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# Slave prices from succession and bankruptcy sales in Mauritius, 1825–1827

Shirley Chenny,<sup>a</sup> Pascal St-Amour,<sup>b,\*</sup>  
and Désiré Vencatachellum<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> *Pulp and Paper Products Council, Montreal, Canada*

<sup>b</sup> *Department of Finance, HEC-Montreal, CIRANO and CIRPÉE, 3000 Cote-Ste-Catherine, Montreal, QC, Canada H3T 2A7*

<sup>c</sup> *Department of Economics, HEC-Montreal, CIRANO and CIRPÉE, Montreal, Canada*

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## Abstract

We construct a unique data set from succession and bankruptcy sales in Mauritius to investigate the determinants of slave prices between 1825 and 1827. We find that males, females sold with children, skilled slaves and slaves sold during the peak sugar cane harvest season all fetched higher prices. In comparison, handicapped and non-native slaves were sold at a discount. Moreover, the young child premium increased over the period. This may indicate that slave owners did not anticipate that slavery would be abolished in the near future or thought that they would be compensated in such an event.

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## 1. Introduction

The Treaty of Capitulation, signed by the French when the British captured Mauritius on December 3, 1810, maintained several of the French settlers' rights, including language, religion, institutions, and the right to own slaves (Nwulia, 1981).

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\* Corresponding author. Fax: +514-340-5632.

*E-mail address:* [Pascal.St-Amour@hec.ca](mailto:Pascal.St-Amour@hec.ca) (P. St-Amour).

However, following the conquest, the British enforced the 1807 ban on slave trade thereby prohibiting slave entry into the island. Although there is evidence of illicit slave imports until 1820 (Scarr, 1998, ch. 6, pp. 112–127), these had likely subsided afterwards (Allen, 1999, p. 53, Barker, 1996, p. 73).<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the market for slaves can be characterized as local; slaves were either exchanged directly among slave owners or through the secondary market until slavery was abolished in 1835.<sup>2</sup> This paper focuses on the latter by using succession and bankruptcy sales during public auctions. We study the determinants of slave prices in Mauritius for the years 1825–1827.

The bulk of the slavery literature has been concerned with transatlantic trade. For example, recent research focuses on: (i) the importance of slavery for colonial powers (Eltis and Engerman, 2000), (ii) the impact of slave trade on Africa (Behrendt et al., 2001; Evans and Richardson, 1995; Lovejoy and Richardson, 1995), (iii) conditions of shipments (Eltis and Richardson, 1995; Haines et al., 2001), and (iv) market conditions in the Americas (Mancall et al., 2001; Newland and San Segundo, 1996). In comparison, the Indian Ocean trade in general and Mauritius slavery in particular, have been much less studied by economic historians despite the fact that it was an important slave colony.<sup>3</sup>

An island of 720 square miles in the Indian Ocean, Mauritius had no indigenous population when initially settled by the Dutch in 1638. The first Dutch settlers imported slaves from Madagascar and Indonesia. France, which occupied the abandoned island in 1715, rapidly imported slaves from Madagascar, the African East Coast (especially from present-day Mozambique) while a smaller percentage came from India (especially Pondicherry, the Malabar Coast and Bengal)<sup>4</sup> and the African West Coast, (Benedict, 1980, p. 138). By 1807, nearly 85% of its 78,000 inhabitants were slaves (Barker, 1996, pp. 53, 168).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Using census data, Barker (1996, Tab A.1, p. 168) reports that the total slave population fell from 68,201 in 1826 to 62,034 in 1832. This could be attributed to a better enforcement of the slave trade ban. Prior to that period, it is estimated that about 30,000 slaves entered the island between 1811 and 1820 (Allen, 1999; Nwulia, 1981), and that the British intercepted less than 20% of those (Nwulia, 1981, p. 46). The enforcement of the ban was made difficult by the numerous illegal ports of entry, local networks, as well as legal obstacles to policing (Allen, 1999; Barker, 1996; Nwulia, 1981; Scarr, 1998). In comparison, there is no evidence of large scale illicit trade in Jamaica after 1817 (Higman, 1976, p. 47), whereas attempts to block slave imports into Cuba under the Anglo-Spanish 1817 Treaty were considered largely ineffectual (Bergad et al., 1995, p. 43).

<sup>2</sup> Estimates refer to more than 43,000 slaves changing hands between 1823 and 1830 (Scarr, 1998, p. 162). About two thirds of those recorded sales contain information on prices.

<sup>3</sup> The literature on Mauritian slavery is predominantly from an historical and anthropological, rather than cliometric perspective. Burroughs (1976), Benedict (1980), Nwulia (1981), Barker (1996), Teelock (1998), Scarr (1998), Valentine (2000), Allen (1999, 2001) provide discussions and bibliographies.

<sup>4</sup> Carter (1988–1989, pp. 234, 235) reports that Indian slaves in Mauritius were predominantly imported under French rule through the *comptoirs* of Chandernagore, Pondicherry, Mahé, and Yanam. Britain prohibited the slave trade from Bengal in 1790, and from India altogether a year later. While there were 6162 Indian slaves in 1806, they numbered 3737 in 1817, and 2351 in 1826–1827.

<sup>5</sup> In comparison, the Jamaican slave population in 1808 was 354,000 (Higman, 1976, pp. 61–62).

Early 19th century Mauritian slavery is also interesting for other reasons. First, because of the ban on imports, a high male sex ratio, a high mortality rate and a low fertility rate (Allen, 1999; Benedict, 1980; Valentine, 2000), the short-run supply of slaves can reasonably be considered as fixed.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the period under consideration is relatively short (3 years). Moreover, as discussed below, the auction sales of slaves for bankruptcy and succession reasons considered in this study justify the assumption of exogenous supply. Consequently it is possible to analyze the determinants of the demand for slaves by studying market prices without having to specify a supply function. Second, changes in attitudes toward slavery following the British conquest might have signaled Britain's intention of abolishing slavery in Mauritius. Verifying whether these expectations were reflected in slave prices as early as 1825 is of interest. Third, mothers and children were often sold together as a bundle. As a result, identifying the value of children slaves in a situation where abolition is pending is also possible.

To study the determinants of slave prices in Mauritius, we construct a unique data set using the notarial acts located at the Mauritius Archives. These acts document the sale of at least 1299 slaves during public auctions. The auctions were publicized at least 3 days in advance (Government of Mauritius, 1824, Art. III, Proclamation of July 16), along with the reasons for the sales.<sup>7</sup> The transaction data were recorded by a limited number of notaries and contains detailed information on the buyers and sellers, slave characteristics (age, gender, ethnicity, physical handicap, and occupation), sales' conditions (bundling, age of children) and date of transaction (Government of Mauritius, 1824, Art. VII, Proclamation of July 16).

Our data set presents several advantages. First, market prices rather than appraisals are recorded. As such, they represent true valuations and are less subject to over- and under-reporting biases related to taxes, subsidies, or other distortions. Some under-reporting could have been present nonetheless since a 2% tax on the price of slaves sold was imposed (Scarr, 1998, p. 161). However, since these auctions were public, and the notaries acts are legal documents, we do not expect such an effect to be present. Second, avoiding potential endogeneity problems associated with bundling of commodities is possible. This occurs because the French and British legislations governing the sale of slaves prohibited the separation of young (*impubère*) children from their mother. Hence, the potential for strategic bundling of commodities by the owner is limited. Third, the potential bias associated with changes in recording methods is minimized given the limited number of notaries active during slave auctions. As in other slave economies, purchasing a slave in Mauritius constituted a large investment; the price of a skilled Mauritian slave in the last quarter of the 18th century would have represented about 40–50 acres

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<sup>6</sup> This is not to say that the *long-run* slave supply was fixed. Changes in mortality and birth rates could have been induced by slave owners through better care and slave work organization depending on market conditions.

<sup>7</sup> For example, in the Mauritius Gazette, No. 60 of May 1826, a sale advertisement stated: "... *procède à la vente à l'encan de 8 têtes d'esclaves, dépendant de la succession de ladite feue Rose Renaud ...*", i.e., have proceeded with the sale of 8 slaves from the succession of deceased Rose Renaud.

of good agricultural land (Allen, 1999, p. 44). Moreover, it also involved an important degree of information asymmetry on the slave's unobserved characteristics. The fact that these exchanges were recorded by notaries gave the information a legal status under French legal and administrative systems maintained by the British (Government of Mauritius, 1824, Art. VII and X, Proclamation of July 16). The precise recording of characteristics and conditions was important to facilitate eventual upholding of transactions by courts (Wahl, 1996). Fourth, census data on slaves for 1826 is available. Using a large subset of that census allows us to confirm the representativeness of our sample.

A fifth and important advantage of our data set is that, as the reasons of the sale are documented, we can focus on a subset of sales in order to limit potential adverse selection biases. Bankruptcy and succession sales are not motivated by hidden faulty characteristics of slaves. Moreover, supply can reasonably be considered as exogenous for these sales. This allows us to focus on the characteristics most sought after by slave buyers without having to control for simultaneity biases. The application of a Mincerian pricing equation to study the determinants of demand is then particularly warranted. We therefore specify a log-linear pricing equation with the slave physical attributes, conditions and time of sale as explanatory variables. We estimate the model for the three years and for each year separately to verify structural stability.

Our main results are the following. First, as in other slave economies, we identify the characteristic concave age–price pattern documented by many authors. Slave prices peak at age levels similar to those found in the US, with females peaking earlier than males. Second, male slaves, female slaves sold with children, skilled slaves and slaves sold during the peak sugar cane harvest season all fetched higher prices. In comparison, handicapped and non-native slaves were sold at a discount. Overall, these results may be explained by the nature of slave work in Mauritian sugar plantations (Valentine, 2000; Benedict, 1980). Physical strength and endurance, acculturation, as well as human capital were likely important characteristics sought after by slave owners.

With respect to dynamic factors, we find that slave prices were much higher in 1827 than the two previous years. Moreover, the value of young children increases over the period. This provides *prima facie* evidence that slave owners were either not anticipating the abolition of slavery in the foreseeable future, or not expecting important capital losses associated with an eventual abolition. This relative optimism can be partly explained by their previous experiences with the colonial authorities. Early talks of abolition following the French Revolution were sternly opposed by Mauritian slave owners who eventually obtained the maintained right to slave ownership under Napoleonic rule. The slavery institutions were also upheld by the British, following fierce resistance to abolition (Burroughs, 1976). Indeed, slave owners went as far as to convince Sir Robert Farquhar, then Governor of Mauritius, to petition the Colonial Office for a temporary postponement of anti-slavery legislation—a demand which was apparently met with dismay by Lord Liverpool (Nwulia, 1981). For the period under investigation, Mauritian slave owners therefore may have anticipated that they could successfully oppose abolition, or at least be

compensated for any subsequent capital loss. In the end, history proved them partially right as they received an important financial compensation while slavery was replaced by restrictive apprenticeship laws which limited the freedom of emancipated slaves.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 describes the construction of the data set. Section 3 discusses the econometric model and the results. Finally, Section 4 reviews the main findings and concludes.

## 2. Data set

We first summarize the information available in the notarial acts. Next, we present descriptive statistics on our data set, investigating the extent to which the slaves sold during succession and bankruptcy sales are representative of the slave population. Finally, we report additional statistics on prices and discuss its relation with gender, ethnicity, qualifications, and age.

### 2.1. Description of the data set

#### 2.1.1. Information in the notarial acts

Our primary source of information is the notarial acts in the General Inventory of Notaries (group NA) which are located at the Mauritius Archives in Coromandel, Mauritius. Table 1 describes the main characteristics of this inventory. Between 1825 and 1827 there were 152 public auctions during which only eight notaries were active. They sold at least 1299 slaves.<sup>8</sup> All eight notaries were active in 1825 and 1826, while two did not record any slave sale in 1827. The number of auctions was fairly stable across the three years and was evenly distributed among the notaries, except for Arnaud and Bonnefin who each account for a quarter of all auctions. Seven of the notaries auctioned in Port Louis, the capital of Mauritius and one notary was based in the agricultural district of Flacq.

Under Mauritian colonial law, all public auctions of slaves had to be conducted by a notary or an auctioneer (*encanteur juré*) (Government of Mauritius, 1824, Proclamation of July 16, pp. 122–125). Although there is scarce information on the role played by the notary, the available evidence suggests that he acted as a middle man rather than a seller or buyer. Indeed, slave owners or their representatives, had to provide to the notary a list of the characteristics of the slaves they wished to sell. In addition, they had to confirm that they owned the slaves and thus were entitled to sell them. The notary certified on the notification that the seller appeared before

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<sup>8</sup> Due to the poor condition of some notarial acts, it was impossible to transcribe some information. It could be argued that missing data on age, skills or other characteristics reflected a deliberate attempt by sellers to avoid eventual litigation from buyers. However in this study, it is most often the case that missing data was related to the difficulty of reading the information on the notary acts because they were badly affected by the passage of time, or the handwriting was unintelligible. Since, in all likelihood, this effect was random, we believe that possible bias is minimal.

Table 1  
Distribution of slaves sold and auctions by notary and year of sale

Archive No.	Notary	Vols.	District	Slaves sold		Number of auctions		
				1825–1827	1825–1827	1825–1827	1825	1826
NA69	ARNAUD, Charles M.A	1–26	Port-Louis	336	15	6	5	4
NA71	BELIN, Jean	1–4	Port-Louis	33	5	1	4	0
NA72	BONNEFIN, Alexandre	1–25	Port-Louis	354	48	13	15	20
NA73	BONSERAGENT, Théodore	1–3	Port-Louis	43	17	6	7	4
NA68	BUSSIE, Jean-Paul	1–20	Port-Louis	163	23	9	4	10
NA63	DUBOR, Louis-Joseph Senoni	1–16	Port-Louis	185	18	9	4	5
NA67	JOLLIVET, Yves Isidore	1–24	Port-Louis	105	20	5	5	10
NA66	MONTOCCCHIO, Charles Jean	1–30	Flacq	80	6	3	3	0
	Total			1299	152	52	47	53

him and acknowledged the third party (notary or auctioneer) to be the organizer of the sale. Finally, notaries publicized the sale, and recorded the details of the transaction between the seller and the buyer. The certified selling act were then filed and indexed by the notary.

During an auction, a slave was either sold individually, or as a bundle with other slaves. There were two types of slave bundles. First, a bundle could be composed of slaves of various age and sex. The notary acts contained 25 such bundles sold during these three years for a total of 86 slaves. Since voluntary bundling may be endogenous, we omit these bundles altogether in order to avoid potential endogeneity biases (Heckman, 1979).<sup>9</sup> Second, and most frequently, a bundle consisted of a mother with her children. Article 47 of the *Code Noir* regulating slavery prohibited the separation of young children from their mother. This article was upheld by the 1823 House of Commons reforms which prohibited the separation of children under the age of 14 from their mother (Barker, 1996, p. 43). Hence, the bundling of mothers with their children can safely be regarded as exogenous.<sup>10</sup> Out of the remaining 1213 slaves, 24% were mother–children bundles, typically involving two children.

In addition to the selling price (in *piastres* or *livres*), most records either stated the slave's gender explicitly, or that information can be inferred from the transaction's phrasing.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, in most cases, a slave's age, ethnicity, occupation and the auction date were reported. The notarial acts also documented the reason for selling the slaves. Those reasons and frequency of occurrence are described in Table 2. The most important reason by far was succession sales, followed by voluntary sales and bankruptcies. Voluntary sales are likely to take into consideration market prices, and could be motivated by unobservable defects of the slave (Greenwald and Glasspiegel, 1983; Pritchett and Chamberlain, 1993). By comparison, succession and bankruptcy sales of slaves can be treated as independent of the prevailing market conditions, i.e., the supply of slave obtained from these sales can be considered as price-inelastic.<sup>12</sup> Because our focus is on the determinants of demand, and in order

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<sup>9</sup> Admittedly, it might be argued that the decision *not* to bundle is also endogenous. Still, a single price was quoted for the bundle, making it difficult to extract information on individual attributes, such that exclusion of voluntary sales can be justified on estimation efficiency grounds (Kotlikoff, 1979). In any event, keeping in mind that these sales were relatively limited in occurrence, their exclusion probably have a limited impact on our results.

<sup>10</sup> It is of course possible—although not verifiable—that an unscrupulous owner could declare a child to be orphan rather than sell her with her mother. For estimation purposes, young children sold without their mother are treated as regular slaves, rather than as children; if information on attributes, skills and timing was complete, these would be included in our sample, otherwise, they are left out of the estimation. Hence, our measured value of children slave is in fact the value of children sold with their mother, rather than the value of all children as in Kotlikoff (1979).

<sup>11</sup> For example, the acts written in French distinguish between *vendu* (male) and *vendue* (female).

<sup>12</sup> One act referred to the forced sale of a slave following a two-year imprisonment for physical aggression of the master. Because this sale was ordered by the court and as this information was public at the time of the sale, there is no reason to suspect endogeneity or adverse selection biases. This sale is consequently included in our sample.

Table 2

Notary acts: reasons for the sale of slaves

Reason for the sale	Number slaves	Percent (%)
Succession	941	77.6
Voluntary sale by owner	192	15.8
Bankruptcy	79	6.5
Total	1212	100.0

to avoid the adverse-selection biases, we omit the 192 voluntary sales and study the 941 succession and 79 bankruptcy sales.<sup>13</sup>

### 2.1.2. Representativeness

Our sample can be compared to other samples of slaves in Mauritius in order to assess its representativeness. For this purpose, we use a subset of the 1826 census data from the *Greffe de l'Enregistrement des Esclaves* in the Mauritius Archives. This subset corresponds to more than 20,000 of the 68,000 total slave population. It has been collected by Vijaya Teelock of the University of Mauritius, and is compiled and discussed in Valentine (2000). Most of the data in the Teelock subset is based on the 1826 census and we compare our sample with only these slaves.<sup>14</sup> Following contemporaneous ethnic descriptions, we classify slaves as Creoles, Malagasy, Mozambiques, and Indians (including Malays). The distinction was based on land of birth, with only Creoles being identified as having been born in Mauritius (Barker, 1996, pp. 62, 66, 164).<sup>15</sup>

The statistics for the census and sample are reported in Table 3. They reveal that Creoles constitute the majority of slaves. This is a likely result of the ban on slave imports enforced by the British.<sup>16</sup> Slaves from Madagascar and Mozambique are nearly equally represented while a small percentage are Indians. On average the ethnic distribution of slaves in our sample is a very good representation of the population distribution.

Our sample differs somewhat from the Teelock sample for the male ratio. While the male ratio is 1.33 in the partial census, it equals 1.94 in our sample. Hence, it appears

<sup>13</sup> Incorporating voluntary sales would result in abandoning the assumption of exogenous supply; a full market model would have to be specified and estimated, rather than a Mincerian equation. This being said, we re-estimated the model using all available data, i.e., including the voluntary sales. The main results are qualitatively similar. Parameter estimates do change however if only voluntary sales are used. In particular, the prices of voluntary sales are lower than for bankruptcy and succession sales. This could be interpreted as adverse selection in at least some of the voluntary sales. We plan to pursue these elements in future research.

<sup>14</sup> See Nwulia (1981) for further discussion on the census.

<sup>15</sup> Barker (1996, pp. 65–66) argues that the potential for over-reporting of Creoles because of abolitionist pressures was probably limited. Ritual scars on African slaves as well as those made by owners were reliable indicators in determining the origin of slaves.

<sup>16</sup> Our percentage of Creoles is similar to that found in other slave economies. John (1988, Tab. 4.7, p. 53) reports that Creoles in Trinidad outnumbered Africans 2 to 1 in 1813. Higman (1976, pp. 75–76) reports that Africans represented 37% of the Jamaican slave population in 1817. By 1832, this percentage had fallen to 23.5%.

Table 3  
Slave 1826 population and 1825–1827 notarial acts comparison

	Number of slaves				Age of slaves			
	1826 Census		Notarial acts		1826 Census		Notarial acts	
	Number	%	Number	%	Average	Std.	Average	Std.
All sample	20,467	100	918	100	24.9	14.3	26.2	14.5
Creole	10,364	51	445	48	17.1	12.1	16.9	12.2
Madagascar	3666	18	172	19	30.5	11.3	32.4	9.9
Mozambique	5581	28	259	28	33.6	10.8	35.1	10.3
India	669	3	42	5	44.1	12.6	44.1	10.1
Male	11,671	57	609	66	26.3	14.0	27.6	13.8
Female	8762	43	309	34	23.1	14.5	23.4	14.5

*Note.* Census data is taken from *Greffe de l'Enregistrement des Esclaves* in the Mauritius Archives. Notarial acts data refers to succession sales subsample.

that males are over-represented in the notarial acts compared to the census. However, there is evidence from other sources which indicates that our sample male ratio is closer to the true population value. Barker (1996, Tab. A 3 and B 4, pp. 169, 171) reports a male ratio of 1.61 in 1826 (based on the full census), and 1.77 in 1832 (based on plantations data). Moreover, a male ratio of 2 is also representative of typical French slave economies of the period (Allen, 1999, p. 41). For example, nearby Bourbon (present-day Réunion) island had 49 thousand male slaves and 24 thousand females in 1838 (Scarr, 1998, p. 35). Finally, only 1 out of 6 captured slaves by British naval authorities during the enforcement of the trade ban was female (Scarr, 1998, p. 133).<sup>17</sup>

Furthermore, our sample has the same age characteristics as the Mauritian slave population. Whether slaves are classified by gender or ethnicity, age differences between our sample and the population are negligible and not statistically significant. Overall we can safely conclude that our sample is representative of the Mauritian slave population. Having described the information recorded in the notarial acts and confirmed its representativeness, we now focus on a statistical description of slave characteristics and prices.

## 2.2. Descriptive statistics on slave prices

### 2.2.1. Gender, occupation, and ethnicity: quantities and prices

Table 4 gives the number of individuals sold in non-bundle sales and average prices of slaves by gender, occupation and ethnicity. We use Telfair's (1830)

<sup>17</sup> The Mauritian male ratio is clearly larger than other slave economies. Ward (1988, Tab. 9, p. 129) finds that the ratio was 1.0 for Jamaican sugar estates between 1817 and 1829. Higman (1976, Tab. 40, p. 72) confirms a gender balance for Jamaica, Trinidad and Barbados. John (1988, Tab. 4.2, p. 41) reports that the male ratio for Trinidad slaves fell from 1.31 in 1808 to 1.11 in 1822. Bergad (1999, p. 136) finds that the male ratio for the Brazilian Minas Gerais region is 2 in 1786, but falls steadily to 1.5 in 1821.

Table 4  
Number, prices, gender, occupations, and ethnicity of slaves: individual sales only

Gender	Occupation	Creole		Mozambique		Madagascar		Indian		Total		
		Nb.	Price	Nb.	Price	Nb.	Price	Nb.	Price	Nb.	Price	
Female	Skilled						71				2	71
	Laborer	13	320	9	210	3	190		3	65	28	243
	Other agric.											
	Maid	35	263	1	51	5	203				41	250
	Other household	24	295	9	243	12	279		5	106	50	263
	Total	72	284	19	217	22	231		8	90	121	251
Male	Skilled	32	465	49	325	50	329		3	136	134	355
	Laborer	29	297	81	241	33	294		2	213	145	264
	Other agric.	9	338	33	272	12	269		6	140	60	268
	Maid	44	291	11	266	10	264		2	132	67	278
	Other household	14	376	12	252	8	365		9	161	43	294
	Total	128	348	186	271	113	309		22	154	449	297
Total	Skilled	32	465	49	325	52	319		3	136	136	351
	Laborer	42	304	90	238	36	286		5	124	173	261
	Other agric.	9	338	33	272	12	269		6	140	60	268
	Maid	79	278	12	248	15	244		2	132	108	267
	Other household	38	325	21	248	20	314		14	141	93	277
	Total	200	325	205	266	135	296		30	137	570	287

Note: Prices are recorded in current piastras. Exchange rate, 5 piastras = £1 = \$4.94 US in 1827. Skilled: Assistant blacksmith, barrel maker, blacksmith, carpenter, carpentry trainee, carter, commander, locksmith, mason, master carpenter, master mason, mattress maker, nailer, roofer, sack-maker, sawyer, shoemaker, squarer, stone cutter, stone cutter trainee, and sugar-maker. Agriculture: Chief gardener, gardener, laborer, marketman, stable-boy, and watchman. Sea-related activities: caulker, fisherman, and sailor. Household: Baker, cook, innkeeper, laundry, maid, messenger, nurse, seamstress, shoe polisher, and tailor.

occupational classification to characterize slaves' work and aggregate them into Agriculture (laborers and other agricultural work) and Sea-related, Skilled, and Household (maids and other household work) categories.<sup>18</sup>

Large plantations of 100 or more slaves employed more than 40% of agricultural slaves in 1826 (Barker, 1996, Tab. B 3, p. 171). Mauritian agricultural slaves were engaged in multiple activities. Field work included ground tilling, weeding and reaping. One group of able-bodied men and women aged between 16 and 60 (*grande bande*) were assigned to the more physical work (*pioches*). Another group of younger or older males and females over 60 or aged between 12 and 14 (*petite bande*) did lighter work. Finally, a third *bande* included children aged between 7 and 12 (Barker, 1996, p. 95; Ly-Tio-Fane Pineo, 1989, p. 219). This work structure is very similar to the specialization in Jamaican sugar estates between able men and women, i.e., *great gang*, as well as nursing mothers and young children *second and third gangs* (Higman, 1976, p. 188).

Work in the sugar houses was assigned exclusively to skilled males. Assignments on the farm included mending tools and repairing buildings and stables, cattle herding, as well as domestic work in the masters' home, whereas preferred slaves were assigned to transport and managerial tasks (Nwulia, 1981, pp. 58–59). The range of domestic work included maids, seamstresses, as well as those performing cleaning and cooking duties. Finally, some slaves could be considered as skilled (e.g., carpenters, masons and coopers, sawyers, and sack-makers).

With respect to occupations in Table 4, we find that over 75% of female slaves were employed for household service, most often as maids. Only two female slaves were considered as skilled (sack makers). The bulk of male slaves worked in agriculture, mainly as laborers (*pioches*). Nearly 30% of males were considered as skilled, most often as carpenters, followed by masons.<sup>19</sup>

The average price of a male and female slave was 297 piastres (\$293 US) and 251 piastres (\$248 US), respectively.<sup>20</sup> Thus, it appears that females were sold at a discount compared to males. These prices are in the same range as other estimates for Mauritius. Scarr (1998, p. 161) finds that a slave cost on average 181 piastres in 1824, and 514 piastres in 1829. He also reports an average auction price of slaves in 1825 of 202 piastres, and gives the example of a male slave aged 30, *de forte complexion*, who was sold for 250 piastres. Barker (1996, p. 73) reports that the average slave price was £36 (180 piastres) in 1824 and £102 (510 piastres) in 1829. Our results also suggest that both male and female Creoles were sold at a premium compared to

<sup>18</sup> See the note to Table 4 for a complete description.

<sup>19</sup> This figure is close to Fogel and Engerman (1974b, p. 40) who find that over 25% of US male slaves were skilled and semi-skilled workers. Ward (1988, Tab. 24, p. 191) reports that field hands represented 60% of the total 19th century slave population of Barbados, Leeward Island and Jamaica, and 66 per cent in the New Colonies. Higman (1976, p. 42) finds that 70% of the Jamaican active slave population was employed as field hands, while this percentage is estimated at 65% for Trinidadian plantation slaves (John, 1988, Tab. 4.15, p. 63).

<sup>20</sup> The exchange rate between the piastre and the British pound was 5 piastres to the £ (Allen, 1999, p. xvii). The British–US exchange rate for 1827 is \$4.94 US to the £ (Officer, 2001).

non-natives, particularly Indians. Finally, we also find a positive human capital premium, i.e., skilled and household slaves were sold at a higher price than agricultural ones.

2.2.2. Age–price profiles

Fig. 1 plots realized and fitted age–price profiles for both male and female slaves. As in Fogel and Engerman (1972), realized prices are the average of prices relative to that of a prime-aged (18–31 year old) male slave for each calendar year in our sample. Fitted prices are obtained by regressing prices on a third-degree polynomial in age. The age–price profile displays the familiar bell-curved pattern identified in other slave economies (Conrad and Meyer, 1958; Fogel and Engerman, 1972; Fogel and Engerman, 1974b; Higman, 1976; Moreno et al., 1983; Newland and San Segundo, 1996) We find that male prices are usually higher at all ages and peak later than female slaves (24 vs 23 years). Both male and female peak-price ages are very similar to those found in the US although somewhat younger than for other slavery economies (see Table 5).

Overall, we conclude that gender, ethnicity, occupation, and age appear to determine the price of Mauritian slaves. Descriptive statistics do not however identify the individual effects on prices of each characteristic as potential correlations across

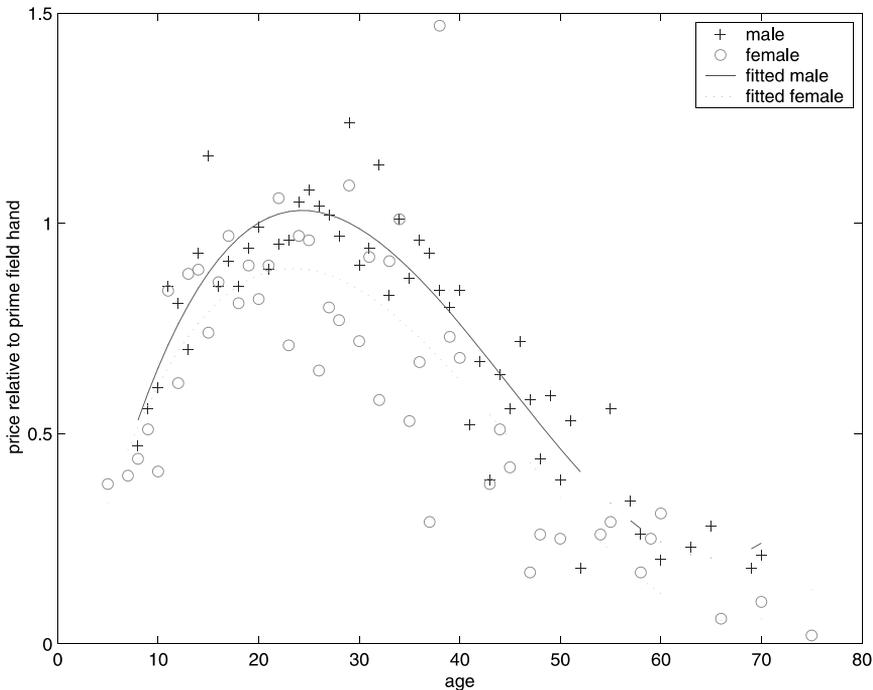


Fig. 1. Age–price profile. Note. Prices are slave price  $P_i$  divided by the price of a prime-aged male slave  $P_{pa}$ . Fitted age–price profiles from  $P_i/P_{pa} = \alpha + \phi_1 AGE_i + \phi_2 (AGE_i)^2 + \phi_3 (AGE_i)^3 + u_i$ .

Table 5  
A comparison of maximum—price age level

Author	Country	Male	Female
Moreno et al. (1983)	Cuba	28–30	25
de Mello (1992)	Brazil	26–27	22
Newland and San Segundo (1996)	Peru	28–29	25–26
Kotlikoff (1992)	US	25	23
Chenny, St-Amour and Vencatachellum (2002)	Mauritius	24	23

factors are not taken into account. For this purpose, we resort to a multivariate econometric analysis.

### 3. Multivariate econometric analysis

#### 3.1. Model

We mentioned earlier that the use of a Mincerian pricing equation is particularly appropriate when supply can sensibly be considered as price inelastic. Hence, following standard practice (Kotlikoff, 1979; Newland and San Segundo, 1996), we regress the log of slave prices on the slave's attributes, the characteristics of the sale and the slave's human capital. Moreover, we introduce timing variables and time-varying parameters to capture dynamic and seasonal effects. The econometric model is:

$$\begin{aligned} \log(P_i) = & \alpha + \phi_1 AGE_i + \phi_2 (AGE_i)^2 + \phi_3 MALE_i + \phi_4 HAND_i + \phi_5 IND_i \\ & + \phi_6 MALAG_i + \phi_7 MOZAMB_i + \beta_1 CHILDL5_i + \beta_2 CHILDO5_i \\ & + \tau_1 AGRIC_i + \tau_2 HOUSE_i + \eta_1 Q1_i + \eta_2 Q2_i + \eta_3 Q3_i + \eta_4 Y26_i \\ & + \eta_5 Y27_i + \epsilon_i, \end{aligned} \quad (1)$$

where,  $P_i$  is the recorded price,  $i$  denotes the slave's identity,  $\alpha$ ,  $\phi$ ,  $\beta$ ,  $\tau$ ,  $\eta$  are parameters and  $\epsilon_i$  is an IID error term. The explanatory variables are as follows:

#### 1. Attributes:

- 1.1. *AGE* Age of slave at period of sale;
- 1.2. *MALE* Equals 1 if male, 0 if female;
- 1.3. *HAND* Equals 1 if handicapped slave, 0 otherwise;
- 1.4. *IND* Equals 1 if of Indian origin, 0 otherwise;
- 1.5. *MALAG* Equals 1 if of Malagasy origin, 0 otherwise;
- 1.6. *MOZAMB* Equals 1 if of Mozambique origin, 0 otherwise.

#### 2. Bundling:

- 2.1. *CHILDL5* Equals to the number of children less than or equal to 5 year old;
- 2.2. *CHILDO5* Equals to the number of children older than 5.

#### 3. Occupation:

- 3.1. *AGRIC* Equals 1 if employed in agriculture, 0 otherwise;
- 3.2. *HOUSE* Equals 1 if employed in household, 0 otherwise.

Table 6  
Parameter estimates, pricing equation (1)

Variable	Explanation	Whole sample		1825		1826		1827	
		Estim.	Prem.	Estim.	Prem.	Estim.	Prem.	Estim.	Prem.
<b>Attributes</b>									
<i>AGE</i>	Age of slave	0.04** (5.20)		0.06** (6.21)		0.01 (0.52)		0.04** (2.78)	
<i>AGE</i> <sup>2</sup>	Age squared divided by 100	-0.09*** (7.46)		-0.11*** (7.71)		-0.05** (2.24)		-0.09** (4.74)	
<i>MALE</i>	Equals 1 if male	0.23*** (3.95)	25.3*** (5.93)	0.11* (1.76)	11.4** (2.10)	0.50*** (3.47)	64.4*** (12.62)	0.18** (2.36)	19.6*** (3.22)
<i>HAND</i>	Equals 1 if handicapped	-0.82*** (5.04)	-55.9** (2.21)	-0.96*** (2.75)	-61.5 (1.10)	-0.91*** (4.64)	-59.7* (1.91)	-0.69*** (4.95)	-49.8** (2.39)
<i>IND</i>	Equals 1 if of Indian origin	-0.47*** (3.25)	-37.5* (1.88)	-0.53*** (3.66)	-41.0** (2.02)	-0.10** (2.09)	-41.4 (1.15)	-0.10 (0.50)	-9.7 (0.44)
<i>MALAG</i>	Equals 1 if of Malagasy origin	-0.04 (0.95)	-4.4 (0.89)	-0.14** (2.21)	-12.6 (1.83)	0.19 (1.50)	20.9** (2.09)	0.03 (0.38)	3.0 (0.40)
<i>MOZAMB</i>	Equals 1 if of Mozambique origin	-0.14*** (2.72)	-12.9** (2.25)	-0.23*** (3.31)	-20.8** (2.44)	0.05 (0.32)	5.0 (0.35)	0.09 (1.21)	9.5 (1.40)
<b>Bundling</b>									
<i>CHILDL5</i>	Nb. of children with age ≤ 5	0.25*** (8.39)	29.0*** (13.46)	0.20** (4.25)	21.6*** (5.99)	0.29*** (4.25)	33.7*** (7.45)	0.32*** (6.90)	37.8** (13.07)
<i>CHILDOS</i>	Nb. of children with age > 5	0.52*** (7.52)	67.9*** (30.76)	0.55*** (4.28)	74.1*** (22.07)	0.47*** (5.35)	60.1*** (17.09)	0.53*** (9.65)	70.0*** (42.47)



#### 4. Time of sale:

4.1.  $QJ$  Equals 1 if slave sold in  $J$ th quarter, 0 otherwise, where  $J = 1, 2, 3$ ;

4.2.  $YXX$  Equals 1 if slave sold in year 18 $XX$ , 0 otherwise, where  $XX = 26, 27$ .

We showed in Section 2.2.2 that the age–price profile was characteristically concave, increasing then decreasing after peak-price age.<sup>21</sup> Section 2.2.1 highlighted the fact that ethnicity, gender and human capital were apparent determinants of slave prices. Also, given the nature of slave work in Mauritian sugar estates, we expect that handicapped slaves would be sold at a lower price than able-bodied ones. Furthermore, when considered as long-term productive assets, children should be positively valued by slave buyers. However, rearing costs, low life expectancy and potential abolition of slavery reduce their value. The final net effect of young children in mother–child bundles is therefore uncertain. Children older than 5 demand less time from their mother, are more likely to survive and can contribute to production. We therefore expect a larger premium for older, compared to younger, children in mother–child bundles.

Model (1) is sufficiently flexible to capture timing and structural shifts. First, given that slave production is predominantly agricultural, we introduce seasonal dummies. Our reference quarter is the fourth, which corresponds to the sugar cane harvesting season. We therefore anticipate a discount on the prices of slaves sold in other quarters. Second, the model can be estimated over the whole sample, or for each year separately in which case, however, we drop the two year dummies. The positive effect on sugar production of British tariff policies should increase the price of slaves at later dates. However, if abolition is anticipated by slave buyers, we should expect prices to decline over time. Given that the dependent price is the log of prices, year dummies control for potential inflation through fixed effects in the pooled-year sample. On the other hand, a separate estimation for each year allows us to assess whether or not the effect of each variable is constant over time.

Finally, for reasons discussed in Sections 1 and 2.1.2, we do not anticipate any endogeneity bias in estimating (1). Hence, the econometric model is adequately estimated by OLS. All standard errors are corrected for potential heteroscedasticity of an unknown form. Moreover, to control for potential biases related to extreme observations, we re-estimate the model using the Least Absolute Deviation and the Trimmed Least Squares estimators, without detectable effect in our results.

### 3.2. Estimation results

The estimates of the parameters of (1), their level of significance for a standard  $T$  test and the premium (or discount) effect in percentage are reported in Table 6. We start by discussing the results for the whole sample reported in the second and third

<sup>21</sup> We restrict Eq. (1) to a second-order polynomial in age because the coefficient on higher-order terms are not significantly different from zero.

columns. Overall, the model presents a good fit for observed prices, with an adjusted *R*-squared of 57% with most explanatory variables being significant at the 1% level.

First, regarding physical attributes, we find a concave relation between age and price. Using the estimates in Table 6, we find that, on average, a slave's highest price was obtained at age 23. This number is very close to the simple estimates presented in Table 5.

Second, a male slave fetched a premium of 25%. This estimate confirms Scarr's (1998, p. 161) findings that Mauritian female slaves were sold at a discount, reflecting lower labor productivity rather than reproductive potential. The male premium is larger than the 9% figure for Southern US (Kotlikoff, 1979) and Peru (Newland and San Segundo, 1996, full sample), but close to that found for the Peruvian vineyards subsample by Newland and San Segundo (1996). West Indian female slaves were typically valued at 80–90% of the males (Ward, 1988, fn. 60, p. 34). Higman (1976, p. 192) estimates that the Jamaican male premium was 12% in 1817.

Our estimated male premium may seem high. Indeed, following the ban on slave imports in Mauritius, the supply of slaves could only have been maintained through reproduction. Hence, we might have expected the value of females to increase, especially since they were outnumbered by males (see Table 3). However, this effect is mitigated by the demand for physical strength in sugar cane plantations (Scarr, 1998, p. 161). Our results would indicate that slave owners valued physical strength more than fertility. Indeed, this is confirmed by a hefty discount of 56% on handicapped slaves, a figure that is close to that found by Newland and San Segundo (1996) for Peru.<sup>22</sup>

Third, ethnicity dummy variables confirm the presence of a discount on non-native slaves, especially Indians. On the one hand, Creoles had the advantage of being better adapted to local conditions and are less subject to illness and marronage.<sup>23</sup> Mozambiques were usually employed in plantations work and were considered as more easily contented compared to Malagasy who marooned more often (Allen, 1999, pp. 42–43; Barker, 1996, p. 62; Scarr, 1998, p. 163). On the other hand, Indians were of significantly smaller size than other slaves (Valentine, 2000, Fig. 13, p. 36) and therefore of likely lower physical strength, an attribute that would have been

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<sup>22</sup> Newland and San Segundo (1996) find a point estimate of 0.65 for 'healthy' dummy, corresponding to a 91% premium. The 'non-healthy' discount is therefore  $-91/191$ , or 48%.

<sup>23</sup> Compared to Africans, Creole slaves in Cuba were sold at a premium that varied between 5 and 18% for males, and between 8 and 22% for females (Bergad et al., 1995, pp. 68–69). This price difference has been linked to the importance of acculturation; Creole slaves had never experienced freedom, could speak Spanish, had rudimentary catholicism and were familiar with harsh labor routines (Bergad et al., 1995, p. 68). Age-specific differences in mortality, especially during the *seasoning* period, and in fertility that favored Creoles were also observed in the British West Indies (Higman, 1976, Tab. 17, p. 109, pp. 116–117, resp.; Ward, 1988, pp. 124–125). Ward (1988, p. 207) finds that West Indian Creoles were typically sold at a 20% premium compared to Africans of similar age and occupation. Similarly, Brazilian Creole slaves had longer life expectancy and fertility, and a lower level of illnesses and defects compared to their African counterparts (Bergad, 1999, pp. 157, 185–187).

important in plantation work (Barker, 1996, p. 63).<sup>24</sup> Our results confirm Carter's (1988–1989, pp. 243–245) criticism of the view that Indians were an elite among Mauritian slaves. She reports that, contrary to widely-held beliefs among scholars of Mauritius history, there is little evidence that Indians were sold at higher prices than slaves with similar characteristics.

With respect to bundling, we find that slave buyers significantly valued children when they were purchased with their mother. Buyers of slave children were clearly not expecting a large capital loss on their investment in the near future. An infant younger than 5 year old entailed a premium of 25% for her mother, which increased to 52% if older. Kotlikoff (1979) also finds that slave bundle prices increase with the age of children for the New Orleans market. Low birth rates, and high mortality at birth (Benedict, 1980; Valentine, 2000) probably explain why the premium on a child is so high. Moreover, the large premium difference between the two age groups of children may reflect: (i) high mortality rates among the younger children; and (ii) the output loss from the time a female spends catering to a young infant's needs. For instance, female slaves stopped working in fields 3 months after being declared pregnant, were given lighter work for 3 months after giving birth, and resumed agricultural work 6 months later (Barker, 1996, p. 95).

With respect to occupation, we find that skilled slaves fetched a premium of 14% compared to agricultural slaves and of 17% compared to household slaves. These premia are lower than US and Peru estimates. Kotlikoff (1979) for the US and Newland and San Segundo (1996) for Peru find a skill premium varying between 43 and 46%. However they are similar to those in Cuba. For instance, Bergad et al. (1995, pp. 72–77) report that a 1819 Cuban field hand sold for 467 Spanish pesos, whereas a carpenter sold for 525. This corresponds to a skilled premium of 12%.

It appears therefore that human capital was valued positively by Mauritian slave owners. Two reasons may explain this result. First, Mauritius had an important slave rental market.<sup>25</sup> Hence, regardless of occupation, urban slaves could be rented out to plantation owners, especially during the sugar cane harvest season, i.e., skilled slaves were downward mobile across occupations. Moreover, the demand for skilled slaves mirrors the demand for skills in agricultural production (Fogel and Engerman, 1974b,a, ch. 2, Tab. B.5, p. 40, resp.). As mentioned earlier, the various stages of sugar cane production demanded varying levels of skills, rather than a uniformly unskilled labor force therefore explaining their positive price premium. It seems clear that slave owners were demanding more, rather than less skills over time. By abolition in 1835, only 45% were considered as field hands (Allen, 1999).

The time at which the sale took place is also interesting. A price increase of 11–18% is found if the sale occurred in the fourth quarter. This indicates a strong

<sup>24</sup> Carter (1988–1989, Tab. II, p. 244) finds that the majority of Indian slaves in Mauritius in 1817 were employed as field hands. More generally, Steckel (1979, 1995) as well as Margo and Steckel (1982) provide an analysis of the determinants of slave height, including general treatment, health and nutrition, status. See also Schultz (2002) for more recent evidence relating height to health human capital.

<sup>25</sup> Scarr (1998, p. 163) reports that a slave rented out as field hand cost 15 piastres per month. Emancipated slaves would ask 12 piastres for the same work. See also Barker (1996, p. 73).

seasonal component, with peak prices coinciding with the sugar cane harvest. A similar pattern is identified in the US by Kotlikoff (1979), and for Jamaica by Higman (1976, p. 204). With respect to the year of sale, we find that slaves prices in 1826 were not significantly different from those in 1825, whereas prices rose by 44% in 1827 compared to 1825. Furthermore, contrasted to other years, 1827 is characterized by: (i) a lower discount on handicapped slaves, (ii) lower ethnic discounts, and (iii) a more pronounced seasonality. These factors all point towards less discriminating buyers in a peak year in slave demand. This evidence—which is confirmed by the increases in slave prices found by others (Barker, 1996; Scarr, 1998) and discussed earlier—can be explained by a number of factors. First, in 1825, the British lowered the duties imposed on Mauritian sugar to the preferential level on British West Indies sugar.<sup>26</sup> Second, technical innovations such as the introduction of the horizontal roller mill in 1819, followed by the steam-driven rollers in 1822 were increasing the level of operations (Nwulia, 1981, pp. 55–56).<sup>27</sup> As a result, between 1825 and 1827, Mauritian sugar production nearly doubled from 10,869 to 20,309 metric tons (Paturau, 1988, Table 8.3, p. 88), as evidenced in Fig. 2. In the district of Flacq, acreage under sugar cane production controlled by Whites increased from 27,800 to 45,554 arpents over the same period (Scarr, 1998, p. 164). The cost of adjusting production to increase sugar exports could explain the two-year lag.

Mauritian slave price increases can be contrasted with price movements in other contemporary slave economies. Lovejoy and Richardson (1995, Table 2, p.108) find that real slave prices along the Atlantic Coast of Africa increased by 41% between 1821–1825 and 1826–1830. Bergad (1999, Tab. E, pp. 262–273) reports that the price of a healthy Brazilian slave increased from 124 to 155 *milréis* between 1820 and 1827. However, Ward (1988, p. 45) finds that a healthy Jamaican field hand which sold for £100 after the Napoleonic Wars would sell for £65 in 1830, most likely a result of the loss of the preferential treatment on West Indian sugar.<sup>28</sup> Moreover Bergad et al. (1995, p. 47) argue that the most important characteristic of Cuban slave prices in the first half of the nineteenth century was their long run stability; no secular increases was detected over the 1820s.

Perhaps the most interesting finding is the *increase* in the value of young children between 1825 and 1827. Indeed, an expected abolition of slavery *ceteris paribus* reduces an investment's time horizon used in calculating the net discounted expected value of owning a slave and consequently, the maximum price a slave buyer is willing to pay. An increase in the price of slaves in general and of children in particular, is therefore not consistent with pending abolition.

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<sup>26</sup> Prior to equalization, the 'foreign' tariff applied to Mauritian sugar was nearly three times that applied to the West Indian sugar (Barker, 1996; Butler, 1995).

<sup>27</sup> Similar increases in slave productivity were observed in British West Indian sugar estates. Ward (1988, p. 193) estimates that a typical Jamaican plantation produced 63 tons of sugar per year with 140 slaves in 1750. In 1830, 240 slaves produced 150 tons.

<sup>28</sup> Jamaica exported J£2.32M worth of sugar at 1832 prices between 1815 and 1820, and J£1.99M in 1830–1834. The London sugar price fell by 49% over the same period (Higman, 1976, Tab. 47, p. 213). See also Fig. 2.



Fig. 2. Mauritian sugar production and London prices. *Note.* Data from Paturau (1988, Table 8.3, p. 88.). Left-hand scale: sugar output; right-hand scale: sugar prices.

This apparent puzzle could be rationalized in different ways. For instance, increased demand for younger slaves could be anticipated following a disruption in the supply of adult slaves associated with better enforcement of the anti slave trading laws. Indeed, Bergad et al. (1995, pp. 43–45) find that the the market share of young slaves in Cuba increased from 29 to 45% between 1790 and 1835. They attribute this shift to the 1817 Anglo-Spanish ban on slave trade; rather than a short-term use of adult slaves, planters took a longer-term view by investing in young and female slaves. Bergad et al. (1995, p. 64) report that the *female* premium was about 30% between 1817 and 1821. A similar finding is made for Brazil. Bergad (1999, pp. 181–184) reports that slaves aged 1–14 were valued less than those aged more than 40 during the 18th century, whereas they were valued more in the 19th century. They take this to indicate that the local slave population was self sustaining rather than relying on imports of adult slaves. However, better enforcement of the ban on slave trade should also have increased the value of Mauritian females of reproductive age. Yet, our estimates suggest no such increase in the female premium (i.e., decrease in the male premium) that is consistent with an increased valuation of their reproductive potential.

We can think of two alternative explanations for our result that young slave prices increased over our period of study. The first one is that slave buyers in 1825–1827 did not anticipate abolition in the near future. Part of the reason may be that Mauritian

slave owners were receiving conflicting signals from the metropole. On the one hand, abolitionist movements were getting increasingly impatient with slave ownership in the latter part of the 1820s (Mathieson, 1926). On the other however, British tariff policies were signalling a facilitated access to the British market for the primary Mauritian staple whose production was entirely dependent upon slavery. Slave owners were willing to purchase young children below 5 years of age when it has been estimated that net earnings from slaves were negative until ages between 8 (Fogel and Engerman, 1974b, p. 74) and 15 (Conrad and Meyer, 1958, Tab. 8; Higman, 1976, p. 207). This result indicates that no abolition was anticipated for at least until 1833–1835, and that the privileged access to the British market would be maintained until then. An increase in the price of children in 1827 would be consistent with an update of beliefs postponing abolition until 1835–1837.

A second explanation is that slave owners expected to be compensated for any capital loss if slavery was ever abolished. Efficient markets would have internalized this belief into higher prices than in the absence of compensation. Earlier successes by slave owners in fighting off French and British attempts to abolish slavery Burroughs (1976) might have enhanced confidence in their lobbying efficiency. Slave buyers could have anticipated that they would receive compensation if abolition occurred. In hindsight, the slave owners' optimism seems somewhat justified; an overall compensation of over £2M was paid in 1835 by the British government to Mauritian owners of slaves. Scarr (1998, p. 161) estimates that this would amount to roughly 50% of total assessed value, or about £69 (345 piastres) per admissible slave.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, emancipated slaves remained tied to their master for a period of 6 years under a restrictive apprenticeship system.<sup>30</sup> Both elements would have been consistent with a maintained demand for slaves. Whether this compensation was sufficient to explain the increase in prices is left to further research.

#### 4. Conclusion

This paper analyzes the determinants of slave prices in Mauritius 1825, 1826, and 1827. We construct a unique data set from the notarial acts in the Mauritian archives. Given the 1807 ban on slave imports enforced by the British and the use of succession and bankruptcy sales, we can reasonably consider the supply of slaves

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<sup>29</sup> The Mauritian compensation is of similar order of magnitude with the compensation paid by Britain to West Indian slave owners (Butler, 1995; Mathieson, 1926). For instance, Jamaica received £6.2M for an estimated value of slaves of close to £14M, while Guiana received £4.3M for an estimated value of £9.7M (Butler, 1995, Tab. 2.1, p. 28). A finer analysis however reveals large differences depending on location and occupations. Hence, Mathieson (1926, fn. 2, p. 275) reports that slave owner Gladstone received £22,443 for his 415 Guianan slaves, but only £9225 for his 468 Jamaican slaves. Higman (1976, Tab. 4, p. 38) reports that a Jamaican inferior field hand was compensated close to £13, while a tradesman entitled its owner a compensation of over £31.

<sup>30</sup> See Nwulia (1981, pp. 144–180) for a description.

as fixed. A further considerable advantage is the availability of the 1826 partial census on Mauritian slaves which reveals that the notarial acts data is representative of the slave population.

Overall, our estimates identify a concave age–price profile as well as a significant discount on female and non-native (especially Indian) slaves. Interestingly, the presence of children in bundled sales was valued by the market, in particular for children older than 5. Moreover, we identify a positive premium on human capital. In addition, we find a strong seasonal component coinciding with seasonal elements in sugar cane production. Finally, we find that once other factors are accounted for, the price of young children increased sharply over the period. This last result could be explained by either slave owners' disbelief that slavery would be abolished or by a correct anticipation of compensation in the event of abolition.

Mauritian slavery displays interesting similarities and differences with other slave systems of the 19th century. The valuation of physical strength, of human capital, and of reproductive potential, as well as seasonal components in demand is also found in North and South American, as well as Caribbean slavery. It differs, however, in sources of slave supply, legislation, and history of relations with metropolitan authorities on the subject of slavery. Hopefully, the quality of the Mauritian data will warrant further research on this topic and help towards a better understanding of slavery.

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