Résumé

J. E. Inikori — Le volume de la traite anglaise, 1655-1807.
Le volume de la traite britannique des esclaves, celui de la seconde moitié du xve siècle notamment, fait l'objet d'un débat chez les historiens depuis les années 1870. Dans cet article, on tente d'apporter une réponse à la question toujours controversée de la traite qui, au xve siècle, a pour origine les ports d'Angleterre. On essaie également de fournir une estimation du volume de la traite qui, à la même époque, provient des îles britanniques de la Caraïbe, et une estimation pour l'ensemble de l'empire britannique de la seconde moitié du xve siècle, ces données ayant été négligées par les historiens pour la période 1655-1807. Pour l'ensemble de ces trois composantes de la traite britannique des esclaves, l'estimation du volume total s'élève à 3 887 630 esclaves. La méthode d'estimation utilisée montre clairement que ces chiffres sont des minima. Afin de faciliter la compréhension du lecteur, on fournit quelques éléments d'histoire légale ou, comme je l'appelle également, d'histoire institutionnelle du commerce. Pour les mêmes raisons, on donne aussi des indications sur la structure des organisations chargées d'enregistrer les chiffres du commerce extérieur britannique et les expéditions par mer ainsi que sur la méthode utilisée pour l'enregistrement. L'histoire institutionnelle permet d'évaluer avec précision la qualité variable des sources utilisées par les historiens. L'analyse confirme l'opinion en vigueur selon laquelle les estimations reposant uniquement sur les documents disponibles (démarche que nous avons suivie dans cet article) sous-estime inévitablement le volume effectif de la traite sans qu'il soit possible de mesurer avec précision l'ampleur de cette sous-estimation.

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The Volume of the British Slave Trade, 1655-1807*

Of all the participants in the trans-Atlantic slave trade from Africa, the volume of the British trade has been the focus of more original research than any other. The first two major studies, published in the mid-1970s, concentrated on the second half of the eighteenth century, with only extrapolations to the first half.¹ About the same time, and a little later, various aspects of the subject relating to the trade of individual British ports were studied.² More recently, the volume of the trade in the second half of the eighteenth century was re-examined, with the inclusion of fresh estimates for the volume of the trade in the first half of the century, based on a direct study of the recorded statistics (Richardson 1989a: 151-195). While these studies have considerably advanced our knowledge of the subject, they have at the same time raised a number of controversial issues that are yet to be resolved. Issues such as the conceptually and practically correct way to handle the volume of slave shipping owned and managed by resident aliens; comparative levels of slave loading per unit of shipping space by British shippers carrying slaves to British and non-British territories in the period 1789-1807; the magnitude of shipping involved in the bilateral product trade between England and the African coast; comparative reliability of the different sources providing quantitative evidence on the subject; and some others. The non-resolution of these issues does mean that existing estimates of the volume of the British slave trade in the eighteenth century remain controversial. The problem has not been made any easier for non-specialists by the inability of

* I wish to thank Stanley Engerman who read the first draft, and David Eltis with whom I shared ideas in the course of producing the paper. I also want to thank my colleagues, Karen Fields, Sam Nolutshungu, Elias Mandala, William Darity Jr, and Ronald Bailey for inspiration.


researchers to avoid making misleading claims. Thus, in the first publication of his research, David Richardson (ibid.: 158) asserts that his “estimates of the British slave trade [. . .] represent probably the maximum levels of the trade between 1698 and 1807 . . .”. But before the “maximum” export figure of 3,052,509 slaves estimated could see the light of day, the so-called maximum figure was further raised in his second publication by 67,491 to 3,120,000 (Richardson 1989b: 3). This must be very confusing to non-specialists, who, one would guess, must wonder whether or not the new figure can also be treated as a maximum, the limited magnitude of the increase notwithstanding.

What is more, the several recent studies by researchers employing archival sources still leave out important portions of the British trade. The volume of the British trade in the seventeenth century is yet to receive the kind of scholarly attention that the eighteenth-century trade has received. And the volume of the slave trade originating from the British Caribbean has been totally neglected, despite references to it.3

To narrow these gaps in our knowledge of the subject, the present paper attempts to clarify those issues on the eighteenth-century trade which remain controversial, and extend the study back in time to the middle of the seventeenth century. Furthermore, to reduce the growing amount of confusion for non-specialists, and encourage them to engage in the discussion with better understanding, much attention is paid to the nature of the sources and the institutional history of the trade—the various rules and regulations, relating to the trade, instituted by the British government, including royal monopoly charters and parliamentary legislation; the effects of these rules and regulations on the recording of the trade; the organization of the recording by the Custom House in London; the procedure for the recording of the trade; and possible sources of error in the abstract statistics for the trade. All this should make it easy for both specialists and non-specialists to gain personal understanding of the sources and agree or disagree with our choice and interpretation of the conflicting evidence on the basis of purely objective assessment.

The discussion of our estimates is divided into three broad parts, which, in some cases, are further subdivided. The first part is the trade originating from England in the period, 1700-1807, further subdivided into three components—1700-1749, 1750-1776, and 1777-1807. The estimates produced for this first part are directly compared with existing estimates and the reasons for the differences are explained. The second part is the volume of the trade that originated from the British Caribbean during the period, 1700-1807. And the final part is the volume of the trade

3. Richardson 1989b: 10. Here, Richardson says he made no allowance in his estimates “for slave shipments from Africa by vessels owned in the British Caribbean colonies”.
in the second half of the seventeenth century. The discussion leads to an overall estimate of the volume of the British slave trade covering a period of roughly hundred and fifty years, whose implication for the global magnitude of the European slave trade from Africa is inferred in the conclusion.

Recording the Trade: Legal and Administrative Framework

In this section of the paper, we present a brief summary of the institutional history of the British slave trade as a necessary background to facilitate a clear understanding of the statistical discussions in subsequent sections. The brief survey includes rules and regulations made over time by the British Crown and Parliament; the structure of state institutions charged with the responsibility of recording the trade; and the procedure followed in the recording.

In drawing up its report, the Committee of Privy Council, appointed by the British Crown in 1788 to investigate the state of the African trade, included “An Account of the Charters and Statutes under the Authority and Protection of which the African Trade first began, and has continued to the present time [1788]”, and also “An Account of the most material Proceedings that have been had in the House of Commons relative to the African Trade”. The first part of the summary that follows is based largely on this document. This source shows that British trade with Africa was conducted under a series of monopoly charters granted by the British crown between 1558 and 1672. The first was granted by Queen Elizabeth to a company in 1558. The company’s monopoly rights, covering the usual stretch of the Western coast of Africa—from South Barbary to the Cape of Good Hope—were to last for ten years. No further information on monopoly grants is presented until 1618, when King James I granted a monopoly charter to a group of London merchants to trade exclusively to the African coast under a joint stock company. This company built two forts, one in Gambia and the other on the Gold Coast. The sources tell us that “such disputes arose between this Company, and the interloping Traders, that the Proprietors gradually withdrew their Shares, and the Company was soon dissolved”.

Another monopoly charter was granted, by Charles I, “in the 7th year of his Reign [1631]”, to a group of merchants, who were authorized to form a joint stock company and trade exclusively “to Guinea, Benin, and Angola” for thirty-one years. Before the end of this charter, the trade

5. Parliamentary Papers . . . , see fn. 4.
passed on to the English East-India Company, which was granted a monopoly charter in 1651 for five years by Parliament. The East-India Company built two more forts on the African coast. Then came in 1662 the most distinguished company ever to trade in England. In this year, Charles II granted monopoly rights to thirty-one members of the royal family to trade exclusively to the African coast. The members included the King's Most Excellent Majesty, His Royal Highness the Duke of York, and the Queen Mother. The company was appropriately called Company of Royal Adventurers Trading to Africa. The sources again show that the "Company were so reduced by War, Misconduct, and interloping Traders, they surrendered their Charter in 1672".6

The last English company to trade to Africa under monopoly rights was the Royal African Company. With changes in its rights over time, it traded from 1672 to 1749. Battling all its life with separate traders, usually referred to as interlopers, the company's monopoly rights remained legally intact up to 1698, when Parliament enacted a law permitting separate traders to trade to the African coast. All such separate traders, however, had to pay to the Royal African Company 10 per cent of the value of goods they exported to Africa. This new regulation was experimental. It was to last for thirteen years.

At first, the separate traders saw the partial opening of the trade as a victory for them. But soon they began to feel the burden of the 10 per cent charge. On 12 March, 1707, a group of merchants, planters, and separate traders petitioned Parliament asking to be relieved from the burden of the 10 per cent charge.7 This proved unsuccessful. As the end of the experimental period drew close, the separate traders fought to maintain the partial opening, while the company fought for the reinstatement of its monopoly rights. The parliamentary battle ended in 1714 with a defeat of the separate traders, due mainly to the West Indian planters who switched their support from the separate traders to the Royal African Company. It was not until 26 March, 1726, that the separate traders finally won, with Parliament declaring the trade completely open to all British nationals, without any charges other than normal customs duties. The Royal African Company was to receive annual state subventions for the maintenance of its forts on the African coast, which Parliament judged, were necessary for the support of British trade in Africa. Thus, the monopoly rights of the Royal African Company were in effect, legally at least, from 1672 to 1698 and 1712 to 1726. In between was a thirteen-year period during which separate traders were permitted to trade legally, but under the burden of a 10 per cent special levy on goods they exported to Africa, paid to the Royal African Company.

6. Parliamentary Papers . . . see fn. 4.
7. Parliamentary Papers . . . see fn. 4.
will be shown in the sections that follow that these monopoly charters and regulations, which operated most of the time between 1558 and 1726, forced merchants to trade illegally and, therefore, helped to conceal the actual volume of the trade during these periods.

Major institutional developments affecting the recording of the trade did not occur again until the last twenty-nine years of the British slave trade. The dissolution of the Royal African Company in 1749 and the establishment in 1750 of a regulating company, the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa, did not seriously alter the legal framework already in place by 1726, as far as conditions affecting the recording of the trade are concerned. The institutional developments of the late eighteenth century related to parliamentary control over the number of slaves loaded in Africa by British ships. The first regulation was instituted in 1788 and took effect in 1789. The numbers loaded were further restricted by an Act of 1799. The effect of these late eighteenth-century regulating Acts on the recording of the trade remains a bone of contention among researchers. More light will be shed on it subsequently. For now, let us turn to the structure of the state institutions charged with the recording of the trade, and the procedure for the recording.

The recording of British trade with Africa, like the rest of British foreign trade, was the responsibility of the Custom House in London. The Custom House had two main divisions: the office of the Inspector General of Imports and Exports of Great Britain, and the office of the Register General of Shipping. As these names indicate, the office of the Register General of Shipping was directly in charge of the registering of merchant ships and recording their movement, while the office of the Inspector General of Imports and Exports was directly in charge of the recording of commodities moving between Britain and the rest of the world. It would appear that the Inspector General of Imports and Exports was the overall boss of the two divisions. However, the officers of the two offices had a clear division of labour in their operation.

The actual recording of trade took place in the first instance in the custom houses in the individual ports, including the port in London. Each port recorded the movement of ships and goods in and out of its harbours. The information collected in each port was transmitted quarterly to the Custom House in London—shipping information to the office of the Register General of Shipping, and information on imports and exports to the office of the Inspector General of imports and exports. Recording of trade in the British American colonies was done by the colonial custom houses and British naval officers stationed in the colonies. Again, the information compiled was forwarded to the Custom House in London quarterly.

Thus, all information about shipping and trade emanated in the first instance from one source, the individual port entries. These primary
entries are usually referred to generically as Port Books, in the case of 
ports in Britain. All other sources are copies made from the original 
entries in the Port Books. Even records of London shipping and trade 
compiled by the office of the Register General of shipping and the office 
of the Inspector General of imports and exports are copies made from the 
original entries in the London Port Books. Copies after copies were 
made repeatedly from the copies sent originally to the Custom House in 
London by the individual ports. The aggregate national statistics of ship-
ning and trade were compiled in London from the information transmit-
ted by the individual ports.

From this organizational structure and recording procedure, one can 
articulate in general terms possible sources of error in the trade statis-
tics. Some errors would occur at the point of initial entry in the individ-
ual ports, due either to normal human error or to specific historical cir-
cumstances. Other errors would creep in from the movement or 
non-movement of information from the ports to the Custom House in 
London. Yet other errors would be introduced in the process of forming 
aggregate national statistics from the mass of information transmitted 
from the individual ports. And as summary or abstract statistics were 
later constructed from the aggregate national compilations, there was a 
further potential source of error.

Let us take some specific cases to illustrate the general problem. In 
November, 1718, the office of the Register General of Shipping, Custom 
House, London, drew up a list of ships, which cleared out from England, 
between 1715 and 1717, specifying from what ports they cleared and to 
what places overseas they were bound. This list shows 76 ports in 
England from which ships were cleared outward during the period. A 
similar list for 1710 to 1714 shows 45 ports in England involved in over-
seas trade. The problem of producing aggregate national statistics from 
a mass of handwritten information collected from such a large number of 
individual ports, without the aid of computers, can only be imag-
inied. Although not directly related to the latter kind of problem, the 
tediousness of compiling data from the custom records to meet parlia-
mentary requests, as described in the following quotation, is representa-
tive of the general difficulty. In July 1800, forwarding to Parliament an 
account of British ships that transported slaves from Africa to the Amer-
icas in the 1790s, the officer in charge reported:

“These Accounts would have been made up and presented to your Lordships ear-
lier, but from the very long illness (which ended in his death) of Mr. Irving the late 
Inspector General of the Customs; under whose attentive care & superintendence 
they have principally been made up. The preparation thereof has been attended

9. PRO, CO 388/18 Part 1/0. 19.
with a degree of trouble hardly to be conceived from the great number of extracts necessarily made from the Journals and Log Books and has employed three clerks unremittingly during the twelve months which have elapsed since the order of your Lordships was made.\(^{10}\)

To make the problem even more difficult and confusing to the compilers of national aggregates and subsequently summary statistics, there was no standard pattern for declaring where overseas the ships cleared out were bound with their goods and from what places they entered the ports in England. For example, whereas many ships involved in the African trade simply declared Africa as their destination overseas, a good number declared specific ports or rivers or regions in Africa as their destination. In some cases, the place names were spelt in a confusing manner by the clerks who made the original entries in the ports. Frequently Gambia was referred to as "Gambo" or "Gambo River".

Now, looking at the first set of summaries produced from the information transmitted by the individual ports, one can easily see a potential source of confusion and errors in the construction of abstract statistics. Table I shows a selection of some of the places specified on a list of the number of ships cleared out from London to different parts of the world from 1710 to 1714.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>1710</th>
<th>1711</th>
<th>1712</th>
<th>1713</th>
<th>1714</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbary</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape de Verde</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guinea</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madeira</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: PRO, CO 388/18 Part 1/0.19.

For as long as summaries such as the one in Table I are available, the problem for the modern researcher is not particularly serious, except that one may not know whether or not the summary accurately represents the

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\(^{10}\) HLRO. House of Lords Main Paper, Order date, 28 July, 1800.
original entries in all the individual ports. However, a serious problem arises when detailed summaries such as this are no longer available and all one has is the number of ships cleared out annually from London to Africa or, even worse, from England to Africa. It is quite possible for a clerk in the office of the Register General of Shipping to simply state the entries against Africa in Table I as the total clearance to Africa in each year. A more knowledgeable clerk, properly directed by his superiors, would produce an accurate summary. But there is no way of knowing, except by comparing several summaries, where they exist. Suffice it to say at this point that summaries compiled from the kind of information in Table I constitute one of the main sources of the conflicting figures of shipping supplied at different times by the office of the Register General of Shipping to be discussed in details in the sections that follow. Finally, it is important to bear in mind, as we move to the discussion of the estimates in the sections below, that the information presented in this section of the paper makes it clear that the Port Books, being the primary entries, are the most reliable source of information on shipping and trade.

Volume of the Trade, 1698/99-1807

The first part of our estimates covers the period, 1698/99-1807. This is divided into four distinct components: 1698/99-1749; 1750-1776; 1777-1789; 1790-1807. A summary of the estimates is shown in Table II. The estimate for the whole period comes to 11,106 ships, which exported a total of 3,361,630 slaves from Africa and landed in the Americas 2,964,511. For the four distinguished components of the estimate, the respective figures are as follows: 1698/99-1749, 3581 ships and 1,081,481 slaves exported; 1750-76, 3516 ships and 947,276 slaves exported; 1777-89, 1206 ships and 454,260 slaves exported; 1790-1807, 2803 ships and 878,613 slaves exported.

For the first period, 1698/99-1749, the shipping figures are as stated by the sources, with the very small number of non-slave ships that are occasionally stated left out. For the second period, 1750-1776, the entries for Liverpool show a total of 51 ships cleared out to Africa that were not involved in the slave trade. These are taken out of the Liverpool total. For the other ports in England, the total clearance to Africa was reduced by 5 per cent to take account of non-slave ships. The validity of this 5 per cent non-slave ship ratio, which is consistently applied for the two remaining components (1777-89 and 1790-1807), is discussed at length below.

As for the measurement of the mean slave loading per unit of shipping, we have used the time series of slave imports into Jamaica, 1702-1775, for the first two components, 1698/99-1749 and 1750-1776. For the third component, 1777-1789, we have employed slave imports into
Table II. — Estimate of the Number of Slaves Transported by Ships Clearing from Ports in England, 1698/99-1807*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Ships</th>
<th>Slaves Imported</th>
<th>Slaves Exported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1698/99-1709</td>
<td>631</td>
<td>152,071</td>
<td>190,089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1710-19</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>133,875</td>
<td>167,344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1720-29</td>
<td>874</td>
<td>215,573</td>
<td>247,785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1730-39</td>
<td>913</td>
<td>213,646</td>
<td>267,058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1740-49</td>
<td>638</td>
<td>179,916</td>
<td>209,205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1750-59</td>
<td>978</td>
<td>220,050</td>
<td>255,872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1760-69</td>
<td>1451</td>
<td>352,593</td>
<td>409,992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1770-76</td>
<td>1087</td>
<td>253,271</td>
<td>281,412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1777-89</td>
<td>1206</td>
<td>408,834</td>
<td>454,260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1790-1800</td>
<td>1715</td>
<td>534,394</td>
<td>562,520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1801-07</td>
<td>1088</td>
<td>300,288</td>
<td>316,093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>11,106</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,964,511</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,361,630</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Sources: Ships cleared from ports in England, for the years 1698/99-1709: PRO, CO 390/12; CO 388/12 Part II; CO 388/13/L.86, and HLRO, Parliamentary Papers . . ., 1789 (see ref. fn 4).

For the years 1710-1724: PRO, CO 388/18 Part 1/0.19; CO 388/25/S77; CO 390/7/1; CO 390/5; CO 390/8. The Bristol figures for this period are from the Port Books as compiled by Richardson (1986). The Liverpool figures for 1712-23 are also from the Port Books as compiled by Richardson (1989a: 186-187). The figures for 1724-29 are estimates based on the value of exports from England to Africa as shown in PRO, BT 6/241, using slave prices in HLRO, Parliamentary Papers . . ., Vol. XXVI, 1789, No. 646a, Part IV, No. 25 (see ref. fn 4).

For the years 1730-1776: PRO, T 70/1205/A.11; T 64/276A/273; T 70/1205/A.18; PRO, BT 6/7; BT 6/3; British Library (London), Parliamentary Papers, Accounts & Papers, Vol. 82, 1789, No. 633, p. 49 (for Liverpool, 1751-1776), HLRO, Parliamentary Papers . . ., vol. XXVI, 1789, No. 646a, Part IV (ref. fn. 4).

For the years 1777-1807: PRO, Cust 17/5-29. For mean slave loading per ship, see Table III below.

Jamaica, Barbados, St Christopher and Dominica, as shown in the Naval Officers Shipping List. The export data provided by the House of Lords List (order date, 28 July, 1800) have been used, along with imports into Cuba, to compute the mean for 1790-1800. Finally, the mean for 1801-1807 is based on imports into Jamaica, Barbados, and Dominica, as shown in the Naval Officers Shipping List, and imports into Cuba. All these sources provided a total of 2,846 cargoes employed to compute the mean number of slaves transported per unit of shipping, 1,190 cargoes for 1698/99-1749 and 1,656 cargoes for 1750-1807. The total number of cargoes
employed for these calculations constitutes approximately 25.6 per cent of the 11,106 cargoes estimated for the entire period. The detailed breakdown is shown in Table III.

The problem of finding adequate and reliable data with which to compute mean slave loading per unit of shipping is a difficult one. The bulk of the information available relates to the number of slaves reported by ships in various ports in the importing territories of the New World. These import data contain a host of weaknesses that readers must know if they are to make much sense of the estimates.

**Table III. — Mean Slave Loading by Ships Cleared out to Africa from Ports in England**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Number of Cargoes</th>
<th>Slaves Imported</th>
<th>Mean (Per Ship)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1698/99-1707</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>27,229</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1710-19</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>52,338</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1720-29</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>72,649</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1730-39</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>77,989</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1740-49</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>69,097</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1750-59</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>72,197</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1760-69</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>72,556</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1770-76</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>53,701</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1777-89</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>71,471</td>
<td>339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1790-1800</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>107,249</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1801-1807</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>69,082</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Sources:* For the years 1698/99-1776: PRO. CO 137/38, fo 5.
For the years 1777-89: PRO. CO 142/19-22; CO 33/18 & 20; CO 76/4-5; CO 243/1.
For the years 1790-1800: HLRO. House of Lords List. Order date, 28 July, 1800. The Cuban data (comprising 20 cargoes for 1790-1800 and 50 cargoes for 1801-1807) were kindly made available to me by Herbert Klein. For the Cuban data, we have followed Klein’s practice of treating only ships landing 200 slaves and above as those from Africa (see KLEIN 1983: 32). The estimate for 1790-1800 is for export loading, later converted to imports, using Richardson’s middle passage mortality rate of 5 per cent.
For the years 1801-1807: PRO. CO 142/21-25; CO 33/18; CO 76/5, and the Cuban data.

The weaknesses arise from three main sources: 1) the mixture of various categories of slave importing vessels in the New World; 2) the universal desire of all traders in time and place to cheat the customs; and 3) the impact of institutional change. Due to limitation of space and evi-
dence, we shall not deal with the second source. We shall concentrate on the first now, and deal with the third later.

The vessels reporting slave imports in British America and other New World territories can be grouped into six categories for the purpose of the present problem:

1. Vessels clearing from ports in England and landing their entire cargoes at once in just one New World territory.
2. Ships clearing from ports in England, but landing fractions of their cargoes from Africa in several New World ports.
3. Vessels belonging to firms in England permanently running between the Americas and the African coast—the so-called rum vessels, usually small sloops.
4. Vessels owned by merchants resident in British America shipping slaves directly from the African coast.
5. Vessels employed in distributing newly arrived African slaves from one entrepot American territory to other New World locations.
6. And vessels employed in shipping creole slaves (American born slaves) from one New World territory to another.

The evidence shows a clear pattern in the mean number of slaves reported per vessel among the six categories distinguished. By far the largest cargoes were reported by category 1 vessels. The mean numbers diminish as we move from category 1 to 6.\(^{12}\)

Some of the sources available contain enough information to enable us reduce the mixture of categories, but not to eliminate it altogether. Thus, the Naval Officers Shipping List contains enough information for us to be able to distinguish between vessels bringing slaves from Africa and those transporting existing slaves from one American territory to another. By stating the ports to which each importing vessel belonged, this source also makes it easy for us to separate vessels belonging to traders in England from those belonging to merchants in British America. But, useful as this source is to researchers, it does not distinguish between vessels landing fractions of their cargoes from Africa in several New World territories and those landing their entire cargoes at once in just one territory; nor does it differentiate between small sloops belonging to merchants in England permanently shuttling between Africa and the Americas and ships clearing to Africa from, and returning to.

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11. See Vila 1977: 272-273. Here Vila says that the deputy governor of Cartagena "was able to verify that between 1516 and 1619 duty had been paid on only 4,816 blacks, whereas in reality 6,000 had entered in little more than a year—from May 1619 until December 1620." The deputy governor contended that "the boats that arrived with 15, 25, 37 and 45 'pieces' actually had on board 200, 300, and 400".

12. The subject is discussed in some details by Klein 1978: chap. IX. See also Inikori (1976a: Table II, 211), for a comparison of the mean loading per vessel among ships belonging to ports in England and those belonging to ports in British America. Between 1755 and 1775, the same source shows a mean of 273 per vessel for the former and 124 for the latter.
England. Yet, it is the mean for the latter group of vessels that is relevant for the estimate of the number of slaves transported by vessels clearing outward from ports in England.

Let us use some specific cases to illustrate these points. In 1802, the *Mary Ellen*, measuring 472 tons, was reported as landing 13 slaves from Africa in Jamaica. Then, uncharacteristically, this particular source shows an accompanying note in brackets: “(The remainder of this vessel’s cargo, being 236 slaves, landed at Trinidad)”. The entry in Trinidad shows the vessel landing 236 slaves from Africa in this year, but there is no indication whatsoever that the ship had any more slaves on board. Another entry in this same source shows a cargo of 68 slaves landed in Trinidad from Africa in July, 1802. Again, unusual for the sources, an accompanying note says, “part of the cargo of the (ship Lady Frances from New Calabar, stranded on the Island of Margaretta)”.

In general, from the way the imports are reported, even in the best sources, it is practically impossible to tell part cargoes from full ones. It is only when the numbers reported are ridiculously low that one begins to imagine that something is wrong. Even then, there is nothing one can do without raising questions. Thus, as one goes through the Naval List, one comes across large ships landing less than 20 slaves from Africa. For example, a London ship measuring 120 tons is reported landing 16 slaves in Jamaica in 1757, and a Liverpool vessel of 113 tons is reported landing 9 slaves in Dominica in 1793. Of course, it is possible that these vessels had an unusually high mortality in the Atlantic crossing, which must be regarded as given in the calculations. Hence, the researcher has no choice but to include these figures in the computation of the mean loading per vessel, although the possibility of part cargoes being reported troubles his mind.

The problem of the rum vessels and the one associated with conditions arising from institutional change are discussed below. When these are added to the problem of reporting part cargoes, which was a legitimate commercial practice, even if it created problems for the researcher, we can understand why import data should understate mean loading per ship. Were it possible to obtain loadings reported as the vessels left Africa, that would be the most reliable evidence. But very little of that kind of evidence is available for the British trade.

After a careful reading of the evidence, we reached the conclusion that using the Jamaican time series of imports from 1702 to 1775 may help minimise the effects of the problems in question. The Jamaican time

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13. British Library (London). *Parliamentary Papers, Accounts & Papers*, 1806, Vol. XIII. This kind of detail is unusual for the Parliamentary Papers; it is not a regular entry in any of the extant sources.

14. PRO. CO 142/16.

15. PRO. CO 76/6.
series shows the number of ships and the number of slaves imported each year during the period. But it does not show the names of the ships and does not distinguish the ports to which the importing vessels belonged. So this source contains all the problems of mixing several categories of vessels distinguished above, which is a serious weakness. But, on the other side of the coin, it would seem that Jamaica, being a very large market in the eighteenth century, tended to attract relatively more of the larger category of vessels. A combination of these two elements, we think, may help to reduce the effects of the problems discussed above.

For the period, 1750-1776, it is possible to compare the mean computed from the Jamaican time series with one derived from loadings reported by British Company officials on the Gold Coast. The Gold Coast data, covering 167 cargoes, yield a mean of 273 slaves. The Jamaican series, when converted to export loading, produces a mean of 268 slaves, being about 2 per cent less than the mean from the Gold Coast data.\(^{16}\) We demonstrated previously that the mean from the Gold Coast data is a conservative one (Inikori 1976a: 211-213). The evidence compels us to retain that view. That the mean from the Jamaican series is lower is a clear indication that the series still suffers from the mixture of the categories of vessels discussed earlier. But the closeness of the two is some reassurance that it is better than other import sources.

For the periods, 1777-1789 and 1801-1807, we have had to rely on the Naval Officers List, for want of better data. However, the 211 cargoes for 1777-1789, covering Jamaica, Barbados, St Christopher, and Dominica, yield a mean, which, when converted to export loading, is exactly the same as the "compromise" mean computed earlier from the late Roger Anstey's data and ours, being 377 slaves (Inikori 1976b: 608-609). This may be a mere coincidence. Nevertheless, the abundant qualitative evidence (and some quantitative also) about overloading in this period, which, in part, led to the regulating law of 1788, has always forced us to think that the "compromise" mean is on the low side. In view of the problem reviewed above, the agreement simply confirms our belief.

For the remaining period, 1790-1800, the evidence relates to export loading. We commented elsewhere on the impact of institutional change on the quality of the data (Inikori 1976a: 218-219). To minimise that impact, we used the number of slaves reported as purchased on the African coast by each vessel. The assumption is that over a period of ten years or so, the mean number of slaves purchased per vessel should be

\(^{16}\) Inikori 1976a: 211. Throughout the paper, the middle passage mortality rates computed by Richardson (1989a) are employed for conversion of imports to exports. His ratios appear to be on the low side, but we do not think that for our present purpose any serious harm will be done by using them. For 1750-1769, the ratio is 14\%, and for 1770-1776, it is 10\%.
about equal to the mean number exported, less a few that died in the course of trade on the coast. Other things equal, the mean we computed for this period, therefore, includes mortality on the ships during the period of trade on the African coast.

Finally, let it be said that we have been deliberately conservative in stating the number of vessels cleared from England. Apart from the five-year period, 1725-1729, for which we derived estimates from goods exported, we have used only recorded clearances. Whenever clearances are not shown for any ports in any years, we have assumed zero for such ports in such years, rather than make allowances that only scratch the surface of the problem. Thus, while it is clear from the import data that much of Liverpool’s clearances in the first decades of the eighteenth century have been left out in the currently known clearance sources, we have done nothing about it. So too is the reporting of clearances from the minor ports in England. Again, although evidence abounds to show that places like Madeira and the Canaries were used as camouflage by slave traders wanting to evade various state laws, we have made no allowance whatsoever for this category of clearances. Nor have we made any allowance for the relatively well known covert participation of a large number of British ships in the slave trade of continental Europe. Some comments are made on the latter issue below. At this point, let us compare these new estimates with others also based on archival sources.

A comparison with the estimates produced recently by David Richardson (1989a) reveals some interesting agreement as well as disagreement (see Table IV).

### Table IV. — A Comparison of Estimates*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Present Estimates</th>
<th>Richardson’s Estimates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ships</td>
<td>Slaves Exported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1699-1749</td>
<td>3,581</td>
<td>1,081,481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1750-1776</td>
<td>3,516</td>
<td>947,276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1777-1789</td>
<td>1,206</td>
<td>454,260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1790-1807</td>
<td>2,803</td>
<td>878,613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11,106</td>
<td>3,361,630</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Sources: For present estimates, see Tables I to III above; and Richardson 1989a: 185-195.
For the first two periods, 1699-1749 and 1750-1776, the estimated numbers of slaves exported from Africa are virtually the same, and for the whole period, 1699-1807, our estimated number of ships is only 163 more than Richardson’s, which is only about 1.5 per cent difference. But these apparent agreements conceal some fundamental differences. To start with the most important difference, Richardson presents his estimates as a maximum. On the contrary, because our estimates are based only on recorded evidence, with clear indications of under-recording, we present them as minimum estimates, not knowing exactly what allowance to make for missing data, fraudulently concealed exports, and the like. We believe that the under-estimate arising from these sources is particularly serious for the first half of the eighteenth century. This will be demonstrated shortly. Second, while the total numbers of ships employed in the estimates are only marginally different, they are significantly different when specific periods are considered. Thus, Richardson has 328 more ships for the period, 1699-1776, while we employ 491 more ships for 1777-1807. Third, the mean slave loadings per unit of shipping space, computed from our sources, are generally greater than Richardson’s. These differences are due to a variety of reasons that must be explained.

Some of the differences in the number of ships for the period, 1699-1776, arise from inadequate data and differing methods of computation. For the years, 1712-1714, Richardson had no clearance data for London. His estimate of 96 vessels for London for the three years is derived from the value of exports from London to Africa (ibid.: 186). For the same years, the actually recorded number of ships employed in our estimates is only 42, being 54 ships less than Richardson’s.¹⁷ In view of the serious under-recording in this source, as revealed by comparison with the Port Books below, Richardson’s estimated number may very well be nearer to the true figure. But, following the principle of our estimate, we have stuck to the recorded figure.

For the period, 1725-1729, Richardson’s shipping figures (ibid.: 187) for London and Liverpool are, again, derived from the value of exports to Africa. As for our own estimates, the shipping figures for all the ports in England are derived from the value of exports to Africa, as stated in Table II. But our estimated figure of 426 ships is 122 less than Richardson’s 548 ships for the same period. Richardson does not present the details of his computation. It is, therefore, impossible to identify the source of the difference. The details of our method of computation are shown below.

The two portions discussed above account for more than one-half of the differences in the number of ships for the period, 1699-1776. The remainder is accounted for by allowances made by Richardson for under-

¹⁷. The recorded figures are contained in PRO, CO 388/18, Part 1/0.19.
recording by the sources, which our principle of estimate does not permit us to make.

For the period, 1777-1807, the difference of 491 ships between our shipping figures and Richardson's arises from issues of concept and differing evaluations of the evidence. The problem is two-sided: one, whether or not slave ships employed by a foreign company trading from ports in England should be included in the estimates; two, the magnitude of the allowance to be made for non-slave ships during the period. The controversy surrounding both issues was actually started by Seymour Drescher (1977: 205-213). Richardson has followed the same line of reasoning. However, he supports his argument with a different body of data. Because the controversy has remained for so long, some detailed analysis and evidence are needed to make it go away.

We start with the subject of alien traders doing business in English ports. The information we have about this comes from the report of the Privy Council committee, appointed by the British crown in 1788 to investigate the state of the African trade. The committee was informed that a year or so preceding the investigation, the Asiatic or Philippine Company of Spain appointed an agent in England, Mr Testati, to fit out slave ships from ports in England. The ships were to fly English flags, wholly fitted and supplied with cargoes in England, manned entirely by English officers and crew, to sail directly from ports in England to the African coast, from where to carry slaves to Spanish mainland America, and then return to England. These vessels, therefore, operated as English ships, but the trade they conducted from England was owned by a Spanish company. The Philippine Company of Spain was not a slave trading company. Its business was in the East India trade. But, like all European companies trading to East India at this time, it needed a lot of bullion, which it found difficult to procure. The slave trade from England to South America was intended to be a means of procuring American bullion to be kept ready at Buenos Aires for the company to pick up on its way to East India. Possibly with the hope of taking over full management of the slave trading branch at some point, three or four Spaniards, "Men of Some Consideration", were put on board each of the ships to under-study the English officers.

This is the only foreign company mentioned in the sources as trading to Africa from England for slaves. Other firms with contracts to supply slaves to Spanish America, such as Baker & Dawson or John Dawson, were large-scale slave trading firms owned by British nationals. The extent of slave trading conducted from England on behalf of the Philippine Company is not known. On the other hand, it is not clear if British slave traders used the operations of the Philippine Company in England

18. HLRO, Parliamentary Papers . . ., 1789, No. 646a, Part VI (see fn. 4).
to gain access to the Spanish American slave markets or to evade the British laws regulating the carrying of slaves in British ships from 1789 to 1807. What is important to note, the recording of ships in the customs ledgers did not distinguish between British ownership and foreign ownership. The distinction was between British built and foreign built ships. For example, the customs ledgers show that in 1796, 138 "British built" ships and 11 "foreign built" ships cleared outwards from England to Africa. It is not clear whether the Register General's Office applied the term to foreign owned ships or it means exactly what it says. However, subsequent summaries of shipping data appear to present the original entry of "foreign built" ships as simply "foreign" ships.

For our present purpose, however, all these confusions are really not important. Whether what the sources show as foreign ships were actually owned by British or foreign firms, for as long as those ships operated from English ports as the sources describe, conceptually their business formed part of British overseas trade to be recorded and treated as such. Have the historians who have debated this subject ever thought of what will happen today if the international business of foreign companies in each nation of the world were removed from the international trade statistics of such nations? This would mean that export and import business owned by American, European and Japanese companies in the Third World will disappear from the volume of world trade. The same thing will happen to the international business conducted by companies owned by the nationals of the developed nations in each other's country. By the time this is over, the volume of world trade and shipping would have been reduced by more than 50 per cent. This is why modern statisticians recording and analyzing international trade do not follow the principle of ownership being recommended by Drescher and Richardson. The principle employed is the place of origin of international business.

Practically speaking, if we have to base our estimates of the volume of the slave trade on ship clearance data, then removing some ships clearing outwards from ports in England on the basis of ownership will remove those ships from our estimates altogether. This is the more so, because there was no independent slave trading from ports in Spain at this time. Hence, there can be no estimate based on clearances from Spain that could include any of these ships, if that were ever possible. What is rather surprising is that while Richardson is eager to remove from the estimate foreign owned ships trading from England under English colours, he shows no attempt whatsoever to include the well known covert participation of British owned ships in the slave trade of continental nations, especially the French and the Dutch. The only principle on

19. PRO, Customs 17/18, Imports.
20. The Privy Council Committee that investigated the state of the African trade in
which that part of the British slave trade can be overlooked is that it should be recorded as part of the trade of those nations where the operations took place. That is the principle we have applied to the foreign companies that did business from England. If Drescher and Richardson reject that principle, which is universally applied in the recording and study of modern international trade, then they should be consistent and include British participation in the slave trade of continental European countries in their estimate of the volume of the British slave trade.

The second part of the problem relates to the magnitude of the non-slave carrying ships among the vessels cleared outwards to Africa from ports in England, during the years 1777-1807. Here, Richardson relies heavily on the Parliamentary Papers and rejects the evidence in Customs 17 as unreliable. In doing this, he pays no attention to the confession of the officers, who compiled the lists sent to parliamentary committees, that they had no way of distinguishing between slave-carrying and non-slave carrying ships among the vessels cleared outwards to Africa from England. For example, in May 1806, just before the end of the legal British slave trade, Mr T. E. Willoughby, the Register General of Shipping, informed Parliament that:

“It not having been customary to distinguish such vessels as were intended to make voyages to Africa and the West Indies, from such as were merely intended to go to Africa and back, the Number of the former has been ascertained, by deducting from the total Number cleared, such as returned direct from Africa to England, and assuming that the rest were destined for Africa and the West Indies.”

1788 was informed of a considerable participation of British slave traders in the French slave trade. See PRO. Board of Trade Papers (henceforth PRO, BT) 6/11, “Evidence of Mr. Baillie, a West Indian Merchant, Mr. King, African Merchant in Partnership with the House of Messrs. Camden, Calvert & King in London, and Mr. Thomas Hubert, Ship Broker, in relation to the trade in slaves which is carried on by the subjects of this country to the French and Spanish Settlements in South America and the West Indies.” The late R. Anstey (1975b: 11-12, fn. 31) discovered among Dutch vessels, captured by the British Navy in 1803, 44 ships with English names, “the names of their masters have a distinctly Anglo-Saxon ring and they near unfailingly were allowed to take bail at Liverpool, or Bristol”. According to him, “Collation with lists of British vessels clearing for the slave trade from British ports reveals that a number of these ‘Dutch’ prizes had cleared as British vessels participating in the slave trade, often three or four weeks before capture. On the other hand, between four and six of the prizes appear probably not to have cleared as British slavers even though their appearance on clearance lists before or after indicates that they were British slavers”. Anstey (ibid.) was compelled to ask “the extent of the iceberg of which these cases were perhaps the tip”. It is remarkable that Richardson does not even mention this portion of the British slave trade.

21. H.RO, House of Lords Papers, Accounts & Papers, 1806. VII, no. 199, “An account of the number of ships, their tonnage and men, which cleared from England for Africa and the West Indies, in the last ten years, distinguishing each year”.
The evidence published by the late Roger Anstey indicates that the Register General's Office was also confused about vessels returning directly from Africa to England. The value of goods reported to have been imported into England from Africa by such vessels between 1761 and 1770 is, in fact, equal to the value of all imports brought from Africa to England by all vessels during the period. Yet the evidence shows that considerable quantities of distinctly African products, such as ivory and palm oil, were brought to England in slave ships through the Americas. Sydenham Teast of Bristol, the best known specialised trader in African products in the late eighteenth century, told the Privy Council Committee in 1788 that the most valuable product imported into England from Africa was ivory, and that "About half the quantity of ivory now imported, is imported in slave ships, but it could not be imported in any other way to profit, for there is no demand for the bulky articles, which must make up the cargo". A ship's captain in the specialised trade in African products, Thomas Dean, also informed the Committee that the specialised trade in African products "is much hurt by the slave ships purchasing these articles which we go solely to bring home".

It is possible that these African products, being brought to England by ships entering from the Caribbean, may have been entered as imports from the West Indies. If this was the case, then the imports entered for Africa may very well be for ships returning to England directly from Africa. This possibility was investigated and no entry of ivory and palm oil as imports from the West Indies could be found in the customs ledgers for the sample years of the late eighteenth century examined. It is clear, therefore, that the vessels entered as returning direct from Africa included slave vessels bringing African products through the Americas.

The confusion of the Register General's office about vessels in the slave trade and those in the bilateral product trade between Africa and England in the late eighteenth century is further exemplified by parliamentary lists showing several vessels as being employed in the slave trade and, at the same time, as not employed in the slave trade. This kind of confusion, contained in two Parliamentary Papers relating to ten Bristol vessels that traded to Africa between 1789 and 1793, is shown in Table V. Interestingly, both lists are signed by the same person, the Assistant Register General of Shipping, one dated 14 May, 1792, and the other, 22 March, 1794.

22. ANSTEY 1975a: 18, fn. 44. For more details, see also INIKORI 1976a: 215-216.
23. PRO, BT 6/9, fos 374-378.
24. PRO, BT 6/11, "Evidence of Thomas Dean, 24 January, 1789".
25. For the sources, see Table V. In these two documents, the name of the Assistant Register General of Shipping is spelt somewhat differently in four places: J. Dalley; J. Dally; J. Dalby; and J. Dalby. The first carries the date, 14 May, 1792, and the remaining three all carry the date, 22 March, 1794. There is no doubt that the same person is involved and the differences are just typographical errors.
JOSEPH E. INIKORI

Table V. — Bristol Ships Listed Simultaneously as Slave and Non-Slave Ships in the Parliamentary Papers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Ship</th>
<th>Tons</th>
<th>Parliamentary Papers, Accounts &amp; Papers, 1792</th>
<th>House of Lords Main Paper, 24 March, 1794</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1789 1790 1791</td>
<td>1789 1790 1791 1792 1793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alfred</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>ST    —    —</td>
<td>NST ST    —    ST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Charlotte</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>ST    ST    ST</td>
<td>NST ST    ST    ST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>ST    —    ST</td>
<td>NST —    ST    ST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King George</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>ST    ST    —</td>
<td>NST ST    —    —</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>ST    ST    —</td>
<td>NST —    ST    ST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queen Charlotte</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>—     —     —</td>
<td>NST —    —    NST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bess</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>—     ST     —</td>
<td>NST —    ST    —</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morning Star</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>—     —     —</td>
<td>NST ST    —    —</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruby</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>—     ST     —</td>
<td>ST —     —    NST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dragon</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>—     ST     —</td>
<td>ST —     NST    —</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ST: In the Slave Trade; NST: Not in the Slave Trade; a dash means that the ship was not listed by the source for that year.


From the Table, it can be seen that in the Parliamentary Paper of 1792, the five Bristol ships, Alfred, Royal Charlotte, Mary (101 tons), King George, and Mary (41 tons) are listed as vessels employed in the slave trade in 1789. But the House of Lords Main Paper of 24 March, 1794, lists the same vessels as “not in the slave trade” for the same year, 1789. Within the Lords Paper itself, some vessels are listed as “in the slave trade” one year and in another year as “not in the slave trade”.

Further comparison of the Parliamentary Papers shows the same confusion. The House of Lords Main Paper of 28 July, 1800, contains a long list of slave ships, which cleared out to Africa from Liverpool, Bristol and London between 1791 and 1797 that failed to submit their log books and surgeon’s journals at the completion of their voyage, as required by law. An examination of this list in respect of Bristol reveals 11 vessels listed in other Parliamentary Papers as not in the slave trade between 1791 and 1797.26 Of these eleven vessels, two are of particular interest.

26. HLRO, House of Lords Main Paper, Order date. 28 July, 1800; British Library, Parliamentary Papers, Accounts & Papers, 1806, Vol. XIII, pp. 21-22; HLRO.
These are the *St Patrick*, 32 tons, and the *Gibson*, 26 tons, both listed in the House of Lords Paper of 24 March, 1794, as not in the slave trade in 1791. Both vessels happened to belong to the Bristol slave trading firm of James Rogers & Co. The firm’s private papers show that both vessels were tenders to larger slave ships of the firm. It was not uncommon for slave ships to have tenders, smaller vessels, which could be used to get into the inland rivers of Africa. The tenders were very often the first vessels to be despatched from the coast to the Americas, while the larger ship completed its cargo. Sometimes the smaller vessel made repeated trips between Africa and the Americas, often returning to Africa with cargoes of rum and tobacco. In April, 1791, Captain William Roper of the ship, *Crescent*, wrote to James Rogers from Isles De Los about the *St Patrick*:

“I will be much obliged if you will leave orders at Barbados for the schooner *James* to sell at some of the Windward islands as her cargo is small, so as she may return to me in Africa if occasion requires […]. If Captain Walker will let me have the *St Patrick*, I don’t know whether I may not have it in my power to send the ship off early, or keep the *Princess* which comes with the Rum, which will ease my expences greatly in this country.”

The House of Lords Paper of 24 March, 1794, also lists as not in the slave trade several other vessels of James Rogers & Co that were tenders to their larger slave ships: the *Anamaboe Packet*, tender to the ship, *Jupiter* in 1790; the *Nimble*, tender to the ship, *Sarah* in 1789. These wrong listings are all clear indications of the difficulties the Office of the Register General of Shipping had in distinguishing between vessels employed in the slave trade and those employed in the bilateral product trade, which developed from the late eighteenth century.

Richardson’s heavy reliance on the Parliamentary Papers also flies directly in the face of his own evidence showing considerable under-recording by that source for the trade of the first half of the eighteenth century, when compared with recordings in the Port Books. For example, the Parliamentary Papers show a total of 225 vessels cleared from Bristol to Africa between 1710 and 1724, while the Port Books show 328 vessels for the same period. Thus, Port Books recordings are 46 per cent higher than those of the Parliamentary Papers during this period. For

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27. PRO, C (Chancery Masters Exhibits) 107/5, “Captain William Roper to James Rogers, Ship *Crescent*, Isles De Los, 13 April, 1791”.
28. PRO, C 107/11.
Liverpool, the Parliamentary Papers show a total of 4 vessels cleared out to Africa between 1710 and 1723, while the Port Books show 101 vessels for the same period. In this case, the Port Books recordings are 2,425 per cent more than those of the Parliamentary Papers. In view of the earlier discussion (above in this paper) of the institutional arrangements and procedure for the recording of the trade, the sources of the discrepancy and the reasons for regarding the Port Books as more reliable must be quite clear to us. The problem is that the Port Books for most ports have been destroyed. For Liverpool, they exist only for a few years up to 1727. For London, they do not exist at all for 1696-1795. Those that exist are even imperfect for some years. The point to stress, however, is that the verifiable weaknesses of the Parliamentary Papers make Richardson's heavy reliance on them highly questionable.

What is more, Richardson does not seem to have applied consistently his principle of "inflating" the parliamentary figures by 4 per cent to make up for under-recording. Of course, in light of the evidence presented above, the 4 per cent allowance only scratches the surface of the problem. But at least, it ought to have been applied consistently. For example, according to the Parliamentary Papers, 1,401 slave ships cleared out from England to Africa in the years, 1796-1805. For the same period, Richardson employed 1,380 slave ships in his estimate. Thus, rather than "inflating" the parliamentary figures by 4 per cent, he deflated them in this particular instance.

We have now shown that the issue of non-slave carrying ships among the vessels annually cleared out from England to Africa in the late eighteenth century cannot be resolved through the Parliamentary Papers as Richardson has attempted. Yet, it may be conceded that the 5 per cent we have employed is not adequately backed by evidence. To resolve the issue in a more incontrovertible way, let us compare the value of African products annually imported into England with the value of exports sent to Africa from England each year. Since it was the goods exported from England to Africa that paid for both slaves and African products, the proportion should indicate the share of shipping space devoted to the African products. The comparison is shown in Table VI.

29. For the recordings in the Parliamentary Papers, see PRO, CO 388/18 Part 1/0,19, PRO, CO 390/7/1, and PRO, CO 390/8. Like the Parliamentary Papers of the late eighteenth century, the figures in these sources were compiled in response to government request during the various parliamentary contests between the Royal African Company and the separate traders. For the recordings in the Port Books, see Richardson 1986, 18-128. Note that six vessels listed from other sources for the period have been left out in our addition. For Liverpool, see Richardson 1989a, 186-187.

# Table VI. — English Imports from Africa Expressed as a Percentage of English Exports to Africa, 1701-1807*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>1 Decennial fob Total Value of Exports to Africa</th>
<th>2 Decennial fob Total Value of Imports from Africa</th>
<th>3 Sterling fob Cost of Goods Exchanged for Imports</th>
<th>4 3 as % of 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1701-10</td>
<td>£819,156</td>
<td>£137,904</td>
<td>£75,564</td>
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<tr>
<td>1711-20</td>
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<tr>
<td>1721-30</td>
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<td>£403,956</td>
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<td>£525,686</td>
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<td>1751-60</td>
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<td>£401,696</td>
<td>£220,107</td>
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<td>£878,593</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

fob: free on board

*Sources: PRO, BT 6/241, fo 22; PRO, Customs 3 and 17; PRO, T 70/177, No. 33, pp. 57-60; T 70/309, “Journal, Company of Royal Adventurers Trading to Africa, commencing 26 September, 1662”. The computation is designed to show the fob sterling value of the goods employed on the African coast to pay for the African products imported into England during the period. At this time, the values of exports recorded by the British Custom House were fob values at constant 1697 prices, while the recorded value of imports represented “first costs” in the country of origin (see Schumpeter 1960: 8). This would mean that the value of imports from Africa in the customs ledgers represents what the British traders paid on the African coast for the African products, again, at constant prices. Now, the evidence shows that the coastal prices paid by the British traders generally represented about 80 per cent mark-up of the fob sterling cost of the export goods employed in the exchange. To illustrate this point, we take two cases, one from the middle of the seventeenth century and the other from the last quarter of the eighteenth century. The Royal Adventurers’ ship, Blackmore, carried to Calabar in 1662 goods whose fob value was £866 14s 11d. The same goods were valued £1,614 16s 3d at Calabar (PRO, T 70/309). This represents a mark-up of 86 per cent. Then, in 1774 and 1775, the employees of the British Company of Merchants Trading to Africa, who were resident on the Gold Coast, received their wages and salaries in goods whose fob sterling costs were £4,291 14s 7 3/4d and £3,856 16s 3 1/2d, respectively. The same goods were valued £7,830 14s 11d and £6,274 10s 5 1/4d, respectively, on the Gold Coast. These represent 82.5 per cent and 62.7 per cent mark-up, respectively (PRO, T 70/177, No. 33). Column 3 of the Table is computed from the values in column 2 by applying a mark-up of 82.5 per cent. It should be noted that by practice the value in the customs ledgers does not include gold imports. Similarly, there is clear evidence that as much as 25 per cent of the goods sold by English ships on the African coast in some years were taken on board in Europe after the ships had cleared out in England, and so not included in the customs ledgers in England (Nikoli 1976b: 206-208.) We have assumed that these elements on both sides of the equation will cancel themselves out.
It can be seen from the Table that the highest proportion of export goods expended on the purchase of African products was 14.1 per cent in the 1730s. In general, the proportion of export goods so expended was highest in the first four decades of the eighteenth century. Thereafter, the proportion declined, being generally lower in the last quarter of the century. When it comes to the employment of shipping, however, the story is somewhat different. While a larger proportion of the goods exported to Africa was exchanged for African products in the early decades of the eighteenth century, those products were almost invariably carried to England in slave ships, and sometimes even by British naval ships. The business of one of the large-scale slave trading firms in London in the 1730s and 1740s may be used to illustrate. The firm of Thomas Hall & Co of London, while exporting about 1,000 slaves a year at this time, probably had about 30 to 40 per cent of its returns from the proceeds of African products and re-exported Brazilian gold brought to England by the firm. And these products were carried either by slave ships or by British naval ships, which frequented the African coast during the period. Thus, the firm's manager on the coast, Captain George Hamilton, reported in 1738 that he had shipped on board Her Majesty's Ship, Centurion, Captain Anson, 30 tons of ivory and 2,540 ounces of gold dust, and expected another officer of the firm, Mr More, to add more to the shipment. He added: “We deal largely in tobacco, which brings the gold, we hope soon to fall into a method to procure that commodity directly from the Brazilians [Brazilians] ourselves which must be kept very secret”. In April 1741, Hamilton, again, reported shipping on board Her Majesty's Ship Chatham 1,100 ounces of gold dust and about 12 tons of ivory. He expected Mr More to ship on board the same vessel about 2,500 ounces of gold dust and 3 tons of ivory. The Diamond and the Greenwich were other naval ships used in shipping products from Africa to England by the firm. The firm's slave ships regularly carried gold, ivory and other products along with the slaves. In 1740, the Sarah was reported having on board 180 Gold Coast slaves, 400 ounces of gold dust, and 3,165 lbs of ivory, with Mr More expected to add more to the gold and ivory. In the same year, another ship of the firm commanded by Captain Clove Talbot shipped from the Gold Coast 291 slaves, 990 ounces of gold dust, and 31,785 lbs of ivory, with Mr More expected to make up the ships cargo of 440 slaves and add 2,000 ounces of gold dust, “at least”.

31. PRO, C 103/130, “Captain George Hamilton to Thomas Hall, 10 January, 1738”. The gold being exported from West Africa at this time was brought from Brazil by Brazilian traders, which explains the reference to the Brazilians. 32. PRO, C 103/130, “Hamilton to Hall, 16 April, 1741”. 33. PRO, C 103/130, “Hamilton to Hall 16 August, 1740, and 27 August, 1740”. Both the slaves and the products to be carried by the ship commanded
There is thus a clear indication in the sources that the limited quantities of African products and re-exported Brazilian gold imported into England in the first half of the eighteenth century were carried virtually by slave vessels and naval ships. Specialisation in bilateral trade between England and Africa was a new development in the late eighteenth century. This view is supported by the testimony of the Bristol ivory and wood trader, Sydenham Teast, who told the Privy Council Committee in 1788 that: "The trade [the specialised bilateral product trade] has not been tried more than five years and a half".34 Thus, while a larger proportion of goods exported to Africa was expended on non-slave exchanges in the first half of the eighteenth century, it was not until the late eighteenth century that a small group of ships was employed in carrying African products only. But even then, as stated earlier in the paper, the slave ships continued to carry a large proportion of those products.

Now, Table VI shows that between 1751 and 1807, the proportion of export goods expended on the purchase of African products varied between 9.9 per cent and 5 per cent. In the last quarter of the century, the highest proportion was 7.3 per cent. Since the evidence shows clearly that a large proportion of the products was transported by slave ships, being around one-half, as mentioned above, our 5 per cent allowance actually over-states the relative magnitude of the non-slave carrying shipping during much of the last 58 years of the trade to which it is applied. There is no reason to believe that the proportion of shipping employed was greater than the proportion of export goods expended. Our 5 per cent allowance can, therefore, be shown on the basis of the evidence to be more than adequate.

The remaining part of the needed explanation relates to the differences in mean slave loading per unit of shipping. The differences arise virtually from Richardson's uncritical use of slave import data. We have already commented elaborately on this issue above. The only point to be further stressed relates to the impact of institutional change on the import data.

Here, again, Richardson follows the line of reasoning started by Seymour Drescher (1977: 212), who argued that the regulating laws of 1789 and after were effectively applied to all ships flying British colours, including those carrying slaves to non-British America. Yet, the House of Lords Main Paper, order date, 28 July, 1800, which most students of the subject have used and referred to, indicates clearly that ships carrying

by Captain Talbot were expected to "make good £17,000 sterling". The firm's captains also reported the slave vessels of other British slave traders carrying considerable quantities of products along with the slaves. For example, the Berkly Gally of Bristol was reported shipping 401 slaves to Barbados in 1735, along with 40 tons of barwood (PRO, C 103/130, "James Pearce to Hall, Bath, 31 January, 1735").

34. PRO, BT 6/9, p. 378, "Evidence of Sydenham Teast".
slaves to non-British America were not expected to submit their log books showing the number of slaves they carried, as required by law. This source also shows that failure to submit the log books by any slave ship was never punished. Hence, a very large number of the slave ships never submitted theirs nor the surgeons' journals on the completion of their voyages. The source in question shows that between 1791 and 1797, a total of 561 slave ships that cleared out to Africa from England did not submit these documents on the completion of their voyages: 414 from Liverpool; 74 from Bristol; and 73 from London. The compiling officer added a note:

“It does not appear that the owners of the preceding ships have in any instances assigned reasons for not having delivered in the Documents required by law, on the termination of their respective voyages, and therefore the particular causes are not known. It may however have happened that some of the vessels were captured or lost and that others may have traded to Foreign Islands where no British officers reside to whom the Journals could be delivered or before whom the Affidavits of the Masters & Surgeons could be made. Others may have completed their voyages but have omitted to deliver in their documents.”

This statement shows that British ships carrying slaves to non-British territories were not obliged and were not expected to follow the laws regulating the carrying of slaves in British ships. It also shows that other ships could avoid submitting their log books and surgeon's journals showing how many slaves were taken on board in Africa without being punished.

That the vessels carrying slaves to non-British America loaded much greater numbers per ship is revealed by the data on British ships carrying slaves to Cuba between the 1790s and 1804. Export data for ships transporting slaves to British territories in the 1790s yield 324 slaves exported per ship, while the data for those carrying slaves to Cuba, when converted to export data at Richardson's 5 per cent middle passage mortality rate, yield 397 per ship. Thus, British ships carrying slaves to British territories in the 1790s carried 22.5 per cent less slaves per ship than those transporting slaves to Cuba. For the period, 1801-1807, a similar pattern is shown. Data for ships that sold their slaves in British America produce a mean of 274 slaves imported per ship, while the mean for British ships that sold their slaves in Cuba during the same period imported 287 per ship. The difference for the last period is much lower, 5 per cent, but it is still important.

As for the ships transporting slaves to British America, the evidence shows clear incentives to understate the numbers carried in order to avoid

35. HLRO, House of Lords Main Paper. Order date, 28 July, 1800 [Emphasis is mine, J. E. I.].
36. For the sources, see Table III.
the heavy fines. For example, the one unusually detailed source referred to earlier in the paper shows that in 1802, the *Princess Royal*, measuring 400 tons, had 386 slaves on board at one time, being 28 more than she was permitted to carry, for which a fine of £30 per head was paid, that is, £840.37 One or two other cases are also mentioned by the source. Those familiar with customs fraud would know that heavy fines are associated with large-scale evasion, and only those who do not know how to “play ball”, or those for whom luck runs out once in a while, pay the heavy fines. In any case, the very fact that someone was willing to carry more slaves than the law allowed, in the face of the heavy fines, is itself a clear indication that it was possible to do so profitably. That is, it was possible to secure the cooperation of customs officials at a cost that still brought a profit from the sale of the extra slaves.

These and the other issues raised earlier in the paper must be considered seriously when using import data to measure the volume of the British slave trade in the eighteenth century. Richardson’s failure to do so explains the rather low mean loadings per ship that he employed in his estimate.

Trade Originating from the British Caribbean

We now move from the better documented and, hence, more repeatedly researched part of the British slave trade to the relatively less documented and little researched portions of the trade. We start with the slave trade originating from the British Caribbean in the eighteenth century. Scholars have generally treated the economies of the entire Caribbean as totally dependent on slaves transported by traders resident in Europe or in North America and Brazil. For this reason, no efforts have been made to estimate the volume of the slave trade that originated from the Caribbean, although this has been done for British North America and Brazil. In this section of the paper, some effort is made to estimate the volume of the British Caribbean portion of that trade from 1700 to 1807, on the basis of the limited evidence available to us. The main objective is to provide a more comprehensive estimate of the British slave trade. However, the exercise is also intended to demonstrate the need to conduct similar investigations for the other Caribbean islands, especially the Dutch and French islands.

The slave trade that originated from the British Caribbean in the eighteenth century fell into four categories. The first category was conducted with ships belonging to traders resident in England. These vessels usually cleared out to the African coast from ports in England in the

first instance. Thereafter, they made one or more repeated voyages between the Caribbean and the African coast, transporting slaves, without touching ports in England, before once again returning to their home ports in England. Sometimes the vessels in this category cleared out to the Americas from ports in England, and from the Americas they went to the African coast to transport slaves to the Caribbean. The second category was conducted with ships belonging to British Caribbean islands, but hired by traders in England to transport rum to the African coast and slaves back to the Caribbean. The third category, a rather limited trade, was conducted with vessels belonging to ports in British North America. These vessels cleared out to the African coast from ports England and from the Americas they went to the African coast to transport slaves to the Caribbean. The fourth category, which was the largest in volume during the first half of the eighteenth century, was conducted with ships belonging to the British Caribbean islands, and the slaves transported belonged to traders or planters resident in the British Caribbean.

By the very nature of this portion of the British slave trade, the only official source of information about the clearance of the ships to the African coast for the specific voyages in question is the one officially recorded in the British Caribbean. Unfortunately, the colonial customs records were poorly produced and irregularly transmitted to the Custom House in London. Thomas Irving, the meticulous Inspector General of the Exports and Imports of Great Britain and the British Colonies in the late eighteenth century, frequently complained of the poor quality of the records transmitted from the colonies. In May 1789, he specifically stated that:

“The Account of the Number of Negroes imported into, and exported from, the several Ports in the Island of Jamaica cannot be carried further back than the Commencement of the Year 1773. The Original Returns from the West Indies prior to that Time being very imperfect: And even, in some Instances, in the Period for which the present Account is made up, some of the Quarterly Accounts for the small Ports are wanting: but as the Trade of these ports was very inconsiderable, it is probable few Negroes were either imported or exported into or from them during that Time. The Accounts for the Year 1788 have not been all received as yet from the West Indies”.38

Again, in May 1792, while transmitting to the British House of Commons an account of ships transporting slaves from Africa to the British Caribbean in 1789, 1790 and 1791, Thomas Irving commented: “The above Account is made up in the best Manner which the very imperfect Returns

from the West Indies enabled the Inspector General to prepare it." 39 Apart from the weaknesses highlighted by Thomas Irving, the extant records from the West Indies, the Naval Officers Lists, contain many gaps, which make it impossible to produce a comprehensive and accurate list of ships that cleared out to the African coast from the British Caribbean in the eighteenth century. However, a careful combination of all the available sources can provide a basis for a reasonable estimate.

The private records of the Royal African Company of England are very helpful in indicating the volume of the company's slave trade that originated from the Caribbean. A summary reference to some of these will suffice. Early in the eighteenth century, the governor of the company, Sir Dalby Thomas, who was resident on the Gold Coast, recommended to the company that "3 or 4 ships a year to go to Ireland and Barbados to fit up with Rum would be proper by which would be supplied cheap with provisions and with Tallow & that part of the Irish cargo might be sold at Barbados to purchase Rum". 40

The company's trade conducted via the Caribbean-African-Caribbean route was generally referred to by the company's officers as the "rum trade", rum being virtually the only product brought to the African coast by the vessels on this route. The evidence indicates that Barbados, Antigua, and Jamaica were the main centers for this branch of the company's trade. The company had factors in these islands who managed the trade on its behalf—hiring local vessels, purchasing rum in the islands, and generally fitting out the hired ships and the company's vessels making repeated voyages between Africa and the Caribbean. In 1707, the company employed at least five vessels on this route, four from Antigua and one from Barbados. 41

Sir Dalby Thomas complained frequently that the company's vessels sent from the West Indies were too small for the number of slaves they were intended to carry: "the Grand Content sloop arrived from Antegua [sic], is too small to take in 170 Negroes..."; "your Flying Fame from Antigua was arrived & was not fit to carry the Negroes she went for...". He recommended to the company that proper directives should "be given to the factors in the West Indies for what ships they send". 42 The company's officers on the coast also complained that the goods sent from England were not enough in quantity to buy all the slaves

40. PRO, T (Treasury Papers) 70/5, fo 10, "Sir Dalby Thomas to Royal African Company, Cape Coast Castle, 2, 4, & 6 March, 1705/6" [to read 1706].
41. PRO, T 70/5, fos 32-43. These vessels are mentioned in the letters of the officers on the coast. The indication is that the company employed more ships on this route at this time.
42. PRO, T 70/5, fos 19 and 32. "Sir Dalby Thomas's letters of 5 October, 1706, and 25 April, 1707".
required for the company’s ships from England and those from the Caribbean, and also to buy gold on the coast. In fact, among seven factors thought by the officers to be responsible for the company’s poor performance, the “rum trade” was listed sixth:43 1. Great mortality of slaves bought on the Gold Coast; 2. lowering of goods and raising of slave prices due to competition with 10 per cent men; 3. hired ships prejudicial; 4. charges of the coast very great; 5. company traded for too many slaves in proportion to the goods sent which made the gold trade to be neglected; 6. the rum trade drains the coast of goods by which gold is purchased; 7. the Natives by custom send their slaves to the English and their gold to the Dutch.

Thus the company’s private records indicate that the slave trade originating from the Caribbean was an important part, by volume, of the Royal African Company’s trade in the early eighteenth century.

Evidence presented to the British Board of Trade by the private traders and by the Royal African Company during their struggle over the company’s monopoly rights in the first decade of the eighteenth century also sheds some light on the volume of the slave trade that originated from the British Caribbean. In a document sent to the Board of Trade in January 1708, the Private traders stated that “between midsummer 1698 and December 1707”, 14 vessels were cleared out each year from the British “plantations” to the African coast to transport slaves, being a total of 133 vessels, out of which 128 belonged to the private traders and 5 belonged to the Royal African Company.44 The private traders indicated in their statement that they were not sure of the exact number of ships cleared from the “plantations” during the period: “Supposed to have been dispatch from the plantations . . . .”, as they put it. Other sources indicate that the private traders may have understated the actual numbers. Evidence submitted to the Board of Trade by the governor of Barbados during the same period shows: “That since the 9th of December 1698, 111 vessels have been fitted out from that Island for the Coast of Africa, 18 whereof were for the Company’s Account [Royal African Company], & 93 on Account of the Separate Traders”.45 Thus, the Royal African Company cleared 18 vessels from Barbados alone during the period, as opposed to 5 from all the British colonies as stated by the private traders. In fact, another source shows that between 1703 and 1709, the Royal African Company dispatched 31 vessels from the West

43. PRO, T 70/5, fo 38, “James Blaney to Royal African Company, Cape Coast Castle, 3 August, 1706”.
44. PRO, CO 388/11/L8, “Answer of Divers Separate Traders to Africa to the queries sent them 15 December, 1707, with a Supplement thereto, Received and Read 2 January 1707/8” [to read 1708].
45. PRO, CO 390/12, fo 193 (or 225, both shown on the same page).
Indies to West Africa. The figure of 111 vessels for Barbados alone also shows that the 133 vessels stated for all the colonies by the private traders is a significant understatement.

Taking the preceding figures along with those of the Naval Officers Lists for Antigua, Jamaica, and Barbados, which appear to be tolerably good for the early years of the eighteenth century, we can produce a reasonable estimate of the volume of the British slave trade originating from the British Caribbean in the first quarter of the eighteenth century. The Naval Lists show the names of the vessels, the ports to which they belonged, the dates of clearance, the dates of entry, and sometimes the number of slaves imported. The counting is based virtually on clearance evidence. On a few occasions, however, because of the gaps in the sources, when a Caribbean vessel entered its home port from Africa without evidence of a previous clearance for more than one year, such a vessel was counted on the basis of the entry information, since the round trip, Caribbean to Africa to Caribbean, invariably took less than a year. For Barbados, the evidence covers two distinct periods, December 1699 to December 1707, and 25 March 1708 to 25 March 1726. The evidence for the latter period relates only to vessels belonging to Barbados; their names and the number of slaves imported into Barbados by each vessel are all shown.

Counting as indicated, these sources show that between October 19, 1705 and September 19, 1719 (14 years), 21 vessels traded from Antigua to the African coast; 11 from Jamaica, 1712 to 1715 (landing a total of 2,509 slaves); 145 vessels from Barbados, December 1699 to December 1707; and 87 vessels belonging to Barbados landed a total of 10,750 slaves in Barbados between 25 March 1708 and 25 March 1726. Thus, in the first quarter of the eighteenth century, we have some tolerably good information for Antigua for 14 years, Jamaica for 4 years, and Barbados for virtually all the years. For the three islands, the total comes to 264 vessels, of which the more or less complete information for Barbados accounts for 232. It should be noted that our Barbados figure of 145 vessels for 1699-1707 from the Naval Officers List is some 34 vessels more than the figure stated by the governor of the island for the same period, which was mentioned earlier.

From the second quarter of the century onwards, the information available to us becomes increasingly unsatisfactory. The evidence indicates a decline in the trade originating from the British Caribbean in the late eighteenth century. This is revealed by the clearances from the Brit-

47. For Antigua, see PRO, CO 157/1; Jamaica, PRO, CO 142/14 Part 1; Barbados, PRO, CO 33/13, 14, 16 Parts 1 & 2; and PRO, T 64/48, for 1699-1707, and PRO, CO 33/15 for 1708-1726.
ish West Indies to the African coast contained in some of the Parliamentary Papers of the period:48

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Ships</th>
<th>Tons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1783</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1784</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1785</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>1790</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1796</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It seems also that by the late eighteenth century, the slave trade originating from the British Caribbean belonged virtually to traders resident in England. Thus, a committee of the Jamaican House of Assembly stated in 1788:

“It seems not to be understood in Great Britain that the inhabitants of the West-India Islands have no concern in the ships trading to Africa. The African trade is purely a British trade, trade carried on by British subjects, residing in Great Britain, on capitals of their own—the connection and intercourse between the planters of this island, and the merchants of Great Britain trading to Africa, extend no further than the mere purchase of what British Acts of Parliament have declared to be legal objects of purchase”.49

But earlier in 1711, the planters of Jamaica had petitioned the British

48. HLRO, House of Lords Main Paper, 31 May 1793; PRO. CO 318/1, fos 159-164; HLRO, House of Lords Main Paper, 21 June, 1799. It should be recalled that it was demonstrated earlier in the paper that the Parliamentary Papers generally understate the volume of the trade. In fact, the sources stated here show conflicting information that is characteristic of the Parliamentary Papers. PRO. CO 318/1 shows that no vessels were cleared to the African coast from the British West Indies in 1789, while House of Lords Main Paper, 31 May 1793, shows 5 vessels measuring 482 tons for the same year.

Board of Trade saying, among other things: "That many of your petitioners (sending for their woollen & other manufactures from England) have fitted & sent vessels from here to the Coast of Africa to furnish their own plantations with Negroes for their use & service".\(^{50}\)

It would appear, however, that by the middle of the eighteenth century the trade originating from the British Caribbean was still considerable. This is indicated by evidence on the trade of the Gambian River in the 1750s. Between 27 July and 17 November, 1755, a list of ships in the said river, "sailed and ready to sail", shows 4 vessels belonging to Antigua, 4 belonging to Barbados, and 1 belonging to St Kitts.\(^{51}\) And between 25 December, 1755 and 24 December, 1756, 7 Caribbean vessels are listed, 4 belonging to Antigua and 3 belonging to St Croix.\(^{52}\)

Now, what can we make of the evidence presented in terms of the volume of the British slave trade originating from the British Caribbean? The evidence does not cover all the islands, nor does it cover adequately all the years for the islands about which some evidence is available. However, the evidence can certainly sustain a conservative generalization. Combining the evidence on the first quarter of the eighteenth century with that of the mid-century, and the mid-century evidence with that of the late eighteenth century, we are able to say that the long-term mean for the first half of the century cannot be less than 10 vessels a year, and that for the second half cannot be less than 5 vessels per annum. This means that the total for 1700-1750 is at least 510 vessels and that for 1751-1807, 285 vessels, at the minimum.

As to the mean number of slaves imported per vessel, this can be computed from the import data presented earlier in the paper. As stated above, 11 Jamaican vessels and 87 Barbados vessels imported a total of 13,259 slaves in the early decades of the eighteenth century. This gives a mean of 135 slaves per vessel. At 20 percent middle passage mortality rate, the mean export per vessel is 169 slaves. This can be used for the first half. In the second half of the century, while the vessels on the route became larger on the average, parliamentary regulations in the late eighteenth century may have had some adverse effects on loading. To be consistent with the conservative generalization already applied to the number of vessels, we reduce the export loading arbitrarily to 140 slaves

\(^{50}\) PRO CO 388/14 Part 1/M.5, "Petition of Jamaican Planters enclosed in a letter from Mr Harris to Commissioners of Trade, dated 4 January 1710/11" [this should read 1711].

\(^{51}\) PRO T 70/1523, "Detached Papers of the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa".

\(^{52}\) PRO T 70/1525, "Detached papers of the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa". It should be noted that the trade of the Gambia river at this time constituted a very small fraction of the British Slave trade from Western Africa. The relatively large number of Caribbean vessels in the Gambia river at this time is, therefore, an indication that the trade originating from the British Caribbean was still substantial in the middle decades of the eighteenth century.
per vessel and the import figure to 130 for the whole period, 1751-1807. These calculations lead to the conservative conclusion that the British slave trade originating from the British Caribbean transported from Africa at least 126,000 slaves and landed at least 106,000 between 1700 and 1807.

Trade of the Seventeenth Century

Next in the less documented and less researched portions of the British slave trade is the trade of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Here we are in a terra incognita. There has been some study of the late seventeenth century that is not specifically focused on the volume of the trade (Davies 1957; Zook 1919; Galenson 1986). But, as far as I know, there is practically nothing for the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. We know that John Hawkins, with the blessing of the Queen of England, raided for and transported slaves from West Africa to the Americas in 1562, 1564, and 1567. The Portuguese sources used by the late Walter Rodney indicate that English traders conducted a flourishing business in the Gambia river and Sierra Leone in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. In the 1580's, English trade to West Africa was given some legality by the encouragement given by the Portuguese Prince, Antonio of Crato, who took refuge at the English court.53 We have also discovered that as of 1636, there was a company in Scotland trading to the African coast, which was called the Guiny Companie of Scotland.54 Beyond these fragments, we are yet to uncover a substantial body of evidence upon which a reasonable estimate of the volume of the early British slave trade can be based. However, while more detailed investigation into the trade of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is called for, we believe that the evidence currently available to us is good enough to attempt an estimate of the volume of the trade in the second

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53. Rodney 1970: 124-138. According to Rodney (ibid.: 126): “A roteiro of the Coast of Guinea in 1635 indicated that the English and the Dutch had several trade factories in Sierra Leone, and they had installed themselves comfortably in a European style of house. Between them, the Dutch and the English dispatched ten to twelve ships per year, loaded with ivory, camwood, wax, gold, and other goods”. He also refers to a London firm, Wood and Company (ibid.: 127), which, as of 1648, had been trading in the Sherbro for about 25 years. While the indication is that ivory and wood formed a large part of the early English trade, there is no doubt that slaves formed an important part of these early ventures to Africa.

54. PRO, CO 1/13 fos 84-87, “The Case of the Guiny Companie of Scotland, 1636-1657”. Again, it is not clear how much slave trading was conducted by this company. The company’s ship, whose seizure by a Portuguese governor gave rise to the case that forms the subject of the document, was carrying largely gold (about 200 lbs in weight, valued at £50 per lb, being £10,000) at the time it was seized.
half of the seventeenth century. The attempt is based on reported slave imports into Jamaica, 1655-1700, and other sources. Two parallel estimates are made, and these are compared to provide some basis for a reasonable level of confidence.

We start with the sources on Jamaican imports. In November 1788, a committee of the House of Assembly of Jamaica reported that between 1655 and 1787, the island imported 676,276 slaves from Africa. Other sources show that between 1702 and 1775, and between 1776 and 1787, 497,726 and 96,271 slaves were imported into Jamaica from Africa, respectively. Adding and subtracting, these figures give a total of 82,279 slaves imported into Jamaica from Africa between 1655 and 1701.

Now, what does the Jamaican import figure tell us about the volume of the British empire slave trade of the period? First, we must note the statement of the Inspector General, Thomas Irving, that the Caribbean import data before the commencement of 1773 are "very imperfect". Second, we have to recognise that as of this time Barbados was the largest slave importing territory in British America. Thus, imports into Barbados plus imports into the other British Caribbean islands and into British North America must have been several times the Jamaican import figure. Under these considerations, it will be reasonable to assume that the Jamaican figure represents no more than a quarter of the total volume of the British empire slave trade of the period: that is, the whole trade originating in Great Britain, the British Caribbean and British North America. This would mean a total import figure of 329,116 for the whole British empire slave trade of the period. We can apply to this figure the middle passage mortality rate in the Royal African Company's trade of the 1680s, being 23.7 per cent. This gives an export figure of 431,345 slaves.

Let us now move to the more direct evidence relating to the volume of the trade of the period. We have available to us figures of import and

export trade between England and Africa in the years, 1662-63 and 1668-69. In 1662-63, exports and imports were £56,766 5s and £15,886 13s, respectively. The comparable figures for 1668-69 are exports, £54,402 14s, and imports, £7,646 7s. With the aid of other data, these export and import figures can be converted to slave export figures.

We should recall that the value of imports into England from Africa, as recorded in the English ports, represents the value of African products brought to England, over and above the value of slaves transported to and sold in the Americas. Since both the slaves and the African products were paid for with the goods exported from England to Africa, by deducting the value of the imports from the exports we can obtain the value of goods employed to pay for the slaves transported. Before we can do this, however, the exports and imports must be expressed in terms of the fob (free on board) value of goods exported from England to Africa.

As stated earlier in the paper, the British Custom officials in England at this time recorded British exports at fob value in English ports, and imports at fob value in the overseas ports of origin. This means that the products imported from Africa were valued according to the prices paid for them on the African coast. We also showed earlier in the paper that the coastal prices in Africa were based on the cif (cost, insurance, and freight) value of the European and Oriental goods employed in payment on the coast. In order to establish the fob value of goods employed in the purchase of slaves during the years in question, we, therefore, need to reduce the import figures to the fob value of the goods employed in paying for the African products.

The private papers of the Company of Royal Adventurers Trading to Africa contain details of the trade conducted at Calabar in 1662 by the ship, Blackmore. The fob cost of the ship’s cargo was £866 14s 11d. With this cargo, 217 slaves were purchased at a total coastal cost of £1304 12s 6d; 81 elephants’ teeth (weighing 2,019.5 lbs) costing £126 4s 4d; 33 ounces and 10 ackies of gold costing £117 14s; gifts to the king of Calabar and his family, £34 8s 3d; goods sold at Princes and unsold goods, £65 17s 2d. The total coastal value of the cargo thus came to £1,614 16s 3d. The coastal value was, therefore, 1.86 times the fob value of the cargo.

We can apply this ratio to determine the fob value of goods employed to pay for the African products imported into England in 1662-63 and 1668-69. This gives £8,541 and £4,111, respectively. The gifts to the king and his family, in terms of the fob value of the goods, come to £21 10s.

59. PRO CO 388/8 Part 3/E.31, “Extracts of Exports and Imports from 1662 to 1663 & from 1668 to 1669, communicated to the Board of Trade by Mr. Pollexfen, Rec’d Oct. 28, 1702”.
60. PRO T 70/309, “Journal, Company of Royal Adventurers Trading to Africa, Commencing 26 September, 1662”. 
which is 2.4 per cent of the fob value of the Blackmore’s cargo. Assuming that 2.4 per cent of the goods exported during the period went into gifts in this manner, then non-slave payments in the two years will increase to £9,903 and £4,295, respectively. This leaves £46,863 and £50,108 employed in the purchase of slaves in these two years, respectively.

The mean price of slaves on the African coast at this time can also be computed from the Blackmore’s data above. It can be seen from them that the coastal value of £1,304 12s 6d paid for the 217 slaves means that the fob value of the goods employed in payment was £702. Thus, the price of each slave, in terms of the fob value of goods employed, was £3 24s. It follows from this mean price that the £46,863 and £50,108 employed in payment for slaves in 1662-63 and 1668-69, respectively, purchased a total of 14,464 and 15,465 slaves in the respective years.

When the foregoing figures are combined with other evidence, a reasonable estimate can be made for the years, 1662-1671. The journals of the Company of Royal Adventurers Trading to Africa contain information on some of the company’s vessels that traded on the African coast during the period: 10 in 1662 (all in September); 26 in 1663; 36 in 1664; 16 in 1665; 13 in 1666. 61 The full cargoes for some of the vessels are shown. Out of the 26 vessels for 1663, about which there is evidence of trading on the African coast, 12 carried to the coast a total cargo of £52,900. 62 As shown above, the sources indicate that one of the problems the company had to contend with was the violation of its monopoly rights by English interlopers. 63 Jamaican planters also stated in 1680 that “when the Trade was open there went to the Coast of Guinea more than twice as many vessels annually as there hath gone since managed by the Royal Compa[ny] [Royal African Company] with joint stock which is manifestly a National Injury…” 64 Considering the unknown volume of private trade during the period, and the fact that there is no information about the cargoes of more than half of the known vessels of the Adventurers for 1663, it is clear that the figure of £56,766 5s stated above as the total amount of exports from England to Africa in 1662-63 is a serious understatement. Yet, as of now, we do not have the kind of evidence on the basis of which the actual magnitude of the under-recording can be measured. It is not even clear what proportion of the total trade of the Royal Adventurers is covered by the information in its known jour-

61. PRO, T 70/309, T 70/599, and T 70/600 Part 1.
62. PRO, T 70/599.
64. PRO, CO 268/1, fo 84. The woollen manufacturers in England also stated that since charter was granted to the Royal African Company, many people employed in the woollen industry in England to produce “Sayes, Perpetuanos, etc are many of them totally ruined . . .” (ibid.).
nals. Under these circumstances, we again, make a conservative generalization that the yearly mean volume of the British empire slave trade could not have been less than 10,000 slaves exported from Africa during the period, 1662-1671. This would mean a total of 100,000.

For the period, 1672-1700, the estimate is best centred around the trade of the Royal African Company. According to the figures published by K. G. Davies (1957: 363, Appendix IIIA), the company delivered a total of 74,529 slaves in the British Caribbean between 1673 and 1700. Compared with figures from other sources, he appears to have understated the volume of the company’s trade in these years. For example, he shows that in 1673 and 1674, the company delivered a total of 220 and 1,945 slaves, respectively (ibid.: 363). But in July 1676, the company itself stated:

“This Company hath been setled [sic] little above four years; in the two first whereof Navigation was obstructed by the Dutch Warr, and the general Imbargos lain on all ships; Yet we were not wanting in our applications to his Ma., who thereupon graciously permitted us to send forth seven ships, to carry soldiers, ammunition, provisions etc to preserve the forts and factories in Guiny, whence they proceeded, with Negroes, to the several plantations and four of them to the Barbados. The third year [1674], when the warr was ended y Company [. . .] sent out fifteen ships to the Coast of Africa and thence ordered six of them to the Island of Barbados with about two thousand Negroes, which their Factors disposed of, at several rates . . .”. 65

Clearly, in the light of the company’s own statement, the Davies’s figures for the first three years of the company’s trade are serious understatements. Again, for the period, 1680-1688, the Davies’s figures show a total delivery of 37,675 slaves in the Americas by the company. But another source, showing a year by year delivery, with the number of ships each year, shows a total export of 60,783 slaves and a total delivery of 46,396. 66 For these years, the Davies’s figures are about 81 per cent of those stated by the other source. It should be noted that Davies is aware that his figures understate the actual volume of the company’s trade in these years. In fact, he suggests that about 10,000 more deliveries should be added to the total for the period, 1672-1711 (ibid.: 299). The evidence presented above indicates that a 20 per cent upward adjustment for the period, 1672-1700, is quite reasonable. This will increase the Davies’s delivery figures to 73,863 for 1672-1690, and 19,299 for 1691-1700, making a total of 93,162 for the whole period, 1672-1700. The detailed information for 1680-1688 also shows a middle passage mortality rate of 23.7 per

65. PRO, CO 268/1, “Reply of the Royal African Company to charges by the Council and Assembly of Barbados, Received by the Committee of Trade and Plantations on 16 July, 1676”. Davies’ figures show a delivery of 1,066 slaves in Barbados in 1674, about half of the figure stated by the company itself, and 879 for the other colonies. And yet 9 of the 15 ships were expected to deliver their slaves in the other colonies.

66. PRO, CO 388/10/H.108.
cent. Applying this rate to these figures gives export figures of 96,806 for 1672-1690 and 25,294 for 1691-1700.

The problem now is to determine the magnitude of interloping trade (private trade) during the period. The company contended with private traders right from the very beginning of its business in 1672. This is revealed by the company’s statement that following its complaints about violations of its charter:

“Your Majesty was graciously pleased, by several Orders of Council, viz on the 20th December 1672 and 4th September 1674, to Order stopping of such ships as were then going out till such time as the Masters had given security not to proceed to any of the limits of Your Highness charter. Since which time, May it please Your Majesty, those Loose Traders [private traders] have been more cautious by entering at the Custom House the Goods they intend for that Trade for some other places ...” 67

In addition to their operation from ports in England, the private traders conducted extensive slave trading from ports in British America. In May 1677, the company petitioned the British crown that contrary to its royal charter of monopoly, “several of your Majesty’s subjects, in contempt thereof, doe frequently use that Trade as well from England as from your Majesty’s Foreign Plantations ...”.68 Earlier in March 1675, it was noted at the Court in Whitehall that contrary to royal proclamations against private slave trading from British America, “there are several ships that have arrived at Barbados from those parts of Africa with Negroes and other goods; and several others are now on the said coasts, all which are set out by private traders ...”.69

In its efforts to stop the illegal slave trade by private traders, the company came up against several insurmountable obstacles. One of these was the ease with which illegal business could be conducted in the British Caribbean because of the existence of many places where vessels could fit out and discharge their cargo undetected. As the company put it:

“Yo. pet have notice that several Interlopers do still goe out to trade upon the Coast of Guiney which will, the most of them, goe to Your Majesty’s Plantations in America [where the Navigation Laws prohibit the slave trade by Interlopers] [...]. But in regard those plantations have many remote ports, and the owners of such ships, goods and Negroes (conscientious of their own guilt) do clandestinely land them in some of the said remote ports, whereby they avoid the punishment that ought to be laid upon them”.70

67. PRO, CO 268/1, fo 66, “Petition of the Royal African Company, Read in Council, 26 January 1676”.
68. PRO, CO 268/1, fo 69, “Petition of the Royal African Company to the King of England, Read in Council, 4 May, 1677”.
69. PRO, CO 268/1, fos 29-31, “Order in Council for a letter to be sent to the Governor of Barbados, Whitehall, March 1st, 1675”.
70. PRO, CO 268/1, fos 117-118, “Petition of the Royal African Company, Presented to the King, 18 October, 1686”.
In addition to these geographical obstacles, there were two other difficulties that were even more serious. The evidence shows unambiguously that the officers of the crown in the colonies did not only corruptly collude with interlopers, but were in fact part owners of illegal slave trading ventures. To illustrate, there was an incident in 1675, when the Royal African Company’s officers in Barbados seized 80 slaves imported from Africa by a vessel belonging to private traders. As the company’s officers narrated, they were beaten up and the slaves forcefully taken away from them, without the colonial officials doing anything to protect them or prosecute the offenders. Expressing their helplessness, the company’s officers concluded:

“... from hence you may conclude what probability there is for us to hinder interlopers coming hither, when if they are discovered, we are beaten and wounded; and the offenders come off better than the sufferers, and little discountenanced in what they doe. We do not think fit to prosecute an action for the recovery of the Eighty Negros [who] were seized and violently taken away from us [...] being assured a jury will find against us: For possibly it will not be easy for us to make such proof as will satisfy a Barbados Jury that they came from within the limits of your charter: or if such proof could be made, yet considering the Baron of the Exchequer and some of his assistants (who are the same with the Baron etc.) are concerned in Interlopers, it will be noe easy matter for us to obtain a verdict against Interlopers, especially since it is a Maxim with many in this Country, That the King cannot grant any such Charter as yours is to exclude the rest of his subjects from trading where they please, without it were ratify’d by Act of Parliament in England”.

The other serious problem, which frustrated the company’s efforts, was the collusion of its own officers on the African coast with the private traders. These officers seized every opportunity to make money at the company’s expense. They traded privately on their own, in which activity they found collaboration with interlopers privately rewarding. The assistance offered by many of the company’s senior officers on the coast made it relatively easy for the private traders to do business within the limits of the company’s charter without serious obstruction. To cite one instance among many, in November 1675, the company’s agent in Barbados reported:

“The Dutch have 3 or 4 ships on y Coast that compa[ny] being restablisht [...] those ships endeavor to take the Interloper that lately came thither, which, in all

71. PRO, CO 268/1, fos 34-36, “Royal African Company’s agent in Barbados to the Royal African Company in London, Barbados, 26 November, 1675”. Evidence about this kind of attitude to colonial laws abounds in other sources relating to other British American colonies. See, in particular, PRO, CO 388/12 Part II/ K.66, “Memorial from Mr. Holt relating to the illegal trade carried on between Curacao, St. Thomas, and the British Plantations. Received, 15 December, 1709, and Read, 11 January, 1710”. This document details the corrupt practices of the colonial officials and their direct participation in illegal trade.
probability they had done if Mr. Archer your factor at Wiamba [sic] had not given him soe quick a dispatch [...] This Archer furnished the Interloper with one hundred and odd Negroes, as we are informed, and is reported to be a general assister of Interlopers, and a dealer with them of which we hold ourselves bound to acquaint the Compa[ny], we being so many ways assured it is truth [...] 72

Thus, all told, there was ample opportunity for the private traders to participate in the slave trade even before the partial opening of the trade in 1697. Yet, because of its very nature, there are no official statistics with which to measure its volume. However, we do have some indirect evidence on the basis of which some reasonable comparison of the relative magnitude of the company’s trade and that of the private traders during the period can be made. For example, in February 1708, the British Board of Trade stated that:

"... from the establishment of the Royal African Company (by Charter) in 1672 to the year 1680, that Trade [slave trade] was greatly neglected, & heavy complaints were made from several of the plantations of their not being sufficiently supplied with negroes, which complaints encouraged many private adventurers to enter into the said Trade. by which means it was considerably advanced ..." 73

Then in January 1709, in a “General State of the Trade to Africa” presented to the British House of Commons, the Board of Trade stated: “Several private ships with their cargoes were seized [...] on the coast of Africa and in the Plantation for trading contrary to the Company’s charter whereby such private trade was in a manner crushed. But upon the late Revolution [1688] it revived again and was carryed on for some years to a much greater degree than formerly”. 74

Finally, in the very first year after the trade was declared partially open in 1697, that is, 1698-99, the private traders cleared out from London to the African coast 36 ships as compared with 15 by the Royal African Company. 75 When private trade from Bristol and Liverpool is added, as also the extensive private trade from British America, the indication is that in this very first year of partial free trade, the volume of private trade to company trade was over four to one. This relative volume of private trade in the very first year of partial free trade could not have been a sudden growth, taking into account the complex and specialized nature of the slave trade. It certainly reflects the pre-existing volume of private trade that had gone on underground for years.

72. PRO, CO 268/1, fos 36-37, “Royal African Company’s Agent in Barbados to the Royal African Company in London, 26 November, 1675”.
73. PRO, BT 6/17, “Board of Trade’s Comments on the Petition of the Royal African Company, 3 February, 1707/8” [date should read 1708].
74. PRO, CO 390/12, fos 140-247, “General State of the Trade to Africa Presented to the House of Commons by the Council of Trade, 27 January, 1708/9” [date should read 1709], fo 142 (p. 174).
75. PRO, CO 390/12, fos 181-193. See also PRO, CO 388/11.
Taking all the evidence together, we consider it reasonable to assume that the volume of private trade was equal to that of the company in the period 1672-1690, and for the last decade of the century, it was twice that of the company. Under these assumptions, total British empire slave exports from Africa in the years 1672-1690, and 1691-1700, come to 193,612 and 75,882, respectively, bringing the total for both periods to 269,494. Adding the figure for the years 1662-1671, we thus have an export figure of 369,494 for the entire period, 1662-1700.

This may be compared with the export figure of 431,345 for the period 1655-1701, derived earlier in the paper from Jamaican import data. The difference comes to about 60,000. Much of the difference can, in fact, be accounted for by the roughly eight-year difference in the length of time covered by the two periods. The two results would thus appear to be consistent. Considering the nature of the evidence, however, the much that one can conclude is that the British empire slave trade could not have transported from Africa less than 400,000 slaves between 1655 and 1700.

We have now produced volume estimates for three components of the British slave trade: 1) slaves transported by vessels cleared out to the African coast from ports in England in the period, 1701-1807; 2) slaves transported by vessels cleared out to the African coast from the British Caribbean during the same period; and 3) slaves transported by vessels cleared out to the African coast from ports both in England and in British America in the years, 1655-1700. The respective export figures for the three components are as follows: 3,361,630; 126,000; and 400,000. This gives a total export figure of 3,887,630 slaves for these three components of the British slave trade from 1655 to 1807. Taking only the main period of the trade, 1701-1807, the export total is 3,487,630 slaves.

Throughout the paper we have consistently tried to produce what we consider a minimum estimate of the volume of the British slave trade during this period of roughly one hundred and fifty years. Our use and interpretation of the evidence, viewed against our discussion of the nature of the sources, ought to make this clear. We have demonstrated that the Port Books, being the original source of all figures relating to shipping and trade conducted from ports in England, are by far the most reliable. The evidence presented in the paper shows that where the extant Port Books contain close-to-complete entries for any years, slave ship clearance figures compiled from them are substantially greater than those from other sources, especially the Parliamentary Papers. Some of the main reasons for the difference have been presented here. Yet, because most of the Port Books no longer exist, the bulk of the estimates by historians
of the British slave trade (including the estimates in the present paper) are based on sources other than the Port Books. We have also shown that because the institutional framework under which the trade was conducted encouraged fraudulent concealment of portions of the trade over the years, even the Port Books entries, where they are complete, still leave out some part of its volume. In spite of the clear evidence on all this, we have made no allowance for it in our estimate of the eighteenth-century trade.

As for the trade originating from the British Caribbean in the eighteenth century, and the entire trade of the second half of the seventeenth century, the data base for our estimates is quantitatively weak. But, again, viewed against the evidence, it can be seen that our estimates here have been deliberately conservative.

Three areas of the estimates presented need to be stressed: the use of import data; inclusion of the slave trade conducted from British ports by alien firms; and necessary allowance for non-slave vessels cleared out to the African coast from England. Issues relating to all three have been contested by historians since the 1970s. We believe that the evidence presented here shows beyond doubt the pitfalls in using slave import data produced in the Americas. In fact, Thomas Irving, the most meticulous of the eighteenth-century British Inspector Generals, insisted that the West Indian slave import data for years preceding 1773 are worthless, and that even those for subsequent years are generally "imperfect". We have tried to minimize error arising from these weaknesses. As for alien firms trading from England, we have demonstrated that it is conceptually and practically wrong to leave out the volume of their business from the account of international trade conducted from ports in England. If the international business of alien firms were to be left out in the measurement of the volume of international business today, that will reduce the actual volume of world trade and shipping substantially. On the issue of the needed allowance for non-slave ships, we have produced a variety of evidence to support our use of a 5 per cent ratio. Probably, the most compelling of our arguments is that based on the value of African products imported into England during the period. The evidence shows that export goods expended by British traders on the purchase of the African products carried to England by the non-slave ships could never have been more than 5 per cent of the value of goods exported from England to the African coast during the second half of the eighteenth century. There is no reason to believe that the proportion of British ships in the African trade employed to carry these products was greater than the proportion of the export commodities expended on their purchase.

Finally, we are tempted to raise one or two general questions about the entire volume of the European slave trade from Africa, which follow from our study of the British trade. First, we wish to ask whether the British Caribbean were unique in their participation in the slave trade.
If they were not, then our study suggests that the volume of the trade conducted from the rest of the Caribbean should be studied. Second, from our present study, it appears that Britain and her American colonies transported well over 4 million slaves from Africa in a period of about hundred and fifty years. (That is, when the trade of the North American colonies is included.) This is over one-quarter of our preferred global figure of 15.4 million for the European slave trade. We are thus compelled to ask whether this rather large proportion, in spite of the short period of British participation relative to the Portuguese, is not due more to the quantity and quality of the British evidence than to the actual volume of the trade conducted by the other European and American participants. The whole truth may never be known. But we raise these questions in order to provide other researchers with more food for thought.

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