercial enemies too. After nine months of failing to trade off the coast near Bissau, the slave ship the *Prudent* of Nantes faced a miserable winter. Joseph Mosneron, an apprentice on the ship, reported that the *Prudent* remained on hostile terms with the only other remaining ship nearby, the *Union*, also of Nantes, as the two captains fed each other false intelligence in the hopes of gaining a trading advantage. "Two boats . . . from the same country, with the same customs, the same religion, the same principles, stuck together in a miserable corner of Africa, lived there as enemies, without communicating, without offering to lend one another the least assistance," Mosneron wrote.[22]

A competitive form of commercial cooperation, intra-European trade arose in the eighteenth century from African and European pressures, and a maritime space that made such transactions possible. Topographically, the African Atlantic had few natural harbors, with a strong surf—likened in one account to "a sheet of water, from ten to twelve feet high"—that threatened large and small ships alike.[23] Slave ships coming from Europe and the Americas congregated several nautical miles offshore, or as captains and fort factors termed it "in the road" of a given location, relying on African canoe transport to ferry goods to shore and enslaved people to the ships anchored

[20] For the ability of African merchants to play European nations off one another, see Stein, *French Slave Trade*, 83; Crété, *La traite des nègres*, 9.

[21] Mémoire, 1754, 37CP 516, fol. 108, Ministère des Affaires étrangères, La Courneuve, France.

[22] Olivier Pétré-Grenouilleau, *Moi, Joseph Mosneron, armateur négrier nantais, (1748–1833)*. . . . (Rennes, Fr., 1995), 68.

[23] M[ichel] Adanson, *A Voyage to Senegal, the Isle of Goree and the River Gambia* (London, 1759), 28–29 (quotation, 28).

at sea.[24] Intra-European trade occurred between company or national forts and ships, but it also increasingly occurred between slave ships, as part of an overall shift to ship trade in the eighteenth century. By the mid-eighteenth century, the African Atlantic was crowded. The secondary market of intra-European exchange was possible in part because slave ships anchored together outside ports in the African Atlantic and in part because they behaved more like Mediterranean vessels than transoceanic voyagers, coasting in African waters instead of directly sailing to and departing from a single African port.[25] In coasting, slave ships encountered one another, sometimes repeatedly. We are accustomed to thinking of slave ships as single dots on the African coast, but it is really more accurate to envision these vessels as overlapping ovals in the African Atlantic, with multiple possibilities for interaction.[26]

Though intra-European trade in the African Atlantic became a standard practice over the course of the eighteenth century, historians have not focused on this particular facet of the slave trade. Their scattered mentions of intra-European trade usually appear as sidenotes in histories of a particular European slave-trading nation or African port.[27] Studies that follow

[24] For "in the road," see Jean Barbot, *A Description of the Coasts of North and South-Guinea* (London, 1732). For the role of canoes connecting local and oceanic trade, see Robin Law, "Between the Sea and the Lagoons: The Interaction of Maritime and Inland Navigation on the Precolonial Slave Coast," *Cahiers d'Études africaines*, vol. 29, cahier 114, rivages 1 (1989): 209–37; Kevin Dawson, *Undercurrents of Power: Aquatic Culture in the African Diaspora* (Philadelphia, 2018), 99–142.

[25] The practice of coasting in the African Atlantic was most common in Sierra Leone and on the Windward, Gold, and Slave Coasts, but it also existed in Senegambia and on the Loango coast in West Central Africa. For the typical coasting pattern of the Windward, Gold, and Slave Coasts, see "Journal du Bord," *Le Solide*, 1787–88, 4J 4182, Les Archives Départementales de la Charente Maritime (ADCM). For coasting in Senegambia and West Central Africa, see "Book Containing Orders & Instructions for William Clinch," 1721, M7/7, BE; Histoire des Services à la mer et dans les ports de Claude-Vincent, Polony, [n.d.], 244J15, pp. 61–62, ADCM. Slave ships often dispatched a second boat to trade in a different location or upriver. See Book Containing Orders & Instructions to Stephen Bull, Commander of the Sarah, . . . With an Invoice of his Cargoe and Journal of Trade, 1722, M7/8, BE. Coasting was not practiced in the Bight of Biafra, where ships sailed upriver and remained anchored. See Randy J. Sparks, *The Two Princes of Calabar: An Eighteenth-Century Atlantic Odyssey* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004), 42–43.

[26] For a representation of slave ships as single dots, see Andrew Kahn and Jamelle Bouie, "The Atlantic Slave Trade in Two Minutes: 315 Years. 20,528 Voyages. Millions of Lives," *Slate*, June 25, 2015; "Slave Voyages Timelapse," Voyages, https://slavevoyages.org/voyage/database#timelapse.

[27] See K. G. Davies, *The Royal African Company* (London, 1957), 236, 276; Philip D. Curtin, *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa: Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade* (Madison, Wis., 1975), 173–75; David Richardson, "West African Consumption Patterns and Their Influence on the Eighteenth-Century English Slave Trade," in *The Uncommon Markey: Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic Slave Trade*, ed. Henry A. Gemery and Jan S. Hogendorn (New York, 1979), 303–30, esp. 327 n. 47; Coughtry, *Notorious Triangle*; Saugera, *Bordeaux, port négrier*; James A. Rawley, *London, Metropolis of the Slave Trade* (Columbia, Mo., 2003), 40–56.

individual slave ships also offer evidence of intra-European trade without focusing on the practice itself.[28] Broadly, the literature on the transatlantic slave trade has oscillated between efforts to grapple with the human side of the slave trade in order to understand the lived experience of captivity and efforts to quantify the transatlantic slave trade in order to ascertain its scope and scale, profitability, demographic composition, and effect on slave mortality.[29] Focusing on the mechanisms of the transatlantic slave trade by investigating intra-European trade offers a third line of inquiry, one that casts Europeans in a reactive-mode on the African coast and adds to an existing literature on slave-trade goods by examining the deployment of those goods and questions of market coordination.[30] Understanding the cross-cultural commercial practices and economic institutions underpinning the slave trade is crucial to scholars interested in both the human dimension of transatlantic slavery and the scope and scale of the slave trade because

[28] Robert Harms, *The Diligent: A Voyage through the Worlds of the Slave Trade* (New York, 2002); Philip Misevich, "In Pursuit of Human Cargo: Philip Livingston and the Voyage of the Sloop *Rhode Island*," *New York History* 86, no. 3 (Summer 2005): 185–204; Sean M. Kelley, *The Voyage of the Slave Ship* Hare*: A Journey into Captivity from Sierra Leone to South Carolina* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2016).

[29] For recent work on the human side of the slave trade, see Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York, 2007); Alexander X. Byrd, *Captives and Voyagers: Black Migrants across the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic World* (Baton Rouge, La., 2008); Jennifer L. Morgan, "Accounting for 'The Most Excruciating Torment': Gender, Slavery, and Trans-Atlantic Passages," *History of the Present* 6, no. 2 (Fall 2016): 184–207; Sowande' M. Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea: Terror, Sex, and Sickness in the Middle Passage* (Urbana, Ill., 2016). For work on the quantitative side of the slave trade, see Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison, Wis., 1969), superseded by Voyages, https://www.slavevoyages.org. On profits, see David Richardson, "The Costs of Survival: The Transport of Slaves in the Middle Passage and the Profitability of the 18th-Century British Slave Trade," *Explorations in Economic History* 24, no. 2 (April 1987): 178–96; Guillaume Daudin, "Profitability of Slave and Long-Distance Trading in Context: The Case of Eighteenth-Century France," *Journal of Economic History* 64, no. 1 (March 2004): 144–71. For prices, see Richardson, "Prices of Slaves in West and West-Central Africa: Toward an Annual Series, 1698–1807," *Bulletin of Economic Research* 43, no. 1 (January 1991): 21–56. On slave mortality, see Klein et al., *WMQ* 58: 93–118; Nicolas J. Duquette, "Revealing the Relationship between Ship Crowding and Slave Mortality," *Journal of Economic History* 74, no. 2 (June 2014): 535–52.

[30] For literture on the mechanisms of the slave trade, see Lovejoy and Richardson, *American Historical Review* 104: 333–55; Stephanie E. Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Cambridge, Mass., 2007), esp. pp. 33–100. Smallwood also focuses on the human side of the slave trade. For a key work on the impact of the transatlantic slave trade, see Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa*, 3d ed. (Cambridge, 2012). For the use of a microhistorical approach to upend vantage points "portraying Africans in reactive mode," see Ferreira, *Cross-Cultural Exchange*, esp. 2–6, 242–43 (quotation, 243). For the literature considering trade goods, see Richardson, "West African Consumption Patterns," 303–30; George Metcalf, "A Microcosm of Why Africans Sold Slaves: Akan Consumption Patterns in the 1770s," *Journal of African History* 28, no. 3 (1987): 377–94; Stanley B. Alpern, "What Africans Got for Their Slaves: A Master List of European Trade Goods," *History in Africa* 22 (1995): 5–43.

the trade in human beings did not just happen; it involved the active participation of a diverse set of historical actors. Between the well-worn routes of the transatlantic slave trade, the gigantic oceanic wheels that transported millions of people, there were little eddies—fraught processes where some people bought and sold other people in small groups, or one by one.

Documenting how frequently intra-European trade happened on the African coast is difficult, as these transactions were not systematically recorded in the cargo lists outfitters prepared before a voyage or the balance sheets they rendered at its end.[31] What accounts there are appear in scattered fashion from diverse sources, such as voyage diaries, letters sent between Europe and the African coast, and descriptions by European travelers who observed the practice at work. But small slivers can hint at a larger phenomenon, and the normalization of intra-European trade by European participants in the slave trade by the late eighteenth century helps us to identify the presence and understand the function of a market adjacent to the readily quantifiable transatlantic slave trade. As such, investigating intra-European trade adds to the body of economic history literature that aims to understand how economic activity in the past transpired.[32]

Though Europeans of all nations participated in the secondary intra-European market in Africa, a focus on the British, French and, to a lesser extent North Americans from the establishment of the RAC in 1672 to the outbreak of the Haitian Revolution in 1790 reveals key aspects of this secondary economy and the way that it connected to the overall transatlantic slave trade. The eighteenth century was a time of tremendous growth and incessant international competition in the transatlantic slave trade, as the number of slave ships increased almost fourfold from the 1690s to the 1780s. During this era, the British and French accounted for nearly two-thirds of slave ships in the African Atlantic and more than 60 percent of enslaved people purchased, as the growing sugar economies of the West Indies drove the transatlantic trade.[33] The British and French engaged in the most clearly defined triangle trade, which had important implications for how slavers from those nations assembled trade goods and marketed

[31] For example, Captain Jacques Cousse of the *Manette*, from Bordeaux, included a separate goods-received line, "exchanged with various," in his 1790 trading log, but this notation was not a standard practice over time that would lead to a dataset of intra-European trade; "Recapitulation Genneralle de La Traitte Faitte Tant a Saint Phillipe la riviere du Zaire qu'a Mallembe," 1S, fol. 86, AMB.

[32] For examples of literature that addresses the question of how economic activity in the past transpired, see David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735–1785* (Cambridge, 1995); Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven, Conn., 2009).

[33] The average number of slave ships per year for the period 1691–1700 was 70 ships and for 1784–1791 it was 269 ships, which is an increase by a factor of 3.8. The latter period is truncated in order to reduce the American Revolution's potential to skew the comparison. See Voyages, https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/database#tables.

them on the African coast. But the very nature of intra-European trade in the African Atlantic meant that the British and French traded not only with each other but also with the Danish, Dutch, and Portuguese. As a result, findings for the British and French, though particular to those two nations, also reflect general practices among slavers. By the mid-eighteenth century, the secondary market was so extensive that not only did Europeans purchase trade goods from one another on the African coast, they also purchased European and East Indian goods from Africans. "It is a truth," the RAC's factors wrote from Cape Coast Castle in 1749, "that India or European goods may be purchased from the Negroes, 5 percent cheaper than such goods cost in Europe."[34]

The transatlantic slave trade on the African coast was a complex commercial system that coordinated the activities of a diverse set of European and African actors in order to transform millions of people into commodities to be shipped across the ocean and sold in distant markets. Intra-European trade arose in the eighteenth-century African Atlantic as a local response to the logic of the Afro-European marketplace, where people were exchanged for bundles of goods that were not perfectly substitutable. But it aided, supported, and reshaped that marketplace as well, becoming a structurally necessary element for the maintenance of the wider transatlantic slave trade system on the African coast in the eighteenth century. The transatlantic slave trade demanded an infrastructure—a series of economic institutions and trading practices that enabled a broad set of culturally distinct actors to agree upon a way of doing business over a remarkably long stretch of time. The enormous evil that was the transatlantic slave trade was the consequence of millions of small commercial actions.

In terms of goods, Europeans found no simple formula for beating rivals and successfully trading with African merchants. "Succeeding" in the slave trade—as contemporaneous slavers framed it—was not about having the most guns, textiles, tobacco, or alcohol.[35] It was about getting the right mix of goods. "If we want to pull the rug out from under the interlopers," the Compagnie des Indes factor at Bissau wrote the company's African headquarters in Senegal, "we cannot leave the trading post of Bissaux without well-assorted merchandise."[36] Previous studies have suggested that one trade good or another stood out in importance when it came to purchasing captives. This argument is most pronounced in the guns-for-slaves thesis, but

[34] [John] Roberts, [William] Husbands, and [Thomas] Bokler to Henry Lascelles, Feb. 14, 1749, T70/1515, NA.

[35] For the language of "success" in framing slave voyages, see Webster, *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 49: 72–98.

[36] Damécourt to [Nicolas Després de] Saint-Robert, Jan. 1722, C6/7, ANOM (quotation). For similar logic, see Dubourdieu, "Nouveau Memoire sur l'Etablissement projetté a Annamabou," Mar. 25, 1753, N100, 16DFC/75, pp 1–11, ANOM.

historians have also suggested textiles for slaves, tobacco for slaves, or rum for slaves.[37] The nature of assortment bargaining runs counter to all of these arguments: Having a variety of the right goods was what mattered. "We must desire such goods only as we write for to make an assortment, otherwise it is laying out your mony to no purpose," James Phipps wrote the RAC from Cape Coast Castle in 1720.[38] In the world of slave trading, assortment meant two things: stocking a slave ship with the correct goods in Europe and exchanging small bundles of goods for small numbers of captives in Africa.[39] Even though consumer demand for certain goods could be particularly strong at various moments and locations on the coast, captains and fort agents still needed to bundle highly sought after goods with other goods in order to purchase enslaved people. Captains and fort agents also had to balance indivisible goods, such as guns, with goods that could be split into smaller parcels, such as coral and beads. The requirements of assortment bargaining were not always easy to meet. Slave ship captains who did not bring assorted cargoes to Africa or who brought the wrong assortment of cargo found that they were unable to quickly and directly trade with African merchants. Rather they had to rely on a robust set of coastal exchange practices in order to assemble the correct mixtures of goods with which to purchase slaves.

How slave ship captains accessed and utilized intra-European trade depended in large part upon a given ship's point of origin. Slave ships sailing to Africa from ports in North America often carried unassorted cargoes, consisting almost entirely of rum. Despite the lore, these "rum men" could not simply trade for enslaved people with African merchants. Colonial ship owners knew this and tried to diversify when they could.[40] But for the most

[37] For guns or gunpowder for slaves, see R. A. Kea, "Firearms and Warfare on the Gold and Slave Coasts from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries," *Journal of African History* 12, no. 2 (1971): 185–213; J. E. Inikori, "The Import of Firearms into West Africa, 1750–1807: A Quantitative Analysis," *Journal of African History* 18, no. 3 (1977): 339–68; Warren C. Whatley, "The Gun-Slave Hypothesis and the 18th Century British Slave Trade," *Explorations in Economic History* 67 (January 2018): 80–104. For the overwhelming importance of textiles, see Metcalf, *Journal of African History* 28: 377–94; Saugera, *Bordeaux, port négrier.* For the competitive advantage of New England rum, see Richardson, "West African Consumption Patterns"; Coughtry, *Notorious Triangle*; Alison Jones, "The Rhode Island Slave Trade: A Trading Advantage in Africa," *Slavery and Abolition* 2, no. 3 (December 1981): 227–44; Randy J. Sparks, *Where the Negroes Are Masters: An African Port in the Era of the Slave Trade* (Cambridge, Mass., 2014), 163–85.

[38] [James Phipps] to CCC, Feb. 3, 1719 [1720], T70/23, fol. 2 (quotation), NA. For a French example, see Pierre Mascon to [Nicolas Després de] Saint-Robert, Mar. 14, 1721, C6/6, ANOM.

[39] For the role of assortment bargaining in the transatlantic slave trade, see Jan Hogendorn and Marion Johnson, *The Shell Money of the Slave Trade* (Cambridge, 1986), 143; Joseph C. Miller, *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730–1830* (Madison, Wis., 1988), 68–69; Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 45.

[40] [John Fletcher] to Peleg Clarke, Feb. 22, 1774, letterbook no. 75: 1771–1774, Newport Historical Society (NHS), R.I. (quotation). Martin Benson to Brown, Benson and Ives, Aug., 12, 1795, box 44, folder 12 (listed as folder 10 in index), Brown Family

part North American slavers could not obtain, either at home or through connections in Europe, the kinds of manufactured goods that African consumers wanted. Consequently, North American ships raced each other to the African coast in the hopes of being the first to arrive with a cargo of New World rum.[41] Once in the African Atlantic, they had two choices: either swap the majority of their cargo with Europeans in Africa for manufactured goods that they could then trade with African merchants or buy captives from European middlemen instead of African suppliers. Captain Peter James of the sloop *Rhode Island* chose the first strategy. He sailed to Africa from New York in 1748 loaded almost exclusively with rum, which he traded for manufactured products in Sierra Leone before incrementally purchasing enslaved people from African traders.[42] By contrast, in 1754, Captain Caleb Godfrey of the ship *Hare* relied on European middlemen. Godfrey purchased captives from twenty-four separate merchants, almost all of whom were British, selling them large quantities of rum in exchange.[43] The entire Rhode Island slave trade depended upon this infrastructure. By 1764, the trade between Rhode Island merchants and British forts and ships had become so substantial that the colonial government used the vibrancy of this trade as evidence to protest the Sugar Act: "This rum, carried to the coast, is so far from prejudicing the British trade thither, that it may be said rather to promote it." According to the Rhode Island Remonstrance, "As soon as our rum vessels arrive, they exchange away some of the rum with the traders from Britain, for a quantity of dry goods, with which each of them sort their cargoes to their mutual advantage."[44]

For slave ships coming to Africa from major European ports such as Liverpool or Nantes and loaded mostly with manufactured products, intra-European trade made up a much smaller portion of slavers' final

---

Business Records (BFBR), John Carter Brown Library, Providence, R.I.; Benjamin Mason to Nicholas Brown and Co., Jan. 5, 1770, box 234, folder 6, BFBR; see also Sean M. Kelley, "American Rum, African Consumers and the Transatlantic Slave Trade," *African Economic* History 46, no. 2 (2018): 1–29.

[41] For complaints that there were so many "Rume men" on the coast that they would "dev[o]ur one another," see John Cahoone Jr. to Stephen Ayrault [?], Oct. 27, 1736, repr. in Elizabeth Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America* (Washington, D.C., 1932), 3: 130–1 (quotations, 131). See also Peleg Clarke to John Fletcher, July 25, 1772, letterbook no. 75: 1771–1774, NHS. For rum men racing each other to the African coast, see Ralph Inman to Peleg Clarke, May 11, 1772, letterbook no. 75: 1771–1774, NHS. For a ship that lost this race and consequently bounced around Sierra Leone searching for trade, see Kelley, *Voyage*, 61–63.

[42] Misevich, *New York History* 86: 191–94.

[43] "An Acco't of Slaves Purchas'd of Whom and Cargo Disposed of Caleb Godfrey master on the Coast of Affrica," repr. in "Accounts of the *Hare*, 1755," fig. 128, in Donnan, *Documents Illustrative*, 3: 151. See also Kelley, *Voyage*, 81–91.

[44] "Remonstrance of the Colony of Rhode Island to the Lords Commissioners of Trade and Plantations in New England," Jan. 24, 1764, in John Russell Bartlett, ed., *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations in New England* (Providence, R.I., 1861), 6: 380.

cargo. Instead, European slavers relied upon the practice to put the finishing touches on an assortment, take advantage of an opportunity, or remedy a mistake. When the La Rochelle slave ship the *Reine de Podor* encountered some Bostonians while anchored off the coast in Senegal, Captain Jérôme Gauvain instructed his second, Claude-Vincent Polony, to "inform yourself of what they have to sell or exchange."[45]

Although the importance of an assorted cargo was a truism in the slave trade, the reality of production was that European nations specialized, with merchants from different countries arriving in Africa with slightly different wares. "Each nation commonly supplies the coast, as much as is convenient, with such as their respective countries afford," the late seventeenth-century French trader Jean Barbot noted. The French, Barbot explained, "commonly carry more brandy, wine, iron, paper, firelocks, &c. than the *English* and *Dutch*." Meanwhile, the Dutch relied upon linens from Coesfeld, serges from Leiden, carpets from Turkey, anabasses (woolen blankets) made at Haarlem, glass beads from Venice, and several types of knives. The British, not to be outdone, offered a wider selection of cloth (though their perpetuanas [durable wool fabric], Barbot noted, were "inferior to the Dutch"), plus rum from Barbados, beads of all sorts, bars of malleable iron called voyage iron, and hats.[46] The Portuguese obtained most of their slave trade goods in Holland, but what differentiated Portuguese slavers from the Dutch was their ready access to Brazilian tobacco. In listing the various national specializations, Barbot realized that each country's home industry might fall short of the demands of the slave trade and noted that slave ship outfitters also bought goods elsewhere in Europe. But sometimes buying goods in other parts of Europe was expensive or impossible. French traders faced state restrictions on importing guns and tobacco and consequently made up shortfalls in these items by purchasing them from other traders in the African Atlantic.[47] British traders, who did not have to contend with state restrictions on acquiring foreign slave trade goods, nonetheless confronted market restrictions, such as transportation costs in Europe and the absence of adequate supplies, most notably alcohol.[48] They too relied on a secondary market in the African Atlantic.

[45] Jérôme Gauvain to Claude-Vincent Polony, May 17, 1787, 244J 80, ADCM.

[46] John [Jean] Barbot, "A description of the Coasts of *South-Guinea*. . . . ," in *A Collection of Voyages and Travels*. . . . (London, 1732), 5: 96–420, esp. 272–74 ("Each," 272, "commonly," 273). For Barbot's tendency to mix his own observations with unabashed plagiarism of others, see Robin Law, "Jean Barbot as a Source for the Slave Coast of West Africa," *History in Africa* 9 (1982): 155–73.

[47] For French state restrictions and their consequences, see "Avis de la Chambre dans le project de reglement pour le Commerce daffrique," Dec. 7, 1762, N18, C4383, Archive départementales de la Gironde (ADG); "Mémoire des Negocians de Nantes," 1769, C757, N43, ADLA.

[48] For British difficulties obtaining alcohol in the eighteenth century, see Letter from CCC, July 12, 1721, T70/4, p. 17, NA; Letter from Sir James Wright, Mar. 20, 1771, State Papers, Venice, SP 99/75 fols. 106–27v, NA.

Intra-European trade afforded slavers from industrializing nations such as Britain and France the opportunity to put the finishing touches on an assortment of goods. On the 1790 slave voyage of the *Manette*, which sailed from Bordeaux to Angola, Captain Jacques Cousse purchased additional trade goods from two Frenchmen at Ambriz and Malembo and then "received" other goods "in exchange with various" people at unlisted locations.[49] Of the forty-nine different goods on Cousse's slave-trading log, he purchased fourteen in Africa, and only one of these was a trade good he did not bring with him to begin with. Cousse was an experienced captain by the time of the *Manette*'s 1790 voyage: it was his third trip to West Central Africa in five years, and the ship's outfitter, François Castaing, belonged to a family with experience in the slave trade.[50] Both Cousse and Castaing should have had good firsthand knowledge of demand on the coast when the *Manette* set sail in 1790. Yet the captain still found it desirable to exchange and purchase European goods, even in relatively small amounts, once in African waters.

Outright desperation also played a role. If a slave ship arrived at a certain point on the African coast and misjudged African demand for a particular good or found its cargo had been ruined in transit, a captain might be compelled to buy goods from rivals, perhaps at elevated prices. "I . . . could not find out till I came upon the Coast, that this Cargo was ill sorted," Royal Navy surgeon John Atkins wrote in his travel narrative of Africa. "At the first place we touched (*Sierraleon*) . . . I found I had neither cutlasses, iron Bars, a better sort of Fire-Arms, Malt and other strong Liquors, the delight of those Traders. At none of the others, quite down to the Gold Coast, were many considerable Articles of my Invoyce ever asked for." Rather than return to England or try to push his goods off on African merchants, Atkins traded with other Europeans on the coast. "I was forced to make friends with the Factorys, and exchange at such a loss," he wrote.[51] Intra-European trade could also be used to replace unsuitable cargo. The slave trade began "well" for the Bordeaux boat the *Triumvirat*, which anchored in the Mano River at Cape Mount on the Windward Coast in 1764. For eight days Captain Jean-Baptiste Barolet conducted a brisk commerce in an area with an abundance of captives due to an ongoing war. Suddenly his fortunes turned: a local ruler came on board and called an abrupt end to all trade. His merchants had discovered that the *Triumvirat*'s gunpowder was nothing more than coal mixed with water. The boat was forced to weigh anchor and exchange European merchandise for adequate powder to replace its useless mix.[52]

[49] "Recapitulation Genneralle de La Traitte. . . . " 1S, fol. 86 AMB.

[50] Saugera, *Bordeaux, port négrier*, 357, 359.

[51] John Atkins, *A Voyage to Guinea, Brasil, and the West-Indies. . . .* , 2d ed. (London, 1737), 162–63 (quotations, 162).

[52] "Déclaration du capitaine Barolet, commandant le navire négrier le Triumvirat," July 9, 1765, 6B 1529, ADG, repr. in Louis Bergès, ed. *Terres d'esclaves: Histoires de la Traite, Afrique, Aquitaine, Amérique* (Bordeaux, 2009), 57–58 (quotation, 57).

The secondary market offered slave ship captains such as Cousse and Barolet efficiency, which mattered because speed was everything in the African Atlantic. For European slavers, trading in Africa was a hazardous business: the key to a successful voyage was getting out quick. "We only ask that you don't lose sight of the fact that it is better to purchase a couple fewer slaves and have a quicker trading time which avoids problems," the outfitters of the *Bonne Société* instructed Captain Gabriel David.[53] Or, as the instructions to British captain Luke Mann put it, "Dispatch is the life of the African trade."[54] Lengthy stays on the African coast invited the twin problems of revolt and disease. More than 60 percent of known slave ship revolts occurred within sight of the shore, and the prospect of disease threatened European crews and enslaved people alike. "Lying long on the coast brings distempers into your ship, and often proves very fatal in the end," Liverpool outfitter William Davenport instructed his captain in 1783.[55] The problems of disease could worsen if an unexpectedly long sojourn on the coast extended the ship's voyage into the so-called sickly season.[56] The premium on trading quickly meant that having the correct assortment of goods took on heightened importance, and Europeans were willing to trade with one another to get there. From Rhode Island merchants who traded with British forts to Bordeaux Captain Cousse who supplemented the textiles he brought with additional goods purchased on the coast, European traders found that exchanging goods and slaves with one another in the African Atlantic mitigated the uncertainties of African commerce. But trading with other Europeans presented its own set of risks.

Slavers faced commercial hazards in trading with one another in the African Atlantic. European-African trade was structured by the rules of

[53] "Ordres et Instructions," July 5, 1783, MS 2290, fols. 8–10 (quotation, fol. 8), MMC.

[54] "Speers, Tuohy and Co. to master Luke Mann," Apr. 5, 1774, 380 TUO 4/7, fol. 6, LRO.

[55] William Davenport to Captain Peter Potter, June 5, 1783, Davenport Papers 1 (quotation), Maritime Museum and Archives (MMA), Liverpool. For revolts, see Richardson, *WMQ* 58: 75. See also Stephen D. Behrendt, David Eltis, and David Richardson, "The Costs of Coercion: African Agency in the Pre-Modern Atlantic World," *Economic History Review* 54, no. 3 (August 2001): 454–76. Examples of slave ship outfitters making the connection between long stays on the coast and disease abound in the archives. See for example "Orders from Francis Ingram & Co. to master George McMinn," Dec. 31, 1783, 380 TUO 4/10, LRO.

[56] J. Gonfray De Haumeurs, "Projet des voyages du Senegal a Cap Verd," 1719, C6/5, fol. 1, ANOM. According to David Eltis and David Richardson, "slave loading" times increased broadly over the first three quarters of the eighteenth century, which only served to increase intra-European trade's importance to European slavers; see Eltis and Richardson, "Productivity in the Transatlantic Slave Trade," *Explorations in Economic History* 32, no. 4 (October 1995): 465–84, esp. 478–79 (quotation, 479). For the argument that slave ship outfitters were willing to trade a quicker loading time for a more unhealthy environment, see Paul E. Lovejoy and Richardson, "'This Horrid Hole': Royal Authority, Commerce and Credit at Bonny, 1690–1840," *Journal of African History* 45, no. 3 (2004): 363–92.

assortment bargaining, and these rules extended to trade between Europeans. Slave ship captains and fort agents dealing with other Europeans used the rules of assortment bargaining as a means to dump goods that sold poorly by bundling them with goods that sold well, "so that the strong carries the weak," as a 1705 report from the Compagnie du Sénégal put it.[57] "Wee have consigned to you with a cargo of very valluable goods," the RAC wrote Dalby Thomas at Cape Coast Castle, "Which wee doubt not but you will make such use of as to putt off therewith some of our goods that have layne so long in our castle."[58] In the thin trading markets of the African Atlantic, Europeans foisted low-quality or damaged goods on rivals, charged higher prices than they would have at home, and forced trading partners to purchase some undesirable items in order to get the merchandise that they wanted. When the chief factors at Cape Coast Castle spotted a French ship in 1721, they jumped at the opportunity to "recruit our stock of French brandy, which was quite exhausted." They obtained the brandy, along with the gunpowder that they needed, but were "obliged to receive also in the barter two hundred ninety sheets & thirty peices of stampt dimitty [cotton fabric]." The RAC factors at Cape Coast Castle did not worry too much about the unwanted cloth, however. They simply planned to resell it to the Portuguese.[59]

Although Europeans of all nations traded with one another to meet the demands of assortment bargaining, intra-European trade meant very different things to the British and the French, reflecting distinct imperatives of political economy at home and the very different relationships the two nations had with the African coast. While the British consistently maintained forts on the West African coastline, France had a much narrower presence there, holding permanent trading posts only at Ouidah and in Senegal in the era of the slave trade.[60] For the British, intra-European trade in Africa evolved from a threat to the RAC's monopoly in the late seventeenth century to a competitive strategy for the company in the eighteenth century, eventually becoming a standard practice for its successor, the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa. For the French, intra-European trade represented an opportunity to acquire slave trade goods without the restrictions of a mercantilist state. For both, intra-European trade became an indispensable part of doing business in

57 "Memoire pour bien etablir le commerce de la concession du Senegal," Sept. 14, 1705, C6/3, fols 1–3v (quotation, fol. 1), ANOM.

58 Letter to Dalby Thomas, Aug. 31, 1703, T70/52, fol. 4v (quotations), NA. For similar instructions to Sierra Leone, see Letter to John Freeman, Feb. 1, 1704 [1705], T70/52, fol. 43, NA.

59 Letter from [James] Phipps, [Henry] Dodson, and [Francis] Boye, July 12, 1721, T70/4, p. 17, NA.

60 The 1780 French map *Etablissemens des Européens sur les Côtes d'Affrique* shows the number and range of British posts in Africa far surpassing those of the French; see 17DFC/110/1A, ANOM. See also Stein, *French Slave Trade*, xv, 75; Stephen D. Behrendt, "Markets, Transaction Cycles, and Profits: Merchant Decision Making in the British Slave Trade," *WMQ* 58, no. 1 (January 2001): 171–204.

African waters. But the imperatives of British and French political economy did not operate in isolation, and British and French slavers interacted with Dutch, Danish, and Portuguese forts and vessels, each operating within its own national framework. As Europeans traded with each other on the African coast and in the African Atlantic, questions of African geopolitics and political economy structured intra-European trade as well.

For slavers from all nations, the end of the RAC's monopoly in 1698 gave a tremendous impetus to the world of intra-European trade. The new trading environment that came about with the end of the company's monopoly dramatically increased the number of slave ships in the African Atlantic and shifted the nature of the transatlantic slave trade from a system almost exclusively based in forts to one where slavers operated through some combination of fort trade and boat trade, or entirely out of their ships. Eventually, the Royal African Company itself would come to embrace the commercial opportunities of intra-European trade provided by this crowded African Atlantic world. But not at first. As private English traders who had previously been barred from African commerce flocked to the coast, they created an immediate uptick in the English slave trade and an immense competition problem for the RAC, which had been accustomed to conducting business in cushioned exclusivity. Unable to reinstate or defend its quarter-century monopoly, the company hunkered down in the face of these new arrivals, called "Ten Percentmen," after the 10 percent tax they were obliged to pay in order to engage in the African trade.[61] Laying out the so-called Ten Percent Act for its chief factors at Cape Coast Castle, the RAC urged that these private English traders "be protected and treated civily" but forbade trade with the newcomers.[62] The idea behind the injunction was straightforward: "When they are by this method disappointed of returns, they will not so quickly visit the coast again."[63] In the immediate aftermath of the act, the RAC in London was likewise adamant that its factors at Cape Coast Castle were not to buy tobacco and rum from the Dutch or Portuguese or "entertai[n]" traders from those nations. The company had been cautious about its agents trading with foreigners before, but 1699 was an especially tense moment in its history.[64] "Much better for us to discourage their trade," the RAC wrote its factors on

[61] For the classic view of the Ten Percent Act as a political failure for the RAC and the beginning of the end, see Davies, *Royal African Company*, 46. For revisionist interpretations, see William A. Pettigrew, *Freedom's Debt: The Royal African Company and the Politics of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1672–1752* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2013); Abigail L. Swingen, *Competing Visions of Empire: Labor, Slavery, and the Origins of the British Atlantic Empire* (New Haven, Conn., 2015), 172–95.

[62] London to Nicholas Buckeridge, William Cooper, and John Browne at CCC, July 7, 1698, T70/51, fol. 5, NA.

[63] London to Nicholas Buckeridge, Howsley Freeman, and Samuel Wallis at CCC, Jan. 15, 1699 [1700], T70/51, NA.

[64] London to CCC, July 11, 1699, T70/51, fol. 20v, NA (quotation). For earlier injunctions, see London to CCC, May 3, 1687, T70/50, fols. 36v–38v, NA; London to Gambia, Oct. 4, 1688, T70/51, fols. 81–84, NA.

the African coast.[65] But it soon became clear that private English traders and foreign competitors were not so easily dissuaded. In the first place, private English merchants did not have to absorb losses in the same way the company did, as the financial failure of an individual slaver did not necessarily harm the group.[66] And secondly, the slave trade was lucrative. The British Parliament ensured the continued influx of private merchants in 1712, when it declined to renew the Ten Percent Act, casting the British slave trade wide open.[67]

Throughout the first decade of the eighteenth century, as the debate over the best way to conduct the nation's slave trade raged in England, the RAC wavered about what to do with the private merchants and foreigners in its midst. The company set, and reversed, policies on trading with foreigners, with agents on the ground in Africa pushing change in London. In a 1704 letter to Dalby Thomas at Cape Coast Castle, the RAC consented to Thomas's request to buy tobacco and sugar from the Portuguese, urging him in return to barter "damaged & unvendible goods or refuge [refuse] slaves not fitt for the West Indies."[68] A year later the RAC wrote Thomas that the Portuguese tobacco "turned to very good account" and recommended that he "encourage the trade with the Portugueze particularly for tobacco."[69] But the company was unequivocal in its June 1707 orders to Richard Willis at Ouidah that he was strictly forbidden to trade with Portuguese merchants at the port, threatening that he would be "lyable to answer to the Parliament of great Brittaine" for disobeying. Commerce, the company argued, might encourage the Portuguese "to fix themselves in the Whiddah Trade," which would "bring an irreparable injury to the English nation."[70] In a dizzying flip-flop, the RAC wrote back just three months later, with instructions to both Thomas and Willis to stimulate Portuguese trade at their respective locations. The reason for the policy reversal was that the RAC believed the Portuguese were willing to trade gold to the British instead of European goods. The RAC recommended prices for both places but was not sure what to give the Portuguese in return, suggesting perhaps gunpowder and other goods that might be suitable for Brazil.[71]

The RAC soon realized that private traders and foreign merchants could represent an opportunity for financial gain. Both historians and contemporary observers have generally blamed the company's fort system for its demise, as the forts were ultimately too costly to maintain.[72] But forts

[65] London to CCC, July 11, 1699, T70/51, fol. 20v, NA.

[66] Davies, *Royal African Company*, 149.

[67] On the RAC's losing political battle to protect its monopoly, see William A. Pettigrew, "Free to Enslave: Politics and the Escalation of Britain's Transatlantic Slave Trade, 1688–1714," *WMQ* 64, no. 1 (January 2007): 3–38.

[68] London to Dalby Thomas at CCC, May 26, 1704, T70/52, fols. 18v–19, NA.

[69] London to Dalby Thomas at CCC, Aug. 30, 1705, T70/52, fols. 52v–53 (quotations, 52v), NA.

[70] London to Richard Willis Ouidah, June 26, 1707, T70/52, fols. 99–99v, NA.

[71] London to Dalby Thomas at CCC, Sept. 25, 1707, T70/52, fols. 103–103v, NA.

[72] Davies, *Royal African Company*, 121, 147.

also provided the RAC with the type of stable base in Africa that enabled the company to stockpile goods and adopt a middleman role with regard to intra-European trade, instead of the onetime intra-European trading scenarios that were more prevalent with small-scale private traders and the French. Unlike individual slavers who sent solitary boats to Africa, disposing all of their goods and purchasing all of their captives in a single voyage, companies with bases in Africa could sell goods when it was advantageous for them and could hold onto goods to trade with others who lacked that flexibility. In a notable retreat from its initial reluctance, at some point in the 1720s the RAC established a policy of "cultivateing a Commerce with the Portoguese," as the chief factors at Cape Coast Castle put it when reporting they had extended credit to Captain Joseph de Torres, outfitting him with goods in exchange for a promise "to make returns in gold within a twelve month."[73]

In the exchange between the RAC and Torres, questions of British political economy met with questions of Portuguese political economy in the African Atlantic. The breakup of the company's monopoly was one factor that decisively altered the transatlantic slave trade in the 1690s. The discovery of gold in Brazil in 1696 was another: by 1703 the Portuguese were importing more gold from Brazil than they had ever procured on the African coast.[74] Both of these events shaped the way that Europeans traded with each other in African waters. In theory, Brazilian ships were obligated to transport gold directly from Brazil to Portugal, keeping the precious metal in Portuguese hands. In reality, Brazilian merchants found it profitable to illegally ship gold to the African Atlantic, where they exchanged it for goods and slaves from other European ships, creating a more complex series of exchanges among gold, goods, and enslaved people in African waters.[75]

Lured by the prospect of Brazilian gold, the RAC evolved into a middleman purveyor of enslaved people as well as goods, and not simply within the gold trade. With its stable position in Africa, the RAC was poised to broker slaves to newly arrived ships, whose captains might be willing to pay elevated prices in order to receive captives without having to negotiate directly with African merchants.[76] During his voyage through Africa, John Atkins noted that the RAC routinely stockpiled slaves at

[73] Phipps, Dodson, and Boye at CCC to London, Sept. 30, 1721, T70/4, fol. 24, NA.

[74] Carla Rahn Phillips, "The Growth and Composition of Trade in the Iberian Empires, 1450–1750," in *The Rise of Merchant Empires: Long-Distance Trade in the Early Modern World, 1350–1750*, ed. James D. Tracy (Cambridge, 1990), 34–101, esp. 65.

[75] For smuggling Brazilian gold, see C. R. Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire, 1415–1825* (New York, 1969), 171.

[76] Like the RAC, the Danish West India and Guinea Company utilized its fort base at Christiansborg to broker slaves to other European traders and pursued a strategy of bartering enslaved people for Brazilian gold. See Ole Justesen, ed., *Danish Sources for the History of Ghana, 1657–1754*, trans. James Manley (Copenhagen, 2005), 1: 354–55, 435 n. 107; Judith Spicksley, "Pawns on the Gold Coast: The Rise of Asante and Shifts in Security for Debt, 1680–1750," *Journal of African History* 54, no. 2 (2013): 147–75, esp. 165–66, 166 n. 102.

Anomabu, "keeping always a number of Slaves against those demands of the Interlopers, who, they are sensible, want dispatch."[77] The RAC was not alone among Europeans in selling slaves to other Europeans. Small-scale slavers exchanged captives in the African Atlantic as well. At times such an exchange emerged out of a chance encounter, as when Captain Peter James of New York sold an enslaved girl to a French captain for munitions, iron bars, and brandy. But such exchanges could also serve as a last resort in a disastrous situation.[78] When Captain Barolet of the Bordeaux ship the *Triumvirat* realized he would not be able to trade on account of his gunpowder, he was forced to sell healthy slaves he had already purchased, along with other merchandise, to acquire the gunpowder he needed to continue trading. In contrast to these one-time trades, for the RAC selling enslaved people to other Europeans in Africa became the centerpiece of a strategy of leveraging both its institutional presence on the coast and its long-term relationships with African merchants to profit from others who were less experienced, whether private British traders or foreigners.[79]

Large-scale private traders who could deploy several ships at once in the African Atlantic in what was called a "floating factory" system were able to mimic the RAC's fort structure and similarly work the secondary market to their advantage.[80] The London-based slave ship outfitter Humphrey Morice gave his captain, William Snelgrave, wide latitude in "bartering & selling the goods you carry out or buying trafficking & disposing of them you purchase on the coast" on Snelgrave's second voyage to Africa in 1721. Morice had four ships in the African Atlantic at once, the *Henry*, *Sarah*, *Elizabeth*, and *Portugal*, and he gave Snelgrave instructions for shifting trade goods and enslaved people between ships. But he specifically instructed Snelgrave to sell as many captives as he could to the Portuguese in exchange for gold, although Brazilian tobacco was acceptable as well, being—as Morice noted—"allways a currant comodity upon the coast." Snelgrave complied with his orders, trading seventy-six enslaved people to the Portuguese in exchange for gold and coins (moidores, silver cruzadoes, and pieces of eight) at several junctures during his four-and-a-half-month voyage from Bassa Terra, just west of Sestos, to Anomabu. (He also bought corn from the Dutch at Apam and slaves from the Danes at Mumford.) He was not able to resell all of the slaves he had purchased to the Portuguese and return to London, as Morice

[77] Atkins, *Voyage to Guinea*, 169–70 (quotation, 169). For the elevated prices the RAC could charge as middlemen, see Curtin, *Economic Change*, 174.

[78] Misevich, *New York History* 86: 185–204.

[79] "Déclaration du capitaine Barolet," July 9, 1765, in Bergès, ed. *Terres d'esclaves*, 58. The Danish fort also continued to broker slaves for foreigners throughout the eighteenth century; see "Articles séparés du traité passé entre La Compagnie Danoise de Guinée à Copenhague et M[essieu]rs David & Dubuq," June 5, 1769, F/3/94, ANOM.

[80] For "floating factory," see Joseph E. Inikori, *Africans and the Industrial Revolution in England: A Study in International Trade and Economic Development* (Cambridge, 2002), 293–94.

suggested he might, and thus still sailed to Barbados with 359 captive men, women, teenagers—whom he denoted "men-boys" and "women-girls"—and children.[81] By the 1720s, the secondary intra-European market was robust enough that Morice, the largest slave-ship outfitter of the time, found it more profitable to buy and resell slaves in the African Atlantic, than to ship captives overseas.

Morice's activities offer one early to mid-eighteenth century example of how a slave-ship outfitter with exceptional resources tried to work a dynamic secondary marketplace to his advantage. For British slavers more broadly, the nature of British government support for the slave trade and the legacy of the RAC's fort system on the coast shaped the way that British traders engaged in the secondary market through the late eighteenth century. Where the RAC had been a joint-stock company with monopolistic privileges, its successor, the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa, received government funding to run the British fort system but was explicitly barred from engaging in the transatlantic traffic itself.[82] Although the company was designed to funnel slaves to British ships, in practice it engaged in complex gold-slaves-goods transactions with ships along the coast, at times even renting or borrowing captives from ship captains.[83] The company also occasionally sold enslaved people to the French; for example, the crew of the French slave ship the *Comte d'Azemar* found themselves barred from trade by the Portuguese in Cacheu in 1763 and consequently exchanged their goods for captives with the British at James Fort in Gambia.[84] Company factors knew that any goods they received from other Europeans would have to be re-traded with African merchants and so refused items when they did not suit, as in the case of Richard Miles, the governor at Tantumquerry, who received goods from Captain James Paisley that were "so intolerably bad" he vowed to "declare off from any further barters with him."[85]

The way that French slave traders participated in intra-European commerce also arose from a combination of political economy in Europe and territorial reality on the African coast. Although the French held the largest share of the slave trade in the 1780s, the way the French slave trade was structured in Europe and Africa differed markedly from its British

[81] "Orders & Instructions to William Snelgrave commander of the Henry for the Coast of Africa with an Invoice of his Cargoe And Journal of Trade," July 15, 1721, M7/6, BE.

[82] For complaints that the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa illegally shipped slaves transatlantically, see "Draught of a Memorial of the Merchants of London Trading to Africa," [n.d.], T70/1534, NA.

[83] For the rental market, see Martin Watts to Richard Miles, Mar. 30, 1776, T70/1533, NA; [Jerome] Weuves to Miles, dated "Saturday morning," T70/1534, NA.

[84] "Etat général de tous les navires expédiés du Port de Nantes pour les Côtes de Guinée," May 13, 1767, C740, ADLA.

[85] [Richard] Miles to Thomas Westgate, Oct. 6, 1773, T70/1533, NA.

counterpart. Whereas the British slave trade operated in the context of a permissive international trade policy and a plethora of forts, French slave traders faced the twin obstacles of mercantilist restrictions at home and a lack of forts on the Gold and Slave Coasts outside of a post at Ouidah. Mercantilist restrictions hampered the ability of French slavers to acquire the precise goods they needed for the slave trade. The absence of forts along the coast made it more difficult for French slavers to develop long-standing connections with African brokers and hindered slavers in parceling out goods because they could not stockpile their wares at a fort, reserving some merchandise for a later moment. Intra-European trade offered a solution to both of these problems. Confined mostly to trading from ships, French captains used intra-European trade as a way to get around the regulations of the Old Regime because it enabled them to swap the goods they had for those they needed without interference from state institutions.

Though the RAC shifted its stance on intra-European trade, viewing it first as a threat and then as an opportunity, the practice remained a constant part of the French commercial landscape in the African Atlantic. In part, the synchrony of intra-European trade for the French was due to the fact that French slave traders continuously faced some level of regulation in importing goods for the slave trade, even as various French state-sponsored companies such as the Compagnie du Sénégal or the Compagnie des Indes entered and exited the commerce in human beings. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, individual French merchants who wanted to import goods for the slave trade had to petition the national Council of Commerce directly. Essentially, the government prohibited slave ship outfitters from purchasing goods abroad that they could acquire from French producers at home. In 1708, for example, the Council of Commerce approved a request from Nantes slave ship outfitter René Montaudouin to import cowrie shells, amber, pipes, knives, and select textiles from Holland but rejected his request to import certain white textiles, woolens, copper kettles, and coral on the grounds that Montaudouin could obtain those items locally.[86] Likewise the council instructed a Bordeaux slaver to first search for seed beads in Rouen and colorful textiles called indiennes in Marseille before it would grant him permission to import those goods from Holland.[87] Local French merchants who supplied slave ships with goods came up against state restrictions as well. The Rouen-based merchant Suslamaure appealed to the Council of Commerce to import "paternosters and glass buttons called rocailles of different sizes and makes" from Holland on the grounds that those goods were essential for bargaining on the African coast and "serve as an assortment to those that

[86] "Dossier concernant les marchandises que le Sr Montaudouin de Nantes. . . . ," June 8, 1708, F12/54, fol. 213–213v, AN, Pierrefitte.

[87] "Memoire du Sr Cardinal negociant de Bordeaux," June 22, 1708, F12/54, fol. 216–216v, AN.

are made in France." His request was rejected by the council, which did not see the difference between imported Holland beads and those manufactured domestically.[88]

Government restrictions only partially eased with open trade. In the 1716 lettres patentes permitting individual merchants from Rouen, La Rochelle, Bordeaux, and Nantes to enter the slave trade, the French government formalized the distinctions created by the Council of Commerce, presenting a list of foreign goods that merchants could import for the slave trade.[89] The list itself was highly specific, including old sheets and tobacco pipes from Holland, small mirrors from Germany, and white, blue, and striped cotton cloth from the East Indies, and outfitters were obliged to warehouse these goods in port cities to prevent them from slipping into France. But the 1716 document was ambiguous about goods that could not be imported for the slave trade, so much so that a decade later the Chamber of Commerce in La Rochelle wrote a mémoire complaining about the level of uncertainty.[90] In regulating commerce, Old Regime institutions continued to enforce importing restrictions. The Council of Commerce passed down rulings prohibiting individual merchants from importing specific goods for the slave trade at least as late as 1748, when it forbade a La Rochelle merchant from importing cowrie shells, indiennes, and blue and white salampore fabric from Britain.[91]

Even as France intensified its slave trade in the second half of the eighteenth century, state restrictions on foreign imports remained. In 1767, the government confiscated gunpowder and knives that Paul Nairac, a major Bordeaux slave ship outfitter, had imported from Britain. Nairac eventually secured the release of his goods, but only after arguing for the "current difficulty" he faced in obtaining the quantities he needed for the slave trade.[92] At the same time, the government also seized gunpowder belonging to a second Bordeaux merchant, Lassus, who at first tried to have his goods reinstated but then dropped his appeal. Though Nairac petitioned on the grounds of insufficient quantity, the crossed-off portion of a letter on Lassus's behalf hints at a different motive: Lassus "wanted to find in France

[88] "Sr. Suslamaure marchand à Rouen," Oct. 3, 1708, F12/54, fol. 284–284v, AN.

[89] *Lettres patentes du Roy, pour la liberté du Commerce sur les côtes d'Afrique* (Paris, 1716).

[90] Chambre de commerce de La Rochelle, Aug. 6, 1726, no. 6575, 41ETP 215, ADCM.

[91] Bureau de commerce ruling on importing goods, July 24, 1748, F12/95, p. 611, AN, Pierrefitte; the Bureau de Commerce supplanted the Conseil de Commerce in 1722. In contrast, even the state-sponsored RAC ranged far and wide for its slave trade goods without state interference. For example, in 1684 the RAC wanted to import Dutch guns to sell, as African consumers preferred them to British guns. Faced with protests from British gunsmiths, the RAC simply outfitted a boat in Holland with orders to send the Dutch guns directly to Africa. Davies, *Royal African Company*, 173.

[92] "Ordonnance M. De Fargés en faveur des Sieurs Nairac," Dec. 21, 1767, Saisie faitte sur le Sr Nairac de poudre a feu et autres marchandises qu'il avoit fait venir d'Angleterre pour la traitte des noirs, 1767–1768 , C2173, ADG.

gunpowder of a good enough quality for the slave trade," he wrote, adding that British gunpowder was far superior. "Many boats have had a bad trade which is burdensome to the outfitters because they were only loaded with gunpowder from France, which is very mediocre and 'les naturels du païs' know the difference."[93]

That French goods were not always sufficient in the eyes of discerning African merchants surfaced in discussions about how to better organize the French slave trade. The overarching structure of the French slave trade was both determined from the top and continually up for debate—the subject of endless petitions, letters, and mémoires amid a pervasive national sense that the French had fallen behind in this most important of commercial competitions. In their response to one such proposal, the Directeurs du Commerce de Guyenne suggested adding British guns to the list of goods French slavers were allowed to import.[94] They wrote, "We are citizens and we regret that we are making this request because it seems contrary to the interests of our factories," but the French factories in Saint-Étienne were "powerless" to match those of Britain when it came to making the kind and quality of guns African merchants desired. Regardless of whether African complaints against French guns were well-founded, the merchants continued, "it is a fact that they rejected ours, and because of that we were often exposed to very difficult trading conditions, that were all the more dangerous because they were longer." Along with guns, tobacco became an especially contentious issue between slave ship outfitters and government institutions in the second half of the eighteenth century. French slave ship outfitters from the port cities of La Rochelle and Nantes maintained that tobacco was a critical trade good, especially on the Slave Coast near the port of Ouidah. On that part of the coast, they argued, African merchants preferred Brazilian to French tobacco. Slavers who had attempted to bring French tobacco to Africa found that their voyages "resulted in a total loss," as the outfitters explained.[95] For years, slavers lobbied customs officers of the tobacco monopoly, the General Farm, to be allowed to import Brazilian tobacco, without success.[96]

[93] Letter to M. le Controlleur General, March 1768, C2173, ADG.

[94] "Avis de la Chambre dans le projet de reglement pour le Commerce daffrique," Dec. 7, 1762, N18, C4383, ADG.

[95] "Observations des Directeurs du Commerce de Guienne sur le memoire intitulé Projet de Reglement pour le Commerce de la Cote occidentale d'Affrique," 1768, C757 (quotations), ADLA. For the African consumer preference for Brazilian tobacco, which was third-grade tobacco brushed with molasses to preserve it, see Pierre Verger, *Bahia and the West African Trade, 1549–1851* (Ibadan, Nigeria, 1964), 7–8; Boxer, *Portuguese Seaborne Empire*, 170.

[96] Evidence of obstacles to importing tobacco exists through the 1780s in the departmental archives of Loire-Atlantique (ADLA) and Charente-Maritime (ADCM), as well as in the French overseas archives in Aix-en-Provence (ANOM). For the inability of the crown to break the General Farm's monopsony over the tobacco tax in the 1780s,

But once on the African coast, French merchants did not try to hide the fact that they traded with other Europeans, which meant that Old Regime institutions had their limits.[97] A flourishing contraband trade to accompany the Old Regime's mercantilist policies was nothing new, both in metropolitan France and abroad. In the West Indies, rampant and entrenched smuggling brought substantial profits for colonial officials and proved too widespread for the crown to curtail.[98] Within France, contraband printed cloth from the East Indies entered the country via Holland, Britain, and Switzerland in violation of crown regulations limiting the importation of East Indies textiles to the Compagnie des Indes. In Nantes, where merchants had to pay customs duties to trade with the interior of France unless the merchandise was destined for Africa, the slave trade actually functioned as a way to disguise other forms of commerce.[99]

For the French, trading with other Europeans in Africa became part of a wider pattern of using overseas spaces to overcome state restrictions. Slave traders coming from French Atlantic ports treated the African coast as if it lay beyond the Old Regime's reach. French slave ships traded with both British and Portuguese ships, especially on the Gold and Slave Coasts, and also purchased goods from European forts in order to better assort their cargo. French reliance on the practice of intra-European trade was so well established by the late eighteenth century that trading with other Europeans—and coming out ahead—had a set of strategies all its own. Thus, the anonymous author of a lengthy set of trade instructions advised French slavers to use a bit of cunning when purchasing Brazilian tobacco from Portuguese ships at Little Popo, on the western Slave Coast. "One should begin by finding out what ports they have chosen for their trade in order to persuade them that one has decided for another," he wrote. "Because if they believe that you will trade in competition with them, they will not sell you tobacco at all."[100] But French slavers also had to be careful to make sure that they did not find themselves swindled,

see Noel D. Johnson, "Banking on the King: The Evolution of the Royal Revenue Farms in Old Regime France," *Journal of Economic History* 66, no. 4 (December 2006): 963–91, esp. 986–88.

[97] French slave ships also stopped to purchase tobacco in Lisbon en route to the African coast. See "*La Jeanne Thérèze*, outfitted by Chaurand Frères of Nantes, which left Lisbon on Jan. 10, 1784 with an augmented cargo for the African coast," 101 J 26, p. 256, ADLA. See also "Liste des Navires françois arrivés et mouillés dans le Port de Libonne," 1786–1788, B1/693, Ministère des Affaires étrangères.

[98] Kenneth J. Banks, *Chasing Empire across the Sea: Communications and the State in the French Atlantic, 1713–1763* (Montreal, 2002), 219; Sophie White, "Geographies of Slave Consumption: French Colonial Louisiana and a World of Goods," *Winterthur Portfolio* 44, nos. 2/3 (Summer/Autumn 2011): 229–448; Michael Kwass, *Contraband: Louis Mandrin and the Making of a Global Underground* (Cambridge, Mass., 2014).

[99] For contraband cloth, see Saugera, *Bordeaux, port négrier*, 249. For Nantes, see Boulle, *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer* 59: 80–81.

[100] "Instructions pour la Commerce de la Cote d'or," [1783], F/3/61, fol. 63, ANOM.

the author of the trade instructions warned: Portuguese merchants often tried to pass spoiled or rotten tobacco off on the French. The best way to guard against rotten tobacco was to unwrap it, but if pressed for time, the author told French slavers to go by smell. Fresh tobacco should be dry and odorless. Rotten tobacco, in contrast, was "stinky and disagreeable." Purchasing tobacco from British merchants on the African coast could also be problematic, Nantes slavers told customs officials as part of their campaign to import tobacco directly. Slave ship outfitters in Nantes complained to the state that the British deliberately delayed trading tobacco with the French in the African Atlantic, holding French merchants at bay by first purchasing captives at a given location and then offering French slave ships tobacco in exchange for other goods.[101] Slavers from Great Britain and France came to intra-European trade from different frameworks in terms of political economy but with the same goals in the African Atlantic: to beat rivals and shorten the amount of time trading. French complaints that the British manipulated intra-European trade to slow them down show that the intra-European market was influenced by the competitive priorities of its participants.

Though differences in political economy in Europe drove the British and French to engage in intra-European trade in different ways, the imperatives of African geopolitics and political economy also shaped the nature of the secondary marketplace in African waters. The impact of African political economy comes into sharp relief in the case of the Dahomey state at Ouidah and the intra-European tobacco trade that developed off the western Slave Coast in the eighteenth century. Tobacco had been a valuable trade item at Ouidah in the early eighteenth century, when the kingdom of Hueda ruled the territory and its main port.[102] But with the Dahomey conquest of Hueda in 1727, the secondary market for tobacco on the western Slave Coast took on a new importance. Although Ouidah remained the largest slave port on the Slave Coast after the Dahomey conquest, the takeover effectively dispersed slaving activity throughout the Bight of Benin instead of consolidating it all at the port, as Hueda and Allada refugees settled in Porto-Novo and Bagadry and the western Slave Coast developed as an alternative when trading conditions at Ouidah were difficult. In relative terms, slaving declined at Ouidah after 1727—compared to the period 1680–1727—while increasing for the smaller Slave Coast ports of Little Popo and Grand Popo, Bagadry, Ekpè, Porto-Novo, and Lagos, even though Ouidah remained the largest slave point in the region and total slaving remained relatively stable for the Bight of Benin as a whole.[103]

A combination of three factors strengthened the position of the smaller ports after the Dahomey conquest, creating the conditions for a secondary

[101] Letter from Nantes merchants to Fermiers Généraux, 1768, C757, ADLA.
[102] Law, *Slave Coast*, 135–6.
[103] Voyages, https://slavevoyages.org; Law, *Ouidah*, 71.

market, especially in tobacco and cowries, to develop along the western Slave Coast. For the first two decades of its rule, Dahomey was continuously at war, both with its western neighbors and with the Oyo Empire to the northeast, which disrupted trade at Ouidah. The French, in fact, shifted their slaving to Little Popo from 1733 to 1744 in response to the instability.[104] Fighting continued sporadically throughout the eighteenth century, and when trade was poor at Ouidah ships went elsewhere. The increasingly powerful Oyo further boosted the smaller ports on the eastern Slave Coast, as the Oyo preferred to take their captives directly to the coast, instead of selling them to Dahomey middlemen as required when trading at Ouidah. The rules and regulations of the Dahomey state at Ouidah itself also gave rise to the intra-European secondary marketplace. Although the Dahomey state did not monopolize trade at Ouidah, allowing both private trade and a market economy, it set prices and regulated trade throughout the eighteenth century, casting itself as a first among equals and demanding preferential treatment alongside taxes and customs.[105] By the late eighteenth century, it had barred nonroyal African traders at Ouidah from purchasing European manufactured goods, allowing them to trade only for tobacco, according to the French fort factor, Gourg, who complained about the restriction.[106] Whether the state explicitly forbade intra-European trade at Ouidah is unclear, but it is certainly likely, especially amid a host of other regulations in the 1780s, and in any case, the Portuguese lacked market incentives to trade away their tobacco once at the port.[107]

But on the western Slave Coast, rules were more relaxed and market incentives to trade were stronger (Figure II).[108] Because slave ships sailed west to east along with the current, trading for tobacco in the secondary marketplace on the western Slave Coast gave their captains flexibility to navigate the uncertainties of trade around Ouidah. The situation could be so fluid that the French fort factor Gourg devised a code for advising French slave ships at Little Popo whether they should stop at Ouidah or keep sailing.[109] Though Portuguese/Brazilian ships may have been able to exchange

[104] Strickrodt, *Afro-European Trade*, 123–27. Captain Pierre Mary of the *Diligent* decided to skip Ouidah in 1730 on account of violence at the port and an absence of slaves, sailing instead to Jakin. Harms, *Diligent*, 202, 223.

[105] For the Oyo, see Law, *Ouidah*, 126–27. For the rules and regulations, see Robin Law, "Royal Monopoly and Private Enterprise in the Atlantic Trade: The Case of Dahomey," *Journal of African History* 18, no. 4 (1977): 555–67; Law, *Ouidah*, 111–19.

[106] Gourg, "Mémoire pour servir d'instruction au directeur qui me succedera au comptoir de Juda, 1791, N118, 16DFC/75, p. 7, ANOM.

[107] For restrictions on selling guns to nonroyal merchants, see "Instructions pour la Commerce de la Cote d'or," [1783], F3/61, fol. 64v, ANOM. For the restrictions of the 1780s, see Law, *Ouidah*, 112.

[108] For the contrast between state-controlled trade in Ouidah and the relative freedom of trade on the western Slave Coast, see Strickrodt, *Afro-European Trade*, 149.

[109] Gourg, "Mémoire pour servir d'instruction," 1791, N118, 16DFC/75, p. 10 ANOM.

tobacco directly for enslaved people with nonroyal merchants at Ouidah, if they were planning to trade anywhere or with anyone else, they too needed an assortment of goods—especially cowries—that they obtained from other European merchants. The French slave ship the *Roy Dahomey* spent the entire day on March 1, 1773, in the waters outside Little Popo purchasing 270 rolls of tobacco from two Portuguese ships in exchange for platilles (linens), cowries, guinées (Indian cotton), silk, and coral.[110] Just as African states and societies shaped the transatlantic slave trade in a macro sense, the priorities of individual African states shaped the trade in any given location on the coast at any given moment, which had a ripple effect into the secondary marketplace. Questions of African political economy intersected with the demands of European political economy both on the coast and in the secondary marketplace of Intra-European exchange.

The intra-European market was influenced by and interacted with the European-African market, as Europeans swapped goods with each other in response to the dictates of African consumer demand. It was this demand that shaped the nature of the transatlantic slave trade in the African Atlantic, creating the impetus for the various bundles of goods that European merchants had to acquire. Ultimately, Europeans were reactive participants in the transatlantic slave trade, both when planning their voyages in Europe and when managing their ships and overseeing their forts on the coast. But the intra-European market also powerfully effected the Middle Passage. The secondary market helped captains to subsist in the African Atlantic for the duration of the slave trading and to prepare for the transatlantic voyage. In this way, intra-European trade served to connect the African Atlantic with the transatlantic, linking African economic history with global economic history.

Intra-European trade was important enough to the overall transatlantic slave trade that a separate economic sector emerged, an intermediary industry of services to accommodate the needs of slave ships coming from Europe. Like the intra-European goods market, this industry propped up the transatlantic slave trade, functioning alongside the primary activity of purchasing enslaved people. An overlooked part of an overlooked trade, this secondary services market enabled European slavers to refit their ships to hold captives, communicate across language barriers, provision themselves with food and water, recapture runaway slaves, and access medical care.

The intra-European service sector—or more precisely the provision of services, support and logistics—existed between forts and ships, enabling slave ships to maintain themselves in the African Atlantic throughout the slave trade cycle. The intra-European service sector supplemented the

[110] Joseph Crassous de Médeuil, "Journal de Navigation," Mar. 1, 1773, *Le Roy Dahomey*, EE 282, AMLR.


Figure 11

Multiple sites of trade in the Bight of Benin. Drawn by Rebecca Wrenn. Thanks to David Eltis, Emory University, and Mark Heller, Wentworth Institute of Technology, for supplying geocodes used to help create the map; see also Eltis and David Richardson, *Atlas of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New Haven, Conn., 2010).

African service sector, with some activities such as translation, canoe transport, and the fresh fish trade firmly in African hands.[111] But Europeans with a stable presence on the African coast augmented the African service sector in important ways. "If one has not made all of his water and his wood, or if one needs fowl or goats, one stops at Cape Three Points, where there is a Brandenbourg fort and three of the Dutch," stated a 1719 set of instructions to French captains.[112] Written by a resident of Lorient, the instructions gave

[111] For translation services, see N[athaniel] Uring, *A History of the Voyages and Travels of Capt. Nathaniel Uring. . . .* (London, 1726), 37–38. For canoe transport, see Letter from CCC, June 28, 1721, T70/23, fol. 6, NA. For the fresh fish trade, see Doumet, "Mémoire historique sur les différentes parties de l'Afrique dépendant de l'Ile de Gorée depuis la Rivière du Sénégal," 1769, N80, 17DFC/76, ANOM.

[112] De Haumeurs, "Projet des voyages," 1719, C6/5, fol. 6 (quotation), ANOM. Europeans at times brokered canoe hire for each other; see for example Christiansborg to Richard Miles, Jan. 5, 1783, T70/1549, NA.

would-be French captains the ins and outs of dealing with various foreign forts. Europeans may have exchanged goods and services with each other, but international trade still had a competitive edge. The Dutch might sell incoming French ships wood or allow French crews to cut wood for themselves, but the 1719 guide warned French captains to beware: the Dutch "hurt as much as they can those who are not their countrymen." Like the intra-European goods market, the intra-European services industry helped ships supplement materials that they had brought from Europe and mitigate unexpected hazards. For example, the *Duc de Choiseul* from Le Havre stopped at a British fort on the Gold Coast on September 30, 1777, "in distress for water and anchors," having sailed from Ouidah.[113]

The intra-European services, support, and logistics sector also enabled slave ships to prepare for the transatlantic crossing by exchanging trade goods for food, water, and medical services. This facet of the secondary market centered upon the Portuguese islands of São Tomé and Príncipe in the Gulf of Guinea. The two islands were uniquely situated at the intersection of the northern and southern Atlantic currents, meaning that slave ships coming from any point throughout the entire stretch between the Windward Coast and the Bight of Biafra could stop at the islands but so too could ships coming from the ports of Malembo, Cabenda, and Loango in West Central Africa, north of the Congo River.[114] The Gulf of Guinea islands had long served to connect different parts of the African Atlantic: in the sixteenth century, the Portuguese used the islands as a way station for enslaved people from the Slave Coast and West Central Africa whom they planned to sell on the Gold Coast.[115] By the late seventeenth century, São Tomé and Príncipe had also become an established stop on transatlantic slave voyages, thereby linking the African Atlantic to the transatlantic.[116] The food and water was reputable, if overpriced. Nicholas Villault, Sieur de Bellefond, declared the water on São Tomé "the best in all Africk."[117]

By the time the slave trade exploded in the eighteenth century, the Gulf of Guinea islands had become integral parts of the transatlantic system, providing goods and services to European ships from all nations. In 1788 Robert Norris told the British House of Commons that he stopped at either São Tomé or Príncipe on all five of his transatlantic voyages, and once

[113] "Arrivals at Cape Coast & Annamaboe 1777," T70/1534, NA.

[114] For a map of trade winds, see Eltis and Richardson, *Atlas of the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, 8.

[115] Verger, *Bahia and the West African Trade*, 3; John L. Vogt, "The Early Sao Tome-Principe Slave Trade with Mina, 1500–1540," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 6, no. 3 (1973): 453–67.

[116] The Cape Verde islands served a similar function for slave ships from Senegambia, although ships generally stopped at the Cape Verde islands before sailing to the African coast and often purchased locally produced cloth to resell in Africa, in addition to food and water. For food and water, see Crété, *La traite des nègres*, 72.

[117] Villault, *Relation of the Coasts of Africk Called Guinee*, 275 (quotation), 287–91.

at both.[118] The French slave ship the *Vénus* set its sights on Príncipe upon departing Ouidah, "not having enough food for us to risk a crossing, like that of going to Martinique, our destination."[119] Like the rest of the African Atlantic, São Tomé and Príncipe could be crowded. When the *Vénus* was moored in a cul-de-sac on the western side of Príncipe, the ship was joined by both British and Portuguese vessels. The goods that the Portuguese at Príncipe demanded from these ships differed to some degree from the goods demanded along the African coast, and experienced outfitters stocked their ships accordingly, knowing they would probably make a stop.[120] Thick woolen textiles called bretagnes, for example, were highly sought after at Príncipe but had little market value elsewhere.[121]

A routine part of the slave trade in the eighteenth century, intra-European trade on the island of Príncipe took concrete shape in the hospital that the Portuguese established on the island.[122] When the *Suzanne Marguerite*, captained by André Bégaud, left the Slave Coast, it was hit by waves of illness, as individuals succumbed to smallpox, scurvy, and a mysterious sickness marked by profuse bleeding. So on December 1, 1775, Bégaud stopped at Príncipe and transferred 474 enslaved people to land, where some of them were treated at the hospital there.[123] The same day, along with the captives, the boat sent large quantities of textiles to pay for their care: thin white platilles, a linen-cotton mixed textile called siamoise, and cotton handkerchiefs. Three days later it sent another large shipment of eighteen different types of goods ashore, including seven hats trimmed in gold, four swords and their belts, eight pieces of striped cloth, eighteen decorated shirts, and a box of another two hundred platilles. The *Suzanne Marguerite* paid the Portuguese with a very different mix of goods than the

118 Examination of [Robert] Norris, June 3, 1788, in Sheila Lambert, ed., *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century*, vol. 68, *George III: Minutes of Evidence on the Slave Trade 1788 and 1789* (Wilmington, Del., 1975), 15–17.

119 *Campagne de la "Vénus,"* Journal de bord de Bachelet, Feb. 10, 1724, MAR/4JJ/27/6, fol. 45, AN.

120 "Table Général de la Traitte de 528 Têtes de Négres, faitte tant au haut de la Côte qu'à Portenove & Isle du Prince . . . commancée le 16 Juillet 1786 & finie le 12 Janvier 1787," F3/128, fol. 153, ANOM.

121 "Instructions pour la Commerce de la Cote d'or," [1783], F/3/61, fol. 64v, ANOM.

122 Through the Santa Casa da Misericórdia confraternity, the Portuguese established hospitals throughout metropolitan Portugal and the Portuguese colonial world, including in Luanda. The hospital on Príncipe has never been identified as part of the Santa Casa da Misericórdia system and probably functioned more like an entrepôt for sick slaves. See A. J. R. Russell-Wood, *Fidalgos and Philanthropists: The Santa Casa da Misericórdia of Bahia, 1550–1755* (Berkeley, Calif., 1968). For French plans to build an "entrepôt" for sick slaves on the island of Corisque on the model of Príncipe, see "Sur les Comptoirs à etablir aux cotes de Guinée," Sept. 22, 1701, N11, C6/3, fols. 1v–2 (quotation), ANOM.

123 Joseph Crassous de Médeuil, "Journal de traite," *La Suzanne Marguerite*, 1775–76, EE 280, AMLR.

RAC had advised Dalby Thomas to trade with Portuguese merchants in 1707. It also traded with a different mix of goods than it had employed at the start of its African trade, when it exchanged guns, ammunition, coral, and select textiles for ivory before heading to Ouidah to purchase captives. Like other locations in Atlantic Africa, Príncipe was its own micro-economy, and merchants who ran the service sector there demanded specific trade goods. By the time captives onboard the *Suzanne Marguerite* suffered massive sickness in 1775, there was an institutionalized system in place for caring for sick slaves: their enslavers paid for Portuguese services with an assorted collection of merchandise. Over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, an intra-European service sector had developed on the African coast, and especially on the Atlantic islands, in response to the needs of European ships as they coasted in African waters purchasing enslaved people and then preparing to cross the ocean.

The Gulf of Guinea islands served as a way station, connecting the African Atlantic to the larger transatlantic world. When British and French slave ships departed São Tomé or Príncipe and left the African Atlantic behind, they began a two-month journey that in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries usually ended at one of the sugar islands in the Caribbean, where the enslaved people that captains and fort agents had purchased for an assortment of goods were exchanged again, this time against commodities, such as coffee and sugar, and financial instruments. When Europeans bargained with each other in the African Atlantic, by contrast, African economic practices governed intra-European economic interactions, whether between ships, between ships and forts, or between ships and Portuguese officials established on the islands of São Tomé and Príncipe. But in connecting the African Atlantic to the transatlantic, intra-European trade also connected African economic activity to global economic activity, as the intra-European service industry prepared slave ships to sail to the other side of the world.