

“All the baubles that they needed”

‘Industriousness’ and Slavery in Saint-Louis and Gorée

In 1768, the will of John Pfeffinger, a British merchant in Saint-Louis, made Marie Bedone “of the island of Senegal” the main heir to his estate.¹ He also left her “one hundred bars of Merchandise of my property,” and all of his furniture, as well as two slaves. *Signares* like Bedone – African and Eur-African women married into the European and increasingly *metis* mercantile classes of the islands of Gorée and Saint-Louis - were responsible for provisioning the slave traders who entered these ports, but also for hiring out the enslaved and family labor that made possible the slave and gum trades that dominated Senegambian commerce.² These women’s efforts were rewarded not only with an abundance of consumer merchandise from the Atlantic world, but also an accumulation of heritable property, in the form of real estate and slaves.

In thinking about the rise of Atlantic consumer culture in the development of capitalism, slavery has played an increasingly important historiographical role. Studies have taken into account the enslaved labor on the plantations producing the new staple luxuries like sugar and cotton, or the role of the slave trade in developing more

¹ The National Archives, UK (TNA) PROB 11/941, August 17, 1768 John Pfeffinger Esquire. There are numerous examples of this in the Wills and Probates of the British merchants resident at Senegambia and Sierra Leone.

² James Searing, *West African Slavery and Atlantic Commerce: The Senegal River Valley, 1700-1860* (Cambridge, 1993), 104; Hilary Jones, *The Metis of Senegal* (Bloomington, 2013), 33-35; Ibrahima Thiaw, *Espaces, Culturelle Matérielle et Identités en Senegambie* (Dakar, 2010), 21-23. For other parts of the coast, see George Brooks “The Signares of St. Louis and Gorée: Women Entrepreneurs in Eighteenth Century Senegal” in Nancy Hafkin and Edna Bay, eds., *Women in Africa: Studies in Social and Economic Change* (Stanford, 1976); Bruce Mouser, “Accommodation and Assimilation in the Landlord-Stranger Relationship,” available from http://www.tubmaninstitute.ca/sites/default/files/file/accommodation_80.pdf; Margaret Priestley, *West African Trade and Coast Society: A Family Study* (Oxford, 1969); Rebecca Shumway, *The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (Rochester, 2011); Robin Law, *Ouidah: The Social History of a West African Slaving Port* (Athens, OH, 2005); Silke Strickrodt, *Afro-European Trade in the Atlantic World* (Rochester, 2015); Mariana Candido, *An African Slaving Port in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge, 2013).

sophisticated insurance and mortgage instruments.³ However, in the study of the history of capitalism, in which the roles of women and African urban slaves are still marginal, the Senegambian island cities of Saint-Louis and Gorée provide a unique insight into how some urban households could use enslaved people as either ‘household labor’ or as a form of capital wealth for investing and inheriting, and collateralizing debt.⁴ Household labor – crucial to the industrious revolution – could generate increased household consumption not just by introducing women’s work to the marketplace, but also by creating an expanded and flexible form of (human) capital in the early modern port cities with domestic slaves.

This essay argues that women in Saint-Louis and Gorée were able to participate in the industrious revolution because the commercial demands of port cities allowed them to mobilize household labor, and particularly enslaved labor, in new ways. It will begin by exploring the debates about industriousness and the role of slavery in ideas of industrious and urban development. It will then examine the ways that Saint-Louis and Gorée could be considered “typical” Atlantic port cities before investigating the specific ways that household consumption, production, and capital accumulation operated in these largely female-dominated cities. The search for enslaved labor for Atlantic plantations helped to create the demand for the services of these cities, but enslaved labor also created the wealth of the largely female-led households, by being a combined flexible form of labor,

³ Joseph Inikori, “The Credit Needs of the African Trade and the Development of the Credit Economy in England,” *Explorations in Economic History*, 27 (1990), 197-231; Robin Pearson and David Richardson, “Social capital, institutional innovation and Atlantic trade before 1800,” *Business History*, 50, 6 (2008), 765-780; Bonnie Martin, “Neighbor-to-Neighbor Capitalism: Local Credit Networks and the Mortgaging of Slaves,” in Sven Beckert and Seth Rockman, eds. *Slavery’s Capitalism* (Philadelphia, 2016), 107-121; Sharon Ann Murphy, “securing Human Property: Slavery, Life Insurance, and Industrialization in the Upper South,” *Journal of the Early Republic*, 25, 4 (2005), 615-652.

⁴ Ellen Hartigan-O’Connor, “The Personal is Political Economy,” and Amy Dru Stanley, “Histories of Capitalism and Sex Difference,” *Journal of the Early Republic*, 36, 2 (2016), 335-350.

property, collateral, and capital. Because they were port cities, Saint-Louis and Gorée demanded certain types of labor, that the female-led, slave-filled household was particularly well positioned to take advantage of.

In the many studies that have followed on from Jan de Vries's *Industrious Revolution*, the role of women and the mobilization of the 'household' have been at the forefront of explaining the simultaneous growth of production and consumption in the long eighteenth century.⁵ A period of labor-intensive growth (industriousness) helped fuel the demand for consumer goods that helped to spur industrialization.⁶ Increases in household production in "response to rising consumer aspirations" often meant increased participation of women in market-oriented activities.⁷ For instance, Laurel Thatcher Ulrich records a change in the productive role of women in the households of seventeenth and eighteenth century New England as they began producing homespun cloth for the marketplace in order to access commodities from around the Atlantic world.⁸ But women's participation in industriousness also meant managing household size, investing for the future of the household, and organizing the household as a "firm."⁹ In some cases, they were actually employing and managing production through structures that look like

⁵ Jan de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution* (Cambridge, 2008); Maxine Berg, "In Pursuit of Luxury: Global History and British Consumer Goods in the Eighteenth Century," *Past and Present*, 182 (2004), 94; Sheilagh Ogilvie, "Consumption, Social Capital, and the 'Industrious Revolution' in Early Modern Germany," *The Journal of Economic History*, 70, 2 (2010); Jane Humphries and Carmen Sarasua, "Off the Record: Reconstructing Women's Labor Force Participation in the European Past," *Feminist Economics*, 81, 4 (2012), 39-67; Constance Hoffman Berman, "Women's Work in Family, Village and Town After 1000 CE: Contributions to Economic Growth?" *Journal of Women's History*, 19, 3 (2007), 10-32; Maxine Berg, "Women's Consumption and the Industrial Classes of Eighteenth-Century England," *Journal of Social History* (1996), 415-434.

⁶ Jan de Vries, "The Industrious Revolutions in East and West," in Gareth Austin and Kaoru Sugihara, *Labor-Intensive Industrialization in Global History* (Abingdon, Oxfordshire, 2013).

⁷ De Vries, "The Industrious Revolutions in East and West," 77.

⁸ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *The Age of Homespun* (New York, 2009), 105.

⁹ De Vries, "The Industrious Revolutions in East and West," 74.

household labor, such as domestic servants and apprentices, who focused on specialized portions of family and extended household production.¹⁰ Specialization and the division of labor, both within and between households, helped to fuel global demand, and created the stimulus to industrial development.

A widespread phenomenon in Europe and North America, the link between industrious household behavior and the consumer revolution suggests that examples could be found elsewhere in the period too. In fact, the household was mobilizing its members with increasing efficiency around the Atlantic world (and beyond) in the eighteenth century as a result of the increasing availability and desirability of global commodities. Rising household purchasing power in places touched by Atlantic commerce was invested in consumption, and the desire to consume led to new strategies for managing both short- and long-term household production. For instance, Hopkins argued that, “the household [in West Africa] was highly competitive because family labor was costless (in the formal sense of not receiving a wage) and could be used to the point where its marginal product was zero.”¹¹

Research on women’s roles in the creation of coastal communities in slave-trading regions of Africa has a long history. Women in these ports were well-placed to act as intermediaries, and from the earliest moments of settlement by European traders, local (often temporary) marriages were negotiated between the daughters of prominent families and European men in order to facilitate access to commercial networks. Women have been the subject of research on the development of Euro-African society in Ghana,

¹⁰ Amy Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (London, 1993).

¹¹ A.G. Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa* (London, 1973), 22.

Senegambia, Guinea, and Angola.¹² Mixed marriages produced children, new trading languages, and new forms of consumption and accumulation. But despite the volume of literature describing the roles of these women as brokers and companions, very little has been done to compare their experiences with that of industrious women in other parts of the Atlantic world. The nature of their role as intermediaries between cultures, and the often temporary nature of their marriages highlight how *different* they are from their counterparts elsewhere. But a focus on comparing the experiences of women in port cities suggests that their temporary marriages may have been the rule rather than the exception.¹³ And as scholars have increasingly emphasized the productive role of women in European and North American economic life in the early modern period, it seems clear that as consumers, as producers, as active participants in the marketplace, as inheritors of property, and as managers of the household, they shared quite a lot in common in this period of consumer and industrious revolutions.

But as research on England and North America has highlighted, the industrious and consuming household that these women were managing was made up more than just the family; it also included enslaved laborers. The organization of production in the American south has long contended with the role of slavery in the household, and what

¹² Margaret Priestley, *West African Trade and Coast Society: A Family Study* (Oxford, 1969); George E. Brooks, "A Nhara of the Guinea-Bissau Region: Mae Aurelia Correia," in Claire C. Robertson and Martin A. Klein, eds. *Women and Slavery in Africa* (Madison, 1983), 293-319; Ty M. Reese, "Wives, Brokers, and Laborers: Women at Cape Coast, 1750-1807," in Douglas Catterall and Jodi Campbell, eds., *Women in Port: Gendering Communities, Economies, and Social Networks in Atlantic Port Cities, 1500-1800* (Leiden, 2012), 291-314; Philip J. Havik, "Gendering the Black Atlantic: Women's Agency in Coastal Trade Settlements in the Guinea Bissau Region," in Catterall and Campbell, eds., *Women in Port*, 315-356; Havik, "Mary and Misogyny Revisited: Gendering the Afro-Atlantic Connection," in Havik and Malyn Newitt, *Creole Societies in the Portuguese Colonial Empire* (Lusophone Studies, 6, Bristol, 2007), 41-63.

¹³ Catterall and Campbell, eds., *Women in Port: Gendering Communities, Economies, and Social Networks in Atlantic Port Cities, 1500-1800* (Leiden, 2012); Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor, "'She Said She did not Know Money': Urban Women and Atlantic Markets in the Revolutionary Era," *Early American Studies*, 4, 2 (2006), 322-352; Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England*, 19.

that meant for slave society's either capitalist or pre-capitalist nature.¹⁴ This debate continues, as historians argue about whether the plantation system (and its related market activities) was fundamentally capitalist or antithetical to capitalism.¹⁵ Studies of the contributions of slave labor to the industrial revolution – whether focused on the Americas or on Africa – have tended to focus on the rural and agrarian labor of plantation slaves.¹⁶ But a long history of thinking about African slavery as a method of incorporating people into a kinship group suggests that African ideas about the household and about slavery should figure in considerations of industrious consumption in the eighteenth century Atlantic.¹⁷ If African slavery was somewhere between an economic and a social institution, and domestic slaves had a function somewhere between production for the market and production of the kinship group, then urban slavery in African port cities would seem to be a valuable case study of how household production and consumption increased in the eighteenth century Atlantic world.

Urban slavery – particularly in the port cities of the Atlantic - was incredibly prevalent in the eighteenth century, and coincided with Atlantic industriousness and the consumer revolution. In many port cities, women could also own property in the form of purchased and inherited enslaved labor, and they could direct those laborers to produce more for the household so that women were free to expand their market activity, or they

¹⁴ Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "Antebellum Southern Households: A New Perspective on a Familiar Question," *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)*, 7, 2 (1983), 215-253; Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (New York, 1944).

¹⁵ Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams* (Cambridge, MA, 2013); Greg Grandin, *The Empire of Necessity* (New York, 2014); Edward Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told* (New York, 2014); Sven Beckert and Seth Rockman, eds., *Slavery's Capitalism* (Philadelphia, 2016).

¹⁶ Joseph Inikori, *Africans and the Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge, 2002); Johan Fourie, "Slaves as capital investment in the Dutch Cape Colony, 1652-1795," Stellenbosch Economic Working Papers:21/11, December 2011.

¹⁷ Frederick Cooper, "The Problem of Slavery in African Studies," *Journal of African History*, 20, 1 (1979), 103-125; Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff, eds. *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives* (Madison, 1977).

could collect rental income from slaves hired out to work as skilled laborers, or they could sell the production of the enslaved in their household to the market.¹⁸ Expanding the household through domestic labor also meant expanding the consumption of the household – both in purchasing the enslaved person from the market economy, and in purchasing the food, clothing, and tools used by those enslaved people.

Eighteenth century port cities, then, are an important part of the story of expanding household industriousness and Atlantic consumer demand. While this essay will argue that Atlantic consumer and industrious trends need to include African port cities because they were an important market for these consumer goods, and obviously their integration into the Atlantic was an important factor in the development of the slave labor systems of the Americas, it is also important to look at African port cities because their experiences of urban slavery can help us to think critically about what is meant by the industrious household and about how women in different Atlantic contexts were able to accumulate and use invested capital in different ways. This essay by no means is attempting to argue that the Senegambian cities should be seen as exemplary case studies fully applicable to the experiences of women and enslaved people in other port cities. But the experiences of African urban slavery might help us to better understand how the Atlantic consumer revolution tied together the experiences of a variety of port cities, while the specific development of industriousness could lead to different kinds of capital accumulation in different cultural and political contexts.

¹⁸ Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor, "The Personal is Political Economy," and Amy Dru Stanley, "Histories of Capitalism and Sex Difference," in *Journal of the Early Republic*, 36, 2 (2016), 335-350; Krol K. Weaver, "Fashioning Freedom: Slave Seamstresses in the Atlantic World," *Journal of Women's History*, 24, 1 (2012), 44-59.

Saint-Louis and Gorée were port cities that experienced rapid growth and change in the second half of the eighteenth century. Saint-Louis doubled its population from around 2,500 in 1754 to an estimated 5,000 in the 1790s.¹⁹ Gorée jumped from 1,044 people in 1767 to 1,840 by 1785, and nearly 3,000 by 1800. Gorée and Saint-Louis were small cities in the Atlantic world, but with dense populations - 42,857/square mile in Gorée; 20,120/square mile in Saint-Louis.²⁰ An unusual female dominance of the island population of Saint-Louis saw nearly twice as many women as men inhabiting the island in the eighteenth century.²¹

Saint-Louis and Gorée also had interesting political histories that linked them very closely to the developments of both the French and British Atlantic. Saint-Louis and Gorée changed hands between the French to British several times between 1758 and 1783.²² Rapid urbanization, alongside the changing nature of imperial rule, helped to desegregate the island societies in Saint-Louis and Gorée: as new traders came with the new imperial administrations, they quickly intermarried in order to expedite trade.²³ This pattern of marriage allowed local women to accumulate wealth in property – merchandise, slaves, and real estate – much more rapidly than might otherwise be the case, and helped to create new *metis* families, reinforce the prestige of others, and generate households that were distinctive from the hinterland households from which

¹⁹ Searing, *West African Slavery and Atlantic Commerce*, 104.

²⁰ Compare to Newport in the same era: 872/square mile; or Charleston at 100/square mile; or Kingston Parish at 2,061/square mile.

²¹ Curtin puts the numbers at 623:1000 men to women in 1767, 630:1000 in 1776, and 586:1000 in 1779. *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa: Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade* (Wisconsin, 1975), 120.

²² Saint-Louis was taken in 1758 and was not retaken by the French until 1779 (and not officially until the Treaty of Versailles in 1783). Gorée was taken by the British in 1758, returned to the French in 1763, and taken again in 1779 before being returned in 1783. So although Gorée was regionally subordinate to Saint-Louis, from 1763 to 1779 the islands were administered by different imperial centers.

²³ Ibrahima Thiaw, 'Slaves without shackles: an archaeology of everyday life on Gorée Island (Senegal),' 9-10. Published online and available from https://mbedduburr.files.wordpress.com/2010/01/thiaw_Gorée.pdf

many of the islands' residents originated.

The geography of the islands also helped to create different social and economic relationships with the hinterlands. The city of Saint-Louis occupied a protected position on the island, but it was always integrated with a metropolitan area of urban fishing, boat building, markets and service-provision. Right in the mouth of the Senegal River, it was a short boat ride (500m) from the mainland to the East (and South) and just 50m or so from the spit of mainland that stretched up to make the northern bank of the Senegal River. As the starting and ending point for riverine commerce, it acted as a busy metropolitan port, with mainland traders coming and going as well as local families visiting, regional elites being hosted by the city's elites, slaves coming and going doing business for the urban residents. Gorée was further from the mainland (around 2km) in the open ocean, although protected by the headland that is part of modern Dakar. Families who settled on Gorée were a bit more removed from the daily local politics and social hierarchies of the mainland, although they relied on the mainland enormously for provisioning themselves, as well as for the goods and people sold from the island.

Both were hybrid cities, engaging with Atlantic maritime commerce, but growing well beyond the bounds of the company forts that dominated other parts of the slave-trading coast. In comparison with Afro-Portuguese trading forts found in modern Guinea Bissau, or the British fort at Cape Coast Castle, these urban entrepôts had features in common, especially in the ratio of Europeans to Africans, the importance of the slave trade to their establishment, the role of female entrepreneurs in their economies, and the spread of so-called 'Atlantic taste' – a variable style inspired by the popularity of Indian fabrics, especially cotton, increasingly available chinaware, food trends such as tea with

sugar, and tropical touches like parasols.²⁴ But as Havik notes of the Afro-Portuguese settlements, “the ‘urban’ expansion of these sites was limited by the refusal of African societies to concede the usufruct of the land,” keeping them quite limited in size and density.²⁵ Equally, because of restrictive Portuguese trading regulations, as the slave trade liberalized in the latter half of the eighteenth century, other ports were often preferred by French, British, and American vessels, allowing for the expansion of places like Saint-Louis and Gorée into real urban trading areas.²⁶

As port cities, Saint-Louis and Gorée shared economic characteristics that would affect the development of “industriousness” households. They were rapidly urbanizing port economies, but they were *not* at the center of the slave trade, unlike Angola or the Gold Coast, and were increasingly important over the course of the second half of the eighteenth century for the services they provided as provisioning centers for refueling as well as assorting the correct goods for slave trading elsewhere – up the Senegal or Gambia Rivers; in the Rio Pongas or Rio Nunez; at Sherbro; or further afield in the Gold Coast or the Bights of Benin and Biafra. Unlike the domestic slavery that grew up around Cape Coast Castle, though, where the Company owned large numbers slaves who worked for them in the slave trade, the majority of the domestic (as opposed to trade) slaves in Saint-Louis and Gorée were owned locally, and were used in a variety of

²⁴ Ann Brower Stahl, ‘Colonial Entanglements and the Practices of Taste: An Alternative to Logocentric Approaches,’ *American Anthropologist*, New Series, 104, 3 (2002), 827-845; Stahl and Adria LaViolette, ‘Introduction: Current Trends in the Archaeology of African History,’ *Journal of African History*, 42, 3 (2009), 354; Ibrahima Thiaw, ‘Atlantic Impacts on Inland Senegambia: French Penetration and African Initiatives in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Gajaaga and Bundu (Upper Senegal River)’ in J. Cameron Monroe and Akinwumi Ogundiran, eds. *Power and Landscape in Atlantic West Africa* (Cambridge, 2012), 57; Sherene Baugher and Robert W. Venables, ‘Ceramics as Indicators of Status and Class in Eighteenth-Century New York’ in Suzanne M. Spencer-Wood, ed., *Consumer Choice in Historical Archaeology* (New York, 1987), 31-53.

²⁵ Philip Havik, *Silences and Soundbites: The Gendered Dynamics of Trade and Brokerage in the pre-colonial Guinea-Bissau Region* (Munster, 2004), 49.

²⁶ William Pettigrew, *Freedom’s Debt: The Royal African Company and the Politics of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1672-1752* (Chapel Hill, 2013).

capacities.²⁷ Since only a relatively small amount of Atlantic slave trading took place in these urban centers, they are more comparable to Newport, or Charleston, than to Havana, or Kingston, as slaving economies.²⁸ But slaving was still important as a trade that contributed to the demand for goods, provisions, and services from these ports. A typical early eighteenth century slaving operation on this part of the coast consumed “8,200 pounds of rice, 4,200 pounds of millet, 5 cattle, 77 goats, 204 chickens, 400 pounds of flour, 600 pints of wine, 200 pounds of wax, 10 pints of alcoholic spirits ‘for the wounded,’ 10 pounds of gunpowder, 12 pounds of lead, 12 pounds of lead shot, 40 pounds of ‘butter from Gorée,’ and an assortment of other goods,” which would have needed to be sourced from the hinterland of these port cities and funnelled through their economies.²⁹

For example, in 1782, after the French had regained control of Saint-Louis from the British, the government negotiated a contract with the cattle merchants of the island. Brokers and translators were paid in guinea cloth - equivalent to £6 per 200 head of cattle for the brokers, and £3 for the translators - and received provisions of millet, molasses, and meat while the transactions were taking place. The Barek (king) of Waalo, Mahammedoun, was also given three pounds of bread a day during the period of the transaction as a tax.³⁰ This complex contract demonstrates the quantity of goods passing through Saint-Louis (hundreds of heads of cattle; fifty-two ‘moulds’ of millet; fifty two

²⁷ Rebecca Shumway, *The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (Rochester, 2011); Ty Reese, “‘Eating’ Luxury: Fante Middlemen, British Goods, and Changing Dependencies on the Gold Coast, 1750-1821,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 66, 4 (2009), 851-872; Paul Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery, second edition* (Cambridge, 2000), 133.

²⁸ The totals for greater Senegambia were 186,783; for the Gold Coast region, 373,655; and for West Central Africa, 1,109,969. The peak five year period for Senegambia, Sierra Leone, and the Gold Coast was 1771-75 (27,619; 20,865; and 47,180 respectively); while for West Central Africa, it was 1796-1800 (149,236). Transatlantic Slave Voyages Database.

²⁹ Searing, *West African Slavery and Atlantic Commerce*, 67-8.

³⁰ Archives Nationales du Senegal (ANS), AOF G 13G1, 26 August 1782.

pounds of meat; four pints of molasses; numerous pounds of locally produced bread), the relationship between the urban centre and its periphery (millet produced in the region, which would be subject to similarly negotiated contracts, butchers present to allocate cuts of meat, the consumption by the Barek of Waalo of bread produced in Saint-Louis), and the combination of local (millet and meat) and Atlantic (molasses) goods that made up the diet of residents.

As this contract illustrates, the commercial demands of the ports meant that the trends in industriousness went beyond the cities themselves. The hinterlands were deeply involved in providing the produce required by both urban residents and ships in port. Households responded to increased demand by mobilizing female and enslaved labor. Le Brasseur noted in 1776, “almost all the women on the continent have obtained [the right] to sell millet, so they could request that the [trading] assortment contain all the baubles that they need.”³¹ Because millet was just one aspect of a family’s production, it could be expanded or combined to participate in external markets. In the hinterland of Gorée, a family’s millet granaries were protected and allowed for an accumulation of surplus even in a politically diffuse region with little to no plantation slave labour. Niuminka villages in the same region also incorporated ways for women to increase their ‘industriousness’ and purchasing power: clams, oysters, and shellfish collected from mangroves and shallows when the tide was low during the day could be boiled, dried, and taken to market.³²

³¹ J.A. Le Brasseur, *Memoire pouvant server de reponse a la letter de Monseigneur de Sartines* (1776) as quoted in Francois Richard, ‘Political Transformations and Cultural Landscapes in Senegambia during the Atlantic Era: An Alternative View from the Siin (Senegal)?’ in Monroe and Ogundiran, *Power and Landscape*, 100.

³² Interview with Yammar Diagne, February 2015. In Niuminka villages, Women collect clams, oysters, shellfish from mangroves and shallows. They boil them and then dry them and sell them in markets. They

The hinterland-port connections could be complex. The traveller Anna Maria Falconbridge noted on her trip to Robana, outside of Freetown, that in that region salt was exchanged for slaves from the interior to be traded into the Atlantic for consumer goods, and “Making this salt is attended with a very trifling expence, for none but *old, refuse, female* slaves, are employed in the work, and the profit is considerable.”³³ In the hinterlands of Saint-Louis and Gorée, enslaved labor intended for the Atlantic trade could be used in the production of food while they awaited sale. The requirements of the port cities (and their Atlantic customers) were met by hinterland producers, who increased production through the mobilization of female kin and enslaved labor in order to access the Atlantic consumer goods channeled through those cities.

In the late eighteenth century, when British and French soldiers were garrisoned in the Gorée and Saint-Louis (respectively), the provision requirements and complex dependence on local and hinterland production correspondingly increased. An American trading voyage to British-occupied Gorée sold over £913 worth of goods, including soap, raisins, sugar, coffee, and a small boat and oars, but which was mostly 3580 gallons of rum for soldiers’ use.³⁴ The majority of foodstuffs, though, came from the mainland. It was either collected by the *habitants*’ male slaves who took small boats to buy millet supplies from producers along the coast, or sold directly by producers who arrived daily in their own boats with animals and grains to sell in the market.³⁵

While industriousness household production might have been a feature in the

collect during low tide, usually about 4-5 hours a day, but only when low tide is during the day (not at night).

³³ Anna Maria Falconbridge, *Narrative of Two Voyages to the River Sierra Leone During the Years 1791-1793* (London, 1794), LETTER III. Granville Town, Sierra Leone, May 13, 1791.

³⁴ John Carter Brown Library (JCB) BFBR B.611, Gorée November 13, 1801, Benson to Brown & Ives.

³⁵ Searing, *West African Slavery*, 116-117.

hinterlands, the cities offered additional ways that female and enslaved labor could be mobilized. These cities focused the point of exchange between the hinterlands and visiting ocean vessels, which expanded the opportunities for household consumption by providing urban residents with opportunities to lend to the French and British. The men and women of Saint-Louis, for instance, were able to make loans to the French company in the form of provisions gathered from mainland suppliers. A book of the Company's (and therefore, the new colonial government's) creditors in the early 1800s reveals to what extent the French had relied on the residents of Saint-Louis for providing supplies in exchange for credit with the company, as well as providing buildings, and access to land and labor, all "rented" from them for long term credit with the company.³⁶ Rosalie Aussenac (1765-1828), who was listed in the book of Senegal's debts five times, was an important *signare* from a dynasty of *signares* stretching back into the early eighteenth century. She had lent the Saint-Louis government over 14,000 livres worth of supplies.³⁷ Other *habitant* families – Pellegrin, Valantin – are also represented among the Company's creditors, renting out bakeries, boats, and laborers. This ability to assemble and produce supplies to lend for credit allowed urban residents to increase their Atlantic consumption when they called in their debt, but it also allowed them to ensure they received the goods or capital they needed, rather than just taking whatever trade goods the company's merchants had on hand at the moment. That they had the capital (in the form of trade goods) to purchase supplies from the hinterland that they could then lend on credit to the company's merchants, shows that the city's residents were accumulating and using their assets to expand the range of their investments.

³⁶ ANS AOF T1 Etat et liquidations des dettes du Senegal.

³⁷ ANS AOF T1, 1808 debts of 12,524, and 1,200 in "fournitures."

Beyond their roles in assorting of food and supplies, the ‘port’ in these port cities established demand for boat-building and repairing, pilots, seamen, laundry-women, bakers, courts - both European-style and local ‘palaver’ style courts - to adjudicate trade and contract disputes, stores to sell provisions as well as imports, and interpreters. What differentiated these cities from the smaller outposts and weekly markets was the combination of import-export trade with the development of government, religious, judicial, and especially service-based economic functions. Accounts of trading voyages as well as travellers narratives attest to the importance of local shipwrights, carpenters, smiths, and coopers, who were either free labourers, or, more often, skilled slaves who were hired out. The purchasing power and consumer behaviour of households in these different ports demonstrates how industriousness manifested in different contexts. In households with the flexibility to expand production to two or more incomes through the mobilization of female industriousness through household-based services and male participation in the port economy – however seasonal or infrequent – access to the Atlantic both facilitated that expansion and gave households a good reason to expand to access new fashions and consumer goods.

In both cities, because of their role as ports, property ownership was an important source of productive capital: rooms or whole houses could be rented out, as could labor. In Gorée, the Rhode Island trader, Martin Benson noted that “It is also an established Custom for all Super Cargos whether English or Neutral to hire a house and reside on shire, where all business must be transacted, and the goods landed in presence of the Military.”³⁸ Real estate was a respectable form of capital accumulation for women in both slave and free societies, since it allowed them to earn income from traditional, domestic

³⁸ JCB BFBR B.611 F.5 Gorée November 2, 1801 Benson to Brown & Ives.

and household based activities such as cooking and laundering. Although the Senegambian *signares* were a class apart in terms of their relationship with both the Atlantic and African political setting, most women who participated in the building of Atlantic port economies shared in common a fairly strict commitment to the domestic sphere of labor. The growth of new Atlantic port cities expanded “the activities of white and black women in ancillary services - providing food, drink and lodging; selling goods; sewing garments; caring for the young and sick,” while men were away at sea.³⁹ Port cities would have struggled to function without the services provided when the household was opened up to the market economy.

But it was not only in their function as service and provisioning centres that these were attractive ports for Europeans: the purchasing power of those associated with Atlantic trade was an important aspect of the region’s value to European and American traders. It was, in fact, in their potential as importers of British (and British re-exported) manufactures that the British Governor of Saint-Louis, Charles O’Hara, believed the Senegal River trade to be most valuable to Britain. “The consumption hitherto [sic] of Manufactures in this River,” he wrote in 1766, “amounts one year with another, to Forty thousand pounds sterling, and much about the same sum is expended in the River Gambia” which at that point was a neutral trading region, though the French had regained control over Gorée to the north.⁴⁰ Ship invoices reveal the scale and variety of goods that were demanded by consumers in Senegal and Sierra Leone: the Schooner *Olive Branch* sent a cargo to Gorée and Sierra Leone which included twenty-one different types of

³⁹ Hartigan-O’Connor, “‘She Said She did not Know Money’,” 349. Peter Lindert and Jeffrey Williamson “American Colonial Incomes, 1650-1774,” *Economic History Review*, 69, 1 (2016), 67; Seth Rockman, *Scraping By* (Baltimore, 2010), 101.

⁴⁰ TNA CO 267/1, From Gov. O’Hara to the Right Honourable Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations, 28 May 1766.

Indian imported cotton cloths and was valued at over \$12,000, suggesting that the Rhode Island merchants who fitted her out anticipated a significant market, and significant purchasing power, in the region.⁴¹

Women were particularly famous consumers in the Senegambian port cities. The *signares* role as companions to the most important British and French officials gave them additional opportunities to consume Atlantic (and global) goods. The Rhode Island trader, Martin Benson, sent a “set of China” with his compliments to John Heddle, the British paymaster at Gorée in order to ingratiate himself with this potential customer. But rather than send the porcelain directly to Heddle, Benson alerted him that the set would be delivered “to your good friend Mrs Sophia,” suggesting that he knew where the real influence was in the colony.⁴² *Signares*’ ability to consume fashion to such a notorious extent that they became internationally famous derived from their creation of new households through marriage with French and British merchants, and their mobilization of enslaved production. As Doumet wrote in the 1760s, even *signares* who could barely get by on the earnings of their slaves could afford jewellery by depriving herself of basic necessities.⁴³

Signares wore clothes imported from around the world to complete their signature style, including the typical African *grande pagne* (wraparound cloth) but also French

⁴¹ JCB BFBR B.611 F.7 Cotton Goods Shipped on Olive Branch included: Jannah Mamody Burboon Gurrahs, Aliabad Emerties, Mow Sannas, Mugga Sannas, Sannah Emerties, Chadpore Cossaks, Mow Sannas, Salalpore Mamoody, Beerboon Baftas, Oud Cossaks, Manahpore Gurrahs, Judgea Baftas, Suchipore Baftas, Chittabully Baftas, Chittabully Fine Baftas, Kyrabad Lawns, Moharage Gungy Sauns, Blue Gelly Handkerchiefs, Fine Check, Double Custas, Musteo Pieces, Bandano Handkerchiefs, Lungee Handkerchiefs.

⁴² JCB BFBR B.611 F.5 Gorée November 10, 1801 Martin Benson to John Heddle, Esq. Paymaster of His Britannic Majesty’s Forces at Gorée.

⁴³ Charles Becker and Victor Martin, eds. “Memoire inedited de Doumet (1769),” *Bulletin de l’Institut Fondamental de l’Afrique Noire*, 31, 1 (1974), 33-34.

shirts and Moroccan shoes, and as much jewelry and as many beads as they could.⁴⁴ The probate inventory of the famous Gorée signare Anne Pepin, who gained status and wealth in the late eighteenth century and established a successful dynasty of sons and grandchildren, lists seventy-one *pagnes* and forty-seven scarves.⁴⁵ It was not purely purchasing power that made this wealth – and particularly its display through consumer goods – notable. The consumption of this Atlantic fashion by Saint-Louis and Gorée’s elite also required an increasing investment in the expansion of the household. The descriptions of the household slaves’ jobs in the largest households in Saint-Louis and Gorée included tailors, weavers, ‘pressers’ (ironers), and ‘fitters’ or dressing attendants.⁴⁶ The *signares* in Gorée wore conical headdresses (made from imported Indian “guinea cloth”) to show that they were not required to carry things on their heads – they had enslaved women to do that for them – and descriptions of the women from the time also note slaves carrying their jewellery for them, and shielding them with parasols.⁴⁷

In the Senegambian cities, then, the growing population and growing purchasing power reflected an increased household size resulting from higher investment in domestic slaves. With the proceeds from trade, renting out their homes, renting out slaves, and using enslaved labor for household production, women could buy more property and slaves, which could be passed on to the next generation, thus perpetuating the cycle of

⁴⁴ Jean-Baptiste-Leonard Durand, *Voyage au Senegal*, tome second (Paris, 1802), 30-31; Jones, *Metis of Senegal*, 36; Marylee S. Crofts “Economic Power and Racial Irony: Portrayals of Women Entrepreneurs in French Colonial Senegal,” *Proceedings of the Meeting of the French Colonial Historical Society*, 19 (1994), 216-225.

⁴⁵ ANS, Dakar AOF Z Privee, 1Z39, 1Z39 Levee de scelles et inventaire apres le deces de dame Anne Pepin, November 4, 1837. See also Mark Hinchman, ‘House and Household on Gorée, Senegal, 1758-1837,’ *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 65, 2 (2006), 184 for an architectural historian’s take on this probate inventory.

⁴⁶ ANS Dakar, Privee AOF Z, 1Z39, December 16, 1837.

⁴⁷ Dominique Harcourt Lamiral, *L’Afrique et le peuple africain, considérés sous tous leurs rapports avec notre commerce et nos colonies*, 1789; René Claude Geoffroy de Villeneuve, *L’Afrique, ou histoire, moeurs, usages et coutumes des africains: le Sénégal* (Paris, 1814), vol. 1.

accumulation. In Gorée, when the colony changed hands, or traders left and never returned, or disease killed them, wives and widows were left with property – real estate and slaves – from multiple marriages over time. Ann Pepin left at least one house, and several slaves to her heirs.⁴⁸

Slaves were required to produce for the household (as weavers, cooks), to reproduce for the household (more labor), and to help the household consume (by carrying and displaying wealth, tailoring and ironing clothing). Slaves made up a sizeable proportion of the population: in 1785, when the population of Gorée was 1,840, 1,044 of those were ‘house slaves’ – just over half of the population.⁴⁹ In 1763, a census of Gorée recorded nine *signare* households made up of roughly 16 people on average, both enslaved and free, making the average *signare* household larger than the household averages of five to ten in non-slave societies.⁵⁰ The Saint-Louis census of 1779 recorded 1,858 slaves in a population of 3,018, with 87 per cent of households owning some slaves, and 47 per cent of households owning more than six slaves.⁵¹

The household slaves of Gorée and Saint-Louis were important contributors to household income, since male slaves could be rented out to French merchants and

⁴⁸ ANS, Dakar AOF Z Privee, 1Z26 29 November 1825; 9 October 1837.

⁴⁹ Mark Hinchman, *Portrait of an Island: The Architecture and Material Culture of Gorée, Senegal, 1758-1837* (Nebraska, 2015), 180; 220. Sylvain-Meinrad-Xavier de Golbery, *Fragmens d'un Voyage en Afrique, fait pendant les années 1785, 1786, et 1787* (Paris, 1802). Only 200 slaves were in the city for export. Compare to Philadelphia where “in 1767... almost 1,400 slaves served their masters in Philadelphia... one-twelfth of the city's inhabitants”: Gary B. Nash, “Slaves and Slaveowners in Colonial Philadelphia,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 30, 2 (1973), 236.

⁵⁰ Searing, *West African Slavery and Atlantic Commerce*, 108. Compare to Philadelphia, where “more than half of the slaveholders owned only one adult slave” (Gary B. Nash, “Slaves and Slaveowners in Colonial Philadelphia,” 238) and where Quaker families most commonly had eight members (Robert V. Wells, “Family size and fertility control in eighteenth-century America: A study of Quaker families,” *Population Studies*, 25, 1, (1971), 74). In pre-industrial England, “53'7% in households of six or more persons” but “the mean and median household size were well below five”, Peter Laslett, “Size and structure of the household in England over three centuries,” *Population Studies*, 23:2, (1969), 207. E.A. Hammel and Peter Laslett, “Comparing Household Structure Over Time and Between Cultures,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 16, 1 (Jan., 1974), pp. 73-109.

⁵¹ Searing, *West African Slavery and Atlantic Commerce*, 116.

companies as sailors and laborers and female slaves made up the majority of the slave population in these Senegambian port cities. In the Senegambian cities, by the second half of the eighteenth century, women dominated the enslaved labor force there were 979 female to 478 male slaves in Saint-Louis according to one census.⁵² Men, skilled as sailors, were particularly in demand during the trading season. Even unskilled enslaved sailors could earn three “bars” worth of goods a month on a five-month voyage, or 75 French livres each, which was divided between the sailors and their masters.⁵³ Payment in bars to both slaves and their masters allowed both sets of people to access consumer goods. At the other end of the spectrum, a captain, who could still be a slave, could make 500 livres worth of goods, plus a bottle of wine a day.⁵⁴ Slave women could be additionally important to the expansion of household production, since they acted as producers of both goods and people, reproducing the enslaved population.⁵⁵

Slaves even added to household consumption by requiring their own clothing and food, and larger living quarters.⁵⁶ Consumption on behalf of and by the enslaved was an especially important part of urban ports’ incorporation into the consumer and industrious revolutions.⁵⁷ The typical urban Atlantic ‘houseful’ contained a mixture of members – enslaved and free; family and servants; related and unrelated – often numbering more than six people, being provisioned by in-house weaving and sewing, and encouraging consumption through both intra-household credit and individual purchases made with wages or the proceeds of other types of ‘industrious’ activity earned in and by its

⁵² Searing, *West African Slavery and Atlantic Commerce*, 103; 105; 116-117.

⁵³ Saugnier, *Voyage au Senegal*, 309. In 1785.

⁵⁴ Saugnier, *Voyage au Senegal*, 308.

⁵⁵ Searing, *West African Slavery and Atlantic Commerce*, 104.

⁵⁶ Thiaw, ‘Slaves without shackles: an archaeology of everyday life on Gorée Island (Senegal),’ 9-10.

⁵⁷ Ellen Hartigan-O’Connor, *Ties that Buy* (Philadelphia, 2012), 19-20.

members.⁵⁸ As Du Plessis has noted, around the Atlantic world, “supplying textiles and apparel for the enslaved could amount to as much as 8.27 percent of annual operating expenses,” though on plantations, owners were often negligent in keeping the enslaved in suitable clothing.⁵⁹ In West Africa, where Lamiral described domestic slaves eating from the same bowls as their owners, clothing slaves was both a social responsibility and a reflection of respectability. In some urban contexts, clothing for the enslaved was purchased as part of household expenditure, but it was also purchased by the enslaved themselves, with the proceeds from their own extra work (selling food, or the partial wages earned when hired out for skills), fitting the pattern of clothing consumption contributing to increased household production.⁶⁰ In Saint-Louis, unmarried slaves – men and women – wore a simple belt with a bit of canvas between their legs; once married, they wore two *pagnes*, one around the waist down to the knees, and the other over their shoulders, which could be produced by their labor or purchased through labor for someone else.⁶¹

Property in the form of enslaved laborers was vital to the expansion of household production in Saint-Louis and Gorée. In these port cities, the intensification of household production, the increase in urbanization, and the development of multipolar regional economies was connected from the mid-eighteenth century onwards to a rise in the

⁵⁸ Hartigan-O'Connor, *Ties that Buy*, 13-15; Kathleen Hilliard, *Masters, Slaves, and Exchange: Power's Purchase in the Old South* (Cambridge, 2014). Cuba: “in 1774, each household accounted for 5.80 individuals” Franklin W. Knight, “Origins of Wealth and the Sugar Revolution in Cuba, 1750-1850,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, 57, 2 (1977), 231-253; Quaker North American households: “an average size for the Quaker family of 5'69 children,” Robert V. Wells, “Family size and fertility control in eighteenth-century America: A study of quaker families,” *Population Studies*, 25, 1 (1971), 74; England: “a majority of all persons lived in households of six or more,” Peter Laslett, “Size and structure of the household in England over three centuries,” *Population Studies*, 23, 2 (1969), 207; Sao Paulo: “average number of slaves owned 3; largest owners (number of slaves), 12” Francisco Vidal Luna, Herbert S. Kellin, *Slavery and the Economy of Sao Paulo, 1750-1850* (Stanford University Press, 2003), 94.

⁵⁹ Robert Du Plessis, *Material Atlantic* (Cambridge, 2015), 135.

⁶⁰ Hilliard, *Masters, Slaves, and Exchange*, 62-63.

⁶¹ Durand, *Voyage au Senegal*, 31.

creative use of domestic slaves. One source estimated that “many African women own thirty to forty slaves.”⁶² This is an important aspect of household labor to bear in mind, because in de Vries’ discussion of the industrious revolution of the North Atlantic, “women substitute away from household activities, child bearing, and child raising in order to capture the now-enlarged benefits of market labor.”⁶³ However, the intensification of female capital accumulation, and corresponding consumption, in Saint-Louis and Gorée was at least in part a result of the intensification of enslaved male and, especially, enslaved female labor in the service industries.

In effect, enslaved and family labor (household labor) in the Senegambian port city context was acting as invested capital, alongside the real estate rented out to visiting merchants, producing increasing returns on the original (slave) investment through the wages paid by merchants, brokers, travelers, etc. that then accumulated to the increasingly wealthy, female dominated *métis* class. This role was emphasized by the preference for selling male slaves – not purely because they were in more demand on the other side of the Atlantic, but also because of the local demand for the kinds of household labor performed by female slaves.⁶⁴

Slaves could also be used to secure loans and were in some ways preferred as collateral because their portability made them more valuable.⁶⁵ While land was only of value to someone willing to use it or rent it out, a pawned slave could be taken to the

⁶² Pruneau de Pommegorge, *Description de la Nigritie* (Amsterdam, 1789), 2, as cited in George Brooks, “The Signares of St. Louis and Gorée” in Nancy Hafkin and Edna Bay, eds., *Women in Africa: Studies in Social and Economic Change* (Stanford, 1976), 23.

⁶³ De Vries, *Industrious Revolution*, 269.

⁶⁴ The percentage of male slaves aboard vessels embarking from Senegambia rarely fell below sixty percent, and at the end of the eighteenth century was as high as seventy three percent. Transatlantic Slave Voyages Database <http://slavevoyages.org/voyages/EBBoMNbe>; Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*, 6-8.

⁶⁵ Gareth Austin, *Labor, Land, and Capital in Ghana: From Slavery to Free Labor in Asante, 1807-1956* (Rochester, 2005), 140-150.

Caribbean and sold for much more than the “purchase value” on the coast if a borrower defaulted.⁶⁶ Investment in slaves (either through purchase or through canny marriage and inheritance) therefore allowed for exponential growth in Senegambian *signares*’ household consumption: not only did the slaves contribute to production, but they also contributed to increased consumption through their own value. Selling slaves to the company, for local use rather than for trade into the Atlantic, was also open as an option. Therefore while the sale of domestic slaves was frowned on because of the “kinship” associations of domestic slavery, and therefore their use as pawns was not encouraged, they could still act as collateral and therefore secure loans that allowed expanded capital accumulation. Because *signares* married merchants, they accumulated slaves as inherited property as well as through purchase, helping them to build ever larger household labor forces, which would allow them the flexibility to have larger numbers of them out “in hock” for loans, or earning “rent” for the family as hired laborers at any given time. They invested and inherited capital in the form of enslaved labor, and saw their returns rise over the late eighteenth century.

Reliance on pawning was a distinctive function of credit in the port cities of the Atlantic world, where the personal nature that had characterized relationships of debt in the early modern period were unmade by the transient nature of the populations.⁶⁷ But especially in the economies of Saint-Louis and Gorée, where there was little cash to

⁶⁶ Curtin, *Economic Change in Precolonial Senegal*, 303-304; Paul E. Lovejoy, ‘Pawnship, Debt, and ‘Freedom’ in Atlantic Africa During the Era of the Slave Trade: A Reassessment,’ *The Journal of African History*, 55, 1 (2014), 55-78; Judith Spicksley, ‘Pawns on the Gold Coast: The Rise of Asante and Shifts in Security for Debt, 1680-1750,’ *The Journal of African History*, 54, 2 (2013), 147-175; James L.A. Webb, ‘On Currency and Credit in the Western Sahel, 1700-1850,’ in Endre Stiansen and Jane Guyer, eds., *Credit, Currencies, and Culture: African Financial Institutions in Historical Perspective* (Nordic Africa Institute, 2000), 47-48.

⁶⁷ Wendy Woloson, “In Hock: Pawning in Early America,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 27, 1 (2007), 39.

exchange, credit (and credit in consumer goods and commodities) was essential.⁶⁸ Company records kept track of debts owed and creditors, and bills of exchange were issued by the military governments, but cash and specie were difficult to come by.⁶⁹ An account of a voyage in Senegal by Saignier illuminates the important role of credit in the cities. Hoping to help future merchants to avoid potential pitfalls in African commerce, Saignier's very first piece of advice is to inform his readers that "slaves by inheritance are only nominally so; their masters cannot sell them without bringing dishonor upon themselves." At first, this seems sensible enough advice, but it becomes clear as he reaches the eighth warning about how to conduct transactions based on credit that this is a way that many European traders have been had. Saignier concludes his list "by observing all these precautions, one may carry on with the natives a traffic on credit without running any risk."⁷⁰ There may have been cultural limitations on selling domestic slaves into the transatlantic trade, but that did not stop *habitant* families from conning naïve merchants that way. Even more savvy merchants accepted domestic slaves as pawns: they could not be sold into the trade without hassle, but they could work for the merchant or the company to earn 'interest' while they awaited payment, an arrangement that was acceptable to the merchants and the Muslim Wolof alike.⁷¹

The importance of slaves in the credit relationships in the Atlantic port city trade is highlighted by contrast with Freetown, where the Sierra Leone Company was prevented by its anti-slave trade mission from using or buying slaves. The Governor and

⁶⁸ Curtin, *Economic Change*, 302.

⁶⁹ Webb, "On Currency and Credit in the Western Sahel, 1700-1850," 40; Robin Law, "Cowries, Gold, and Dollars: Exchange Rate Instability and Domestic Price Inflation in Dahomey in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," in Jane I. Guyer, *Money Matters* (Heinemann, James Currey, 1994), 53-73.

⁷⁰ Pierre-Raymond de Brisson Saignier, *Voyages to the Coast of Africa* (London, 1792), 275-276.

⁷¹ Curtin, *Economic Change*, 307.

Council decided in October 1793 to end existing credit practices – lending goods to Africans – as “no expediency remains for recovering the Company’s money except seizing the persons of the debtors an expedient it was better to avoid.”⁷² The inability to use slaves as a credit instrument continually frustrated the Sierra Leone Company’s commercial ambitions and limited the growth of individual wealth amongst Freetown’s settlers to levels below that of their counterparts in Senegambia. “It gives to the Slave Factories a great Superiority over the Company, even in the Traffic of Produce, inasmuch as they are able to conduct a Trade in both Produce and Slaves, at nearly the same Expence at which a Trade in Produce alone can be carried on. It afford also to the Slave Factor an Advantage in respect to the Means of recovering Debts for Produce, for he has only to seize and sell his Debtor, or the Family, or even Townsmen of his Debtor, in order to secure himself against loss; he can therefore generally gain some Preference over the Company, by affording a larger Credit to the Natives.”⁷³

The use of slaves as credit instruments in the port cities was not unique in the African context. Slaves were important as a means of financing growth in the interior African states. Here, huge sums could be expended in goods lent as credit to the aristocratic families in Fuuta, up the Senegal River, or from James Fort in the Gambia River, or in Futa Jallon in the highlands to the far north of Freetown. In the hinterland, coastal traders would arrive with large shipments of goods, given as credit for the future delivery of slaves. But government spending could also be financed through the credit provided by the slave trade. The government of Kajor, the coastal state between Saint-

⁷² TNA CO 270/2, Minutes of Council, 4 November 1793; Suzanne Schwarz, “Commerce, Civilization and Christianity: The Development of the Sierra Leone Company,” in David Richardson, Suzanne Schwarz and Anthony Tibbles, eds., *Liverpool and Transatlantic Antislavery* (Liverpool, 2007), 264.

⁷³ TNA WO 1/352, Report from the Committee on the Petition of the Court of Directors of the Sierra Leone Company 1802, 16-17.

Louis and Gorée, owed the Compagnie des Indes 107 slaves in 1726, and the government of Bawol, on the mainland opposite Gorée, owed 41.⁷⁴ These kingdoms also provided access to credit for the trading companies in times of need – especially in times of war, when supplies from the Atlantic were at a premium.⁷⁵

But over the course of the eighteenth century, slave debt became important beyond the large interior states. The average indebtedness on the books of the Royal African Company in the 1730s and 1740s in the Gambia River was £20 worth of goods – or 3 good slaves.⁷⁶ By the 1780s, Senegambian slaves were worth nearly £20 of goods *each*, in part as a result of increased demand for slave labor in the Caribbean, and in part as a result of a boycott of the slave trade by the revolutionary jihadist state of Futa Toro.⁷⁷ This gave *metis* families in Saint-Louis especially unprecedented access to credit: *signares* could hire out their domestic slaves to the company for access to goods; they could pawn their slaves for small loans, which could be in goods or in (goods-based) capital with which to expand their own trade into the interior; and they could sell their slaves directly when prices were high, and demand for hired labor was low, as a result of interior political instability and famine, as in the 1750s, and again in the 1780s and 1790s.⁷⁸ Domestic slavery allowed women to accumulate capital, earn interest and rent, and invest, all while staying largely within the domestic sphere of the household.

These female dominated cities draw attention to the relationship between

⁷⁴ Curtin, *Economic Change*, 305.

⁷⁵ Curtin, *Economic Change*, 303.

⁷⁶ Curtin, *Economic Change*, 303; David Richardson, “Prices of Slaves in West and West-Central Africa: Toward and Annual Series, 1698-1807,” *Bulletin of Economic Research*, 43, 1 (1991), 39-40.

⁷⁷ Richardson, “Prices of Slaves in West and West-Central Africa,” 40-41. See Lovejoy, *Jihad in West Africa during the Age of Revolutions* (Athens, OH, 2016).

⁷⁸ Searing, *West African Slavery*, 128; Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*, 133.

household production and consumption, and the way that this urban slave society engaged in intensified Atlantic consumption and production in ways that demonstrate that the consumer revolution sparked different, locally inflected versions of the industrious revolution in places where capital, credit, and consumer goods accumulated to an unprecedented degree, amongst new groups of people. While households around the Atlantic relied on non-familial labor contributions, and invested in heritable property, the role of domestic slavery could and did differ, yielding different results for the development of capitalism.

Although there were specific local contexts to the expansion of female labor in these cities, they mirror those changes taking place in female labor practices in other Atlantic port cities. As Ogilvie has noted, however, the industrious revolution that took off in England and the Netherlands relied on the ability of women to move into an extra-household labor market, something not available to, for instance, those in small market towns in Germany, where social capital restricted access to the market.⁷⁹ In her example, guilds and other ‘entrenched elites’ kept the consumer revolution within the norms of gendered labor expectations.⁸⁰ In the case of the port cities of Saint-Louis and Gorée, female participation in the service sector did not create a change in the labor force, and therefore did not challenge traditional political authority. In fact, many of the earliest *signare* marriages were brokered by local elites, who were using traditional means of incorporating ‘stranger’ traders into the kinship group.⁸¹ What was new to these specific port cities was the accumulation of heritable forms of capital wealth, and the corresponding access to new forms of credit and increased household consumption, that

⁷⁹ Ogilvie, “Consumption,” 290.

⁸⁰ Ogilvie, “Consumption,” 321.

⁸¹ Brooks, “A Nhara of the Guinea-Bissau Region: Mae Aurelia Correia,” 293-319.

resulted from the cities' specific roles within the Atlantic trading complex and their innovative uses of property in slaves.⁸²

Engaging with the idea of the industrious revolution reveals that African port cities were also industrious producers and consumers, fueling the same cycle of growth in the eighteenth century that touched port cities in North America and Northwest Europe. But it also casts new light on the make-up of those households, and the gendered role of slavery in urban industrious economies. The dominance of female labor contributions to the household's production and consumption practices is especially clear in the preference for female slaves in Saint-Louis and Gorée, which reflects the growth of women's contributions to household production in other port cities. In contrast, in the productive hinterlands that fed the port cities and the wider world, there was a preference for male servants and slaves.⁸³

As urban slaveholding declined after the eighteenth century, some parts of the Atlantic industrializing world (including the hinterlands of these African port cities) continued to rely on labor-intensive growth because their fixed capital was in enslaved labor, and the scarcity of labor, abundance of land, and demand for high value commodities elsewhere made this approach profitable.⁸⁴ But in urban centers, as the industrious revolution gradually gave way to the industrial revolution, owning fixed

⁸² See for instance Clare Haru Crowston, *Credit, Fashion, Sex: Economies of Regard in Old Regime France* (Raleigh, 2013); T.H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution* (Oxford, 2004), 117; Joseph Inikori, "The Credit Needs of the African Trade and the Development of the Credit Economy in England," *Explorations in Economic History* 27 (1990), 197-231; Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa*, 70-71; David Richardson, 'Background to Annexation: Anglo-American credit relations in the Bight of Biafra, 1700-1891' in Olivier Petre-Grenouilleau, ed., *From Slave Trade to Empire: Europe and the colonisation of Black Africa, 1780s-1880s* (Abingdon, 2004), 49; Webb, "On Currency and Credit in the Western Sahel, 1700-1850," 40.

⁸³ Ogilvie, "Consumption," 290; Emily Osborn, *Our New Husbands Are Here* (Athens, OH, 2011).

⁸⁴ Ralph V. Anderson and Robert E. Gallman, "Slaves as Fixed Capital: Slave Labor and Southern Economic Development," *Journal of American History*, 64, 1 (1977), 28; Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa*, 21-23; Gareth Austin, "Labor intensity and manufacturing in West Africa, c. 1450-c.2000," in Austin and Sugihara, *Labor-Intensive Industrialization in Global History*, 204-205.

capital in the form of labor became less important, as more and more production took place outside of the home, and the costs of idle labor became undesirable in a world of cheap migrant labor. The decline of the Atlantic world's economic reliance on urban domestic slaves from the end of the eighteenth century suggests that their labor contributions and their usefulness as credit instruments may have been a particular characteristic of eighteenth century 'preindustrial' industriousness. It may be, though, that the forms of capital accumulation of these Africa port cities were undermined by the turn away from the slave trade – signaled by the Sierra Leone Company's early switch away from slaves as pawns – which, combined with a shift to colonial political rule, undermined the *signares*' heirs' ability to translate industrious accumulation into industrial development.

As elsewhere, the arrival of exotic luxury goods in Senegambia's port cities connected to global trade spurred increased household consumption and production. Examining these urban ports in West Africa highlights how port economies were tied to expanding household production and consumption, but also demonstrates the additional household complexity created by, and the forms of accumulation available through the institution of domestic slavery. Women in Saint-Louis and Gorée, endowed with property in the form of land and enslaved people, deployed that property, taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the port cities' service-based economies, to access more consumer luxuries, but also to reinvest in further household expansion. They used slave labor to integrate hinterland production with Atlantic demand, while innovating household credit and debt relationships by using slaves as financial instruments in dealings with both the company and mainland states. Household labor was important for

generating increased Atlantic consumption not just by introducing women's work to the marketplace. Women's participation in the service economies of these port cities also helped to create new uses for household labor.