A Particular Study of Slavery in the Caribbean Island of Saint Barthelemy: 1648-1846[1]

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Introduction

Situated in the Caribbean among the Leeward Islands of the Lesser Antilles, the tiny island of Saint Barthélemy, a French colony from 1648 until it was ceded to Sweden in 1784, developed socially and economically along a path that diverged in almost every respect from the characteristic pattern that pervaded the colonial West Indies. Socially and culturally, it evolved as an isolate, an atypical society, and yet was a constituent part of the unfolding world of slavery and plantation settlements of the seventeenth-and eighteenth-century Caribbean. In this context slavery was equally a constituent, but hardly an indispensable element, in Saint Barthélemy's colonial development. It is the aim of this

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article to trace the peculiar historical and demographic specificity of slavery in the colony from its early beginnings until its abolition by Sweden in 1846/47.

Certainly, the most characteristic mode of seventeenth-century European colonization in the Caribbean has been that of exploitation. West Indian colonies were established by European nations not only to enhance their political power but, within a prevailing economic framework of mercantilism, to augment their wealth by providing the base for their international trade and commerce. The colonies were therefore geared, from their very inception, to the agricultural production of lucrative export staple crops to meet the market demands of a gradually expanding seventeenth-century world economy. While tobacco, in addition to indigo and cotton, initially served this purpose, as wealth-producing staples they were, by the end of the seventeenth century, generally and irrevocably replaced by sugar. While the conversion to sugar monoculture occurred in varying stages and with varying intensity throughout the island colonies of the British and French West Indies, once sugar became firmly entrenched as the cornerstone of a colony's economic prosperity and development, and intrinsically wedded to African slave labor, characteristic social structures emerged. Grounded in racial caste and class contradictions, these structures generally defined the basic nature and parameters of the typical West Indian slave society. (Knight, 1990:66-158 passim)

Throughout its turbulent social history, Saint Barthélemy remained outside the major thrust of these forces that so directly contributed to Europe's economic expansion, while so profoundly shaping the fabric of Caribbean colonial societies. In fact, while the major islands were evolving into virtual sugar kingdoms, Saint Barthélemy's agricultural structure remained comparatively static. Over the two hundred-odd years of its colonization, Saint Barthélemy never moved beyond the primitive, transitory stage of the pre-sugar economies, where holdings were small in area, where capital investment was minimal, and where indentured servants and African slaves worked side by side.

Its tiny size (25 km^2), its rocky terrain, arid soil and excessive lack of rainfall totally precluded the emergence of the sugar plantation as a feature of its economy, and its labor needs remained consequently small. As such, Saint Barthélemy's population never developed into the distinctive and peculiar racio-economic pyramid that characterized the demographic composition of the sugar islands; that is, with a tiny, exclusively white ruling minority at the top; a disproportionately massive base of racially different and juridically defined (i.e., as chattels) slave

laborers at the bottom level; and, over time, a proportionately tiny caste of free coloreds (usually smaller than that of the whites) emerging in between the two opposing poles. Nor did Saint Barthélemy exhibit the exorbitantly high mortality rates of the sugar plantation system that necessitated the ever-increasing importation of African slaves. Contrarily, at least during those periods of political stability that punctuated its history, Saint Barthélemy's slave population did reproduce itself through the traditional process of family formation and births.

Where the treatment and conditions of slaves on the sugar plantations were excessively cruel, where slaves were notoriously «overworked and undernourished» as virtual units of production, and where an overall and pervading atmosphere of fear reigned, at once to force slaves into accepting their degraded position and to stimulate their labor, the Saint Barthélemy slave was no doubt spared most of the more wantonly and garishly inhuman aspects of slavery in the sugar colonies. This is not to say, however, that the slaves' lot in Saint Barthélemy was an easy one, but their «overwork and undernourishment» were probably due more to the generalized poverty of the island and the infertility and aridity of its soil than to any deliberate policy of cruelty on the part of the master, who himself labored to make ends meet. In fact, agricultural practices in Saint Barthélemy were distinguished both by their family orientation and their small scale, as opposed to the progressive tendency, in the more developed colonies, toward a consolidation of holdings and the concentration of landowners.

In most Caribbean slave societies where a social and political plantocracy emerged, status was rigidly defined both by race and by one's relationship to property. "Black" had come to be equated with "slave," with manual and menial labor and with social degradation, while "white" embodied wealth, power, exemption from physical work, and the pursuit of leisure. (Knight, 1990:120-54passim) In Saint Barthélemy, the only West Indian colony where masters deigned to work in their own fields beside their own slaves, the latter's view of themselves, as of their masters, must certainly have been a singular one.

Early French period

The first slaves that arrived in Saint Barthélemy came with a handful of French colonists emigrating in 1648 from the neighboring island of Saint Christopher, where slave labor was already in use. Within eight years, this small contingent was massacred by Carib Indians, forcing the few

remaining survivors back to the mother colony. Three years later, in 1659, several dozen colonists and their slaves attempted to settle once again on Saint Barthélemy, this time with more success. However,

> In 1666, the inhabitants of both Saint Barthélemy and Saint Martin were forced to reoccupy that portion of Saint Christopher from which the English had been expelled. The latter having retaken the island, however, and its cession to England having later been ratified, most of the inhabitants returned to the islands from which they had been uprooted.[2] (Deveau, 1972-76:8)

Table 1 shows the evolution of the colony's population according to status (white, free colored and slave) from 1671 until the arrival of the Swedes in 1784. Up to the period of King William's War (1689-1697), the Saint Barthélemy population perceptibly increased, although at a lesser rate for the whites than for those of African origin. In 1671 slaves and free mulattoes comprised only 14 percent of the population; by 1681 they already represented 23 percent. A household by household census taken in the latter year offers some insights into the colony's socio-economic organization. Of the seventy-one men bearing arms, only about sixty are heads of family and listed with a wife. Fifty of these couples have children. There are forty-six heads of household engaged in cattle-breeding, including the commander, DeGuerre, who has neither wife nor child. The cattle consist of: 96 cows, 85 calves, 16 steer and 2 horses, the latter belonging to the commander. There is no mention of agriculture in the 1681 census, however Père Dutertre, who had witnessed the early beginnings of the settlement, does mention that tobacco was cultivated and even states that, in his opinion, there would never be much of anything else. (Robequain, 1949:26) In this respect, Dutertre was overly pessimistic since, already in 1686, there were 5 indigo plantations and 214 cattle. Within two years, the number of indigo plantations tripled, while that for cattle rose to 292.

Very little is known concerning slavery in Saint Barthélemy at the time of its colonization in the seventeenth century. Presumably slave labor was utilized at that time to compensate for the insufficient recruitment of indentured servants. Of the 290 whites in 1671, 8 are listed as «artisan-servants,» 15 as «white servants,» and 36 as «female servants.» The white labor force thus exceeded that of the slave labor force, the latter totalling only 46 individuals, including 6 children. After this date, no mention is made of indentured servants until 1688, and even then, there are only four. It is clear that the

exploitation of the island's resources did not require an abundant labor force. A colonist and his family, frequently aided by a handful of agricultural laborers, either slave or indentured, would suffice to fill the labor needs of the smallholder who comprised the majority of the island's farmers. So that, as plantation economies were becoming firmly established throughout most of the British and French West Indies, Saint Barthélemy remained condemned to little more than subsistence farming. While Barbados had by now already undergone its spectacular sugar revolution and was rapidly reaching its peak in production, Jamaica was forging an economic base for its own «take-off» to sugar conversion. Even in the relatively small Leeward islands of Saint Christopher, Nevis, Montserrat and Antigua, the number of slaves there had virtually doubled between 1672 and 1678 to reach a combined total of 8,449. (Dunn, 1972:125)

TABLE 1
Population shifts: white, slave and free colored
Saint Barthélemy, 1671-1784

Year	White		Slave				Free colored		Non-white	Total
			Adult		Children					
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F		
	(1)		(2)				(3)		(2) + (3)	(1) + (2) + (3)
1671	161	129	25	15	6				46	336
1681	162	133	23	30	13	14	7		87	382
1682	172	156	22	30	16	14	3	2	87	415
1686	150	196	38	28	30		4	2	102	448
1687	179	176	32	25	24		3	2	88[1]	443
1688	181	168	29	22	21		2	2	76	425
1700	47	38							5	90
1731	122	82[2]		138					138	347
1732	118	93		154					154	365
1766	126	156[3]	140		77				230[4]	523
1767	144	156[5]	146		85				251[6]	569
1784		458		281					281	739

Sources: ANSOM G1 498: 1671, no 54; 1681, no 89; 1682, no 100; 1686, no 56; 1687, no 101; 1688, no 108; 1700, no 62; 1731, no 110, 1732, no 111, 1766, no 14; 1767, no 15.

Notes: 1.Includes two Carib slaves. 2. Plus five over 60, or infirm. 3. Plus eleven over 60, or infirm. 4.I ncluding thirteen over 60, or infirm. 5. Plus eighteen over 60, or infirm. 6. Including twenty over 60, or infirm

By contrast, in 1681 only twenty-two households in Saint Barthélemy, scarcely more than one-third of the families, held slaves. In only one case did the number of slaves for each owner exceed ten:

Number of slaves per owner	Number of owners	Number of slaves
1	7	7
2	5	10
3	3	9
4	1	4
5	1	5
6	1	6
7	1	7
8	-	-
9	1	9
10	1	10
-	-	-
13	1	13
TOTAL	22	80

Significantly, however, four owners owned nearly one-half of all the slaves, while twelve owners, roughly 50 percent of the twenty-two, had only one or two slaves. The nature of the domestic and agricultural activities in Saint Barthélemy, as opposed to those of the early sugar colonies, practically precluded the pronounced preference for male slaves. The sex ratio does not, therefore, systematically favor the adult males and, in fact, in 1681 and 1682, adult women are overrepresented (Table 1).

What can be said of the possibilities in Saint Barthélemy for family life within the population of African origin, given its extremely small size, the dispersion of slaves amongst the white households, and the fluctuations in sexual distribution patterns? Equally, what can be said of the conditions influencing family formation and of the reproduction of the colored population of Saint Barthélemy? Variations in the imbalance between the sexes is hardly surprising in a group with a significantly small number of individuals. It is nevertheless within these extremely unsettled conditions that couples were formed. First of all, an equal number of adult men and adult women in a given household does not suffice to allow one to conclude that all the individuals of the household are realted to one couple. In fact, all that is available for the seventeenth century is a listing by household of the number of adult slaves according to sex, slave children according to sex, and then free mulattoes. We do know that certain combinations preclude any possibility of marriage, whether legal or

by circumstance: mother-son; father-daughter; brother-sister; grandparent-grandchild; aunt-nephew or uncle-niece. Other situations, such as extreme age differences between two potential partners, or the residential separation of two potential partners on different plantations, not to mention cultural or psychological incompatibility, also make unions improbable. Given the fragmentation of the colony's servile population, unions between slaves of different owners constituted nevertheless the single alternative to celibacy for many. The obligation of obtaining a master's approval for marriage outside the plantation and, in such cases, the loss by the master of a certain measure of control over his male slave and, even more importantly, the loss of eventual offspring to the benefit of the female slave's owner (or vice versa), all militated against the formation of unions as freely desired by the slaves. Whatever the case, the number of monogamous couples cannot be more than the number of adult individuals in the least numerous sex group. By the same token, the number of couples coresiding cannot exceed the number of cases where an adult male and an adult female reside in the same household (see D. Gonthier, 1987:66-104). Obviously, the conditions of slavery prevented the cohabitation of a certain number of sexual partners: slave spouses could be sold separately; some masters lived in concubinage with a female slave, thus depriving male slaves of a potential partner; polygamy also seems to have been tolerated. The following represents several elements derived from the 1681 census:

Combinations	No. of households where the combination exists	Optimal no. of combinations	No. of individuals
man+woman+child(ren)	7	13	52
man+woman	3	4	10
woman+child(ren)	4	4	9
woman+woman	1	1	2
woman	4		4
man	2		2
child(ren)	1		1
TOTAL	22		80

Of the 23 couples that we could list in 1681 under the optimal conditions (there are 23 adult males for 30 females), a maximum of 17 would have had the possibility of cohabiting: 13 with children and 4 without children. Thus, scarcely more than half of the women (17 out

of 30) could have enjoyed a conjugal life, with or without children. The same number effectively live with children, but there is no way of ascertaining whether these are their own children. At best, the average number of children per mother in the slave population would be 1.6. In the same census of 1681, we find the following figures for the white population: 59 women, of whom 57 are married and 2 are widowed, living with 165 children under 14 (91 male and 74 female); that is, an average per mother of 3.2 children residing with her. The categories for each group, however, are not perfectly comparable. Moreover, in the absence of age and maternity indices, these figures cannot be taken to presume approximations of fertility. What can be deduced, however, given the wide variance between the two groups, the one of African, the other of European origin, is that the conditions for population reproduction disfavored the slaves.

But the two groups are not entirely closed off from each other. If the presence of miscegenous couples was officially non-existent in the 1681 document, there were, nonetheless, seven individuals listed as mulattoes. The fact that a particular category was reserved for mulattoes indicates that their status was different from that of slaves. Unfortunately, they are listed neither according to sex nor according to age groups. It can probably be assumed that these mulattoes belong to the category that is eventually designated as *affranchis*, or free persons of color. Prior to the 1685 Black Code, no comprehensive legislation existed to regulate the process of enfranchisement. It was the practice in Martinique, however, from 1681, to free mulatto children upon attaining the age of fifteen, if girls, and twenty if young male. Thus, «the acquisition of freedom by right, during this brief period, by a child born of the union between a white with his female [negress] slave,» seems to have been the only type of case involving the enfranchisement of slaves. (Peytraud, 1897:402) If such were also the case in Saint Barthélemy, those mulattoes listed in a category apart from the slaves would thus be free adults.

What can be said of the relationship and the ties between this miscegenated group and each of the populations that gave rise to it? Of the seven mulattoes listed in 1681, five are found in households with slaves. They could, therefore, have conjugal or filial ties with these slaves, and perhaps even with the masters or a member of the masters' family. Within seven years, in 1688, their numbers fall from seven to four (Table 1). After 1688, in the midst of the disruptions and

upheavals caused by the English-French wars, we lose trace of them altogether; equally, the white population undergoes a drastic decline.

Political turbulence and demographic fluctuations

By 1700, after the close of King William's War, only 85 whites and 5 slaves remain in Saint Barthélemy (Table 1). The slow demographic reconstruction that occurs primarily after the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) does not provide enough documentary evidence to shed a great deal of light on the structural characteristics of slavery during the first half of the eighteenth century. The few statistics that are available do show, however, that in 1731-32 the whites have not yet reached their previous 1681-88 peak in numbers, while the slaves, for their part, have greatly surpassed their numbers for the same period. Consequently, the ratio of whites to slaves declines in 1731 to three to two and, in 1732, to four to three, while it was as high as four to one in the 1681-88 period. Neither in 1731 nor in 1732 is any mention made whatsoever of mulattoes, free blacks or *affranchis*. We know that by the end of the seventeenth century, with the Black Code in effect, the enfranchisement of slaves, mulatto or black, had fallen under metropolitan control and, for the mulattoes, was no longer acquired by right. If, indeed, the colonists had enfranchised any of their slaves, it does not appear that their services were retained. In any case, we find no *affranchis* in the island.

France as a whole was taken for a surprise at the results of the first round of elections on April 23, 1995.

Given the progressive rise in the slave population from 1731, and the corresponding decline in the white to slave ratio, we may presume that, by 1736, the ratio may have continued to decline. It was within these demographic parameters that a violent slave revolt actually broke out in Saint Barthélemy. The revolt itself occurred within a context of brewing slave rebellion and unrest throughout the Lesser Antilles, the conspiracy in Antigua being the largest and most carefully organized. Apparently the slaves of Anguilla, roughly one hundred miles northwest of Antigua, were

«to join those of St Martins the 26th» December, 1736. It was on the 15th December that the slaves of Saint Barthélemy «were rose in Rebellion and had killed Eleven men of the white Inhabitants.» Given the fears of the white colonists over the «contagion» of rebellion in the string of small islands north of Guadeloupe, on which island rebellion had also broken out in late 1736, the revolt in Saint Barthélemy must have appeared sufficiently serious, for «the Remainder... kept together, being about thirty men, not daring to Separate, and waited Succors» from the French governor of Saint Martin. (Cited in Gaspar, 1985:41).

That some form of collaboration existed between the slaves of Saint Martin, Anguilla and Saint Barthélemy seems highly probable, although a systematic study of slave unrest and rebellion in these smaller islands is yet to be done. Were the Saint Barthélemy slaves who killed the eleven whites born in the island? Or had they recently arrived in Saint Barthélemy, along with a master, from any one of the neighboring islands, and with knowledge of the projected rebellions? Or, in the context of an increasing slave population in Saint Barthélemy, had some of them been purchased by resident colonists from a few of the surrounding islands? Did the revolt, then, involve a combination of both local and external elements? The composition of the slave rebels would certainly reveal much about the place of Saint Barthélemy slavery within the regional island configuration of the northern Leewards.

During the War of Austrian Succession (1744-1748), followed by the Seven Years' War (1756-1763), the inhabitants of Saint Barthélemy are again disrupted. The *procureur-général,* Coquille, offers these remarks in 1763:

> The island of Saint Barthélemy is small and abandoned. During the war of '44 it was ruined by the English who made off with the few slaves the colonists had, forcing the latter to take refuge with their women and children in Guadeloupe and in Martinique where they were well received and aided. After the peace of '48, a few families returned to St. Barthélemy, but without installations, and with the war of '56 they withdrew permanently after having been pillaged by privateers. (Deveau, 1972-76:17)

The island is repopulated under the efforts of Sieur Descoudrelles, appointed in 1763 as commander of the islands of Saint Martin and Saint Barthélemy. As of 1766, there are 293 whites and 230 slaves. The slaves

now occupy a slightly larger proportion of the population as compared to 1731-32, but even more significantly, the numbers for the whites have increased by nearly 40 percent, and by 50 percent for the slaves. Do these slaves belong to those «former families» of whites whom the disruptions caused by the wars had prompted to flee, and who Descoudrelles undertook to induce back to the island after the peace of 1763? We may presume that at least some came back with their owners. These latter, however, had no doubt purchased other slaves, as well, during their exile or upon their return to Saint Barthélemy to compensate their losses and thereby replenish their labor force.

As in the population figures for 1731 and 1732, those for 1766 and 1767 make no mention either of free persons of color or *affranchis*. What we find, following the total for the whites, is:

	1766	**1767**
male and female slaves working		
(nègres et négresses travaillants)	140	146
their children	77	85
infirm and over 60	13	20
TOTAL	230	251

One may safely assume that the French terms «*nègres*» and «*négresses*» used by the census-taker are equivalent to that of «*esclaves*,» or slaves. This need not therefore exclude the possibility of mulatto slaves being present.

In spite of their brevity, the documents do reveal the structure of the servile population by age category and allow for a comparison with that of the whites. If we presume that the upper limit for childhood and the lower limit for agedness are the same for the two groups, one would obtain noticeably different structures for each one:

% of	**1766**		**1767**	
	white	**slave**	**white**	**slave**
children*	42	33	43	34
infirm or over 60	4	6	5	8
working adults	54	61	52	58
TOTAL	100	100	100	100

* (In stable population models, where a low life expectancy is evidenced, a proportion of 33 to 34 percent children corresponds to a total fertility rate of five children per woman, and a proportion of 42 to 43 percent to a total fertility rate of seven children per woman.)

It appears that the fraction comprised by the active working population is higher among the slaves than among the whites. And it is, of course, to the advantage of the whites that the greatest number of slaves possible be in a position to work. On the other hand, this advantage is obtained to the detriment of the reproduction of the group numbering proportionately fewer children and more aged.

The agricultural activities in which masters and slaves are engaged became considerably modified. Actually, the agricultural practices reported in the documents providing the population figures show that cattle-breeding had largely regressed, while animal husbandry, requiring far less care and involving mainly goats and sheep, had taken its place:

	1766	1767
horses	2	2
cattle	26	41
sheep	35	
goats (*cabrittes*)	1799	} 966

No mention is made of cultivation in the censuses of 1766 and 1767. However, we find this statement, written by Descoudrelles on 10 June 1763: «The previous inhabitants had cultivated cotton, some foodstuffs and raised livestock.» (Deveau, 1972:18.)

From 1766 to at least 1775, the proportion of the total population constituted by the slaves is maintained at 44 percent (Robequain, 1949:17). In 1784, when the colony is ceded to Sweden, it falls to 38 percent (Table 2). Not only is the proportion of slaves tiny when compared to the other islands but, as Robequain relates, citing Abbé Raynal, Saint Barthélemy is «the only one of the European colonies established in the New World where free white persons deign to share agricultural tasks with their slaves and to labor in the field alongside their subordinates.» (1949:17) Contrarily, throughout all of the economically advanced Caribbean of the post-Seven Years' War period, particularly in the decades of the 1770s and 1780s, the eschewed population pyramid characterizing West Indian slave societies had long been reached. In the French West Indies, slaves vastly outnumbered whites by ratios ranging anywhere from six to one in the cases of Martinique and Guadeloupe, to thirteen to one in Saint Domingue, while ranging, at the lower end, from 7.5 to one for tiny Montserrat in the British

Leewards, to an extreme of 14.5 to one for Antigua. The slave to white ratio was, roughly, ten to one in Jamaica by the 1770s. (Gisler [1965]; 1981:34, n.1; Sheridan, 1970:150) At the close of the Seven Years' War, the white to slave ratio in Saint Barthélemy stands at 1.3 to one, despite a marked increase in slave numbers from the 1731-32 level, and is reminiscent of the infancy period of the other islands in the early to mid-seventeenth-century.

The Swedish period: diversification of labor and population structures

Barely recolonized, the island is ceded by France to Sweden in exchange for warehousing privileges in the port of Gothenburg. By virtue of this exchange, the Swedes benefit from the strategic position of the island at the heart of both illicit and official international Caribbean trade throughout the Lesser Antilles. Turning the island into a commercial freeport, the Swedes are determined to reap the maximum possible advantage from the situation. The Swedish West India Company even obtains its license to participate in the slave trade. (Ekman, 1975:224)

Under Swedish administration, beginning in 1785, a commercially-oriented infrastructure was erected with the development of the island's natural harbor, le Carénage, as well as the edification of its capital city, Gustavia, with warehouses, supply depots, and public buildings surrounding the port. In addition to administrators, merchants and businessmen, the new functions of the Swedes in Saint Barthélemy necessitated a large number of artisans, unskilled workers, clerks, and civil servants. Foreign workers are attracted to Saint Barthélemy in large numbers in response to this need, while, for the long-established St-barts colonists, this also means a hitherto unknown prosperity.

With the 1787 census (the only one available for the first years of Swedish rule), it is possible to measure the effectiveness of Descoudrelles's efforts to repopulate the colony, along with the immediate impact of the establishment of Gustavia upon the rural population. In no fewer than three years, from 1784 to 1787, the demographic changes in the country are remarkable: the slave population increases by 65 percent, while that of the whites increases by only 17 percent. As for the recently founded city, there are now 294 whites and, at 362, an even higher number of coloreds, free and slave combined:

Class and demographic composition	Country 1784	Country 1787	City 1787
Whites			
men		129	130
women		127	79
male children		129	34
female children		121	47
infirm and over 60		29	4
total	458	535	294
Free coloreds			
men		1	18
women		3	36
male children		1	15
female children		3	14
total		8	83
Slaves			
men		128	109
women		133	112
male children		113	15
female children		68	36
infirm and over 60		22	7
total	281	464	279
TOTAL	739	1007	656

With the establishment of Gustavia, Saint Barthélemy's free colored population is not only constituted as a distinct population group, but also increases. In 1806, the city's white and free colored populations are numerically comparable, with 835 whites, and 802 free persons of color, while the slaves number 1424 individuals. (Cave, 1979:90, n. 2) The appreciable labor input from the free colored sector is probably responsible for the constant minority position of the slaves in relation to the combined free (white and colored) population. The combined colored population (free and slave), however, is clearly in the majority in Gustavia from the very beginning and remains so until at least 1854, the last year in which a categorical (former free colored/former slave)

distinction is available for the two groups. At the zenith of its prosperity in 1812, Gustavia's ratio of colored to white is three to one; of free colored to white, one to one; and slave to white, two to one.

In the country, a high rate of fertility and, finally, conditions of social stability, result in a rapid renewal of the population. The proportion of children has appreciably increased, rising from 43 percent in 1767 to 47 percent in 1787 for the whites, and from 34 percent to 39 percent for the slaves. The infirm and over-sixty category comprises a proportion of 5 percent in each group. The decline in the active population for the two groups is thus the counterpart of a more vigorous increase in the number of children.

In 1787 the city offers a far more contrasting demographic picture. The quasi-balance of the sexes among the adults of the country, both of African and of European origin, is contrasted by an overrepresentation of males in the city (164 men for 100 women) for the whites, and, inversely, an overrepresentation of free colored women (50 men for 100 women). Unexpectedly, the slave population comprises almost as many men as women.

The emerging urban population directly reflects the immediate needs of the city. Men are needed for the garrison; architects and mastercraftsmen for the edification of the fortifications, public buildings, warehouses, commercial establishments and private housing; and government officials and administrators to serve the public needs. This helps to explain the underrepresentation of women and, consequently, the low percentage of children (28 percent) among the whites. Influencing the fluctuations in the urban population are factors involving the seasonality of certain occupations, the risks of commercial enterprise, and a certain degree of political turbulence.

As for urban domestic slavery, generally one would find women in the majority, which is not the case for Gustavia, where a sexual balance among the slaves is in evidence in 1787. No doubt there would not have been this sexual balance in the urban slave population were is not for two factors. First, Gustavia's portuary activities, construction, warehousing and trade all required a variety of unskilled and day labor, and second, the presence of free women of color, who provided certain services (as seamstresses; laundresses) that were generally assigned to female domestic slaves, obviated an exclusive reliance upon the latter to fulfill these tasks.

Also, the differences between the urban and the rural demographic structures of the servile population would certainly have been less

TABLE 2
Population shifts according to residence and status
Saint Barthélemy, 1784-1847

Year	Country				City			
	Total	Free		Slaves	Total	Free		Slaves
		Whites	Colored			Whites	Colored	
1784	739	458		281				
1787	1007	533	8	464	656	294	83	279
1788	978	543		435	583	311		272
1790	1034	565		469	522	292		230
1791	988	523		465	634	352		282
1792	920	455		465	548	290		258
1793	997	509		488	987	505		482
1794	1068	547		521	1144	590		554
1806					3061	835	802	1424
1812	1601	933	90	588	3881	1025	1038	1818
1819	1677				2910			
1834	1640				2080			
1835					1786	552	706	528
1838	1553	1200		353	1412	1074		338
1840	1480	1041	73	366	1070	830		240
1846	1499	1018	147	334	1136	292	634	210

Sources: The majority of the above statistics are from Lavoie et Mayer, 1984:tableau 2. Those for 1787 are from RA, SBS XXVIII, S24. Those for the years 1788-1794 are from a manuscript copy, transcribed by J. Benoist at ANSOM, of a document that has since been lost (FSB, PO 292); those for the years 1835, 1840 (country) and 1846 (country and city) are derived from an analysis of the censuses made by the authors for these years. They differ slightly from the totals recorded at the time.

pronounced had there been integration, if only partial, between the newly-arrived urban dwellers and the long-established rural inhabitants. The urban population, however, comprises very few persons from the rural milieu. Rather, it is comprised of external elements: a large number come from the surrounding islands; a certain number (especially administrators and soldiers) from Sweden; others from the United States and from western and, especially, southern Europe. Preferences in the selection of urban slaves reflects a definite interest in productivity over the natural reproduction of the labor force: 80 percent are in the active adult category. As well, most of the urban slaves who were African-born

probably had a certain degree of West Indian slave experience at the time they entered the colony, and, although they would have changed location, they did not all necessarily change masters.

The 1787 census provides only a glimpse into the origins of the slaves, and, at that, only for the rural windward sector. This part of the island includes 259 whites, 191 slaves and 8 free coloreds. Of the 94 slaves whose origin is not mentioned, 59 are less than 25 years old, and 45 of these are less than 15 years old. That is to say, in all probability, at least half of them were born in slavery. In fact, of the 56 slaves listed as creole, 46, or over 80 percent, are under 25 years of age. Likewise, 10 of the 11 mulatto creole slaves are under twenty. Thus roughly 60 percent of these slaves were West Indian-born. As to the 30 slaves whom we may presume are African-born, as they are identified by ethnic origin, only two are under twenty, and one is under ten. Although colonists were often dependent upon fluctuating market conditions affecting availability and prices of slaves, the distribution by nation in 1787 seems to reveal, if not a degree of selectivity, at least certain distinct preferences:

Nation	Male	Female	Total
Ibo	5	7	12
Congo	7	1	8
Mandingue	5	2	7
Mina	1		1
Moco	1		1
Mondongue	1		1

It should also be noted that in the rural windward sector, mulatto slaves are relatively few and, at roughly one in twenty, represent no more than 5 percent of the slave population here. The free persons of color are even fewer: we find seven mulatto children all under eighteen years of age, one free negress thirty-four years of age cohabiting with an unmarried white male of sixty-eight years. The evidence strongly suggests that this cohort comprises an unofficial couple living with their children; three slaves complete the household.

One cannot realistically extend the rural models to the urban setting, whether one is considering the ethnic origins of the slaves, the extent of miscegination, or the use of slave versus free-artisan labor. The very fact that Gustavia now has a free colored population of some significance means that a far greater diversity of situations exists as to

modes of cohabitation. While all the heads of household are white in the country, 12 percent of these being women, in Gustavia we find this situation:

Household heads	Male	Female	Combined
White	101	11	112
Free colored	17	13	30
Combined	118	24	142

It is immediately evident that the proportion of female household heads is quite high among the free coloreds (43 percent); in fact, it is four times that among the whites in the country. The 1787 census also reveals that 68 percent (63 households out of 93) are slaveholding in the country, while the proportion of slaveholding households drops to 52 percent (74 out of 142) in Gustavia:

Household	White head	Free colored head	Combined
With slaves	67	7	74
Without slaves	45	23	68
Combined	112	30	142

In this case we see once again that the socio-economic comportment of the free coloreds influences the averages, since only 23 percent of these own and cohabit with slaves. As to the statistical divergence between the slaveholding whites of the country and those of the city, one may largely ascribe this situation to the frequency in Gustavia of white households composed of only a single male, a characteristic feature of a settlement in its early phase of development.

One may also expect to find urban/rural differences in the composition of slave groupings of a given household unit. In the country we find 9 households with 10 slaves or more (16 percent of the slaveholding households) and only two (3 percent) in the city. The composition of the slave groups according to sex and standard age categories (children; adult men and women; over 60), the only indicators available for determining possible forms of family organization, equally reveals important divergences between town and country. Certain forms that are prevalent in the one area are rare in the other:

Composition of slave groupings	Country	City
men, women, children	16	16
women, children	9	10
men, women, children, over 60	8	1
men, women	5	10
men, children	2	4
women	9	16
men	5	9
children	6	3
other combinations	4	5
number of households with slaves	64	74
total number of households	93	142

One such case is that of slave groups involving persons over 60 and therefore the possibility of three generations cohabiting. This structure, fairly frequent in the country while practically nonexistent in the city, reveals both a greater generational depth of recruitment and a population renewal assured more through the fertility of the woman than by the purchase of new slaves in the country. In fact, as 57 percent of the slaveholding households include slave children[3] and 48 percent include both adult males and adult females, we can surmise that slavery in the country is far more conducive to the formation of classical family structures, as well as the reproduction of the slave population itself. In the city, the same two categories represent respectively 43 percent and 36 percent of the slaveholding households. Still, it is in the country that we find the greater proportion (31 percent) of slaveholders with only one slave as compared with the city (20 percent). However, groups of 2, 3, or 4 slaves consisting of men only or of women only are far more frequent in the city than the country.

In the country there is a direct correlation between the extent of agricultural activity and the size of the labor force needed, the former being equally tied to the size of holdings in area. By simultaneously consulting a list of proprietors drawn up around 1790 (RA, SBS XXVII, 21) and the 1787 census, it can be determined that the few large landholders are generally those who also own the greatest number of slaves. The only commercial agricultural activity indicated in the list cited above is that of cotton. Animal husbandry is also in evidence, and a few herds of goat even exceed one hundred, but this type of breeding obviously requires much less care and therefore fewer workers than that of cattle-farming, which had by now become nearly extinct.

Social controls and inter-group relations

In 1787, von Rosenstein, governor of Saint Barthélemy, published an ordinance «relating to the treatment and policing of slaves and free coloreds.» Its thirty-one articles cover a wide range of social prescriptions and control measures, applying both to slaves and free coloreds, as well as obligations and prerogatives of the master in relation to the slave.

The severity with which the code was applied in Saint Barthélemy in areas of slave activity, and, reciprocally, the degree to which slaves may have resisted the social prescriptions and sanctions imposed upon them by the code deserves a more thorough investigation than is possible here. One may also consider whether the code was applied in the same manner in the city as in the country. As is so often the case in slave societies, only those cases actually brought before the courts would be on record. And in slave societies, where the slave by definition is denied a legal identity, the testimony of the bondsman or woman had no juridical value. So, although the degree to which law remained in the hands of the individual slaveowner can be surmised, the matter is still a conjectural one.

Caribbean slave societies were necessarily buttressed by an overriding ideology of white supremacy, not only to justify the racial determinant of slave labor but also to erect a social barrier to confine the caste of free coloreds —because of their slave origins and free status— should their gains begin to encroach upon the privileges of the white planter elite. It was an ideology defined and defended both by crown policies and by local custom and law, and its most pervasive manifestation came in the elaboration of slave codes. Von Rosenstein's slave code was derived from those codes already in use throughout the Caribbean since the seventeenth century. Although the slave to white ratio in Saint Barthélemy was nowhere near the average ten to one level it had reached in most of the other islands, the code nonetheless reflected the characteristic need, at once to regulate and regiment the colored population, both free and slave, and to protect the white ruling population from the possibility of slaves rebelling or in any way conspiring against the master.

Von Rosenstein believed it necessary in 1804 to republish the original code in the island newspaper, *The Report of St. Bartholomew,* seventeen years after its initial promulgation. His avowed purpose for this was that, «as the following Ordinance is of a very old Date, but Still a Standing Law of the Island, We think it useful, if not necessary, to make the same a little better known, than daily experience proves it to be.» (No. 5, 30

April 1804.) Were masters, then, lacking in their responsibilities toward their slaves or surpassing their stipulated rights concerning punishments for their slaves? Or, conversely, had they become overly lenient toward the slaves by allowing them to circulate or to traffic their goods somewhat more freely than the code permitted? Were slaves or free persons of color beginning to pose a potential threat to public security? Von Rosenstein claimed that the code's purpose, aside from that of establishing mutual obligations between master and slave, was «to enable the Government to give Immediate protection to those Unfortunates, who merely through want, are often forced to go beyond the limits of the Law; as well as to prevent the abuse of an unlimited power and Authority of tyrannical Masters.» But given the prescribed punishment of public whipping and branding for slaves having «stolen any beast, cattle, poultry, or any kind of eatables» and of mere payment of damages to the victimized party by the owner for having allowed the theft to occur (Article 18), one may wonder what «immediate protection to the unfortunates» von Rosenstein had in mind; or are we to assume that masters went beyond whipping and branding? On the other hand, masters were obliged to «feed [their] slave[s] well and provide [them] with two suits or four yards of suitable material (...) under penalty of being brought to Justice. (Article 10) Masters were also forbidden to abandon their slaves, «even when sick, overaged, or infirm.» (Article 11) A more detailed integrated study remains to be done of the social and economic context that the code seems to reflect at this particular stage of the colony's development.

During the decade from 1790 to 1800, Gustavia's growth occured in a highly unstable context. Revolutionary ideas were circulating widely; the authorities were forced to disband an unreliable militia and to reinforce the garrison. The rural inhabitants refused to repair the roads and to participate in corvée duties. At the turn of the century, in 1801 and again in 1802, the island falls into disorder under the vissicitudes of British occupation, and in 1802 reference is made to a slave revolt (Bourdin, 1978:222). Documentation concerning the rebellion is scant, and one hardly knows whether it was inspired by the spread of French revolutionary ideas, generally; by news of the war being waged by the ex-slaves of Saint Domingue against the Napoleonic army that had invaded the colony that year to restore slavery; or whether the slaves of Saint Barthélemy, merely taking advantage of the disruption and upheaval caused by the presence of British forces, struck out to rebel

on their own; or, conversely, whether the British may not have instigated slave rebellion for their own ends in order to claim control of the island. In any event, British occupation was short-lived, though the contingencies created by the war were not, and, in fact, from 1806 to the Treaty of Paris in 1815, Gustavia found itself in a fair position to profit financially and commercially from the war and thus emerged at the pinnacle of its prosperity. The postwar years, however, mark the beginning of Gustavia's decline, and the economic fragility of the colony is cause for concern, beginning in 1817, in the annual governors' reports. Slave desertion and the role of neighboring Anguilla as a refuge for fugitives is also of some concern.

Toward the abolition of slavery

During the decades that follow Saint Barthélemy's peak, between 1812 and 1840, the white population in the country increases slowly (0.4 percent per year). That of the slaves and free coloreds is in net regression. During the same period, from 1812 to 1835, the city's population is reduced by half: the white population declines from 1025 to 552; that of the free coloreds from 1038 to 706, and that of the slaves from 1818 to 528 (Table 2). According to a report of James H. Haasum, governor of the colony from 1833 to 1857, it appears that the overall demographic decline is accompanied by a marked decline in slavery itself:

> The inhabitants of this colony, far from desiring to purchase more slaves are rather seeking to unrid themselves of those they already have, given the precarious nature of this type of property; besides, the slaves are not essentially necessary here, where the land is cultivated chiefly by the colonists themselves. And should needs arise in the future for tilling the land or for domestic services, they could easily be filled by encouraging the settlement here of black freedmen from the English colonies. Several of these are already established here in these two capacities, in both the city and the country. Up to now, in fact, I have had to adopt policing measures to prevent too great a migration of freed slaves, especially from Anguilla. (ANSOM, FSB. RG 125, 28 May 1836.)

Various documents, including the Gustavia censuses of 1835 and 1846, those of 1840 and 1846 for the country, and a special report of Governor Haasum on slavery in 1841 permit us to describe the situation on the eve of general emancipation in Saint Barthélemy.

The proportion of slaveholding households turns out to be considerably lower in the country as compared with 1787: 34 percent in 1840

and 27 percent in 1846, compared to 68 percent in 1787. The change seems to have been somewhat less radical in the city, as 44 percent of the households still have slaves in 1835 and 28 percent in 1846.

TABLE 3
Household[4] distribution according to number of slaves
Saint Barthélemy: Gustavia (1835 and 1846) and country (1840 and 1846)

Number of slaves	City		Country	
	1835	1846	1840	1846
0	179	142	190	195
1	50	15	27	23
2	29	12	12	10
3	18	6	11	2
4	10	7	8	12
5	4	6	5	4
6	5	2	2	3
7	4	1	3	6
8	3	-	3	2
9	3	2	3	3
10 and over	13	4	8	7
TOTAL	315	197	272	267

Some of the slaveholding households have at their head a free colored. In the country it cannot be affirmed that the enumerated slaves actually belong to the free colored household head. In certain cases, it is even evident by the composition of the slave group that the unit constitutes a family (a couple with children). We may presume that certain masters allowed those of their slaves whose partner was free to coreside with the person. The children of the slave mother naturally followed. The same could be true of slave parents over sixty, thus regrouping three generations in these particular households with a free colored household head. If such situations are far from widespread at this point, they nonetheless may tend to forecast the imminent abolition of slavery that occurs in 1846-47 in Saint Barthélemy.

The Gustavia census of 1835 was taken slightly earlier than those for the country, perhaps enough so that indications of an eventual abolition of slavery are less evident. A striking feature is that roughly 40 percent

TABLE 4

Groupings of free coloreds and slaves according to main categories of demographic composition (%)

Demographic composition	City						Country[3]			
	1835			1846			1840		1846	
	All slaves[1]	Slaves living with free coloreds	Free coloreds[2]	All slaves[1]	Slaves living with free coloreds	Free coloreds[2]	All slaves[1]	Free coloreds[2]	All slaves[1]	Free coloreds[2]
Men, women and child(ren)	13	13	20	18	18	21	16	23	22	29
Women and child(ren)	20	15	18	23	6	22	24	23	18	20
Men, women, child(ren), over 60	4	-	4	4	-	7	10	-	7	3
Men and women	8	15	11	5	6	12	1	4	5	2
Women only	26	29	16	22	35	14	12	9	17	-
Men only	4	6	6	4	12	3	12	14	13	12
Child(ren) only	11	12	3	4	-	5	11	4	4	5
Other	14	10	22	20	23	16	14	23	14	29
Combined	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Numbers	(137)	(52)	(206)	(55)	(17)	(153)	(82)	(22)	(77)	(41)

1. Slaves living with whites and free coloreds, combined.
2. Exclusively or alongside with whites or slaves or both combined.
3. The number of slave groupings living with free coloreds are too small in the country to be included in the calculation (1840 = 3 and 1846 = 6).

of the slaveowners are free persons of color. As opposed to certain rural patterns, these free colored households with slaves have far more complex structures, and it is often difficult to identify, or even to suppose, conjugal and filial ties between the free coloreds and the slaves, even though their possibility must not be excluded.

Table 4 describes the demographic composition of slave and free colored groupings and their organization within the domestic units to which they belong. The typical family structures and the single parent groupings are the most frequent among slaves and free coloreds of the country and among the free coloreds of Gustavia, while the single women groupings are strongly represented among the Gustavia slaves. On the eve of abolition, in 1846, the «men-women-children» group among rural slaves accounts for 22 percent of the groupings, and for 18 percent in Gustavia, the increase in the country from 1840 being accounted for by a reduction in the single parent grouping. The same, however cannot be said for the city, where the single parent grouping is in fact more highly represented than in 1835. Here, the reduction in the «women only» and the «child(ren) only» categories from 1835 to 1846 could help to explain why. The changes in the socio-organizational structures in both city and country thus illustrate a shift in the patterns of slave groupings a few months before general emancipation. (We cannot interpret the percentages for the slave groupings within free colored households in Gustavia in 1846 because of too few numbers: only 17.)

The proportion of the groups including only women is higher in Gustavia than it is in the country. This is hardly surprising when factors such as masculinity (men per 100 women), social category and age group are considered:

Age group	Sex ratio (men per 100 women)					
	Country 1840 (1846)			City 1835 (1846)		
	Whites	Free coloreds	Slaves	Whites	Free coloreds	Slaves
Under 15	101 (110)	150 (100)	85 (110)	94 (130)	101 (103)	89 (73)
Adults	88 (88)	52 (91)	70 (75)	51 (60)	48 (38)	42 (47)
60 and over	55 (71)	67 (75)	56 (90)	77 (61)	29 (17)	40 (44)

Even if Table 4 took into account the possibility that persons of different social categories coresiding in the same unit could form families of a mixed type —which is not the case— still, it is evident in

the country that not all women could have a partner in a monogamous situation. And since a balance between the sexes among the children is approached (except for the free colored category, which is too small to be statistically valid) the overrepresentation of women is related to selective migration, both past and present. In fact, in the country, very few persons are born outside the island; only the disproportionate emigration of men is evident. In Gustavia, on the other hand, only one half of the residents are declared born in the island in 1835 and 60 percent in 1846 (Table 5).

TABLE 5
Population distribution by place of birth
Gustavia, 1835 and 1846

	1835			1846		
Place of birth	Whites	Free coloreds	Slaves	Whites	Free coloreds	Slaves
Saint Barthélemy	46	50	48	62	58	68
Africa	-	3	19	-	2	8
Saint Martin	7	11	6	5	8	3
Saint Eustatius	13	9	7	9	5	5
Anguilla	4	10	5	3	18	2
Sweden	1	-	-	2	-	-
Other European countries	5	-	-	5	-	-
Other West Indian islands	15	14	9	12	8	13
Other regions and Unknown	9	3	6	2	1	1
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	100
Numbers	552	706	528	292	634	210

Since its beginning, the city was able to attract more men than women for certain types of occupations. Thus the sexual preference for slaves progressively favored the women over the men. The increasingly deteriorating economic situation had sharply reduced the demand for the male-oriented occupations.

The overrepresentation of women also had serious consequences on the reproduction of the groups, and it is not surprising to see that the proportion of persons under fifteen becomes smaller as the imbalance between the sexes becomes greater, as is the case for the city in 1835 and the country in 1840. However, by 1846 the opposite is true for the free coloreds and the slaves in Gustavia, where the overrepresentation of women (see page 29) is accompanied by a fairly high proportion of

children; this could be explained by the fact that a good portion of the adult male population in these two categories is temporarily absent, although the censuses make no record of these absences, nor do they make any nominative mention of such individuals if they are absent. Perhaps another explanation may lie in the possibility of a polygamous-union pattern. Both hypotheses, however, must be analyzed in depth before we can adopt either one, or both.

Proportion of children (0-14 years/total) (%)

Country	Gustavia						
	Whites	Free coloreds	Slaves		Whites coloreds	Free	Slaves
1840	41	36	45	**1835**	28	31	32
1846	39	46	39	**1846**	24	38	37

A differential fertility study is yet to be done, and, given the fragmentary nature of the sources, there will be obvious problems. Whatever the case, however, it is certain that a population whose proportion of persons under 15 exceeds 40 percent is one that demonstrates a high fertility rate or one whose age and sex structure is favorable to births, or both.

The imbalance in the demographic structure of Gustavia results in a type of social organization in which women are predominately household heads. The distribution of household heads by social category and sex is as follows:

		White	Free colored	Slave	Total
1835	Male	95	63	1	159
	Female	57	96	1	154
	Total	152	159	2	313
1846	Male	49	39	-	88
	Female	30	76	2	108
	Total	79	115	2	196

It is thus the free colored category that accounts for the slightly higher overall total for female household heads. In fact, if one out of two households are headed by a free person of color, among these, two out of three are headed by a woman, compared with two out of five for the whites. In the country, female household heads are the exception, and the situation, when it does occur, is also more frequent among the free coloreds.

Slave conditions and general emancipation

Whether abolitionist or simply pragmatic, Governor James Haasum portrays the conditions of the slaves in his special report of 29 March 1841, five years before general emancipation.

> The condition of this latter part of the Island's population has always appeared to me to be better than that of the same class of persons in all the other Islands of which I have been able to formulate an opinion, as much in regard to their workload as to their treatment. The slaves here are, in certain respects, in a position comparable to that of the recently freed laboring population of the British colonies, and even to that of a few European countries.[5]

Haasum certainly knew the island well and the West Indies generally. But even if he had reason to embellish the condition of Saint Barthélemy's slaves, his word need not be questioned when he states that their condition can be favorably compared with that prevailing on the other slave islands. This is not to say, however, that the situation of the Saint Barthélemy slave (or for that matter of the recently freed British slaves) was an idyllic one. But still, the context of Saint Barthélemy in 1840 is fundamentally different from that of the great plantation economies in regard to the nature and practice of its agriculture:

> First, as concerns work, it should be noted that cultivation in this Island, where there are neither sugar nor coffee plantations, is much less painful than in those colonies where these plantations do exist, or than in the homeland even. It must also be noted that the rural population, which is almost entirely of European extraction, can be more closely compared to the European peasant than to the West Indian colonists in that the latter only direct the work, while our inhabitants do much of the work themselves, whether laboring in the fields, or fishing, or carrying out any other occupation, alongside their slaves, if they have any, and, as the slaves, they come to town to market the produce of their gardens and their fishing endeavors. Thus, regardless of the type of work to which the slave of the country is subjected, he is still encouraged at seeing the work shared by the entire free population, and most often by a master. In any case, the habit of personal labor among these colonists, which may perhaps be a trait inherited from their Normand ancestry, is today an absolute necessity. The slaves alone are insufficient to meet our needs and are used exclusively by their owners; their numbers, which have been declining over the past years, though less rapidly than those of the city, do not now even equal one-third that of the free agricultural laborers.

It would seem, to read Haasum, that the masters of Saint Barthélemy were actually accomodating as to the hours of work they demanded of their slaves:

> The hours for public works, or corvée, as well as those for the jobbing free worker or artisan, as for the slave, are fixed according to the customs of this island and begin at six o'clock in the morning and continue until four o'clock in the afternoon, with one hour allocated for lunch. The same regulation applies for jobbing slaves or free workers or artisans who work by the day for individuals in the city. So that, it would be difficult to persuade them, even in cases of emergency, to work beyond these hours. For rural agriculture, the number of hours is roughly the same, but their distribution differs according to the type of work and is organized differently in each of the two districts of the Island--in the one designated as «windward,» two hours rest are generally accorded at noontime and the work ends one hour later; in the one designated «leeward» there is a one-hour break for breakfast, a two-hour break for lunch, and the work continues until sundown at 6 o'clock. Those slaves that have kitchen gardens take advantage of these intervals to cultivate them or to care for any animals or fowl they may have and, in the absence of the owner, they are hardly scrupulous about the use of their time. In the leeward section the slaves are fed by their owners and they are given Saturdays and Sundays as free days; in the windward part, they are not fed by the masters but, in addition to those two free days, are given half a day on Fridays, and they have, or take, the privilege of cutting wood on their owners' land for their own use or to sell for themselves.

One senses behind this apparently liberal attitude of the masters regarding work hours a nonetheless calculated interest. In fact, the slaves are now left to care for a good part of their own subsistence (food, clothing, maintenance of shelter) as well, no doubt, as that of the inactive members of the labor force (children, the sick, the aged) of whom Haasum mentions nothing at all. If the work hours required by the master are relatively light, it is in part because the slaves must dispose of enough time to be able to furnish all or part of their needs, and those of their dependents as well. In the country, the slaves' kitchen gardens, as well as whatever minimal animal husbandry they could manage, must have been absolutely essential to their survival. An incident occurring in 1835 bears vivid evidence of this fact. In a report of Haasum, dated 16 January 1836 (no 119), we learn that an African slave had killed another slave whom he found stealing at night in his garden. Though the African was acquitted of murder, he was banished forever from the island.

In Gustavia, the context is different, but, as in the country, poverty is a general condition. The city is in a period of full economic and demographic decline. The utilisation of the slaves' labor is adapted to this context. To survive economically himself, the master often becomes, it seems, an agent who furnishes others with the services of his slaves for a fixed remuneration. Apparently, the free coloreds also engaged in this type of commerce, which enabled them to reduce their obligations toward their slaves to a minimum, while deriving profit at the same time from their activity. This type of exploitation of slave labor no doubt explains why the slaves, as well as free workers in Gustavia, constituted domestic regroupments that were hardly oriented toward traditional family forms, but that, rather, involved the potential for remunerated work. In this context of mutual poverty, slaves and free workers are never far apart, and one may question whether the blame Haasum casts upon the slaves for their jauntiness is justified. Gustavia offered no more than a glimmer of hope to the workers, slave and free, for social and economic improvement:

> The slaves of the city who are not used as domestics are rented out. This is generally preferred by the slaves who pay their owner a fixed retribution per day, or one half their earnings. These slaves are day laborers, boatmen, porters, bread and dry goods vendors, etc. and if they have a trade, especially that of carpenter, mason, painter, cooper or caulker, they are in a position to lead a highly independent life and, with industry, to earn their freedom: but their lack of concern in this respect is truly astonishing. It seems that, as long as they have enough to satisfy their immediate material needs, they care little about their future and make no sacrifices to guarantee it. The authority of the master is exercised with as much moderation as can be expected under a necessarily arbitrary regime. For a number of years now, the work is no longer conducted, if it ever was, by slave drivers having received delegated powers from the masters to inflict punishments upon the other slaves--a usage that still exists in the other colonies. The humanity, as well as the interests of the owner, of course, lead him to treat his slave well; in this respect appreciable progress has been made in general attitudes. The Court of Justice, moreover, has of late established in its sentences the equality of punishments for the slave and the free person having committed the same crime, and the distinctions established by the Black Code have also fallen into disuse.

Fugitive slaves are few in number in Saint Barthélemy, although their percentage of the total slave population is not entirely negligeable. The

1840 (country) census mentions 15 (11 men and 4 women), while the 1835 Gustavia census indicates 8 fugitives (three women, one of whom flees with her two infants aged three years and eighteen months; one woman with a man; two other men who flee separately, and one woman who flees alone); that of 1846, however, makes no mention whatsoever of maroons. According to Haasum, flight was relatively easy:

> It is apparently because the Slave senses his fate is more bearable here... that he so rarely profits from the opportunities of escaping that are offered by his ties with the freedmen of the English Islands and by the daily communications they have with these Islands by the canoes, upon which the means of surveillance at our disposal are limited. Since 1832, there have only been 52 slaves of the city and 25 of the country--77 in all--that have escaped from here, while from Saint Martin they flee in great numbers to Anguilla despite the repressive measures that are taken on that Island. I am not in a position at the present time to state the exact number of Slaves that have escaped the domination of the masters in this way prior to 1832, but the number must not be much greater than 150.

What he does not specify, however, is that slave hunters were actively engaged in the surrounding Caribbean islands. It was not enough for a slave to have fled; he or she still had to escape the vigilance of these hunters motivated by pecuniary desires. Moreover, seventy-seven maroons in the span of nine years (from 1832 to the date of his report in 1841) seem somewhat significant for such a small island where conditions were purportedly benign. A more refined analysis of this phenomenon remains, however, to be undertaken.

In fact, the idyllic portrayal of slavery that Haasum presents in the first part of his report takes on a more morose tinge as he continues. Not only are the slave's most fundamental rights as a human and a social being liable to revocation; they are revoked in reality by the Saint Barthélemy masters. The negation of the right to found a family and to live a normal family life is undoubtedly one of the most cruel abuses of the masters and is reflected in the manner in which their slaves are enumerated. There is almost total silence in the nominative censuses as to the relationships that might exist between them, while the relationships are systematically and consistently stated for the whites. Haasum goes on to state:

> Whatever the ameliorations we may bring to the lot of the slave, there still remain in the very nature of slavery itself, certain conditions ascribed to his servile state that shock one's sense of humanity and which are yet

> impossible to change. The slave is controlled in his dearest and most intimate affections; at the most essential levels of his well being he is struck down by social impotence. He cannot contract a marriage without the consent of his master, who will not sacrifice his right to freely dispose of his own slave as he wills. Therefore, consent is rarely given, and has only been given on two occasions since I have been in office here. Consequently the slave is obliged to live in concubinage and can thereby be separated from his spouse, his children, or other relatives at the will of the master and even in opposition to his will, as in the case of seizure or confiscation for debts. What is more, he can be extirpated from his family and exported to foreign colonies with no hope of ever seeing his loved ones again.

After having underscored the inhuman nature of separations imposed upon the slaves against their will, Haasum invokes the inutility of slavery in Saint Barthélemy to justify its aboliton:

> Fortunately slavery is hardly necessary in this colony where a free working population could furnish both the agricultural needs of the country as well as those of the city. The maintenance of such a vicious system in all its relations can only result in further inconvenience.

General emancipation is all the more necessary since, evidently, the Saint Barthélemy slaves not only perform the same tasks as the masters, from whom the only factor separating them is the cruel privation of their freedom, but they also seek to rise above the master's social level through education. Fearing the consequences of distortion between the legal and civil status of the slaves and their actual abilities, Haasum suggests that abolition should occur without a period of transition; that is, without a period of apprenticeship, as was imposed in the British West Indies:

> When the time for general emancipation will have come, my opinion is that the transition from slavery to freedom in this Island should occur immediately and without the intermediary period of apprenticeship, for any agitation over the question can only serve to throw out trouble in people's minds, and create distrust between the two classes of the population. The Slave, placed as he is at the bottom of the social ladder, is not the less endowed with intelligence, and, as for his degree of civilization and morality, he is at the same level in this Island as that of the free working population in general, not excepting the whites in the

country who, for the most part ignoring the basic elements of education themselves, seem very little inclined to teach their own children; while the slaves take advantage of every occasion they have to instruct their children. It seems to me that society would have nothing to fear by allowing them to participate in the same civil rights that the other citizens enjoy.

A few years after this report; in July 1846, a committee was appointed to establish the procedures leading to general emancipation. The tasks of the committee were not concluded until 1847. Social equality, however, apparently did not follow immediately upon legal equality, since the nominative lists of 1853, 1854 and 1857 still distinguished the former slaves from the former free coloreds, conserving in practice the same three social categories: whites, free coloreds and [former] slaves.

Conclusion

Thus, for two centuries, from 1648 to 1847, the island of Saint Barthélemy developed with the participation of slave labor. The slaves lived through the tribulations, misery and deportations of the French period alongside their masters, and they participated in the recolonization of the island after 1763. Kept by geographic factors outside the slave context of the great plantation economies of the other islands, they nonetheless added to their experience an urban dimension under Swedish rule. The poverty of the island at a time when British colonists were emancipating their own slaves, brings the Saint Barthélemy slaves closer to the free population in several ways: in the type of work they engaged in; in their qualifications; and even in their standard of living. The abolition of slavery no doubt prevented social disorders that could have resulted from the distortions created by the deprivation of civil rights for a group that had acquired the same level of competence as that of the free persons and, in some ways, even tended to surpass it.

NOTES

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2. Translated from the original French by C. Fick. Unless otherwise noted, all further translations are those of co-author.

3. Households with only slave children or with only slave children and slaves over sixty are not included in the calculation.

4. A small number of these households are in fact housefuls (Mayer et Lavoie, 1991); a more detailed analysis of these is presently under way.

5. This and the following quotations are from ANSOM, FSB. RG 125, 29 March 1491.

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NEWSPAPERS

The Report of St. Bartholomew, 1804-1819.

ABBREVIATIONS

ANSOM	Archives Nationales, Section d'Outre-Mer
FSB	Fonds Saint-Barthélemy
RA	Riksarkivet
SBS	S:t Barthélemysamlingen