

The Secondary Market Evaluation of Slaves in XIXth Century Mauritius

S. Chenny

P. St-Amour

D. Vencatachellum¹

January, 2002

Preliminary version

Do not quote without authors' permission

Comments welcome

ABSTRACT

We construct a unique data set from succession sales in Mauritius to investigate the slaves' characteristics the most sought after by slave owners. As in other slave economies, males are sold at a higher price than females, but slaves reach their maximum price earlier in Mauritius. Skilled slaves are sold at a premium over both household and agricultural slaves, and Indian slaves are cheaper than Creole, Malagasy and Mozambican ones. There is a seasonal effect coinciding with the sugar cane harvest season. Each child sold with her mother increases the price of the mother-child bundle by 15 to 84 percent depending on the child's age. Moreover, that child-premium increases over the period. This may indicate that, at that time, slave owners either did not anticipate the 1835 abolition of slavery or thought that it would have no impact on the value of their human assets.

Keywords: Slaves, Price, Mauritius

JEL Classification: N37

¹ Authors' affiliation: HEC-Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3T 2A7. We acknowledge financial support from the FCAR. We are grateful to Ruth Dupré and Mary MacKinnon for helpful comments. We thank Robert Shell for a stimulating discussion and the staff at Mauritius Archives for their assistance in accessing the notaries' acts. All remaining errors are ours. Corresponding author: D. Vencatachellum, Ecole des HEC, 3000, Cote-Ste-Catherine, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3T 2A7, Email: P141@hec.ca Fax: (514) 340-6469.

1. Introduction

The treaty of Capitulation, signed by the French when the British captured Mauritius on December 3rd 1810, preserved the French settlers' property rights and thus their rights to own slaves. Following their conquest, the British enforced the Navigation Act in 1813, which meant a ban on the import of slaves into the island. Although there is evidence that some slaves were illegally imported after 1813 (Allen, 2001), Mauritian slave owners relied mostly on local slaves who were either exchanged directly between slave owners, or through the secondary market during public auctions. This paper focuses on the secondary market for slaves in Mauritius where slaves were usually sold, with other assets, following their owner's death. To that extent, this segment of the secondary market for slaves in Mauritius is similar to the New Orleans' market analysed by Pritchett and Chamberlain (1993). As in New Orleans, in Mauritius also, the auction had to be advertised in the Mauritius Gazette at least 3 days before the sale. On the day, and at the location, of the auction someone would blow the horn and call out that an auction was to start. The advertisement in the Mauritius Gazette gave the number of slaves to be sold and specified if it was a succession sale.² Hence, prospective buyers knew that those slave were not being sold because of their fault and that they are not of lower quality than the slave population. In other words, we do not expect adverse selection to occur during succession sales.

The notary recorded each transaction, documenting the slave's attributes (age, sex, occupation, ethnic origin, etc) the names of the buyer and the seller, as well as the price. The strong advantage of the price recorded in the notaries' acts is that it reflects a buyer's true willingness to pay for a slave. This must be contrasted with those studies which rely on professionals' appraisal for estimates of the value of a slave. These price estimates may be biased, downwards or upwards, if they are used, for instance, to levy taxes. To our knowledge, we are the first to study the secondary market for slaves in Mauritius, and more specifically to use data from the Notaries' Acts. The information in those acts have never compiled before or used to investigate the attributes of slaves which were sought after by slave owners in Mauritius.

This is precisely our objective in this paper. We first compile data on the sales of slaves from the notaries' acts for 1825, 1826 and 1827. These years are chosen for two reasons. First, the notaries' acts prior to 1820 are in very poor condition making many of them impossible to

² For exemple, in the Mauritius Gazette, no. 60 of May 1826, a sale advertisement stated: "...procédé à la vente à l'encan de 8 têtes d'esclaves, dépendant de la succession de ladite feue Rose Renaud..." This translates as "... 8 slaves, belonging to the deceased Rose Renaud, will be auctioned".

read. Second, the availability of the 1826 Mauritius partial population census allows us to compare the degree to which the sample of slaves sold on the secondary market is representative of the slave population. We then use the data from notaries' acts to carry both a non-parametric and a parametric analysis of how slaves' attributes affected their price. We compare our findings with those for slave economies in the Americas.

The economics of slavery has received extensive attention, especially in the U.S. (see Fogel and Engerman (1974)). Since the seminal work of Conrad and Meyer (1958), it is well accepted that the purchase of a slave may be treated as an investment in a risky asset. The net expected lifetime income generated by a slave determines the buyer's willingness to pay for that slave. That flow of income depends on the slave's lifetime productivity which the buyer must estimate from the slave's observable attributes. Given the nature of a slave's work, Conrad and Meyer (1958) state that physical strength is the most sought after characteristic and may it be appraised by the slave's age. On that attribute, Fogel and Engerman (1974) predict that a slave's value is a concave function of age thus reflecting the evolution of physical strength over one's life. This result is confirmed by Friginal, Klein and Engerman (1983), for a sample of Cuban slaves, and Newland and San Segundo (1996), in Peru, who both find that the maximum price of a male slave is at around 27 to 29 years.³

Conrad and Meyer (1958) also mention that a slave's gender is a likely determinant of productivity. Females may be sold at lower prices than males because of their lower physical strength, due to pregnancies and child rearing activities, which reduce their work time. However, the lower expected productivity of a female slave is partly compensated by her child bearing capacity. This is well summarized by W.W. Bird (1822) who while commenting on Cape slaves and states: "The acquisition of a male slave is a life interest; that of a female is considered to be a perpetual heritage". Slave owners can make children are sold with their mother work (Kotlikoff, 1979). In spite of those positive factors on the value of females, their lower selling price is accentuated because they are unskilled. Indeed, skilled slaves are mostly males, and as in modern economies, skilled labor is the most productive in the labor force. Estimates of the male price premium, relative to a female, range from 9% in the southern U.S. (Kotlikoff, 1979) to 50% in South America (Newland and San Segundo, 1996).

A prospective slave buyer must account for additional factors which may reduce the useful life of their investment when evaluating the lifetime productivity of a slave. These factors include the likelihood that a slave may fall sick, as measured by any pre-existing sign of illness (Kotlikoff, 1979) or handicap; that slavery may be abolished; and the buyer's beliefs that slaves of a particular ethnic group are more inclined to rebel and flee. Friginal, Klein and Engerman (1983) report that African-born slaves are sold at a lower price than local-born slaves, who are

called Creoles. The latter are thought to be less likely to flee and to have better defenses against endemic diseases because they are born in the country. Finally, the price of a slave depends on the period of the year when the sale takes place because of the seasonal property of agricultural labor demand (Kotlikoff (1979)).⁴

We find information on 1,216 slaves who are sold from 1825 to 1827. During that period a male slave sold is on average at 289 piastres, while a female is worth on average 23 per cent less. Nearly all skilled slaves are males (211 males and 2 females) and are the most expensive selling on average at 353 piastres. Most females are classified as maids and sell at an average price of 272 piastres. We find that the price of a prime-field hand slaves, that is those slaves who are aged 15 to 35 years, increases from 260 piastres in 1825 to 427 piastres in 1827. The main reason is that the number of such slaves on the secondary market falls over that period. These slaves may be more and more attached to plantations. As our data concerns succession sales, they do not appear any more. The price of a prime fields hand slave rises from 260 piastres in 1825 to 307 piastres in 1825 mainly because there are less of them which appear on the market.

We specify a log-linear price equation with explanatory variables which capture the slave's attributes, human capital, risk measures and account also for market conditions. Our estimates support a quadratic relationship between the price and a slave' age. The maximum price of a male slave is at age 24, while females sell for the highest price at 22 years. Hence, as in other slave economies, physical strength is an attribute which is valued by slave owners. However, when a female is sold together with her children, this increases her price by 25 per cent if the child is younger than 5, and by 68 per cent when the child is above 5. Moreover, after accounting for all other factors, the price of a representative slave does not fall over time. This indicates that the demand for slaves does not fall in spite of the emerging debate on the abolition of slavery. Consequently, as neither the premium for children nor the average price of a slave fall between 1825 and 1827 there is reason to believe that slave owners did not think that they would lose their human assets in the near future.

Although contemporary writers mentioned the relative "laziness" or low physical capacities" of slaves of particular ethnic groups, we find that ethnicity does not strongly influence the price of a slave throughout the three years, except for Indians who are consistently sold at a lower price than Creoles, Malagasy and Mozambicans. It turns out that Creoles are sold at a higher price than all 3 other racial groups only in 1825. There is also a seasonal effect due to the sugar cane harvest season which increases the demand for labor. A slave who is

³ See for example Kotlikoff (1979) for similar results on a sample of U.S slaves

⁴ Note that the time lost by slave buyers when going to the site where the sale takes place is not likely to matter a lot in Mauritius because of the short distances. The island covers only 720 square miles.

purchased outside of the sugar cane harvest season costs between 12 and 26 per cent less than during the harvest season.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. In section 2 we discuss the information which is available in the notaries' acts and we explain why the supply of slaves on that market can be considered as exogenous. We also conduct a non-parametric analysis by investigating the relation between the variables of interest, which have been identified in the literature, and the price at which a slave is sold. We also compare our sample of slaves with the slave population at large by using data from the 1826 census. Next, in section 3, we conduct a multivariate analysis by specifying, and estimating, a log-linear price equation. Finally section 4 concludes by summarizing our findings and providing avenues for future research.

2. The Secondary Market for Slaves

We first summarize the information available in the notaries' acts and the nature of the sales carried by the notaries. Next, we perform a non-parametric analysis of the link between slaves' attributes and their price. We end this section by investigating the extent to which the slaves sold on the secondary market is representative of the slave population.

2.1 Information in the Notaries' Acts

Our primary source of information is the notaries' acts which are located at the Mauritius Archives. Between 1825 and 1827 there were 152 auctions during which eight notaries sold 1,216 slaves at public auctions (see Table 1). All eight notaries were active in 1825 and 1826, while two notaries sold no slave in 1827. The number of auctions is fairly stable over the three years and is evenly distributed among the notaries, except for Bonnefin who accounts for close to a third of all auctions (Table 1). Seven of the notaries auctioned in Port Louis, the capital of Mauritius, and one notary was based in the agricultural district of Flacq.

The geographical distribution of the auctions may be a consequence of legal clauses in the "Lettres Patentes" which regulated slavery in the French colonies and was upheld by the British when they captured the island. While Article 39 states that slaves are movable property (*biens meuble*), article 43 assimilates them to immovable property when they are attached to an estate or land. This is the case for most plantation slaves. These are attached to sugar cane estates and could not be sold separately from the estate. During the succession sales, which are recorded by the Notaries, the items could be sold individually explaining why Port Louis, the only urban district, accounts for the vast majority of sales.

During an auction, a slave is either sold individually, which is the case for 75 per cent of the slaves in our sample, or as a bundle with other slaves. There are two types of slave bundles. First, and the most important, is a mother-children bundle because Article 42 of the Lettres Patentes forbids the separation of immature children from their mother. Second, a bundle of slaves of various age and sex. There are 25 group bundles sold during those three years for a total of 85 slaves. They represent the smallest sales category. In this paper we consider only individual slaves and mother-children bundles. The latter may be treated as exogenous while the bundling of a group of slaves may be an endogenous decision which if lumped together with the other sales may lead to biased estimates because of sample selection (Heckman, 1979).

In addition to the selling price, in piastres, most records either state the slave's gender or that information can be inferred from the phrasing of the transaction.⁵ Finally, a slave's age, ethnicity, occupation and the date of the auction are also reported. The notaries acts also document the reason for selling the slaves. We find that 81 per cent of all auctions were to liquidate the assets of the owner following his death. The succession sales of slaves can be treated as an exogenous decision, which is independent of the prevailing market conditions. We can therefore treat the supply of slaves on the secondary market as price-inelastic.

Mauritian slaves can be divided into four main racial groups: Creoles, Malagasy, Mozambicans and Indians, with the last group including also Malay slaves. We use partial data from the certified register of slaves per owner drawn up for compensation purposes on 1 February 1835 slaves and compiled by Valentine (2000) to find the distribution of races in the slave population. Most of the data was compiled from the 1826 census and we compare our sample with only those slaves. The main characteristics of the 1826 census are reported in Table 2C. Note however that this is a partial census because slaves in the most important district, Port Louis, are not recorded.

The notaries' acts also give the ethnic origin of the slaves. The racial distribution of the slaves in our sample is given in Table 2C. Creoles are the majority of slaves as a result of the ban on the imports of slaves in 1813. Slaves from Madagascar and Mozambique are nearly equally represented, and there is also a small percentage of Indians. On average the racial distribution of slaves is a good representation of the population distribution. Creoles are slightly under represented in our sample while slaves from Madagascar are slightly over represented. However these differences are not statistically significant. Similarly, our sample has the same age characteristics as those of the slave population as summarized in Table 2C. In both our sample and the population, females have an average age of 23 years, while males are on

⁵ All the notaries' acts are in french. For example "vendu" relates to a male slave while "vendue" is female one.

average slightly younger in the notaries' sample than in the 1826 census. However, a simple t-test reveals that this difference is not statistically significant.

Our sample differs from the 1826 census for the male-female ratio. We find that 57 per cent of the slaves are male in the census but this percentage increases to 69 per cent in our sample. Males are therefore over-represented in the notaries' acts. In fact, as can be seen from Table 2C, a finer analysis reveals that the over representation of males arises because of the too few female slaves from Madagascar and Mozambique in our sample. One possible reason is that such slaves were mostly working on sugar cane estates and therefore are not very likely to appear in succession sales. In spite of the over representation of males in the notaries' act, the age and racial distributional elements indicate that our sample has similar characteristics to those of the population. However, we will have to interpret with caution the results for females from Madagascar and Mozambique.

Having described the information recorded in the notaries' acts, following the literature on slavery, we now investigate how a slave's price varies as a function of age and of his occupation.

2.2 Non-Parametric Analysis

First consider the slaves who are sold individually. The youngest slave in that group is 4 years old, the oldest 75, and 65 per cent are between 15 and 35 years of age. Females have an average age of 27 years and are younger than males (31 years) which may reflect their shorter life expectancy. While an individual slave, irrespective of gender, is sold at 277 piastres, the average price of a female sold in a bundle with her children equals 497 piastres on average. Moreover, there are 2.5 times more males than females in our sample when we exclude children sold with their mothers in bundles. This may partly reflect the gender imbalance in the Mauritian slave population, and may in part be a characteristic of the sample of non-plantation slaves who are overwhelmingly present on this secondary market.

We use Telfair's (1830) classification of slave occupations in Mauritius to assign a slave to one of four broad categories: fieldwork, sea, household and skilled. The distribution of slaves across occupations are as reported in Table 2A. For the sake of this discussion we group together, under the agricultural category, slaves who perform fieldwork and those who are unqualified and work in sea related activities. Agricultural slaves are unqualified, number 304 and are the most important of the 3 groups. Among those, 36 per cent are laborers and 24 percent are recorded as (farm) helpers. Note that there are also 42 slaves who are involved in fishing related activities and who, in our analysis, will be added to the 304 agricultural slaves. Household slaves are mainly assigned to domestic chores and constitute the second most

important group with 295 slaves sold during that period. 41 per cent of all household slaves are maids and the second most common reported occupation is sewer. Finally, there are 214 qualified slaves who, when compared to agricultural and household slaves, are more uniformly distributed across the different occupations.

The distribution of the slaves' occupation reflects the economic structure of early 19th century Mauritius. First, consider slaves who are sold individually (Table 2A). The distribution of slaves occupations, and the average price for each category, is summarized in Table 2A for individual slaves and in Table 2B for women who are sold with their children. A consequence of the importance of sugar cane plantation on the island is that agricultural slaves form the largest category at 280 slaves, or 30 per cent, of all individual sales over the three-year period. Slightly more than 54 per cent of all females are household slaves and most of them (65 per cent) are maids.

Surprisingly, female slaves who work as maids are not sold at a lower price than male laborers. One would expect that a male laborer would be worth more than a maid because of his contribution to productive activities. This result may indicate that the preferences of slave owners' in Mauritius differed from those of slave owners in the Americas, and that they were willing to pay a premium for household slaves. However, a second explanation may be that household slaves performed tasks other than those strictly related to household chores. For instance, because of the high demand for laborers and the relatively low supply of prime field hand slaves arising from the ban on the imports of slaves, slave owners may have been compelled to buy household slaves to work on sugar cane plantations. In that case, a second consequence of the Trade Bill would have been a higher price for household slaves.

Qualified slaves account for 23 per cent of all individual sales and are on average 39 per cent more expensive than unskilled ones. Out of 211 skilled slaves only 2 are females (sack-makers) which is not surprising for a slave economy. The most common skilled occupation is carpenter. Wood was quite plentiful on the island and all houses, as well as sugar cane mills, were built in wood. Hence, the need for that profession and the fact that master carpenters are those slaves who are on average bought at the highest price (777 piastres). There is also a sizable number of sea slaves (42) all of whom are males and most work as sailor or fishermen. On average they are worth significantly less than skilled slaves and their average price fall in between that of field and household slaves. Given the

As for females who are sold with their children, Table 3, they are most often classified in the household category, amounting to 69 per cent of all such slaves for whom the occupation is known. Nearly all other females are laborers (30 per cent), and only one is skilled, working as a mattress maker. That skilled worker was sold at a only 25 piastres because of her old age.

Creole females account for 58 per cent of all mothers who were sold with their children. This is simply because no Indian, Malagasy and Mozambique females arrived on the island since 1810. Therefore, there are fewer female slaves of those ethnic groups. They are also older than Creole slave, and are less likely to have young children.

We now pay special attention to the relation between price and age, conditional on the slave's occupation, using the same methodology as Fogel and Engerman (1972) and Friginals, Klein and Engerman (1983).⁶ First, so as to control for any trend in prices, we deflate the price of each slave by the average price of a prime field hand slave aged 21 to 38 in the year when the sale occurs. While 110 such slaves are sold in 1825, that number falls to 64 in 1826 and 41 in 1827, representing respectively 25, 22 and 14 per cent of all transactions in each year. The result of the fall in the supply of prime field hand slaves is that their average price rises from 260 piastres in 1825, to 307 piastres in 1826 and reach a maximum of 421 piastres in 1827.

One possible reason why prime field hand slaves are worth more is the accrued demand for such slaves following the 1825 Trade Bill which equalized sugar tariffs between Mauritian and Jamaican Sugar. Barker [p. 52] (1996) citing Telfair, a contemporary planter, reports that from 1820 to 1829 the export of sugar from Mauritius more than doubled.⁷ It is likely that sugar cane plantations demanded more prime field hand slaves increased around the time when the Trade Bill was voted. As a result, slave owners may have decided to sell such slaves and we should, *ceteris paribus*, find fewer prime field slaves in non-plantation estates. Indeed, there are no plantation slaves in our sample because they are not present in succession sales.

The price-age profiles which are reported in Figure 2 are remarkably similar to those calculated by Friginals, Klein and Engerman (1983) for Cuban slaves. These profiles have 2 striking characteristics. First, unskilled males reach their maximum price at 24 years of age while female slaves fetch their highest price earlier at 22. Although unskilled males who are younger than 12 are worth less than their female counterparts, their price exceed that of same-age females once they become older than 12. This result is well documented in the literature as being due to the earlier physical maturity of females. Indeed a 10 year old female is already worth 50 per cent of her maximum price and by 36 years old she is worth less than half of that price. This price cycle may reflect the child bearing capacity of a female slave. As for an unskilled male, he is worth at least 50 per cent of the average maximum price between ages 12 and 45. This is a reflection of the relation between age and his physical strength, which is sought after by buyers.

⁷ In 1820 Mauritius exported 20,533,989 pounds of sugar and in 1829 it exported 55,141,729 pounds.

Second, skilled males are consistently worth less than unskilled males or female slaves up to age 21, thus reflecting the training period. For the same reason older skilled slaves, who have already been trained, fetch a higher price. For instance, 30 year old skilled male slaves are sold at the highest price and are worth more than 1.2 times a prime field hand slave. However, as can be seen in Figure 2, the price of both skilled and unskilled slaves fall at a similar rate after they reach their maximum.

We find that Creole slaves, who form 31 per cent of all individual slaves, are sold at an average price of 304 piastres, higher than Indians (199 piastres), Mozambiques (262 piastres) and Malagasy (278 piastres). The sales of Indians slaves on the secondary market is interesting in itself because it provides some additional evidence that Indians were in Mauritius prior to the abolition of slavery. However, they form the smallest ethnic group (58 slaves), are mostly domestics and are older than the average slave. However, it is possible that the price of Creoles is higher than the 3 other ethnic groups because Creoles being born on the island have had the time to be trained to occupy skilled positions, or for some other reasons rather than a preference for ethnicity.

The non-parametric analysis which we performed does not allow us to isolate the joint impact of a slave's characteristics on its price. We now carry a multivariate analysis to that effect.

3. Results

As mentioned in section 2.1, the nature of the data allows us to assume that the supply of slaves is exogenous such that we can estimate a single log-linear price equation. For that purpose, we allow the logarithm of each transaction's price to depend proxies of the slave's attributes: age, the presence of a handicap, gender, ethnic origin and occupation. Moreover, we include also the number of children when a woman is sold as a bundle as explanatory variable. We also take into account aggregate market conditions such as the quarter in which the slave is sold. We first estimate the price equation first over the whole sample by including year dummies for 1826 and 1827. The parameter estimates are reported in the second column of Table 4. Second we estimate the price equation for each calendar year. The 4 sets of parameter estimates are reported in columns 2 to 5 of Table 4.

The model fits the data very well with an adjusted R-square which is always greater than 0.53, and equal to 0.66 when the model is estimated for 1827. The reported standard error are corrected for the presence of heteroscedasticity. When the model is estimated over the

whole period, 14 out of 16 of the explanatory variables are statistically significant at the 1 per cent level. We also report the price premium associated with each one of the qualitative variable when the corresponding parameter estimate is significantly different from zero. These results are discussed hereafter.

We find a statistically significant concave relationship between the logarithm of the price and a slave's age. On the whole period, when we control for all other factor, our results indicate that slave is sold at the maximum price at age 22. This somewhat lower than in other slave economies, these maximum occur about 7 years earlier in Mauritius.⁸ This may be due to the poor living conditions and shorter life expectancy of the slaves in Mauritius, as documented by Barker (1996), compared to other slave economies. However, the price-age relationship is not stable over the 1825 to 1827 period. In 1826 the price-age relationship is always downward sloping, while the maximum selling price is reached at age 26 in 1825 and at age 17 in 1827.

Our results indicate that a physical handicap reduces the price of a slave by 57 to 71 per cent relative to a non handicapped slave. This validates the hypothesis that slave owners value a slave's physical strength. A handicap may greatly reduce the physical strength of a slave.

As in other slave economies, we find that male slaves are sold at a premium, 21 per cent, over females. However, there is no gender premium in 1825. This result may occur because from that year the British government reduced the Mauritius sugar tariff to the Jamaican tariff. As a result, the production of sugar more than doubled in 1825. This must have increased the demand for slave labor on the island. As new slaves could not be imported, and the natural growth of the slave population was very low, there is a scarcity of slaves which may have led slave owners to assign female slaves to positions traditionally held by male slaves. As a result there is no gender premium in that year. The highest gender premium occurs in 1826. During that year the gender of a slave is the explanatory variable which has the highest positive impact on the price of a slave.

As mentioned in section 2, the impact of a slave's gender is mitigated by the fact that she is sold jointly with her children. The lettres patentes stipulate that a mother cannot be sold separately from her immature child. Reddi (1989) notes that slave owners made children above 5 years old work but not those who are younger. In addition, children who are older than five can be thought of being more independent from their mother in which case she can spend more time working for the owner. These two effects reinforce each other and children older than 5 should have a greater impact on their mother's price than those who are younger than 5. To that

⁸ Newland and San Segundo (1996) report a maximum price at around 27 to 29 years for males.

effect, we include as explanatory variables the number of children in each of those two age groups. The hypothesis that children older than 5 years yield a significantly higher premium than those who are younger than 5 is validated by our estimates both for the three year period and when the model is estimated separately for each year. *Ceteris paribus*, the greater the number of children in the mother-child bundle, the more expensive the bundle. Our estimates for the three year period indicates that a child who is more than 5 years old increases the mother's price by 68 per cent, while a child younger than 5 yields a price premium of 25 per cent.

One interesting result is that the premium attached to children younger than 5 and who are sold with their mother increases sharply after 1825. In 1825 the premium attached to a child was equal to 15 percent and more than doubled in the following two years. *Ceteris paribus*, the price of a child slave increases from 1825 to 1827.. This can be interpreted as a consequence of the ban on the import of slaves in the island. In that case, slave owners anticipate that their demand for slaves would have be satisfied only by local slaves. Therefore, if they wanted to have skilled slaves in the near future they would have to buy young ones and provide them with enough training. This may also explain why there is no gender premium in 1825 and why the gender premium falls significantly in 1827 as opposed to 1826. The fact that the price of child-slaves increase from 1825 to 1827 indicates that slave owners did not expect to lose their investment in the near future. Therefore, this is the first indication that slave owners did not expect that slavery would be declared illegal soon.

Our results partially support the assumption that slave buyers discriminate on the basis of the slave's ethnicity.⁹ When the price equation is estimated for the 3 years, Indian and Mozambique slaves are sold at a lower price than Creole slaves. The Creole premium has been also documented by Shell [p.57] (1994) for Cape slaves. Shell argues that there is a strong preference for light-coloured Creoles slaves. When we estimate the model on year-specific data, Creoles are sold at a significantly higher price than the 3 other ethnic groups in 1825. For the next two years, Indians are the only ones who are sold at a lower price than Creoles. Indians are seen as less strong than the other 3 ethnic groups. They therefore have a lower productivity and the willingness to pay for such slaves is lower.¹⁰ The fact that there is no significant price difference between Creoles, Mozambiques and Malagasy in 1825 and 1826 may be due to the fact that more and more slaves flee after 1825. The increased marronage

⁹ Noël (1991) commenting on the origins of the slaves who were imported on the island says that compared to the Malagasy, the Mozambicans "were stronger, worked harder but were less intelligent" (p. 38). However, the same author remarks that the "Malagasy were lazy and prone to fleeing" (p. 41) If that opinion reflects slave owners' beliefs, then Malagasy slaves should fetch at lower price than Mozambicans.

¹⁰ Indian slaves are viewed as "esclaves à façon" by slave owners.

arise because the higher demand for Mauritian sugar, a consequence of the equalization of sugar tariffs, made slave owners more demanding upon their slaves (Allen, 1999).

Apart from ethnicity, as we have seen in section 2, a slave's occupation is also likely to affect the price. Our estimates indicate that there is a positive price premium for a skilled slave over an agricultural slave in each of the three years. However, *ceteris paribus*, we find no significant statistical difference between skilled and household slaves in 1826 and 1827. This result may arise because the shortage of skilled slaves following the sugar boom of 1825 may have forced slave owners to assign household slaves to skilled tasks.

The sugar industry is characterized by a sharp demand for labor during the harvest season between September and December. It is therefore not surprising that all three other quarter dummies are nearly always negative and significant, except in when we do not find any seasonal effect.

4. Conclusion

Few scholars of slavery have analyzed the market for slaves in Mauritius, and to our knowledge, no economic historian has done so. This is surprising given the wealth of information which is available at the Mauritius Archives, and also because Mauritius was the third most important slave market of the British empire. We believe that studying this market can shed some light on the characteristics which were sought after by slave owners and provide a comparative basis for slavery in the Americas. Slaves were sold during public auctions mainly to liquidate the assets of their owners. Hence, contrary to slaves' appraisals, the price reported in the notaries acts are therefore a true indication of the slave owners' true willingness to pay for a slave

In this paper we construct a unique data set of the sales of 1,216 slaves from notaries' acts between 1825 to 1826 in Mauritius. These acts provide information such as the slave's gender, age, ethnic origin, occupation as well as price. We use this data to estimate a Mincerian price equation controlling for the slaves' attributes. We find that buyers are willing to pay a premium for male and qualified slaves. In addition, the number of children sold together with their mother has a positive impact on the price of the latter. Finally, the slaves are more expensive during the sugar cane harvest season and it appears that the imminence of the abolition of slavery does not reduce the demand, and consequently the price, of slaves in Mauritius. Hence, our results show that Mauritian slave owners had a similar behavior to those in the Americas and valued the same characteristics in the slaves.

Our results indicate that the positive premium for children did not fall between 1825 and 1827 and that the price of a representative slave increased over that period. These results allow us to conjecture that Mauritian slave owners did not think, at that time, that they would not lose the investment they made by purchasing slaves in the near future. Had they thought so, it is likely that the price of child slaves would have fallen because slave owners would have a shorter time to recuperate their investment. This is particularly relevant in Mauritius where slavery was abolished in 1835.

This question is relevant because first local slave owners fought against the abolition of slavery. Mauritius was the only British colony where the discontent amongst the slave owners burst into open revolt (Burroughs (1976)). Second, the local British administration reportedly defended slave owners position, while Britain was taking measures to make slavery more difficult (Teelock, 1998). Many contemporary observers point out that Charles Colville, who was governor of the island from June 1823 to May 1828, joined the slave owners by assuring them that slavery would not be abolished. Hence, future work could investigate whether there is any indication of the anticipation abolition of slavery by collecting information on the sales of slaves in Mauritius until 1835.

5. Bibliography

- ALLEN, Richard. *Slaves, Freedmen, and Indentured Laborers in Colonial Mauritius*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, 217 p.
- Allen, Richard (2001) "A Traffic of Several Nations: The Mauritian Slave Trade, 1721-1835," in *History, Memory and Identity*. Editors V. Teelock and E. A. Alpers, Nelson Mandela Centre for African Studies, University of Mauritius.
- BARKER, Anthony J. *Slavery and Antislavery in Mauritius, 1810 – 33*, London, Macmillan Press Ltd, 1996, 225 p.
- BURROUGHES, Peter. "The Mauritius Rebellion of 1832 and the Abolition of British Colonial Slavery", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 4,3, 1976, p.243-265.
- CONRAD, Alfred H. and Meyer, John R. "The Economics of Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South", *The Journal of Political Economy*, vol. 66, april 1958, p. 95 – 122.
- FOGEL, Robert W. and Engerman, Stanley L. *Time on the Cross*. Boston; Toronto, Little Brown, 1974, 286 p.
- FRAGINALS, Manuel M. and al. "The Level and Structure of Slave Prices on Cuban Plantation in the Mid-Nineteenth Century : Some Comparative Perspectives", *American Historical Review*, vol. 88, n° 5 (December 1983), p. 1201-1218.
- Heckman, James (1979) "Sample Selection Bias as a Specification Error", *Econometrica*, 47, p. 153-161.
- KOTLIKOFF, Laurence J. "The Structure of Slave Prices in New Orleans, 1804 to 1862", *Economic Inquiry*, vol.17, n° 4 (October 1979), p. 496-518.
- NEWLAND, Carlos. and San Segundo, Maria Jesus. "Human Capital and Other Determinants of the Price Life Cycle of a Slave : Peru and La Plata in the Eighteenth Century", *Journal of Economic History*, vol. 56, n° 3 (September 1996), p. 694 - 701.
- NOËL, Karl. *L'Esclavage à l'Isle de France*. Paris. Éditions Two Cities, 1991, 190 pages.
- PRITCHETT, Jonathan B. and Richard M. Chamberlain (1993) "Selection in the Market for Slaves: New Orleans, 1830-1860", *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Volume 108, n2 (May 1993), p.461-73.
- REDDI, Sadasivam. "Aspects of Slavery during the British Administration", in BISSONDOYAL, U. et S.B.C. Servansing. *Slavery in South West Indian Ocean, Moka*, Mahatma Gandhi Institute, 1989, p. 96-105.
- SHELL, Robert C. –H. "Children of Bondage. A Social History of the Slave Society at the Cape of Good Hope, 1652-1838", University Press of New England, Hanover, NH, 1994.
- TEELOCK, Vijaya. *Bitter Sugar : Sugar and Slavery in 19th Century Mauritius*, Mauritius, Mahatma Gandhi Institute Press, 1998, 326 p.
- TELFAIR, Charles. *Some Account of the State of Slavery at Mauitius since the British Ocuupation in 1810; In Refutation of Anonymous Charges Promulgated Against Government and that Colony*, Mauritius, Vallet and Asselin, 1830, 262 p.

VALENTINE, Barbara, "The Dark Soul of the People, Slaves in Mauritius" Rhodes University, Grahamstown South Africa, Barbara Valentine (Producer), South African Data Archive (Distributor), 2000.

Mauritius Archives, General inventory of notaries (group NA)

NA69, ARNAUD, Charles M.A. vol. 1-26, Port-Louis
NA71, BÉLIN, Jean. vol. 1-4, Port-Louis
NA72, BONNEFIN, Alexandre. vol. 1-25, Port-Louis
NA73, BONSERGENT, Théodore. vol. 1-3, Port-Louis
NA68, BUSSIÉ, Jean-Paul. vol. 1-20, Port-Louis
NA70, EON, Paul Marie Bonaventure. vol.1, Rivière Noire et Savane
NA63, DUBOR, Louis Joseph Senoni. vol. 1-16, Port-Louis
NA67, JOLLIVET, Yves Isidore. vol. 1-124, Port-Louis
NA66, MONTOCCHIO, Charles Jean. vol. 1-30, Flacq

Appendix I: Figures

For all slaves of age a sold in a given year t we construct the ratio $r_t^a = \sum_{i=1}^n p_{it}^a / p_{rt}$ where

$p_{rt} = \frac{1}{s_t} \sum p_{ft}$ where s_t is the number of prime field hand slaves sold in year t and p_{ft} is the price of a prime

field hand slave in year t . The age-price profile for slave of age a is the average of r_t^a for the years 1825, 1826 and 1827.

Figure 1. Price Distribution of slave, in Piastres 1825 - 1827
(Bundle and Individual sales: 1017, Males: 727, Females: 290)

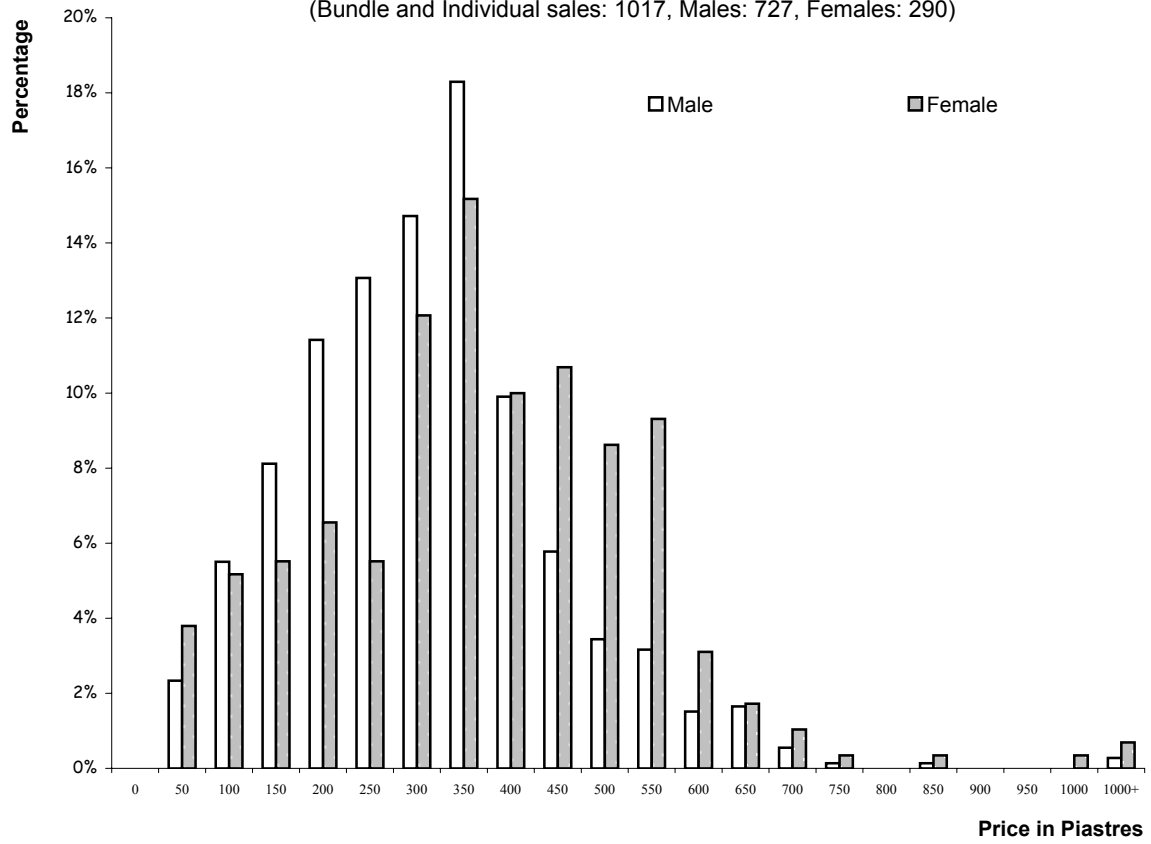


Figure 2. Sales Distribution of Slaves by gender

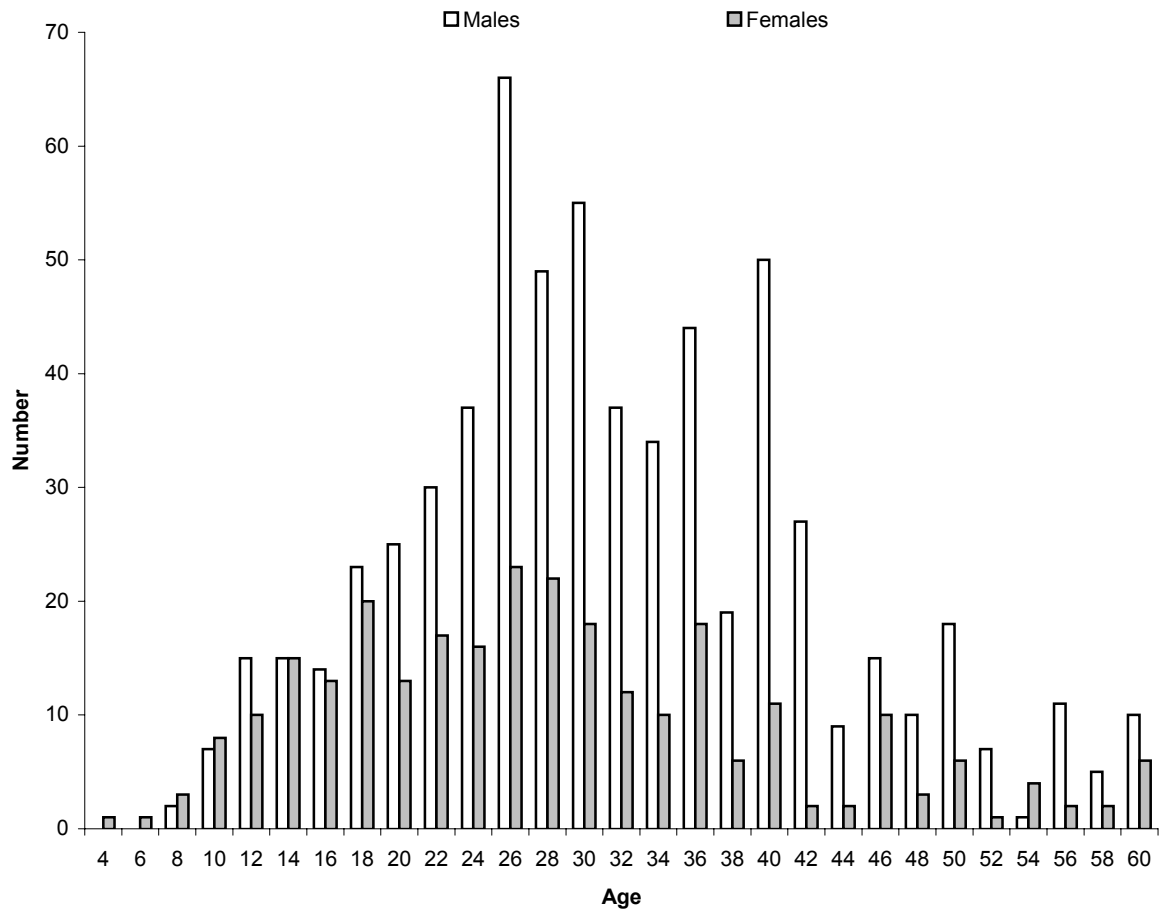
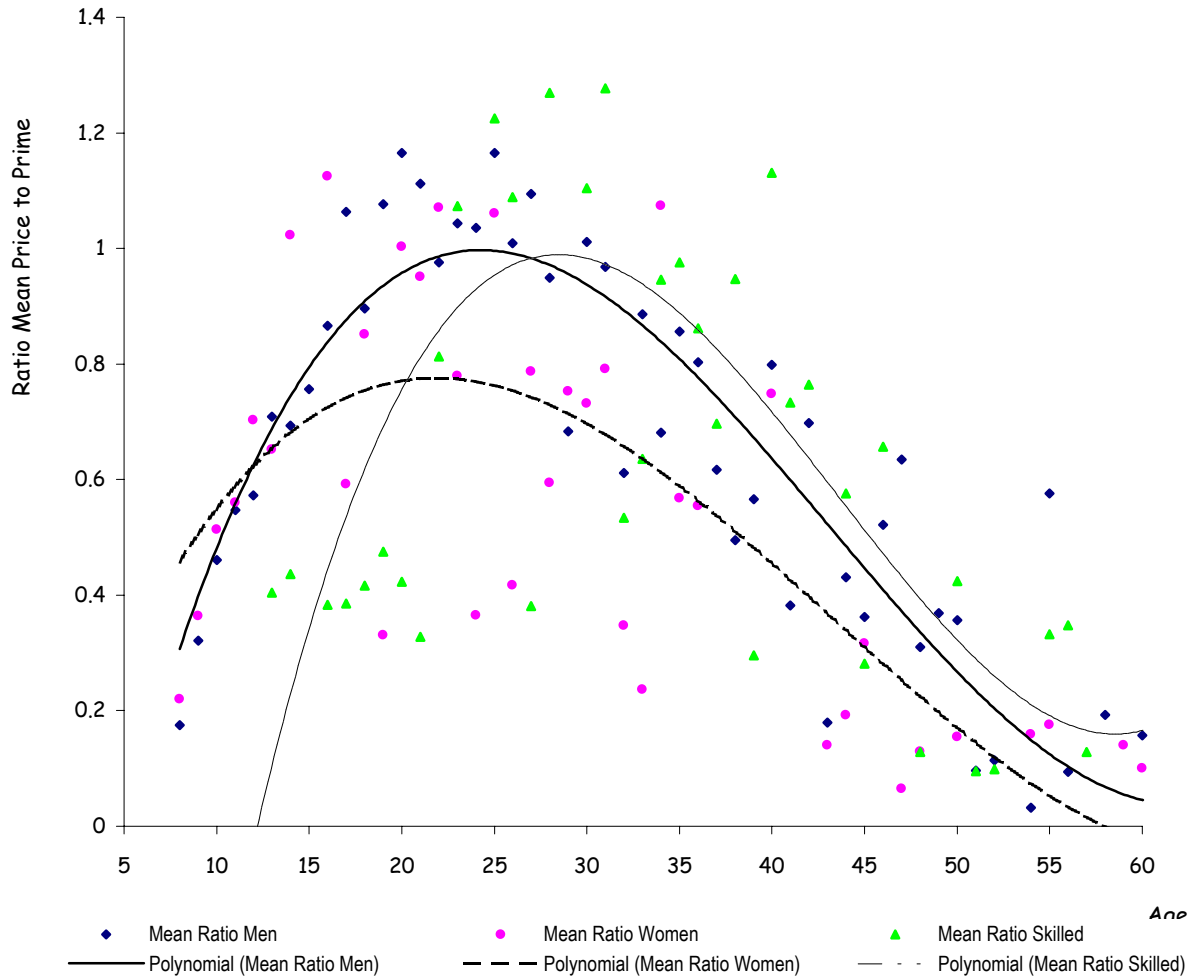


Figure 3. Age-Price Profile by Gender and Occupations



Note: The data in Figure 1 are based on the average of the ratios of the price of a healthy male, or female, slave of a given age relative to the average price of a prime field hand aged 18 to 31. That reference price equals 305 piastres. . A third degree polynomial is fitted for male slaves and another one for females. These are used to calculate the maximum selling price which is reached at 24 years for an unskilled male slave, 29 for a skilled male slave while that for a female slave is at 22 years. Slaves older than 60 are excluded from this graph because the observations are too sparse.

Table 1: Auctions by Notary					
Notaries	District	1825-27	1825	1826	1827
Arnaud	Port-Louis	15	6	5	4
Bélin	Port-Louis	5	1	3	0
Bonnefin	Port-Louis	48	13	15	20
Bonsergent	Port-Louis	17	6	7	4
Bussié	Port-Louis	23	9	3	10
Dubor	Port-Louis	18	9	4	5
Jollivet	Port-Louis	20	5	5	10
Montocchio	Flacq	6	3	3	0
		152	52	45	53

Table 2B. Distribution of the prices of slaves sold individually on the secondary market, by ethnicity and occupation, Mauritius, 1825-27

Category	Number of Sales			Average price ⁽²⁾			Average age			Bundles	
	Entire Sample	Male	Female	Entire sample	Male	Female	Entire Sample	Male	Female	Number	Average Price
	918	727	191	277	289	235	30	31	27	99	497
Ethnic origin ⁽³⁾											
Creole	283	170	113	304	334	258	22	23	21	57	529
Indian	58	43	15	199	215	153	42	40	46	5	369
Malagasy	206	178	28	278	286	232	33	33	32	20	455
Mozambique	295	271	24	262	267	199	35	24	42	17	472
Occupation ⁽⁴⁾											
Agriculture	320	284	36	251	253	231	33	33	35	25	570
Household services	232	128	104	275	287	261	25	26	25	58	463
Qualified	213	210	3	350	354	68	33	33	49	1	25
Unknown	153									15	
Handicapped	23	19	4	103	110	67	35	33	41	1	

Notes

⁽¹⁾ Sample size may vary because of missing data for some variables

⁽²⁾ Average price is in current Piastres

Table 2C: Population and Sample Comparison

					Age				Gender					
	Census		Notaries' Acts		Census		Notaries' Acts		Census			Notaries' Acts		
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Average	Std. Dev.	Average	Std. Dev.	Male	Female	M/F Ratio	Male	Female	M/F Ratio
All Sample	20 467	1	1 083	1	24.9	14.3	26.2	14.3						
Male	11 671	0.57	823	0.69	26.3	14.0	28.0	13.6						
Female	8 762	0.43	376	0.31	23.1	14.5	22.7	14.9						
Creole	10 364	0.51	483	0.47	17.1	12.1	16.9	12.2	4 982	5 368	0.93	263	248	1.06
Madagascar	3 666	0.18	218	0.21	30.5	11.3	32.6	9.9	2 222	1 437	1.55	178	48	3.71
Mozambique	5 581	0.28	292	0.28	33.6	10.8	34.7	10.4	3 974	1 596	2.49	271	41	6.61
India	669	0.03	38	0.04	44.1	12.6	44.3	10.0	380	288	1.32	16	28	0.57

Note The sum of the different categories is smaller than the total number of slaves because of missing information

Table 3: Females sold with their children

Profession	Ethnicity								All races	
	Creole		Indian		Malagasy		Mozambique			
	N	Mean Price	N	Mean Price	N	Mean Price	N	Mean Price	N	Mean Price
Fieldwork Labourer	12	646			5	718	8	364	25	570
Domestics House Slave	19	423	2	285	5	399	1	725	27	419
Embroidery	1	395							1	395
Laundress	3	675			3	383	5	496	11	514
Maid	6	523			3	472			9	506
Seamstress	7	566	1	457	2	258			10	493
Total	36	488	3	342	13	390	6	534	58	463
Skilled Trade Mattress maker	1	25							1	25
NA	8	606	2	410	2	218	3	638	15	535
Total	57	529	5	369	20	455	17	472	99	497

Note: N denotes the number of slaves for each category

Table 4: Ordinary Least Square Estimates of the Price Equation
 Dependent Variable: logarithm of the price in piastres

Explanatory variables	Whole Sample		1825		1826		1827	
	Estimates	premium (a)	Estimates	premium (a)	Estimates	premium (a)	Estimates	premium (a)
Physical attributes								
Age of the slave	0.04 *** (6.03)		0.06 *** (7.92)		0.01 (0.71)		0.03 ** (2.16)	
Age of the slave square (times 100)	-0.10 *** (9.14)		-0.12 *** (10.13)		-0.06 *** (2.90)		-0.08 *** (4.43)	
Gender of the slave equals 1 if male, 0 otherwise	0.22 *** (4.04)	25	0.03 (0.63)	NS	0.47 *** (3.62)	61	0.26 *** (3.07)	30
Handicap equals 1 if the slave is handicapped, 0 if healthy	-1.03 *** (4.21)	-64	-0.84 *** (3.24)	-57	-1.07 *** (7.08)	-66	-1.24 *** (2.95)	-71
Ethnicity, Creole slaves form the reference group								
Dummy variable equals 1 if the slave is Indian	-0.33 *** (3.13)	-28	-0.54 *** (4.55)	-42	-0.27 * (1.66)	-24	0.11 (0.65)	NS
Malagasy	-0.04 (0.83)	NS	-0.18 *** (3.05)	-16	0.13 (1.33)	NS	0.07 (0.79)	NS
Mozambique	-0.09 * (1.77)	-8	-0.25 *** (3.84)	-22	0.08 (0.69)	NS	0.16 * (1.89)	17
Bundling								
Number of children aged less than or equal to 5 years	0.22 *** (6.75)	25	0.14 *** (3.02)	15	0.31 *** (4.96)	36.14	0.28 *** (4.64)	33
Number of children older than 5 years	0.52 *** (7.18)	68	0.53 *** (4.40)	70	0.43 *** (5.63)	54.05	0.61 *** (9.71)	84
Slave's trade								
Qualified slaves form the reference group Dummy variable equals 1 if the slave is an Agricultural slave	-0.19 *** (4.77)	-18	-0.15 *** (3.16)	-14	-0.40 *** (3.87)	-33	-0.22 * (2.44)	-20
Household-slave	-0.144 *** (2.87)	-13	-0.22 *** (3.95)	-20	-0.08 (0.69)	NS	0.12 (1.22)	NS
Seasonal factors								
Quarterly effects, the 4th quarter is the reference Dummy equals 1 if the slave is sold in the 1st quarter	-0.26 *** (5.30)	-23	-0.24 *** (4.62)	-22	0.22 (1.63)	25	-0.44 *** (4.56)	-35
2nd quarter	-0.21 *** (4.30)	-19	-0.23 *** (3.78)	-21	0.23 (1.65)	26	-0.39 *** (5.15)	-33
3rd quarter	-0.12 *** (2.59)	-11	-0.07 (1.27)	NS	0.23 (1.42)	26	-0.22 *** (3.26)	-20
Year effect, 1825 is the reference year Dummy equals 1 if the slave is sold in 1826	0.1311 *** (3.39)	14						
1827	0.3146 *** (8.84)	37						
Constant								
	5.30 *** (45.52)		5.20 *** (43.33)		5.43 *** (20.11)		5.87 *** (26.12)	
Mean of dependent variable	5.58		5.49		5.56		5.76	
Number of observations	754		356		194		204	
Ajusted R square	0.555		0.558		0.532		0.657	

* Absolute T-ratio corrected for heteroscedasticity are in parentheses under the point estimate. *** (**) [*] denotes that the parameter is statistically different from 0 at 1% (5%) and [10%].

(a) Effect in percentage of the corresponding dummy variable.

NS Not significant