

**MANUMISSION IN ISLE DE FRANCE DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY
AND POST REVOLUTIONARY YEARS
FROM 1789 TO 1810**

By

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(RSNPRIOOI)

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

Much has been written by historians on the issue of slavery and freedom in Isle de France but a detailed study on how slaves obtained their freedom remains to be undertaken. Several features in the institution of slavery in Isle de France have been discussed and analysed in depth. Detailed studies on marronage have been undertaken by historians such as Richard Allen¹, Megan Vaughan² and Amédée Nagapen.³ For the British Period, the influence of the sugar plantation economy on the institution of slavery has been studied by Vijaya Teelock whose book "...represents a humble attempt to achieve an understanding of the events and developments, people and policies, that affected the lives of the slaves".⁴ Amidst these features in the study of slavery in the 18th and early 19th centuries in Isle de France, the accession to freedom through the process of manumission however has not been analysed in depth in Mauritian historiography despite manumission studies elsewhere such as the works of Robert Shell⁵, Richard Elphick⁶, Andrew Bank⁷ and Rosemary Brana Shute⁸ who focus on manumission in the slave societies at The Cape and at Suriname.

Richard Allen and Muslim Jumeer, did deal with the manumission issue in Isle de France since Allen stated that the colony's manumitted slaves contributed in the emergence of the 'gens de couleur' who began to figure prominently in the island's social and economic life in late 18th century.⁹ Muslim Jumeer's work centred on the manumitted population and the Free Indians in Isle de France in the 18th century and his study showed that, despite the authorities' efforts to

¹ Richard Blair Allen: 'Marronage and the maintenance of public order in Mauritius, 1721-1835', in Slavery & Abolition, Vol.4, No.3, December 1983.

² M.Vaughan: 'Maroons and Masquerade: Mauritius in the Eighteenth Century', (Draft), Paper presented for the International Conference on Slavery, Unfree Labour and Revolt in Asia and The Indian Ocean Region, University of Avignon, 4-6 October 2001.

³ A.Nagapen: Le marronage à l'isle de France-Ile Maurice : Rêve ou Riposte de l'esclave?, Centre Culturel Africain, Port Louis 1999.

⁴ Vijaya Teelock: Bitter Sugar-Sugar and slavery in 19th Century Mauritius, MGI Press 1998, Moka, Mauritius.

⁵ Robert.C.H.Shell: Children of bondage-A social history of the slave society at the Cape of Good Hope 1652-1838, Witwatersrand University Press Johannesburg 1997, Chapter 12, pages 371..

⁶ Richard Elphick and R.Shell: 'Intergroup relations: Khoikhoi, settlers, slaves and free blacks, 1652-1795' in The shaping of South African society, 1652-1840, Edited by R.Elphick and Hermann Giliomee, Maskew Miller Longman Ltd 1989, Chapter 4, pages 204-232.

⁷ Andrew Bank:The decline of urban slavery in Cape Town, 1806-1834, Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town 1991, Chapter 5, pages 171-207.

⁸ R.Brana-Shute: 'Approaching freedom: The manumission of slaves in Suriname, 1760-1828' in Slavery & Abolition, Vol.10, No.3, December 1989, pages 40-63.

⁹ R.Allen: 'Economic marginality and the rise of the Free Population of Colour in Mauritius 1767-1830' in Slavery & Abolition, Vol.10, No.2, 1989, page 129.

limit the number of manumissions, the rate remained high in Isle de France as compared to other French colonies.¹⁰ However, they did not analyze the whole 'institution' of manumission in Isle de France; 'institution' here covers the whole concept of manumission, that is, its nature, practices, the means motivating the manumissions, a qualitative as well as a quantitative approach, a study of the manumittedes and the manumitters.

This research work is an analysis of the whole 'institution' of manumission as it existed in Isle de France during the period between the French Revolution of 1789 and the post-revolutionary years up to British rule in 1810. In his study of 'The Free Population of Colour in Mauritius', Richard Allen emphasizes the fact that "a comprehensive study of manumission in the colony remains to be undertaken, but we do have reliable information on manumission practices and patterns during the last two decades of the Ancien Régime".¹¹ Indeed, Muslim Jumeer reports that between 1768-1789, a total of 785 slaves consisting of : 347 women, 173 men, 133 boys and 132 girls were freed according to the acts of manumission.¹² But the existing works do not reveal any manumission figure for the years after 1789, during the revolutionary period up to British rule. As Allen notes, "information on the composition of the manumitted population and on the pattern of manumissions between 1789-1820 is scarce, but only because research on this period remains to be done".¹³ This present work has attempted to 'fill the gap' in the study of manumission for the years 1789 to 1803, by a 'comprehensive study' of manumission acts found at the Mauritius Archives.

Emancipation and manumission both lead to freedom though a clear distinction must be made between the two. Rosemary Brana-Shute defines manumission as "...the granting of freedom by an owner to a slave or bondsman, (and) is a personalized concession of freedom which occurs because of an agreement, an intention, or a contract between an owner and a slave".¹⁴ She further explains that "the owner relinquished property rights over the slave and the slave's civil status

¹⁰ Muslim Jumeer: 'Les Affranchis et les Indiens Libres à l'île de France au 18e siècle(1721-1803)', Thèse pour le Doctorat de 3e cycle, Université de Poitiers 1984, page 52.

¹¹ Richard Allen: 'Economic marginality and the rise of the Free Population of Colour in Mauritius 1767-1830, ...', pages 129-130.

¹² Muslim Jumeer: 'Les affranchissements et les libres à l'île de France à la fin de l'ancien régime (1768-1789)', unpublished Mémoire de Maîtrise 1979, page 26, Université de Poitiers, Faculté des Sciences Humaines.

¹³ R.Allen: 'Creoles, Indian Immigrants and the restructuring of society and economy 1767-1885', PhD Thesis 1983, University of Illinois, pages 99-100.

¹⁴ R.Brana-Shute: 'Approaching freedom...', page 40.

changed from enslaved to free person”.¹⁵ Seymour Drescher states that “manumission was a means of releasing individuals from the condition of slavery while reaffirming the sanctity of the institution in particular and the structure of social relationships in general”.¹⁶ The concept of manumission is different from that of emancipation because, in the latter case, freedom is granted to all slaves irrespective of age, sex, origin and status by ending the very institution of slavery. In the manumission process, freedom is granted only to specific slaves by specific free people, either their own masters or other individuals who felt very much concerned for the slave’s welfare. Ideologically, it can be said that manumission is highly discriminatory as it distinguishes among the slaves to be freed.

This study will clearly analyse this aspect and determine which slaves were manumitted, whether the manumission was ‘highly discriminatory’ or not. The slave was deprived of all civil rights and, while seeking his manumission, he “...could not attempt anything without the help of a free man”.¹⁷ The manumission acts always mentioned the manumitter as a free citizen, either a free born or a slave who had been formerly manumitted, whose role was greatly significant in the case of Brazil in the process of manumitting the slave. Sidney Chalhoub further explains that “...the act of manumitting was an exclusive prerogative of each particular slave owner. In other words, any bondsman know perfectly well that, ...except for openly antagonistic options-like running away, for instance - his chances of becoming free depended upon the relationship he had with his particular master. The idea here was to convince the slaves that the only way to freedom was to remain obedient and faithful to their owners”.¹⁸ That was partly true for the case of Isle de France also as a large proportion of the manumission acts mentioned “reward for loyal service and obedience” as the primary reasons for freeing the slave. However, as will be discussed in the forthcoming chapter, there remained other means such as self purchase, old age, marriage, filial love – ‘*piété filiale*’ - among others for the slave to get manumitted. Richard Allen states that “...the reasons for manumitting slaves remained much the same as they had been during the last decades of the ancien régime: for personal bravery, for military service, and on account of marriage”.¹⁹

¹⁵ R.Brana-Shute: ‘Approaching freedom...’, page 40.

¹⁶ Seymour Drescher: ‘Manumission in a society without slave law : Eighteenth Century England’ in Slavery & Abolition , Vol 10, No.3, December 1989, page 85.

¹⁷ Sidney Chalhoub: ‘Slaves, freedmen and the politics of freedom in Brazil: The experience of Blacks in the city of Rio’ in Slavery & Abolition , Vol.10, No3, page 74.

¹⁸ S.Chalhoub, *ibid*, page 67.

¹⁹ R.Allen: ‘Creoles, Indian Immigrants...’, page 100.

My research demonstrates that the revolutionary and post revolutionary years witnessed a high rise in the number of manumitted slaves in Isle de France as compared to the years of the Ancien Régime from 1768 to 1789. For these years, the records show a total of 785 slaves who obtained their freedom while the years that followed up to 1810 recorded a total of 3639 freed slaves from the acts of manumission. What could possibly account for such a sudden rise in the number of slaves obtaining manumission? One of the reasons might be the impact of the French Revolution. As Jumeer explains, the Revolution opened to slaves pathways towards acquiring a free status.²⁰ His argument is similar to Karl Noël's who also writes about the great rise in the manumission process during that period.²¹

This analysis will focus on five major themes relating to manumission between the years 1789 to 1810. Chapter One will attempt to explain the 'institution' of manumission as a whole and analyse the legal framework in relation to the laws of manumission, the concept of manumission and the various means by which slaves attained freedom. At least seventeen reasons for initiating a manumission have been recorded from the original manumission acts and a qualitative analysis of each reason has been carried out with relevant examples.

Chapter Two examines manumission from a quantitative angle and, an interpretation of the data is attempted relating to gender, origins, age structure and status of the slaves who obtained their freedom. An attempt is made to draw out some generalizations about slave society through the figures and answer questions such as whether Mauritian slave society was an open or a closed society and whether the slave society witnessed a high or a low degree of social mobility? This chapter also tries to explain the high rate of females among the manumitted and the factors influencing and favouring the manumission of female slaves. Finally it also explores quantitatively the different means by which the slaves were freed and to determine which method was the most common among the manumitters.

Chapter Three focuses on the manumitted slave women and attempts an analysis of their economic and sexual roles in the slave society of Isle de France. The issue of whether gender influenced the possibility of a slave being manumitted is explored, and, what this reveals about their relationship with males, slaves or free, and their role in slave society at that time. The idea

²⁰ M.Jumeer: 'Les Affranchis et les Indiens Libres à l'île de France au 18e siècle (1721-1803)...', page 27.

²¹ Karl Noël: *L'esclavage à l'isle de France (Ile Maurice) de 1715 à 1810*, Editions Two Cities ETC 1991, Paris, page 111.

that slave women were considered merely as potential sexual partners in a revolutionary society and the idea that the sexual relationships appear as the easiest way for women to attain freedom are also discussed. The occupational roles of the female slaves are also considered since their professions, though not so varied as the male slaves, contributed to their access to manumission. The chapter tries to understand the economic aspects of manumission and explore whether it was only slave women, who were economically active, could purchase their manumission. These issues are discussed in this chapter.

In Chapter Four, two major themes discussed are: the economic role of the manumitted male slaves and the emergence of a 'Freed' community. The study of the economic role of slaves would be incomplete if male slaves were not discussed as had been the case for the female slaves in the preceding chapter. This chapter tries to examine the differences and similarities that arise in the occupational patterns of the male and female slaves. The absence of the plantation slave among the manumitted is also discussed. Finally, the future prospects of manumitted slaves after gaining their freedom are analysed. And their place and status in society as freed people is discussed using the factual evidence available on donations made by owners and the manumitted slaves' occupations. These have helped to follow the emergence of a 'new' social group that was situated between the enslaved and the free people.

Chapter Five focuses on the slave owners and manumitters rather than the manumitted slaves. It considers the clear distinction between slave owners and manumitters as it has been the practice in most studies to place them in one homogenous group. A slave owner can own slaves but he might not necessarily be the one who carries out the manumission of that slave. A manumitter can free a slave while not being the owner of that slave. The profiles of the different types of slave owners are worked out to show that not only the whites could act as potential owners of slaves. The freed slaves were also included among the slave owners and the factors which distinguished them from the French slave owners and the owners on estates are made clear.

The second part of Chapter Five attempts to define the role of a manumitter and it is found that two categories are clearly discernible according to certain manumission acts. This part tries to answer questions such as which type of manumission acts involved these two types of manumitters - primary and secondary - and, why? How far was the function of the secondary manumitter essential to carry out the manumission? And, why should the manumitter normally seek someone else to confirm the freedom he had granted to his own slave?

This study attempts to examine whether there was tension, conflict and struggle in the relationships between the slave owners and the manumitted. On the one hand, it can be said that certain slave owners tried to maintain the order of exploitation to show their domination and profit especially in cases of testamentary manumissions. It tries to understand why an owner would allow his slave to be manumitted only after his death, and, sometimes, even expect the slave to continue in the family's service even after he had been manumitted. On the other hand, the slaves struggled to improve their own condition, became more and more self-subsistent and saved the money they earned to purchase their freedom. At this stage, can we refer to the creation of a 'slave culture' which formed the basis of what might be called 'freedom consciousness' particularly with the outbreak of the French Revolution? David Geggus explained that, "built upon a foundation of bondage, inequality and prejudice, the slave societies of the New World represented a complete negation of the ideals of the French Revolution".²² The 'freedom consciousness' in slaves evolved out of a complex interaction with the Revolution and its libertarian ideology.

It is unfortunate that no slave narratives exist for the French period in Isle de France and, hence there are no written accounts of their experiences and feelings both as enslaved and newly-freed. Much can be said about slave owners and manumitters as they expressed their intentions, feelings and wishes in the manumission acts, but, as far as slaves were concerned, they were virtually mute. Furthermore, all that was said about the slave in the manumission act resulted from the owner's or manumitter's point of view and also from the Officer or Notary registering the act. As Neville Fleurs explains, "much, therefore, is bound to remain hidden to the researcher. Slavery is and will always be a potential issue which makes it difficult to arrive at a balanced assessment.... The true scholar is not concerned only with what people have thought about what happened, but also what the past was really like, what actually happened and why".²³ This study has tried as far as possible to uncover and understand the slaves' perceptions as well, especially through means such as self-purchase and purchase of kin to get access to freedom. These perceptions are also made clear through the slave woman's strategy to use her sexual role to obtain manumission.

²² David Geggus: 'The French and Haitian Revolutions, and Resistance to Slavery in The Americas: An Overview' in *Revue Française d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer*, Tome LXXVI (1989), Nos. 282-283, page 107.

²³ Neville Christopher Fleurs: 'A comparative study of the treatment of slaves at the Cape and in the West Indies, 1806-1834', *MA Thesis*, University of Cape Town, June 1984, (Introduction – page ix).

Research for this work has been carried out over a period of four years in all the primary sources located in the Mauritius Archives. As far as primary sources for manumissions during the French period are concerned, it can be said that the Archives contain very rich and useful material. However, several registers holding the acts of liberty are in a very poor condition thus making research work quite difficult as, very often, the essential information about the age, origin, profession, name and sex of the slave cannot be read properly either because the ink has faded or the sheets crumbled. However, it was possible in almost all the cases to read the name of the slave and this information helped to establish the slave's gender though sometimes the name itself was ambiguous, leading to assumptions about whether the slave was male or female. Certain names like *Ravanne*, *Niovar*, *Sullant*, *Lizin*, *Enoud-Zara*, *Michou*, *Bagatelle*, *Vingout*, *Choub* did not give clear indication as to the gender of the slave since they could be masculine as well as feminine common names. Fortunately, other information in the same manuscript such as personal pronouns like 'il', 'elle' or articles in expressions such as 'le nommé', 'la nommée' or demonstrative pronouns in 'cet esclave', 'cette esclave' in the document allowed one to establish the gender.

Even though a detailed analysis of the manumission acts has been carried out, there are still some deficiencies because of the poor state of the documents. For some documents, it is not possible to determine the origin, the age and occupation of the slave. These missing details have led me to create an 'Unknown' category. Thus, for the slave's origin, for which the information is missing in many cases, from a manumitted population of 3639 slaves, some 333 slaves belonged to the 'Unknown' group. Their origins were either not mentioned or was not legible. The same situation applies to the age and occupation of the slave. For information on age structure, alternative information was available such as references on donations to be offered at 'majority age' or immediately helped more or less to determine the different age groups. In the case of the slave's profession, several acts failed to mention whether the manumitted was a skilled artisan or a field slave. From a manumitted population of 1191 males including both adults and children, only 234 males were listed with a specific occupation, while, for the females, only some 231 cases mentioned the occupations out of a total of 2448 manumitted women and girls. The remaining 957 males and 2217 females whose professions were not listed lead us to consider another aspect of whether there were plantation slaves among the freed slaves. It is entirely possible that slave-owners with 'large' estates in the rural areas manumitted their slaves without stating the latter's occupation. Therefore, the probability of having field slaves among the manumitted is not to be discounted.

Research for this work has shown that manumission was both a rural and an urban phenomenon. The rural areas were divided into different 'Cantons' while the urban region referred to Port Louis only. In the manumission acts, the residence of the slave-owner and the slave to be freed was usually mentioned. For the rural regions, the different 'Cantons' were namely 'Canton de': Pamplémousses, Rivière du Rempart, Flacq, Port Impérial, La Savanne, Rivière Noire, Plaines de Wilhems and Moka. Port Impérial was the name given to 'Mahébourg' by General Decaen when, on 1st October 1806, a decree proclaimed this change of name.²⁴

The urban region Port-Louis was known by different names following the periods of French administration and the acts generally referred to Port Nord Ouest, Port de La Montagne and Port Napoléon. During Dutch settlement, the Port Louis harbour was known as 'Noordt-Wester Haven' or North West Harbour (Port Nord Ouest), but, when the French settlers arrived in 1722, they changed the harbour's name to Port Louis.²⁵ The name of 'Port La Montagne' dated back to Mahé de Labourdonnais' governorship in 1735 when the site near the North West Harbour was divided into two distinct parts for a new town to be built - Quartier de La Petite Montagne and Quartier de La Grande Montagne.²⁶ Some of the manumission acts mentioned these names as well. During the French Revolution, the General Assembly which was established in the colony changed the name of Port Louis reverting to the old name of Port Nord Ouest.²⁷ When General Decaen arrived in the colony in 1803, he renamed the urban region Port Napoléon as the Empire was the new system of government.²⁸

Another important factor which made the comparative analysis of manumission in the Ancien Régime and manumission during the Revolutionary period incomplete was the absence of any detailed data by gender or district from the secondary sources for the slave population. Although Milbert²⁹ and Kuczynski³⁰ have given figures for the total slave population and to the population by ethnic origins, there seem to be no figures available according to gender and district. Also,

²⁴ Auguste Toussaint: Port-Louis Deux Siècles d'histoire (1735-1935), La Typographie Moderne, Port Louis 1936, Ile Maurice, pages 195-196.

²⁵ Auguste Toussaint: Port-Louis A Tropical City (Translated by W.E.F.Ward), George Allen & Unwin Ltd 1973, Great Britain, pages 14-15.

²⁶ A.Toussaint, *ibid*, page 19.

²⁷ A.Toussaint, *ibid*, page 47.

²⁸ A.Toussaint, *ibid*, page 59.

²⁹ M.J.Milbert: Voyage pittoresque à l'île de France et à l'île de Ténériffe, Tome 2, Paris 1812, page 233 (Bis, Ter).

³⁰ Robert Rene Kuczynski: Demographic Survey of the British Colonial Empire, Vol.2, Part 4: Mauritius and Seychelles, Oxford University Press 1948-1949, page 759.

information on different types of family units such as nuclear-family, mother-child units, single males and females, couples, father-child units do not exist in the sources consulted. This has meant that it is not possible to ascertain with precision the proportions of manumitted among the total slave population according to gender and family units.

All the acts showed the dates when manumissions were confirmed, and, as from 22 September 1794, a new calendar was issued by the Republican government. The year contained twelve months of 30 days each, plus 5 extra days which were to be festivals.³¹ The months were named: Vendémiaire, Brumaire, Frimaire, Nivose, Pluviose, Ventose, Germinal, Floreal, Prairial, Messidor, Thermidor and Fructidor. The years from 1794 to 1805 were referred to as An III to An XIV. A decree of 9 September 1805 abolished the Republican calendar but this was applied in the Mascarenes as from 1st April 1806.³² In my study, the Republican dates are cited and the corresponding dates from the 'old' calendar are also given for easy reference.

Some parts of the analysis have also required the quoting of original texts as they appear in the acts of manumissions. It must be noted that the accents, spelling and usage of the French words have been preserved, the incorrect spelling as well as antiquated forms have been retained. To make the French narrative clearer, a translation is provided in the footnotes.

³¹ A. Toussaint: Port-Louis A Tropical City, page 54.

³² Correspondence des calendriers Républicain et Grégorien, Mauritius Archives.

CHAPTER 1

Manumission practices

in

Isle de France

Chapter 1 : Manumission practices in Isle de France

1.1 The legal framework

French colonization of Isle de France began in the early 18th century when the first French East India Company administered the colony from 1715. The second French East India Company was established in 1721 until its liquidation in 1767 when the Royal Government started to rule over the colony.¹ Under the French East India Company, the 'Lettres Patentes' of December 1723 with its 54 clauses, also known as the 'Code Noir', constituted the legal framework for slavery and manumission. During this period, laws were issued by the 'Conseil Provincial et Supérieur' through decrees.

From 1767 to 1790, under Royal Government, another set of laws was issued, originally known as 'Code Jaune' so as to distinguish it from 'Code Noir'. But, later on, it became the 'Code Delaleu' as it had been edited by Etienne Delaleu.² With the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789, the Royal Government was dissolved and the Republic which became the new system of government created Colonial Assemblies which administered the colony from 1790-1803. Isle de France was under the French Imperial Government from 1803 to 1810, and, during this period, other set of laws were issued by General Decaen; these laws, originally known as 'Code Colonial', became 'Code Decaen' afterwards. Each of these three 'Code' proposed specific clauses for the freeing of slaves and provided a glimpse of the dynamics of manumissions as it was practiced in the colony from the rule of the French East India Company till the Decaen era.

In the 'Code Noir', clauses 49 to 53 dealt with manumission and post manumission laws. Slaves could certainly be freed but under certain rigorous conditions. To begin with, slave owners had to be at least twenty-five years old, and to prevent any sort of corruption, the 'Conseil Supérieur' had to approve their decision to manumit the slave. The owners were not supposed to decide upon the price of manumission since this could encourage slaves to get involved in acts of theft.³ Among the articles relating to the process of manumission, the Code Delaleu of 1767 put forward certain restrictions upon the emancipation of slaves due to some abuses dealing with

¹ Auguste Toussaint: L'administration française de l'île Maurice et ses archives (1721-1810), Mauritius Archives Publications, Imprimerie Commerciale 1965, Port Louis, Mauritius, page 5.

² Ordonnance ou Code Noir, Publications des Archives de Maurice 2000, Ile Maurice, page 11.

³ Ordonnance ou Code Noir, *ibid*, page 19.

manumission.⁴ If a slave was to be freed, the nature of his manumission was in connection with a most outstanding deed performed by him such as saving his master's life.⁵ This was also effective in Bourbon island where manumission was granted 'automatically' to any slave having saved the life of a White.⁶ Slave owners had to bring forward to the Governor and Intendant very convincing reasons requiring them to free their slave, and, furthermore, the owner had no authority to decide personally upon his slave's liberation, and, such manumissions were not considered.⁷

Under the Republic, manumission could be carried out without the permission of the Governor and the Intendant. In a sense, as Toussaint has pointed out, the act of freeing a slave had become somewhat more liberal than under the Ancien Régime.⁸ During Decaen's era, as far as manumission was concerned, the 'Code Decaen' issued more restrictive laws and the act of freeing a slave was not performed with ease and frequency. The manumission clauses in the 'Code Decaen' will be dealt with in the forthcoming parts.

Claude Wanquet argues that the number of manumissions increased perceptibly during the revolution⁹ and his argument agrees with that of Karl Noël whose analysis reflected a great rise in the manumission process in that period.¹⁰ However, the legislators were somewhat apprehensive towards the rate of increase "as it was felt that too many manumissions had been granted under the Revolutionary period"¹¹ and they feared that the consequences of manumission might prove to be harmful to the economy.¹² Therefore, the Colonial Assembly became more rigid in the practice of manumitting the slaves, "the situation returned to pre-Revolutionary days. The authorities began to fear the rise of the Freed population..."¹³, and, the extent to which freedom was

⁴ Reference B3C: Code des Isles de France et de Bourbon, 2e Edition 1826, Tristan Mallac et Cie, Ile Maurice, page 209, Article 170 (Ordonnance du Roi), Mauritius Archives.

⁵ Karl Noël: L'esclavage à l'île de France (Ile Maurice) de 1715 à 1810, Editions Two Cities ETC 1991, Paris, pages 110-111

⁶ Claude Wanquet: Histoire d'une révolution La Réunion 1789-1803, Jeanne Laffitte 1980, Marseille.

⁷ Code des Isles de France..., Articles I, II

⁸ Auguste Toussaint: Histoire des îles Mascareignes Mondes d'Outre-Mer, Editions Berger-Levrault 1972, Paris, page 115.

⁹ Claude Wanquet: 'Apports et limites de la Révolution aux Mascareignes' in L'île Maurice et la révolution française, MGI Press 1990, Moka, page 17

¹⁰ Karl Noël: L'esclavage à l'île de France..., page 111.

¹¹ Vijaya Teelock: Mauritian History – From its beginnings to modern times, MGI Press 2001, Moka, page 126.

¹² K.Noël: L'esclavage..., page 111.

¹³ V.Teelock: Mauritian History..., page 149.

accessible to those in bondage remains to be analysed and this aspect is one of the main objectives of this thesis.

In 1791, the 'Assemblée Coloniale' issued a set of clauses during its session of 27th January, relating to the practice of manumission. Amongst the different laws which the owner had to respect, some appeared as rather 'mild' such as 'Articles 1,2,3 4' which dealt mainly with the formal procedures preceding manumission.¹⁴ The requests must indicate the slave's name, occupation, sex, age as well as the owner's identity and the reasons for the manumission. The request should normally be made by the owner of that slave who wished to be freed, otherwise, if someone else other than the owner, commonly known as the 'offender', made that request, he would be fined 3000 *Livres* to the 'Commune Générale'.¹⁵

Articles 2, 3 and 4 referred to other procedures involving directly the slave to be manumitted; the request would appear in the weekly paper, commonly known as "Affiches" for a period of four weeks in case of any opposition against this manumission. Where there arose no opposition, the legal procedures continued.¹⁶ As was the case for Isle de France, very few oppositions, barely one or two, existed but, in the end, the request for manumission was accepted and fulfilled; such case studies will be analysed later on.

The following two documents, on pages 13 and 14, give an idea of the type of "Affiches" which showed the names of slaves to be manumitted as they appeared in the weekly paper in 1791 and in 1807. The document on the left has been transcribed as it appeared in the paper, whereas the document on the right is a translation in English for easy reference.

¹⁴ Z 3B/13, Register 19, No28, (Mauritius Archives – MA).

¹⁵ Z 3B/13, *ibid*, Article 1 (The 'Commune' was established on 9 April 1753 by the 'Conseil Supérieur' and it collected money to be used for the maintenance of roads, for paying 'noirs de détachement', that is those men charged with the capture of fugitive slaves. At the end of the Ancien Régime, the money collected at the 'Commune' was mainly used for the maintenance of roads, bridges and canals – in Toussaint: L'administration française..., page 100).

¹⁶ Z 3B/13, Register 19, No.28, Articles 2,3,4,5 , MA.

Document 2

“Affranchissements proposés

Troisième annonce

Jeanne et Frédéric son fils, créoles,
la première âgée de 18 ans et le
second de 22 mois; par feu Jean
Julien Postique, de son vivant habitant
Aux Plaines Wilhems.

Première annonce

Henriette créole, âgée de 22 ans rachetée
du Sieur Cauvin son maître, le 11 Brumaire
an 10, enregistrée au bureau de Police, le 30
fructidor suivant.”

Manumission requests

Third notice

*Jeanne and her son,
both Creoles, the former
18 years old and the
latter 22 months old;
freed by late Jean Julien
Postique, in his day
residing at P. Wilhems.*

First notice

*Henriette, Creole, 22 years,
self-purchased her freedom
from Sieur Cauvin, her
master, on 11 Brumaire an 10,
recorded at the police station
on 30 fructidor next.*

(Source : “No.13. Petites Affiches de l’isle de France, Mercredi 1er Avril 1807”, included in Register IE 47, Mauritius Archives)

The documents cited show that manumission was not a direct process and did not follow a one-way procedure. Generally, two major parties were involved for the exercise to be carried out – on one side, the manumitter and the slave to be freed, and, the other body was the legislation which confirmed the manumission. In Document 1, the slaves to be freed – Bazile, Rosalie, Françoise Jeanne and Annette – were being announced in the ‘Affiches’ and no one opposed the fourth and last notice, meaning that these slaves had only to obtain the confirmation of their manumission.

In Document 2, though the first request was at its third notice, there could still be an opposition as the request would be announced one more time. The other request was only at its first notice, and, before the fourth and last notice, someone could as well oppose this manumission. Reasons to oppose a manumission were mainly because of insufficient donations, the slave’s inability to subsist independently or for some particular reason such as the bad conduct of the slave.

Clauses which involved restrictive measures dealt with donations which the owner had to offer when freeing his slave so as to consolidate his means of subsistence. In fact, the amount of money to be given in favour of the pubescent manumittee who had a profession should not be less than 1000*livres*, and, twice this sum for the slave who did not practise any profession. Furthermore, if the child was a minor below the age of puberty and manumitted with his parents, the owner was requested to offer 600*livres* for each individual. In case of a minor child being freed alone, he was allocated the same amount as the pubescent manumittee.¹⁷ Another payment of 300*livres* was required as a sort of tax at the ‘Commune Générale’ for each slave to be manumitted¹⁸, and, if a slave family comprising of at least five members was being freed, the slave owner had indeed a huge sum to lay out in terms of donations and all other requirements. How far the clauses of 27 January 1791 tended to encourage the practice of manumission will be discussed further in this chapter.

Testamentary manumissions were only executed if the late owner or his succession provided sufficient needs for the slave. This means to accede to freedom seemed, in a way, less easy as the authorities could reject the request if the necessary measures had not been respected. As far as Isle de France was concerned, manumissions by order of testament were fulfilled as will be studied later, but, in Bourbon island, an interesting case study revealed that a request could face opposition. Two slaves, Lindor and Marie, were to be freed as requested in the will of late Simon

¹⁷ Z3B/13, Register 19, Article 10, MA.

¹⁸ Z3B/13, *ibid*, Article 11, MA.

Turban and the authorities concluded that they did not deserve being liberated for convincing reasons : the amount of money proved insufficient, furthermore, both of them led a life of debauchery and had even made the Turban succession spend 600*livres* for each of them to cure a venereal disease. Finally, it appeared that Marie succeeded in gaining her emancipation.¹⁹

A decree of 2 messidor an 8 (21 June 1800) suspended manumissions until the making up of new laws. The Colonial Assembly was requested to revise the manumission laws and no requests would be considered until further notice.²⁰

Henri Prentout discusses the practice of manumission during Decaen's rule; it was observed that the act of freeing the slaves was not carried out with ease and frequency. Decaen, as it appeared, did his best to maintain the slave system²¹ and his laws tended to limit the number of manumissions by laying down different kinds of restrictions. Thus, manumission revealed to be not only an onerous task for the owner but also a heavy and burdensome activity since he was subject to follow several necessary steps.²² The decrees applied during 1804 to 1805 confirmed the restrictions related to the act of freeing a slave. Whether it being the decree of 19 Brumaire an XII (11 November 1803), 10 Brumaire an XIII (1 November 1804), 1er Messidor an XIII (20 June 1805) and 8 Thermidor an XIII (27 July 1805), they all put down a set of clauses that led to question the possible likelihood of slaves obtaining their freedom. Slave owners as well as slaves were forced to abide by the rules and face all the requirements such as tax, means of subsistence, testamentary guarantee to be able to free and be freed. A slave could be manumitted only if he had been his master's property for at least five years as stated in the 1804 decree, and, freedom was meant for the slave having performed 'real' service.²³ Furthermore, the owner must pay a tax of 3% on the sum for manumission and must ensure his slave's means of subsistence before freeing him. Testamentary manumissions required a guarantee and the freeing of a slave through marriage with a free black was no longer applicable.²⁴ Hence, it seemed most probable that manumission affected a fluid character during the revolution as compared to the years of the Ancien Régime and Decaen's administration. Prentout further emphasized the fact that the number of slaves manumitted under Decaen was relatively low as stated in a data of 2 January

¹⁹ Claude Wanquet: Histoire d'une révolution La Réunion...., page 750.

²⁰ Z3B/19, No. 740 , MA.

²¹ Henri Prentout: L'île de France sous Decaen 1803-1810: essai sur la politique coloniale du premier empire, Paris Hachette 1901, page 123.

²² H.Prentout, *ibid*, page 138.

²³ V.Teelock: Mauritian History...., page 126.

²⁴ H.Prentout: L'île de France sous Decaen...., pages 137-138.

1807 – only 244 slaves had been freed for a period of 2 years out of a slave population of 60,000.²⁵

1.2 The concept of manumission

Manumission is legally defined as the act of freeing a slave from bondage. Historians like Andrew Bank and Robert Shell develop further this concept of slave manumission as it was conceived at the Cape, but it is to be noted that this concept of manumission can be usefully applied to Isle de France.

Andrew Bank stated that manumission, or the act of setting free a slave “represented the decisive moment in the creation of a new social identity and the assertion of individual self-dignity”.²⁶ This was the process whereby a human being, officially classified as property in the eyes of the law and the owner, attained a position of legal freedom.

Robert Shell explains that manumission at the Cape was “a most dramatic and profound act”²⁷ as the slave, before being “literally propelled into freedom”²⁸, was struck on the back a last time by the owner. Shell further defines the position of the newly-freed slave as a being who assumed “a new legal and civic status and responsibility as a ‘free black’”.²⁹ However, the act of striking physically the slave “in a last symbolic gesture of humiliation”³⁰ was not commonly practiced in Isle de France since no mention appeared in the secondary sources consulted as far as manumission was concerned. But, even if the owner omitted to strike his slave physically, the latter was, nonetheless, undergoing some sort of moral torture as it seemed that the actual journey from slavery to freedom did not prove to be that easy. Firstly, the laws to manumit slaves bore sufficient restrictive measures to discourage the owners and slaves. Furthermore, for the price of manumission, some owners acted rather immorally towards their human property especially the female slaves. Karl Noël stated that it was a common phenomenon among young

²⁵ H. Prentout: *L'île de France sous Decaen...*, page 140.

²⁶ Andrew Bank: *The decline of urban slavery in Cape Town, 1806-1834*, Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town 1991, page 189.

²⁷ Robert C.H. Shell: *Children of bondage – A social history of the slave society at the Cape of Good Hope, 1652-1838*, Witwatersrand University Press 1997, Johannesburg, page 371.

²⁸ R. Shell, *ibid*, page 371.

²⁹ R. Shell, *ibid*, page 372.

³⁰ R. Shell, *ibid*, page 371.

slave women to offer their virginity to their masters³¹ who, afterwards, granted them their freedom. The master was qualified as being 'generous' since the slave woman was purchasing her freedom for the price of her virginity. Such an act can be characterized as psychologically "dramatic and profound" since the slave felt, in a way, 'forced' to do so to attain freedom. The different means by which slaves got their manumission will be analysed and discussed in the forthcoming parts.

Those deprived of their freedom would necessarily feel "like dishonoured and degraded persons"³² and the attainment of freedom was of much psychological importance to them. The quest for an identity and self-dignity "induced superannuated slaves to go to such lengths to achieve free status".³³ In the context of Isle de France, the practice of manumission could explain and back up this argument especially when it came to manumission obtained through self-purchase and purchase of kin.

If slavery can be considered as an 'institution', why can manumission not be an 'institution' as well? When defining the institution of slavery, we are normally dealing with those held in bondage. What can the institution of manumission possibly mean? Ideologically, when manumitting a slave, two parties at least are involved: "the slave and the owner"³⁴ as Shell explains. He further emphasizes that "the owner could be a person or an institution such as the Company or the Church".³⁵ In Isle de France, the owner could be a single person, a couple and several members of a family specially if it concerned a late person's will. Many slaves were also freed by the State but no cases of manumissions carried out by the Church had been recorded for Isle de France as far as primary sources are concerned.

The term 'manumitter' applies to the one who is freeing the slave; it could be the owner himself, the State, or another person referred to as "... a third person... who purchased the slave from the owner for no other purpose than to free him or her".³⁶ Rosemary Brana-Shute proposes a very interesting study of the 'Profile of the manumitters' in her article on the manumission of slaves in

³¹ K.Noël: *L'esclavage à l'isle de France....*, page 115.

³² Orlando.Patterson : *Slavery and social death : A comparative study*, Harvard University Press 1982, page 79

³³ A.Bank: *The decline of urban slavery....*, page 189.

³⁴ R.Shell: *Children of bondage....*, page 381.

³⁵ R.Shell,ibid, page 381

³⁶ R.Shell,ibid, page 382.

Suriname;³⁷ in her definition of the manumitter, she stated that the one who frees a slave "...includes not only owners but all those free people whose roles in the process were instrumental and necessary to effect a legal manumission".³⁸ Furthermore, it is most important to understand the relation between manumitter and owner; the manumitter might not necessarily be the owner – "not all free people who aided in the manumission of a slave were owners, and the owner at the time of a manumission was not necessarily the only owner a slave had had"³⁹. Brana-Shute further argues that "...there is a continuing propensity among authors to assume, imply, or state overtly that to say 'manumitter' is to say 'white man'".⁴⁰ This reveals to be most untrue as manumitters include free blacks and free coloured as will be later discussed.

Thus, the institution of manumission reflected for the slave the feeling of being freed either by his owner or by his own efforts; he had the inner satisfaction of having gained an identity of his own, having at last attained a free status. It was also possible for him or her to reach economic benefits and help in the formation and rise of a freed community. The quest towards freedom from physical bondage was inborn in all slaves and a great number requested to be manumitted even if this 'institution' represented the hard way to the "actual journey to freedom".⁴¹ The manumitted thus attained a particular status, that of the free black, sort of 'middleman' between the slave and the White owner.⁴² For his part, Muslim Jumeer explains that manumission flourished with the outbreak of the French Revolution and that gave to the slaves of Isle de France greater opportunities to have access to the free segment of the population.⁴³

The manumission of a slave was a considerable financial sacrifice for the owner as Shell has observed;⁴⁴ the act of freeing a slave involved financial investment both in terms of money and other types of grants such as land, houses, furniture, tools as well as the loss of the value of the slave. Both the manumitter and manumittee were directly concerned with this 'financial sacrifice' as, in the case when the owner freed his slave, he must provide him with means of subsistence such as donations. All the acts of manumission referred to this particular clause before confirming the manumission. It appeared as thus :

³⁷ Rosemary Brana-Shute : 'Approaching freedom: The manumission of slaves in Suriname, 1760-1828' in *Slavery & Abolition*, Volume 10, No.3, December 1989, pages 50-53.

³⁸ R.Brana Shute: 'Approaching freedom...', page 52.

³⁹ R.BranaShute, *ibid*, page 52.

⁴⁰ R.BranaShute, *ibid*, page 50.

⁴¹ A.Bank: *The decline of urban slavery....*, page 172.

⁴² J.V.Payet : *Histoire de l'esclavage à l'île Bourbon*, L'Harmattan 1990, page 51.

⁴³ M.Jumeer: 'Les affranchis et les indiens libres...', page 27.

⁴⁴ R.Shell: *Children of bondage....*, page 389.

*“... que cette negresse ne peut être à charge à la colonie, tant par les talens que par la donation qui lui a été faite d’un terrain et de cinq têtes d’esclave...”*⁴⁵

The above mentioned case concerned a female slave, named Marie Marthe, Creole de Bourbon, who was freed with her three children from the owner Sieur Dumestre, in October 1790. Besides she being talented, that is she could work on her own, her owner provided her with other means to prevent her from being in need. In most of the cases studied for Isle de France, the donations were mainly in terms of money or land or slaves, and, that fact led us towards a comparative study with Bourbon island. Claude Wanquet observed in his study that such donations solely in land or money or slaves were not so common.⁴⁶ The most popular type of donation included both the grant of a piece of land and several slaves.⁴⁷ However, in Isle de France, a study of the donations offered by manumitters to their slaves revealed that most of these manumittedes had enough to subsist. Some even received a considerable amount of assets and a particular case in June 1790 proved to be most interesting. It dealt with a Creole female slave, Suzanne Fabon, who was manumitted with her own children, nephews and nieces. Her owner, Jean Baptiste Desgault, officer at the Regiment, provided her with a house measuring 25 feet in length and 17 feet in width and the roof covered with shingles. She further obtained another house, 21 feet by 16 feet and this one was strawroofed. A third house including a kitchen, also strawroofed, was granted to her at the Camp des Malabards; she also received three slaves.⁴⁸ This example clearly showed that some slave owners were quite generous in their grants and these helped the freed slaves in their social and economic organization.

Donations granted through testaments were sometimes very peculiar, it seemed that some late owners left almost everything to the freed slave, from the most ordinary objects like coffee pot, chairs, hoe, bowls, even a chamber pot, to the most valuable asset like land with a house built on it. In April 1797, four slaves, namely: Rosette, an Indian aged 25, with her 2 year-old Creole son, Louis, and a Malagasy couple, Sansoucy with his wife Sauvelle, both thirty years old, were manumitted through the will of their late master, Jacques Touraille.⁴⁹ He bequeathed to Rosette

⁴⁵ “... so that the slave may not depend on the colony, she is talented and is being offered as donation a plot of land and five slaves...”, Register A67 (1790-1791), Folio Troisième Verso, Mauritius Archives.

⁴⁶ Claude Wanquet : ‘Aperçu sur l’affranchissement des esclaves à Bourbon à la fin du XVIIIe siècle’ dans Annuaire des Pays de l’Océan Indien, Volume IV, 1977, Presses Universitaires d’Aix-Marseille 1979, page 145.

⁴⁷ C. Wanquet, *ibid*, page 145.

⁴⁸ Register OA 87 (17 février 1786-20 janvier 1792), MA.

⁴⁹ Register A66, act dated 4 floréal an 5 (23 April 1797), MA.

and Louis two male slaves of Indian and Malagasy origins while Sansoucy and Sauvelle benefited both of kitchen utensils, furniture, tools and two houses located at the Grande Rivière.⁵⁰

As discussed earlier, in the legal framework for manumissions, the donation required when freeing a pubescent child without any occupation should not be less than 2000*livres*.⁵¹ A case in December 1795 revealed that the manumission request for a young Creole female slave, Jeanne, could have faced opposition because of the insufficient amount of money given by the owner, Laurent François Chantoiseau.⁵² He offered only 1000*livres* while the sum required was 2000 *livres*. It was only after the receipt of another 1000*livres* that Jeanne's manumission was confirmed as this amount

"... *complète la somme de deux mille livres exigée par la loi,...* ".⁵³

Another request in February 1797 could have faced opposition since no donation was granted to the manumittee. This case dealt with a testamentary manumission whereby the late Sieur Bourien did not leave any amount of money to his male slave, Carolus, a malabard of 21 years old;⁵⁴ this would render the manumission process difficult and could deprive Carolus his chance of being freed. Hence, the executor responsible to carry out the manumission procedure offered freely to Carolus a certain amount of money as requested by the law so as to enable him to subsist.

Certain cases also revealed that those who were manumitted, especially female slaves, could as well receive besides money and slaves, their own children as donations. In July 1794, the citizen Jacques Jean freed his female slave, Jeanne Rose, a seamstress and laundress. He offered her an amount of 2000*livres* as well as her two male children, Jacques Jean and Jean,⁵⁵ it is observed with most interest that one of the boys bears the name of the owner – Jacques Jean - a fact which makes us think about a possible consanguinal link between them. In November of the same year, Emmanuel Joseph Guyon liberated his Indian slave, Sophie, 18 years old and donated to her 5000 *livres* as well as her child Marie to whom she had given birth on the first of January 1794.⁵⁶ In December 1794, another citizen, François Bourgeois set free his Bengali slave, Modeste. As donation, she was given a male slave, Louis, who worked as carpenter and her own three months

⁵⁰ Register A66, act dated 4 floréal an 5 (23 April 1797), MA.

⁵¹ Z3B/13, Lois 19, Article 9e, MA.

⁵² Register A66, act dated 4 nivose an 4 (25 December 1795), MA.

⁵³ "...makes the sum of two thousand livres requested by law..." in Register A66, MA.

⁵⁴ Register A57, act dated 4 ventose an 7 (22 February 1799), MA.

⁵⁵ Register A39, act dated 18 messidor an 2 (6 July 1794), MA.

⁵⁶ Register A39, act dated 5 frimaire an 3 (25 November 1794), MA.

old child.⁵⁷ Such donations from the owner led towards a broader analysis of the whole institution of manumission. The children, when given as donations to their mother, could be considered as being manumitted 'indirectly'. Furthermore, in the above acts of manumission, no mention was made of the father of these children and it was most improbable that they had been impregnated by other male slaves. We are brought to believe that these children were those of the owner's due to his most generous intention to 'free' a child by donating him to his mother; as stated earlier, in one of the previous cases, the male child, Jacques Jean could be the owner's own son.

In other cases where the slave is buying his or her freedom, there arose an enormous sacrifice since the slave might have saved a huge amount of money to find himself offering this money in order to gain his freedom. In such cases, the money had been obtained after long years of hard toil and savings. The slave, Magdelaine, formerly belonging to the King, made a request to be manumitted with her two Creole children, Françoise and Marie, both females. She bought her freedom with the money obtained

*"...par son travail et économie et à l'aide de ses bienfaisance..."*⁵⁸

Another female slave, Victoire, Créole de Bourbon, offered a sum of 3000*livres* to buy her freedom from her owner Dame Panon, wife of Sieur Labiolière. In this case also, the money was obtained

*"...par son économie et son travail..."*⁵⁹

1.3 The nature of manumissions

The years during and after the Revolution witnessed a considerable increase in the requests for manumissions as well as their confirmation. As discussed earlier, the whole procedure of manumitting a slave involved financial aspects to a great extent. The manumission patterns could be analysed "in terms that were qualitative as well as quantitative";⁶⁰ this part will mostly deal with the qualitative dimension as the reasons for freeing the slaves will be studied here. The next chapter will make a quantitative analysis of the means by which slaves obtained their manumission.

⁵⁷ Register A39, act dated 12 frimaire an 3 (2 December 1794), MA.

⁵⁸ "...from her work and savings..." Register A67, act dated 11 May 1791, MA.

⁵⁹ "...from savings and hard work..." Register A67, act dated 25 April 1791, MA.

⁶⁰ A. Bank: *The decline of urban slavery...*, page 180.

In Isle de France, the manumission cases revealed that slaves were freed for various reasons, the “most popular modes”⁶¹ being those by reward from the owner, intention of close kin through maternal or paternal love, self-purchase and testamentary manumissions. Throughout the whole period 1789 to 1810, liberty granted to the slaves were of different natures. Besides the most common and frequent ones mentioned earlier, manumission was also obtained through marriage, exchange and replacement, departure of owner from the colony, purchase of slave by someone else with the intention of freeing him or her, old age and illness. However, the pattern of manumissions here, in Isle de France, was somewhat different from that of the Cape as Andrew Bank explained it. At the Cape, the particular reasons for freeing the slave were closely related to the ordinances and legislative changes.⁶² But for Isle de France, the means by which slaves were freed did not follow any specific pattern in relation to the laws. In the same year, there could arise various types of manumissions – through reward, testaments, self-purchase – and these revealed that the legislative measures did not favour any particular reason to manumit the slave. It mostly depended on the owner’s decision when to free the slave and by what means.

The different reasons that have been mentioned in the archival acts to initiate a manumission are listed below :

- Reward
- Intention of owner
- Through love of parents and children or close kin (‘piété filiale’)
- Marriage
- Self purchase
- Purchase of slave in view to free him/her (‘achat en vue de...’)
- Will of deceased owner (Testamentary Manumissions)
- Manumission by a third party or by power of attorney (‘fondé de pouvoir’ or ‘porteur de pouvoir’)
- Love and affection (other than parents and close kin)
- Departure of owner
- Exchange and replacement
- In gratitude

⁶¹ A.Bank: The decline of urban slavery.... page 180.

⁶² A.Bank, *ibid*, page 180.

- Old age and illness
- Slave had originally been freed but still kept in bondage
- Encouragement for other slaves (incentive to trustworthy behaviour)
- Conditional manumission (slave is freed following certain conditions)⁶³

Among these sixteen reasons that enabled a slave to have access to freedom, it is to be noted that filial love and self purchase concerned directly the slave's intention to be freed. They dealt exclusively with him or her and showed that the decision to be manumitted was entirely the slave's since he or she did not wait for the owner to obtain freedom. The slave tried to earn and save the amount of money needed to purchase his or her freedom and that of close kin as well. Each of the motivations for manumission will be studied in detail and the quantitative data will be analysed in the next chapter.

1.3.1 Reward

In most of the cases dealing with manumissions by reward, the manumitter appeared to be the owner himself, that is no third party was involved to free the slave except in cases of testamentary manumissions involving reward whereby it was the responsibility of an executor to free the slave. When manumission was being granted through reward, it meant that the slave had proved to be most devoted towards the master, he had worked loyally for him. As Claude Wanquet observed, in Bourbon island, most of the slaves who were freed through reward, appeared to be old slaves who had been at their owner's service for a long time.⁶⁴ However, for Isle de France, the cases studied for this type of manumission showed that the slaves were both old and young beings. In February 1791, Rosalie, a 17 year-old Bengali slave obtained her manumission from Nicolas Marie de La Giraudain, naval officer from Pondicherry.⁶⁵ The owner wanted to reward her and the manumission request was carried out in Pondicherry on 11 February 1791 but confirmed in Isle de France.

In July 1793, another male Malabar slave, Virail, 25 years old, was freed through reward by Cato Pragassa, an Indian freed woman residing at Camp des Malabares.⁶⁶ The number of old slaves manumitted through reward was not proportionate to that of the younger generation; of the 302

⁶³ This will be further explained in Part 1.3.11 in this chapter, page 49.

⁶⁴ C. Wanquet : 'Aperçu sur l'affranchissement des esclaves à Bourbon', page 139.

⁶⁵ Register A55, act dated 28 February 1791, MA.

⁶⁶ Register A55, act dated 29 July 1793, MA.

cases of manumission by reward, barely one quarter could account for middle aged and for old slaves around 60-70 years old. In December 1790, Charles Dimbar, a 72 year-old slave working for the State was manumitted as a result of his good conduct and good work done.⁶⁷ The origin was not mentioned for this slave named Dimbare but it interesting to note that the slaves in this age group who obtained their manumission through reward, belonged mostly to the Malagasy, Guinean and Mozambican origins as could be explained through the following cases.

In 1797, Hyacinthe, a female Malagasy slave, aged 50, was manumitted by her owner Pierre Triolet, who wanted to reward her.⁶⁸ In December 1796, Jeanne Mollé freed her slave, a 70 year-old Mozambican female named Fanchon for the same reason⁶⁹. In November 1795, the female Malagasy slave, Félicité, 40 years, was freed through reward by her owner François Chaillet.⁷⁰ Those employed by the Republic also obtained their manumission as a result of the good work performed; Brasse, a Guinean slave working as carpenter, was freed in August 1796 by the Republic.⁷¹ The 'Administration des Finances'⁷² manumitted a sixty year-old Guinean slave, Singolo, through reward for good work done.⁷³ In September 1797, Prudence, 45 years old, belonging to the Malagasy caste, got her freedom through reward from her owner⁷⁴ as well as Neptune, a 50 year-old male Malagasy who was freed by Charles François Veron de Lagracinière.⁷⁵ The couple Buttié rewarded their Mozambican male slave, Cesar, 65 years old in July 1797⁷⁶, and, another case in December 1798 referred to manumission obtained by means of testament and reward. The late Jean François Villard requested that his slave Louisa, a Mozambican slave of 45 years old be freed with her five children after his death. He wished to reward her and, for that reason, free the family from bondage.⁷⁷ Another testamentary manumission bearing reward was recorded in March 1796, whereby the lady Félicité Jocet, also known as Widow Chazal, residing on her estate at Montagne Longue, wanted to fulfill her late husband's desire to reward a Creole slave family. Hence, the couple, Phillippe, 38 years old and

⁶⁷ Register A55, act dated 24 December 1790, MA.

⁶⁸ Register A65, act dated January 1797, MA.

⁶⁹ Register A65, act dated December 1796, MA.

⁷⁰ Register A66, act dated 25 November 1795, MA.

⁷¹ Register A65, act dated August 1796, MA.

⁷² It was directly linked to the Directoire which took charge of the colony's General Administration as stipulated in Articles 16 and 17 of the Constitution of 1791. The 'Administrateur des Finances' in fact was the 'Intendant' of the Ancien Régime, who, under the Revolution, lost his legal powers but since he was still responsible of the colony's finance, he was designated as 'Administrateur'.

⁷³ Register A66, act dated 26 September 1795, MA.

⁷⁴ Register A57, act dated September 1797, MA.

⁷⁵ Register A66, act dated 25 November 1795, MA.

⁷⁶ Register A57, act dated July 1797, MA.

⁷⁷ Register A57, act dated December 1798, MA.

Gertrude, 30 years old, was manumitted together with their two children: Edouard, 5 years old and Louis Ferrant, 3 years old.⁷⁸

It happened that some slave owners manumitted the children of their slaves and this type of manumission was a reward for the mother or father who, maybe, was already dead. Such cases were not so common but those recorded revealed to be rather particular like the following case in April 1796. Two little Creole girls, Jeanne Perrine, aged 22 months and her 3 month-old sister, Henriette Louise, were freed by the owners of their late mother, Jeanne.⁷⁹ The owner, Pierre Henry Saucet and his wife, manumitted the two girls who resided at their place; this act of freedom was executed as a reward in memory of their late mother who was most unfortunate to die before the manumission. Since the children were still too young, they would remain under the responsibility of the couple Saucet till their majority but they were no longer held in bondage.

Julie, a free coloured citizen, wished to reward a female Indian slave, Marie, and, she manumitted the latter's son, Edward, a two month-old Creole child. In the act, no mention was made whether Marie was still alive.⁸⁰ It was only said that Julie rewarded Marie for having been at her service in a most faithful way. Another act recorded in November 1795 confirmed the manumission of a male infant, Jean Hillaire, 16 months old. The child belonged to a Malagasy slave, Zaïre, slave of Vincent Foy. The reason of this manumission was to reward "beforehand the services and faithfulness" of Zaïre.⁸¹ Another slave owner, Louis Mahé, freed the daughter of his slave for the same reason; the ten year-old Creole girl, Jeanne Estev, was manumitted and she received as donation from the owner a convenient house.⁸²

1.3.2 Gratitude

Another reason for which owners were brought to manumit their slaves was gratitude and also the personal wish of the manumitter to ensure a more fortunate destiny for the slave. Expressing gratitude towards a slave usually implied that the latter had shown a particular attention or care for the master as in cases of old owners being looked after by their slaves; gratitude was different from reward in the sense that, in the former case, the owner felt he owed something to the slave.

⁷⁸ Register A66, act dated 22 March 1796, MA.

⁷⁹ Register A66, act dated 21 April 1796, MA.

⁸⁰ Register A66, act dated 21 May 1796, MA.

⁸¹ Register A66, act dated 25 November 1795, MA.

⁸² Register A39, act dated 2 December 1794, MA.

Brana-Shute explains that “what emerges from the requests is a pattern of affection for and dependance on those slaves who nursed owners and their kinfolk through serious illnesses”.⁸³ In 1791, Sieur Edme Nicolas Rolina, apothecary at the King’s service, freed his female slave, Rosi, 26 years old, of Indian origin, because of the

“...soins assidus quelle a pris de lui pendant une maladie de deux années...”⁸⁴

Another slave owner, Nizam, of ‘lascar’ origin, referred to as an infirm, manumitted in gratitude his Indian slave, Manon for the

“...soins qu’elle lui a rendu depuis seize ans quelle lui appartient et quelle lui rend journellement dans son état d’infirmité”⁸⁵

A Bengali female slave, Soret, aged 45 years, obtained her manumission since her master, Sieur Dupuy, was highly indebted to her for her loyal service.⁸⁶ Another owner, Louis Alexandre Chermont liberated his 60 year-old female Malagasy slave, Gouv, as she had been nursing his wife for a long time.⁸⁷

There were cases whereby the master felt concerned to provide a better living for his slave. In the acts, the term used was “faire le bien” meaning to ensure for the slave a more fortunate destiny. This dealt normally with young children who obtained their manumission by their masters, who were, in fact, their own father. In certain acts, the relationship between the slave and the owner was revealed as in this case : the citizen Pierre Guyor also known as Duclos wanted to free his illegitimate child, Cecile, a ten year-old Creole of this island.⁸⁸ Here, it is very clear that Duclos impregnated out of wedlock a slave who came to bear his child. No mention was made about the child’s mother in the act. However, in other cases, when a female slave and her children were manumitted, the owner often admitted his responsibility as father; the free coloured citizen, Soucroumania, residing at Camp des Malabars, gratified his slave Marianne, also Malabare and ‘their’ Creole children, five year-old Mathurin and three year-old François by manumitting them. He identified the two children as his own:

⁸³ R.Brana-Shute : ‘Approaching freedom ...’, page 55.

⁸⁴ “... she took good care of him during his state of illness which lasted two years...”, Register A67, act dated 31 March 1791, MA.

⁸⁵ “... she had taken good care of him since sixteen years and was still helping him in his poor state of illness”, Register A72, act dated 25 April 1791, MA.

⁸⁶ Register A67, act dated 29 March 1791, MA.

⁸⁷ Register A66, act dated 26 September 1795, MA.

⁸⁸ Register A41, act dated 25 December 1795, MA.

*"...ses véritables enfants procréés entre lui et la dite Marianne..."*⁸⁹

As discussed earlier, the term 'faire le bien' appeared in certain acts, whereas, in others, the owner referred to 'faire le bonheur'⁹⁰ which meant that the master really wished to make the slave happy. The case of Marguerite, a Creole slave residing at Camp des Noirs Libres was most revealing. It appeared that her manumission was not yet confirmed as she obtained it from her mistress, Widow Magon, some six years back. In the document, the owner mentioned

*"Je declare que voulant faire le bonheur de Marguerite créole et sa fille Mélanie contrefaite, bossue, je leur ai donné la liberté il y a au moins six années, personne n'a le droit de la tracasser pour sa liberté."*⁹¹

Her manumission was confirmed in 1797 but Marguerite was already living on her own.

Another noticeable term in acts of this nature was 'godson', referring to the child being manumitted. This normally implied that the owner was the godfather but, how far was this true? Claude Wanquet argued that the term 'godson' was most certainly an euphemism to represent in fact an illegitimate child.⁹² In December 1793, François La Rue, a free black, freed his 'godson' Joseph, Creole of this island, aged 12 years.⁹³ The reason to manumit him was mainly because the 'godfather' wished a better destiny for the child, he also offered him as donation a house covered with shingles, situated at Camp Malabar and an Indian slave woman named Flore.

1.3.3 Intention or personal wish of owner

Reward and gratitude could be considered as plausible reasons to manumit a slave since the owner might feel he owed something to the one who had been at his service. There were however, certain owners who freed their slaves for no evident specific reason, the acts revealed that it was the owner's intention or his personal wish to free his slave. Further details were not given to explain this intention or wish. An act dated December 1795 confirmed the manumission of a 40 year-old female Malagasy, Rozalie. The slave belonged to François Guillaume La Vergne,

⁸⁹ "...his own children procreated with Marianne...", Register A41, act dated 28 floréal an 6 (17 May 1798), MA.

⁹⁰ Register A57, act dated 4 vendémiaire an 6 (25 September 1797), MA.

⁹¹ "I wish to make the happiness of Marguerite, a Creole slave and her daughter, Mélanie, who is hunchbacked and I granted to them their freedom some six years back. No one has the right to oppose this manumission", Register A57, act dated 4 vendémiaire an 6, MA.

⁹² C. Wanquet: 'Aperçu sur l'affranchissement des esclaves...', page 140.

⁹³ Register A39, act dated 20 December 1793, MA.

surgeon residing at Port de La Montagne and it was his sole intention to free Rozalie.⁹⁴ Another owner, Bertrand Bonhomme, manumitted his male slave, Valentin, a Creole of 35 years for the same reason.⁹⁵ Marie Françoise, an Indian slave, 22 years old, was freed from bondage since it was her owner's intention to do so.⁹⁶

A few cases contained some sort of disguised intention such as manumitting very young children; Julie, a free Bengali female slave residing Camp des Malabares, proclaimed her intention to free her two children, Marie Françoise who was three years old and Balthazard, one year old. In the act, it was mentioned that

"... elle promet ... de les garder auprès d'elle".⁹⁷

What could this possibly imply? Maybe the children were those of her owner who had already freed her, and now she was requesting their freedom and bore their responsibility.

We could also assume that certain owners did not have any children, and, hence no one to bear their inheritance. Louis Kerclin, a carpenter at Port de La Montagne, acquired from Sieur Bastaro and his wife, on 15 August 1794, an infant named Louis, a 17 month-old Creole of this island with the intention to free the boy and adopt him as his own and sole heir.⁹⁸

An interesting case was that of Heyder, a free coloured man residing at Camp des Noirs Libres, who intended to manumit his 19 year-old Indian slave, Rozette and her child, Marie Louise.⁹⁹ The owner did not define further the reason of this manumission, but, once more, the 'intention' led towards the interpretation that maybe he was intimately linked to Rozette who had his child.

A few owners confirmed their legitimate paternity, and the child was given the father's name as well, a fact which was most uncommon among slaves who were mostly referred to by their first names; very few cases mentioned the family name of the slave. In 1799, Jean Baptiste Yandel, 'Commandeur', working for the State, manumitted his son, André Yandel, a Creole of 18 years old.¹⁰⁰ The boy worked for the State as locksmith. However, nothing had been said about the

⁹⁴ Register A56A/56B, act dated 4 nivose an 4 (25 December 1795), MA.

⁹⁵ Register A56A/56B, act dated 4 nivose an 4 (25 December 1795), MA.

⁹⁶ Register A56A/56B, act dated 4 frimaire an 4 (25 November 1795).

⁹⁷ "...she promised...to keep them with her", Register A56A/56B, act dated 4 nivose an 4 (25 December 1795), MA.

⁹⁸ Register A56A/56B, act dated 4 frimaire an 4 (25 November 1795), MA.

⁹⁹ Register A56A/56B, act dated 2 messidor an 4 (20 June 1796), MA.

¹⁰⁰ Register A41, act dated 9 brumaire an 8 (31 October 1799), MA.

young slave's mother, whether she had been one of Yandel's slaves and 'mistress'. But it was probable that he married her since the child was considered as legitimate, bearing his father's name.

1.3.4 Testamentary manumissions

Some slaves were manumitted by testamentary disposition after the death of their owners. In Isle de France, testamentary manumissions accounted for the second most popular mode after reward. Shell observed that "such owners enjoyed their slaves' services until the very last moment".¹⁰¹ Indeed, that was most truly the case since the slaves obtained their liberty only after the master's death. We are brought to believe that the late owner did not sacrifice much in terms of wealth in his living days as he kept the slave at his service, while, if he had manumitted him or her, he would have had to provide for the needs of the newly-freed. After the owner's death, it became the responsibility of an executor to carry out the slave's manumission, according to the will left by the deceased. Some owners left almost a part of their wealth for the slave they were freeing, and, such an act showed, on one part, the master's generosity while, on the other, he was also acting 'intelligently' as he enjoyed the full possession of his wealth till his death.

In 1799, Jean Louis Merlo, executor of late François Hache, proclaimed the manumission of a slave family belonging to the late owner and as stated in his will. Hence, Antoine, a 25 year-old tailor of Malay origin and his wife, Aucina, an Indian of 25 years were freed with their four children : Perine-7 years, Virginie-5 years, Marie Louise- 3 years and Emilie-3 months. They were freed from slavery but they would still continue to work on the estate for a limited period.¹⁰² This clause in the testament mainly reflected the owner's wish that his slaves be perfectly able to subsist once freed.

A slave could be freed through testament while at the same time being rewarded in the name of the late owner. An act dated December 1794 defined the manumission of Zaire, a Malagasy slave belonging to late Jacques Landy. Her late owner intended to have her freed after his death so as to reward her for having cared for him

¹⁰¹ R.Shell : *Children of bondage...*, page 390.

¹⁰² Register A41, act dated 1er thermidor an 7 (1 July 1799), MA.

*“... avec d’autant plus de raison qu’elle à pris les plus grands soins d’un viellard dont la maladie de laquelle il est décédé en exigeaient beaucoup, ... ”.*¹⁰³

The free coloured also chose to manumit their slaves by testaments and Guillaume, a free citizen residing at Camp des Malabares, fulfilled the wishes of his late mother, Charlette and freed Marguerite a Creole slave.¹⁰⁴ Another free woman, Toinette, stated her wishes in her will dated 26 July 1792 that her Indian slave, Thérèse, 22 years old be freed after her death. The slave was manumitted on 2 November 1793, more than a year later.¹⁰⁵

Of all the cases dealing with testamentary manumissions, it is interesting to note that there was only one case whereby the dying owner did not make any written will, she merely expressed her wishes by word of mouth. That was the case of late Catherine Darval, wife of Nicolas Leroux. The executor, Jacques Saulnier, respected her ‘verbal will’ and manumitted the three slaves she mentioned: Pélagic, a 40 year-old female Malagasy and Pélagée, 38 years old of Indian origin with her 2 year-old child, Modeste, born Creole.¹⁰⁶ This act could be defined as tribute to the deceased as Wanquet interpreted it.¹⁰⁷ The same executor could deal with different testaments from different slave owners; the same executor, Jacques Saulnier, was responsible for the manumission of Antoine, a malabard slave of 22 years belonging to late Jean André Lamalétie, as stated in his will.¹⁰⁸

A few testamentary manumissions involved very young female slaves with children. Freed while being so young, how could the mother possibly be able to subsist especially if the donations were granted to her only at her majority? A case in 1799 showed that Hélaine, a Malay slave, only 16 years old, was able to obtain her manumission as well as that of her 10 month-old Creole son, Jean, from her late master Jean Tourtellier.¹⁰⁹ No details concerning the relationship between the slave and her master were available. That was rather ambiguous since the young Hélaine was not referred to as a slave “à talents” and she would be offered the donation as stated in the will only at

¹⁰³ “... she had taken very good care of an old man who died of an illness that required the greatest care..”, Register A39, act dated 12 frimaire an 3 (2 December 1794), MA.

¹⁰⁴ Register A39, act dated 6 November 1793, MA.

¹⁰⁵ Register A39, act dated 2 November 1793, MA.

¹⁰⁶ Register A41, act dated 28 vendémiaire an 8 (20 October 1799), MA.

¹⁰⁷ C. Wanquet: ‘Aperçu sur l’affranchissement des esclaves...’, page 139.

¹⁰⁸ Register A41, act dated 28 vendémiaire an 8 (20 October 1799), MA.

¹⁰⁹ Register A41, act dated 29 fructidor an 7 (15 September 1799), MA.

her 'majority age'. Maybe she would still remain at her late owner's place even after being manumitted, and, we could further question whether the child was fathered by the owner.

Almost every testamentary manumission granted donations for the welfare of the freed slaves, but other owners left a legacy, which very often, was in terms of slaves, lands or a close kin. A manumission case in 1797 clearly demonstrated the specific bequest to each of the slaves. The late Nicolas Olivier requested in his will the manumission of four female slaves, namely Marie Jeanne, a 50 year-old Mozambique and three other Creoles: Rozalie-45 years, Manon-26 years and Magdelaine-22 years. It was mentioned in the document that

"... il n'est fait aucun don aux ..., quatre affranchies, parceque feu citoyen Olivier a pourvu a leur sort par son dit testament en faisant a chacune d'elles des legs particuliers..".¹¹⁰

Document 3, on Page 33, proposes an abstract transcribed in its original French, enclosed in the act and which contained the details about donations, while Document 4, on Page 34, is a translation in English of this abstract. The document has been cited wholly as it showed an abstract, which generally was included only in very specific manumission acts, and, it also gives an idea of the way slave owners wrote their wills. The abstract was relevant particularly for manumissions by will and manumissions granted because of the departure of the owner from the colony, and, in this document, the owner expressed clearly his wishes and intentions regarding the manumission to be performed in his absence. In the case of Nicolas Olivier, he made specific bequests to each of the four slaves who were to be freed after his death. The abstract contains interesting details on the assets bequeathed to the four manumitted. Since each of the bequests made was different from one another, this further provided important particulars on the slaves and also on the wealth of the slave owner.

^{110a} ...no donation was granted to the four manumitted since the late Olivier. left to each of them a personal legacy...", Register A65, act dated 4 ventose an 5 (22 February 1797), MA.

Document 3

“Suit l’annexe

Du testament du citoyen Nicolas Olivier reçu en Brevet... le trois vendemiaire an cinq

Extrait ce qui suit

Rosalie – Je veux que Rosalie Creole soit affranchie et je lui donne et legue le nommé Louis son fils, cinq autres esclaves travaillants, six bêtes a cornes bonnes et valubles et en rapport pour par elle jouir du tout en propriété.

Marie Jeanne – Je veux et entend que Marie Jeanne negresse Mozambique soit affranchie et je lui donne et legue Cyprien Commandeur son mari et Françoise Creole fille de ce dernier pour appartenir à la dite Marie Jeanne en toute propriété. Je lui donne et legue pareillement Charlette sa filleule fille d’André.

Manon – Voulant reconnaître les services que me rend Manon Creole depuis que je suis malade je veux qu’elle soit affranchie et je lui donne et legue a prendre parmi mes esclaves et a son choix un enfant male ou femelle de l’age de sept a huit ans pour en jouir en propriété.

Magdelaine - Je veux encore que la nommée Magdelaine Creole soit affranchie et je lui donne et legue un de ses frères ou une de ses soeurs a son choix pour en avoir la propriété.

Rosalie – J’ajoute au legue cydessus fait a Rosalie cinquante arpens a prendre au Cent Gaulettes dans l’endroit qu’elle choisira et ou il lui sera fait aux frais de ma succession un petit logement et une plantation en vivres pour aussil en avoir la propriété et pour executer le present mon testament. Je nomme et institue le dit Aucler cydevant habitant au Canton de Moka actuellement residant en cette ville que je prie de me rendre ce dernier service.”¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Register A65, act dated 4 ventose an 5 (22 February 1797), Annexe, MA.

Document 4

“Follows the abstract

From the testament of the citizen Nicolas Olivier...received on the 3 vendemiaire year 5.

To Rosalie - I wish that Rosalie, Creole, be manumitted and I bequeath to her, Louis, her son, five hard-working slaves and six horned animals...

Marie-Jeanne - I want Marie Jeanne, a Mozambican slave, to be manumitted and I bequeath to her, Cyprien, her husband working as ‘Commandeur’ and Françoise of Creole origin, daughter of Cyprien. I also give to her Charlette, her goddaughter who is André’s child.

Manon - as this Creole slave has taken good care of me since my illness, I wish that she be freed and I bequeath to her a male or female slave around seven or eight years old, to be chosen among my slaves.

Magdelaine - I want this Creole slave to be manumitted and I give to her one of her brothers or sisters... who will become her property.

Rosalie - besides all that had already been given to her, I also bequeath about 50 acres of land. She is given the possibility to choose the exact place at Cent Gaulettes. Furthermore, a little house and an area of cultivation would be made available to her on this land, at the costs of the Olivier succession. I give the citizen Aucler, residing in Canton de Moka, the responsibility to be my executor”.

From this abstract, one can get an idea of the Olivier estate; it appeared to be a ‘large’ estate due to the number of slaves working there, namely : the four slaves to be freed and the other slaves bequeathed to them. Furthermore, Cyprien’s occupation was that of ‘Commandeur’ and this normally meant he was in charge of a number of slaves. Also, when the slaves Rosalie and Magdelaine were being bequeathed their son and brother or sister, it shows that such close kin became their property and their ‘slaves’. This refers to manumission cases whereby a mother was freeing her own child, stating that the child was also her ‘slave’.

Another aspect worth considering was the bequest made to Marie Jeanne; the late Olivier stated that he was offering her Cyprien's daughter, Françoise. Since Cyprien was Marie Jeanne's husband, then surely the child was hers as well. But, according to the information available, it seemed that Françoise belonged to another slave woman and was fathered by Cyprien – "*filie de ce dernier*". This interpretation could be justified following the different aspects of sexual freedom that existed among slave women. This aspect of sexual freedom will be further discussed in Chapter 3.

This case study reveals, that the owner had been most generous towards each of the four slaves but, still he had been quite intelligent in his task of freeing his slaves since his property and slaves remained in his hands until his death. Those slaves who belonged to a family succession seemed less fortunate than those who were privately owned. It seemed as if those owners were most unwilling to free their human property before their death, perhaps because of the financial investment required by the process of manumission.

Not all owners managed to make their wills long before their death, there were some "dramatic deathbed manumissions..."¹¹² whereby the owner, already in a critical state, tried to make his wishes concerning his slaves. An interesting case in 1791 showed such a scene; the notary and other officers of the Republic were requested by a certain Jean Baptiste, a free Creole, to come to his place at Camp des Noirs to make his will. The owner was only 26 years old but in a state of physical illness. He wished to manumit a nine year-old boy, Hipolitte whom he had acquired from Sieur and Dame de La Sablonnière while the child was only 18 months old. As donations, he granted to him 2000*livres* and two slaves: Azor, a 12 year-old Mozambique and Jammy, a female Malabard of 20 years. An executor, Sieur Joseph Gaspard Roger, was appointed to carry out the manumission. The will was dated 27 March 1790 and the manumission confirmed on 9 May 1791.¹¹³

A few owners who intended to leave Isle de France for good, felt obliged to make their wills in case of any unfortunate event. They feared for the welfare and destiny of their own slaves who, left under the responsibility of others, might never get their freedom. The testament of Alexis Nadreau was most revealing in that aspect:

¹¹² R.Shell: *Children of bondage...*, page 390.

¹¹³ Register A72(folios 121-142), act dated 9 May 1791, MA.

*“Dans le cas de mon decès pendant mon voyage, je donne à ma negresse nommée Blanche, sa liberté, et de plus une somme de dix mille livres, pour subvenir à ses besoins. 27 floréal an dernier.”*¹¹⁴

Actually, Alexis Nadreau happened to die and the executor, Jean Paul Bruneau, fulfilled the testamentary wishes and manumitted Blanche, a Mozambican female slave of 18 years. The manumission was confirmed on 21 May 1796, a year later, after the will was made.

Another case was that of Alexis, a free Indian, already embarked for a voyage to Batavia. His will dated 23 October 1793 stated that a sufficient amount of money should be used to buy the slave Auguste, his brother, an Indian from the Sieur Desjardins and then proceed to obtain his manumission. Alexis died in Batavia on 19 April 1794; it was to be considered that Auguste, wigmaker and barber, bought his own freedom as wished by Alexis. The executor donated to him an amount of 4100*livres* and the manumission was carried out in December 1794.¹¹⁵

Another will was made at Mahé, in Seychelles on 20 April 1797 by the late Dominique Seguin, Captain of a commercial ship. He stated that the manumission of a Malabar slave, Simon, 24 years old, should be granted a year later.¹¹⁶

1.3.5 Manumission by a third party : the “porteur de pouvoir” or “fondé de pouvoir”

The manumission process usually involved two major parties – the owner and the slave to be manumitted. But, there were cases which dealt with a third party, normally referred to as a “porteur de pouvoir” or “fondé de pouvoir” in the acts; this third party acted as an agent holding power of attorney and he was able to carry out the manumission on the manumitter’s behalf. The task of the executor and the agent were very much similar. However, it differed in the sense that, in the executor’s case, the ‘real’ manumitter or owner was already dead, whereas, in the agent’s case, the owner was either absent from the colony or physically unfit to fulfill the manumission. In certain acts, no details were available for the owner’s inability to perform personally the manumission exercise.

¹¹⁴ “In case of death during my voyage, I give to my slave Blanche, her freedom, and also an amount of ten thousand livres, for her subsistence”, Register A41, act dated 2 prairial an 4 (21 May 1796), MA.

¹¹⁵ Register A39, act dated 12 frimaire an 3 (2 December 1794), MA.

¹¹⁶ Register A57, act dated 4 floréal an 6 (27 April 1798), MA.

In 1796, Sieur Dusanty authorized François Hidier to proceed with the manumission of his slave, Justine, an Indian aged 16, belonging to the Talinga sub- group. A part of the act is quoted to show that the manumission had been announced in the papers and met with no opposition. Dusanty also donated to Justine two Mozambican female slaves and an amount of 6000*livres*.

*“Je, par ce present, donne pouvoir et autorise le citoyen François Hidier à faire toutes poursuites, diligence et actes necessaries, en mon nom, pour la liberté et affranchissement de ma négresse Justine de caste talinga qui j'ai déjà fait porter sur les annonces publiques et pendant le present mois lui donner par acte deux negresses mozambiques et la somme de six mille livres... Port Nord Ouest, le 20 nivose an4. Signé Dusanty”.*¹¹⁷

The manumission was confirmed on 22 March 1796.

Another case was that of Jean Pierre Guillaume Bernard, Captain of a commercial ship, who appointed Antoine Michel Marron to carry out the manumission of his Indian slave, César, 31 years old, on his behalf.¹¹⁸ According to his profession, it was most probable that the Captain Bernard was absent and he left the document bearing the authorization on 28 February 1798 and the manumission of César took place on 24 March 1798, a very short period of time after the request.

Usually, when a father or mother was requesting the liberation of his own child, he did it personally and persevered so that the child got his freedom. A case in 1798 appeared to be most ambiguous since the father, a coloured citizen, Sieur Pierre Peslerbe, appointed Pierre Henri Saucet to free his own son, Florimond, a Creole of 21 years old. The ambiguity resided in the context of the document as it was stated by Peslerbe

“Je prie le citoyen Saucet de vouloir bien prendre sous sa surveillance Florimond Créol mon fils et qui m'appartient lui donnant tout pouvoir, sur lui à l'effet de le reprendre et punir s'il se dérangeait de ses devoirs.

¹¹⁷ “I give to the citizen François Hidier the power and authorization to do everything on my behalf for the freedom and manumission of my slave, Justine, of Talinga caste, whose manumission I have already announced in the public paper this month and I am giving to her two Mozambican female slaves and an amount of 6000*livres*. Port Nord Ouest, 20 nivose an4, Signed Dusanty”, Register A56A/56B, act dated 2 germinal an 4 (22 March 1796), MA.

¹¹⁸ Register A57, act dated 4 germinal an 6 (24 March 1798), MA.

Je l'autorise en outre à faire tout acte et diligence nécessaire en mon nom pour l'affranchissement du dit Florimond approuvant d'avance tout ce qu'il croira bon de faire à ce sujet et promettant ratifier le tout.

Port Nord Ouest, Isle de France, le 18 pluviôse an 6 approuvé l'écriture cy-dessus. Signé Pierre Peslerbe".¹¹⁹

The father admitted that Florimond belonged to him, nevertheless, it seemed that he offered him to another person and, furthermore, the third party could have full rights on the boy. The reasons lying behind Peslerbe's decision were somewhat uncertain as he even proposed to Saucet to 'punish' the boy. It is most unfortunate that the act does not provide us with the necessary information needed to enable us to interpret the reasons leading to this manumission.

In 1795, Sieur René Joubert, marine surgeon being absent from the colony, conferred the powers of attorney to Claude Dudresit, enabling him to free a Talinga slave Rosette, 18 years old, belonging to Joubert himself. The manumission was confirmed on 26 September 1795.¹²⁰

1.3.6 Filial love : through love of parents – children ('piété filiale')

It was very often through bonds of affection that slaves were able to secure their freedom. In most cases, mothers and fathers who were already freed tended to secure the freedom of their children or close kin like nephews, nieces. Manumitted children also were able to obtain the necessary funds to free their parents. Andrew Bank stated that, at the Cape, parents, brothers or sisters purchased the freedom of their close kin¹²¹, but, it has been observed that here, in Isle de France, that was not exactly the same as in the acts studied, those intending to manumit their close kin did so without buying the freedom, the reason mentioned was mainly because of a close bond, a filial love as very often stated – "piété filiale". This was namely in cases where the slave was the parent's own property. But there were cases whereby a close parent purchased the freedom of a child or close one from someone else who owned the slave. This is analysed in detail in Part 1.3.9 on pages 46-47.

¹¹⁹ "I ask the citizen Saucet to take under his responsibility my son Florimond, Creole, who belongs to me and I give to Saucet all rights on the boy and punish him if he acts disagreeably. I also authorize him to manumit Florimond on my behalf and let him do anything that seems good for the boy. Port Nord Ouest, Isle de France, 18 pluviôse an 6 (6 February 1798). Signed Pierre Peslerbe", Register A57, act dated 4 brumaire an 7 (25 October 1798), MA.

¹²⁰ Register A66, act dated 4 vendémiaire an 4 (26 September 1795), MA.

¹²¹ A. Bank : The decline of urban slavery in Cape Town....., page 182.

As required by the process of manumission, sufficient donations were granted to consolidate the manumittee's welfare.

"Article onzième" of the laws pertaining to manumission stated that a sum of 300*livres* must be paid to the 'Commune Générale' by the manumitter for every slave to be freed. But this law was not applicable for manumissions carried out through filial love; parents, children, brothers or sisters freeing their close kin were not entitled to pay the 300*livres*.¹²²

In certain acts, this clause was stated whereas, in others, no mention was made about it. In June 1794, Elizabeth, a free Creole woman residing at quartier de La Savanne, requested the manumission of her 8 year-old daughter, Victorine, and,

*"... attendu que par l'article de l'assemblée coloniale relatif aux affranchissements au fait pour cause de piété filiale sont exempt des droits à payer à la Commune ..."*¹²³

The same was applicable to another free coloured citizen, Marie Louise, who wanted to free her five Creole children : Jean Mindy-23 years, Pierre Paul Thomas-11 years, Manuel Thomas-6 years, Jeanne Eleonore-9 years and Marie Josephine-2 years.¹²⁴ It was most evident that the children were privately owned by someone else, maybe their mother's former owner.

In October 1793, Jeanneton, a free slave who was manumitted by a coloured citizen, Jean Pierre, managed to free her two children: Jean Baptiste, a Creole of 3½ years old and Marie Louise, a one year-old Creole. She wanted to liberate them mainly because of the maternal tie linking her to them. She donated to the children a Mozambican slave, Azor, 16 years old working as launderer and also 3000*livres* obtainable at their 'majority age'.¹²⁵

Another case on the same day was that of Mélanie Victorine, a Creole child of 8 years who was manumitted by her mother Marguerite, a 'mulatresse', herself manumitted by the citizen Maissin. The term used to describe the mother-child relationship was most curious as, in the act, Mélanie was defined as Marguerite's child and also as her slave - "*...et néanmoins son esclave*".¹²⁶ It was surprising in the sense that her own mother considered her as her slave, but, it could be that the

¹²² Lois 19,Z3B/13, (Mauritius Archives).

¹²³ "...because of filial love, they are exempt from paying the charges to the 'Commune' ...", Register A65, act dated 4 thermidor an 4 (22 July 1796), MA.

¹²⁴ Register A65, act dated 4 thermidor an 4 (22 July 1796), MA.

¹²⁵ Register A39, act dated 19 October 1793, MA.

¹²⁶ "...and nevertheless her slave", Register A39, act dated 19 October 1793, MA.

mother, when she obtained her manumission, got the child as donation from Maissin, her master. Hence, she considered her child as bearing the status of a slave.

In November 1793, a free woman, Flore, manumitted by her late owner, sought to free her 7 year-old son, Jean Marie. Her maternal affection for the child led her to request his liberty and she confirmed her responsibility to take care of her son, educate and feed him until his 'majority age' whereupon he would have rights to Flore's succession.¹²⁷ Some parents, while freeing their children through an act of filial love, also bore the intention to give to their freed siblings a civil status in society. Such was the intention of Jacques, a free Creole, manumitted from the citizen Le Roux and still residing at the latter's place, Rue de Paris, Port Nord Ouest. He wished to free his 21 year-old daughter, Françoise, born Creole. The girl's mother was a Creole slave, Marie Magdelaine, also a manumitted slave. Jacques emphasized the fact that long before they were freed, they longed to have their daughter manumitted and give her the legitimate rights to their succession. The deep desire to acquire that so precious freedom was clearly revealed here.¹²⁸

It is most important to observe that in all the cases dealing with a mother freeing her child, nothing has been said about the child's bondage. We can as well ask from whom the mother is trying to liberate the child, if he is possibly owned by someone else. However, it is highly probable that the child must acquire the same free status as the mother; Article IX of the 'Code Noir' states that if the female slave was free, the children whether males or females, acquired the mother's free status, and, they be considered as free people like her. If the father was already freed while the mother was still a slave, the children would be considered as slaves as well.¹²⁹ That could be the case of Henriette, a 3 month-old baby fathered by the free citizen, Jean Marie Oger. He proclaimed that the child was born in the island and promised to take care, feed and house her. Nothing has been said about the child's mother and it is most certain that maybe she was still a slave and Henriette bore the same enslaved status. However, the father managed to obtain her manumission and took her under his care.¹³⁰

During the Decaen period, the manumission cases were not so easily confirmed as in the years before. Decaen's laws relating to tax, to request to the Colonial Commissioner, to go behind the Judge in the court of first instance were time consuming and much burdensome for the

¹²⁷ Register A39, act dated 8 November 1793, MA.

¹²⁸ Register A65, act dated 4 ventose an 5 (22 February 1797), MA.

¹²⁹ K.Noël: *L'esclavage à l'isle de France....*, page 165.

¹³⁰ Register A39, act dated 6 November 1793, MA.

manumitter. Hence, it is observed that most of the manumission acts were confirmed after having been gone through with a fine-tooth comb. A request dated 14 frimaire an 13 (5 December 1804) was confirmed only four years later, on 31 May 1808. It was a case of parental love: Pierrot and Marie, both 61 years old were free coloured residing at Rivière du Rempart and they were seeking the manumission of their daughters: Louise, 41 years old and Angélique, 18 years old, and, the latter's children: Elisa, 3 years old and another 5 month-old little girl. Pierrot and Marie expressed their deep desire to get the manumission of their children and stated

*"... ils seront heureux si la main de leurs enfants libres leur ferme les yeux..."*¹³¹

The two daughters, Louise and Angélique, had been previously bought from Sieur and Dame Vieilh, their former owners, by their parents. Through their savings, the old couple managed to have four acres of land and two slaves worth the donations required by law. Furthermore, they had to admit the legitimacy of Louise and Angélique as heirs to their possessions.

Filial love did not only deal with free parents manumitting their siblings but also with free children liberating their mothers or fathers. On 6 November 1793, Marie Louise, a free Creole from Isle de Bourbon, residing at Camp des Malabares, sought to obtain the freedom of her mother, Adélaïde, an Indian slave residing with her and to whom she donated an amount of 1000*livres*.¹³² In the act, it is stated that Adélaïde, while still in bondage, lived with her free daughter. We are brought to question the free status of Marie Louise; most probably she could not have been born free as her mother was still a slave, but, there arose the possibility that she might have obtained her manumission through her own savings or by someone else, maybe the one who fathered her.

Another case was that of Marie Jeanne, a coloured citizen who wanted to free her mother, Marie Josephe, a Bengali slave and her brother, Pierre, a Creole of more than 14 years. She acquired them from the citizen de Bruny and obtained their manumission in May 1796.¹³³ It became evident that the two slaves belonged to de Bruny from whom Marie Jeanne liberated them through an act of filial love. The document mentioned nothing about donations but it is most clear that the freed mother and brother would remain with Marie Jeanne and be under her care.

¹³¹ "... they would be happy if the hands of their freed children close their eyes...", Register GA36, act dated 14 frimaire an 13 (5 December 1804), MA.

¹³² Register A39, act dated 6 November 1793, MA.

¹³³ Register A39, act dated 12 floréal an 4 (1 May 1796), MA.

In June 1797, Christine, an Indian slave of 61 years old, was freed by her son Baptiste Tourangeot, residing at Canton des Pamplemousses. She was offered 4000*livres* as donation and would reside at her son's place.¹³⁴ Such cases of manumission also revealed the children's commitment towards their enslaved parents and it appeared that their income was used in the whole process of liberating their close ones. As Brana-Shute explains, "manumitted became manumitters in turn, freeing kin or others they loved,...It is a pattern that resembles 'chain migration': one member migrates (to freedom, in this case) and prepares the way for other relatives to follow".¹³⁵

1.3.7 Love and affection [other than close kin]

Another reason for initiating a manumission was the manumitter's statement that he or she felt affection for that slave. We are no longer dealing with cases of filial love and love between close members of a family. Here, the owner, whether male or female, felt a particular interest, affection or tenderness for the slave, and, for that reason, wished to manumit him or her. An act dated October 1797 expressed the need to manumit a 40 year-old Malagasy slave, Magdelaine. Her owner, Pauline Bacour, a free coloured woman residing at Canton des Pamplemousses, stated that she was not related by consanguine ties to the slave but her wish to free Magdelaine was because of the bond and affection that linked them.¹³⁶

In certain acts which involved male owners manumitting their female slaves for personal reasons dealing with affection, it may appear that they shared an intimate and sexual relationship although this might not be necessarily the case. Two case studies in 1808 revealed to be much interesting and somewhat particular in the way the reasons for manumission were expressed. In both cases, the manumitted were females and their behaviour and work performed for the owner had been most outstanding. Lolotte, a Creole slave of 18 years, belonged to Marie Adélaïde Pilot and to her husband, both deceased. The slave Lolotte became the property of the late owners' children and she devoted herself at their service with unlimited affection and ardour. In the act, it was mentioned that such a characteristic was "...*rare dans cette espèce d'individus*".¹³⁷ The late Marie Pilot already spotted this particular slave from the others and expressed her wish to free her

¹³⁴ Register A57, act dated 4 messidor an 5 (22 June 1797), MA.

¹³⁵ R.Brana-Shute: 'Approaching freedom...', page 57.

¹³⁶ Register A57, act dated 4 brumaire an 6 (25 October 1797), MA.

¹³⁷ "...entirely rare in this type of persons", Register GA36, act dated 13 July 1808, MA.

but unfortunately she died. But, Lolotte obtained her manumission granted to her by the children of her late owners.¹³⁸

The second case was that of Agathe, a 50 year-old Malagasy female slave belonging to Sieur Pierre Rudelle. The following 'Document 5' is the original statement written by Rudelle, explaining his motivation to manumit Agathe, while 'Document 6' is the translated version.

Document 5

“Qu’il possède depuis treize ans une négresse... nommée Agathe âgée de cinquante ans, mère et grand’mère en ce moment d’une... famille: que cette négresse lui a été apportée en mariage par son épouse Mademoiselle Chasteau le 12 janvier 1794; qu’elle l’a reçue de son père mourant en juin 1791 et que son pere possédait depuis près de 15 ans.

Que cette esclave n’a cessé de donner à son premier maitre, le Sieur Chasteau père, des preuves de son zele, de son dévouement... ,rare dans cette espèce d’individus.

*Que ce sont ces qualités précieuses qui ont déterminé le père de l’épouse de l’exposant de la lui leguer, comme un gage de sa tendresse, ... ”*¹³⁹

Document 6

“That he possesses since thirteen years a female slave known as Agathe, 50 years old, and now mother and grandmother: this slave had been brought to him by his wife Mademoiselle Chasteau an 12 January 1794 when she got married; she received the slave in June 1791 from her dying father to whom Agathe had belonged since 15 years.

This slave woman had always shown to her first owner, Sieur Chasteau, signs of devotion... ‘rare in this type of persons’.

These precious qualities of the slave made Sieur Chasteau bequeath her to his daughter...”

Agathe obtained her manumission partly as a reward for her devoted service but also because of the affection and love which she shared with her owners, having been at their needs for a very long time.

In fact, among all the cases of manumissions recorded, these two cases only expressed that peculiar statement about the good character of the slaves - an aspect which was “...rare in this

¹³⁸ Register GA36, act dated 13 July 1808, MA.

¹³⁹ Register GA36, act dated 1 March 1808, MA.

type of persons". Furthermore, it seemed most queer why reference was made to the expression- "...this type of persons" - giving the phrase a pejorative character and it was also interesting to observe that such expressions had been stated in the acts during the Decaen period.

1.3.8 Self purchase

Self purchase was yet another stated motive for a manumission and it was an act through which the slave purchased his or her freedom with the money he had earned and saved; in his article on slaves and freedmen, Sidney Chalhoub notes that "...freedom through self purchase was a meaningful possibility in real life,...".¹⁴⁰ Slaves bought themselves from their owners, who, in turn, gained financial prosperity. Brana-Shute defines self purchase "...as a slave paying an owner in cash or in kind for his or her freedom".¹⁴¹ In most cases, manumission by self purchase included a heavy financial sacrifice from the slave. Most of them had been working for several years for their masters and, very often, the amount of money they had been able to save was finally used in purchasing their freedom. In a way, the master was greatly involved in the act of his slave's self purchase since "...it is clear that it would be impossible without the master's consent, since, for a slave to accumulate savings through his work, it is necessary that the master give him time and, at first, the means for him to be able to work".¹⁴²

In September 1793, Rose, a 30 year-old Indian, purchased her manumission and that of her children for an amount of 5000*livres* from a certain Pierre Hector.¹⁴³ In December of the same year, Julie, a Bengali slave, also purchased her freedom for 3000*livres*.¹⁴⁴ Both these slaves were working as seamstress and laundress, and, these professions enabled them to save money and purchase their free status.

In March 1794, a 41 year-old Malagasy slave purchased his manumission from the widow Angibout. He worked as butcher and had the means to subsist.¹⁴⁵ Another Indian slave, Flore, 23 years old, had to pay 3000*livres* to purchase the so desired liberty. Furthermore, she obtained as

¹⁴⁰ Sidney Chalhoub: 'Slaves, freedmen and the politics of freedom in Brazil: The experience of blacks in the city of Rio' in *Slavery & Abolition*, Volume 10, December 1989, page 65.

¹⁴¹ R. Brana-Shute: 'Approaching freedom...', page 55.

¹⁴² Sidney Chalhoub: 'Slaves, freedmen.....', page 72.

¹⁴³ Register A39, act dated 30 September 1793, MA.

¹⁴⁴ Register A39, act dated 20 December 1793, MA.

¹⁴⁵ Register A39, act dated 19 March 1794, MA.

donation from her owner a house and a female slave.¹⁴⁶ Such cases made us question Henry Koster's conclusion whether "the slave can force his master to grant him his manumission given that he is able to offer the slaveowner the amount for which he had been bought, or the price for which he could be sold..."¹⁴⁷

In February 1794, Azor, a Malagasy slave purchased his freedom for a sum of 2000*livres* from his owner Alexandre, a free Malagasy. The profession of that slave was most uncommon since it was stated in the act that he practiced the art of surgery which enabled him to buy his liberty.¹⁴⁸ This profession will later be discussed in Chapter 4. It was evident that these slaves were most willing to invest all the money they had been able to raise during long years of servitude in order to break the chains of bondage. At the Cape, the Guardian reported that "there are no slaves who possess enough money to purchase their own freedom; all of necessity obtain the amount or some part of it, by gift or loan".¹⁴⁹ Bank however argued "...that the slaves being manumitted paid the purchase price themselves".¹⁵⁰ That was mostly the situation in Isle de France since most slaves obtained the money through hard work and earnings as this case clearly proved it. In March 1796, Pauline, a 25 year- old Creole paid in cash her purchase price. A note from her owner certified that, by her work, she has been able to purchase herself, and she has sufficient means to subsist, she has in her possession an amount of 1600*livres* obtained from her work, amount which she showed to the notary and witnesses.¹⁵¹

Unfortunate events could as well arise during a manumission transaction such as the loss of the purchase receipt. Usually when the slave purchased his freedom, he was also given a receipt as a proof of the transaction and the newly-gained manumission. But there were slaves who happened to lose the receipt and had to make another request to obtain their liberty. That was namely the case of Cecile, a Creole slave, manumitted from the citizen Gubin Descombes in 1788. Unfortunately, she lost the receipt and, in 1792, made once more a request to purchase her freedom. She paid a total of 2500*livres* and obtained another receipt as confirmation of her self purchase and manumission.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁶ Register A39, act dated 6 February 1794, MA.

¹⁴⁷ S.Chalhoub: 'Slaves, freedmen....', page 70, (quoted from Manoela Carneiro da Cunha in *Antropologia do Brasil*, Brasiliense/Ed,da USP, 1986, Sao Paulo, pages1-3).

¹⁴⁸ Register A39, act dated 17 February 1794, MA.

¹⁴⁹ A.Bank: *The decline of urban slavery....*, page183.

¹⁵⁰ A.Bank, *ibid*, page 183.

¹⁵¹ Register A66, act dated 2 germinal an 4 (22 March 1796), MA.

¹⁵² Register A39, act dated 19 October 1793, MA.

It is interesting to note that the self purchase agreement, as it was carried out in Isle de France, did not totally constitute "...a time-honoured tradition..." as Libby and Paiva showed in their study of manumission practices in Sao José.¹⁵³ They further argued that "until quite recently it was generally thought that this type of self purchase was common only in Hispanic America, especially in Cuba".¹⁵⁴ This could be considered as convincing since the cases of Isle de France did not mention payments over time, the slaves purchased their freedom by paying the total price required.

Self purchase did not only involve slaves owned by individual owners but also the slaves employed by the Government, known as 'esclaves de l'état'. They usually obtained their manumission by purchasing it from the 'Administrateur des finances' but, their freedom was somewhat conditional since they had to continue working for the Government for a certain period of time before being totally freed.

Another interesting detail was the purchase price which did not have any fixed rate; the price fluctuated according maybe to the sex, caste and age of the slave. No relevant explanation could be obtained from the primary sources as to why the prices were not fixed. Most of the slaves paid around 2000-4000*livres* to purchase their manumission while others offered as far as 20,000*livres* like Hercule, a tailor who purchased his freedom from the citizen Christophe Forty.¹⁵⁵

1.3.9 Purchase by a third party

As discussed earlier, the process of manumission usually involved two major parties - the owner and the slave. But there were frequent cases of slaves being purchased by someone else, either a close kin or any other person, in view to manumit them. Brana-Shute argues that slave owners benefited greatly from this transaction "by selling a slave to an anxious would-be owner who wanted to free the slave and would incur all the costs to do so".¹⁵⁶ The former owner could consider himself as being 'lucky' since he was spared the trouble to deal with all the manumission procedures. Moreover, when selling the slave to some other owner, he received

¹⁵³ Douglas Cole Libby and Clotilde Andrade Paiva: 'Manumission practices in a late eighteenth century Brazilian Slave Parish: Sao José d'El Rey in 1795' in *Slavery & Abolition*, Volume 21, No.1, April 2000, page 119.

¹⁵⁴ Libby and Paiva, *ibid*, page 119.

¹⁵⁵ Register A41, act dated 4 vendemiaire an 4 (25 September 1795), MA.

¹⁵⁶ R.BranaShute: 'Approaching freedom...', page 53.

money for the price. The records dealing with this type of manumission revealed the third party to be a close member of the slave's family - sister, mother, children, niece - who managed to purchase the slave from his current owner. The 'would-be' owner could either manumit the slave immediately or later on, years after.

In June 1790, Jean Alexandre, a manumitted Malagasy freed his son Zacharie from bondage. The boy belonged to a certain Sieur Querantin and Jean Alexandre purchased Zacharie on 11 October 1785 for 100 *piastres*. He wished to own the boy with the firm intention to manumit him later and the manumission was confirmed in 1790.¹⁵⁷ In April of the same year, Françoise, a Creole woman, herself a manumitted slave, sought to free her niece, Therese, also Creole. She acquired the slave from Sieur de Launay on 3 December 1788, for 2000 *livres*.¹⁵⁸

Another example was the slave Suzanne who belonged to Sieur Deroches and she was purchased by her sister Agathe, a free woman who manumitted her in August 1790.¹⁵⁹

It was most evident that the third party who intended to purchase the slave in view to free him, had been in fact, formerly a slave as the above cited cases revealed it. This clearly showed the aspirations of the manumitted slave who felt most eager to enable other members of the family to secure their freedom and be united.

1.3.10 Exchange and replacement

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, slaves were owned by the Government and by private owners. Those slaves belonging to the Government had to face certain difficulties and conditions if they wished to be freed. When they requested their manumission, they had to provide a substitute slave, and, only when the exchange and replacement exercise had been carried out, the manumission would be confirmed. The requests concerning these slaves emphasized the need for a slave to replace the manumitted one as will be shown in the following manumission cases.

¹⁵⁷ Register OA87, act dated 23 June 1790, MA.

¹⁵⁸ Register OA87, act dated 29 April 1790, MA.

¹⁵⁹ Register OA87, act dated 7 August 1790, MA.

In 1796, Mathurin Samba, a free coloured citizen, expressed his intentions to free a Creole slave, Michel, 20 years old, belonging to the Republic. For the manumission to take place, Samba had to offer another slave, Désiré, in his place at the Republic's workshop.¹⁶⁰

In 1798, Laurent, a 20 year-old Creole slave employed by the Republic at the ironmonger's, was freed by the citizen Antoine Michel residing Canton des Pamplemousses. The slave Laurent obtained the confirmation of his manumission only when a 'noir Indien' was offered to replace him.¹⁶¹

Even slaves who purchased their manumission from the Government also had to give a substitute slave, like Louis Salo, a Creole, '*Commandeur à médaille*', who obtained his freedom by self purchase while at the same time offering a 20 year-old Mozambique slave, named Laventure, in exchange.¹⁶²

It is important to observe that the conditions imposed on Government slaves concerning exchange and replacement did not apply to all of them. Those Government slaves who were manumitted for reasons such as reward, long service, good work done were exempt from offering a substitute slave.

Some private owners proved to be too demanding when granting manumission to their slaves as they expected to be given a substitute slave to replace the one they were freeing. The case of Félix, a 15 month-old child was most revealing since, at such a young age, the owners required another young individual to replace him. Félix belonged to the couple La Selle, being the child of their female slave, Félicité. Another citizen, Nicolas Estivallet, proposed to free him. La Selle's statement in the act was in the following form

*"...le nommé Félix âgé de 15 mois enfant de notre négresse Felicité, est entièrement à la disposition du citoyen Estivallet, d'après l'échange qui en a été fait ..."*¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Register A41, act dated 4 brumaire an 5 (25 October 1796), MA.

¹⁶¹ Register A41, act dated 4 thermidor an 6 (22 July 1798), MA.

¹⁶² Register A41, act dated 6 nivose an 3 (26 December 1794), MA.

¹⁶³ "...Félix aged 15 months, child of our slave Felicité, totally belongs to the citizen Estivallet, following the exchange that has taken place...", Register A41, act dated 9 fructidor an 7 (26 August 1799), MA.

1.3.11 Conditional manumission

Some owners were not so eager to free their slaves as they seemed to fear more the shortage of labour than the procedures they had to carry out for manumission. Certain owners were dependant on their slaves and, even when freeing them, they imposed service conditions. Such exigencies from the owners could make us look for a possible correlation between the wealth of owners and the number of slaves they were freeing as Shell argued.¹⁶⁴ According to his interpretation, "...if owners were indigent they would insist on a service contract after manumission".¹⁶⁵ In Isle de France, that happened partly especially with slaves employed by the Republic and also during the Decaen period. Article XIX of the laws of 26 Germinal an XIII (16 April 1805) stated that those manumitted who were unemployed and had no means of subsistence should be at the State's service. Those aged from 9 to 15 years had to work for a period of four years and the older ones for three years.¹⁶⁶ At the end of the service, they would be granted the amount of money due to them.

Brana-Shute's interpretation of conditional manumission was somewhat different from Shell's. She explains that the conditions imposed on the future manumission "...indicate that owners were afraid they would be abandoned by those they were freeing...owners tried to limit future freedom, usually by conditioning the manumission with a requirement that the slave continue to live with the owner".¹⁶⁷

In 1789, Sieur Liautaud freed his Indian slave Euphrasie and her son Jean Marie. But he declared that the manumitted slave would still continue to be at his service as long as he remained in the colony.¹⁶⁸ Another case in 1790 described more or less the same situation: the citizen Louis Charles Tribard de Drecey manumitted his Malagasy slave Marie Louise Françoise but she was committed to work for him for a further period of three years before being totally freed.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁴ R.Elphick & R.Shell: 'Intergroup Relations: Khoikhoi, Settlers, Slaves and Free Blacks, 1652-1795' in *The Shaping of South African Society, 1652-1840*, Edited by R.Elphick & H.Giliomee, Maskew Miller Longman Ltd 1989, page 210.

¹⁶⁵ R.Elphick & R.Shell, *ibid*, page 210

¹⁶⁶ *Recueil complet des lois et réglemens de l'île Maurice* Quatrième Partie, connu sous le nom de Code Decaen, page 115.

¹⁶⁷ R.Brana-Shute: 'Approaching freedom....', page 54.

¹⁶⁸ Register OA87, act dated 25 November 1789, MA.

¹⁶⁹ Register OA87, act dated 4 March 1790, MA.

The same conditions were applicable to Republic slaves like Annette Samba, a Guinean slave bearing the No.14 and employed by the Republic in the 'Detail de la Voilerie'. She was granted her freedom but felt obliged to continue her service for the Republic.¹⁷⁰ In 1797, Sieur Jean Poutrelle intended to free a Creole slave, Louise, from her owner, Charles Doury. She would be manumitted but certain conditions were imposed. She had to remain at Sieur Poutrelle's place and continue to be at his service for the rest of his life.¹⁷¹

Conditional manumission could as well deal with a slave's behaviour during his service contract. A very interesting case in September 1808 provides a clear illustration. A slave owner, Sieur Estivalet who was leaving for France, left his Malagasy slave, Lubin, 32 years old with Sieur Chennan and requested his manumission only if he behaved well. Estivalet left a note to his attorney stating that

"le nommé Lubin est loué au citoyen Chennan pour un an, moyennant six balles de café. Si pendant cette année il continue à se bien comporter, il sera affranchit dans le cas contraire il sera vendu: bien entendu qu'il payerait les frais de son affranchissement.

À l'isle de France le 17 vendémiaire an 8.

*Signé Estivalet."*¹⁷²

On 14 July 1805, the attorney confirmed Lubin's good behaviour and his manumission

*"Depuis cette époque le dit Lubin a constamment mené une bonne conduite et depuis sa sortie de chez le Sieur Chennan a travaillé de ses métiers de tonnelier et cuisinier, il a acquis par son travail un noir et une petite case dans le Camp des Noirs libres.."*¹⁷³

Following an analysis of these cases, we can as well question the whole point of this type of manumission. Why must the owner free the slave while at the same time prevent him from enjoying totally his long sought freedom? Andrew Bank explained that "effectively this type of manumission meant that slaves became indentured servants for a lengthy period of

¹⁷⁰ Register OAB7, act dated 4 brumaire an 5 (25 October 1796), MA.

¹⁷¹ Register OAB7, act dated 4 nivose an 6 (24 December 1797), MA.

¹⁷² "Lubin will be hired for a year to the citizen Chennan for six chaffs of coffee. If during this period, he shows a good behaviour, he will be manumitted otherwise he will be sold: he would of course pay for his manumission.....(9 October 1799) Signed Estivalet", Register GA36, act dated 8 September 1808, MA.

¹⁷³ "Lubin has continually behaved well and since the end of his contract with Sieur Chennan, he has worked as cooper and cook, has acquired from his savings a slave and a little house at Camp des Noirs Libres.", *ibid.*

time...However, the promise of freedom in the long term was no doubt preferable to enslavement...".¹⁷⁴ That could be an acceptable judgement since the slaves became more confident about their would-be manumission and they were most certain they would attain freedom following a certain period of time.

Another possible issue could be "...the transformation of slaves into dependent freed persons" as Maria Manuela Carneiro da Cunha has shown in her study.¹⁷⁵ She explains that slaveowners tended to consider blacks as 'defective creatures' who were incapable of governing their own lives and would depend upon their masters to subsist. Hence, the practice of conditional manumission could provide "...a transitional period for the 'defective' black to learn his changing responsibilities in society;..."¹⁷⁶

1.3.12 Marriage

Another mode of liberation for privately owned slaves was by marriage. That proved to be a most efficient means for a slave to attain freedom, and, a certain proportion of female slaves were manumitted by getting married to their owners or to some other free people who wished to liberate them. Maybe marriage seemed the easiest way to get freed since the slave who married a free citizen became eligible to be manumitted. Article 14 referring to the laws of manumission stated that

*"l'homme ou la femme libre, de couleur qui sera dans l'intention d'épouser son esclave, en fera la déclaration dans la même forme que pour tout autre affranchissement... et de plus de procurer le séjour de l'esclave dans son domicile pendant un an au moins. Ces conditions étant remplies... il pourra être procédé au mariage..."*¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ A. Bank: *The decline of urban slavery...*, page 185.

¹⁷⁵ S. Chalhoub: 'Slaves, Freedmen, ...', page 67, (quoted from Carneiro da Cunha in *Antropologia...*, pages 123-144).

¹⁷⁶ S. Chalhoub, *ibid*, page 67.

¹⁷⁷ "any free, coloured man or woman who has the intention to marry his slave, must make the request as for other manumissions... furthermore he must house the slave for at least a year. If these conditions are fulfilled, he will be able to proceed with the marriage which proves to be a sufficient means to attain manumission...", Article 14, Arrêté relatif aux affranchissements, Z3B/13, Lois 19, MA.

Also, Article V of the Code Noir mentions that

*“... lorsque l’homme noir affranchi ou libre qui n’était pas marié Durant son concubinage avec son esclave, épousera dans les formes prescrites par l’église, ladite esclave, qui sera affranchie par ce moyen, et les enfans rendus libres et légitimes”.*¹⁷⁸

In June 1796, Jean Baptiste, a free coloured citizen residing at the Ville Bague, Canton des Pamplémousses, requested the manumission of his Creole slave, Marie, 30 years old whom he had received as donation from his former owner, Widow Magon. The act stated that Jean Baptiste made a marriage settlement with the slave Marie in September 1794. Since that period, Marie was considered as free but her manumission was not yet confirmed. Jean Baptiste satisfied all the necessary requirements and acknowledged his paternity upon Marie’s two children, Marie Rosette, aged 4 and Jeanne Delphine, only 8 months old. He however promised to free from bondage the two children as well, and, the manumission was confirmed in June 1796.¹⁷⁹

Another interesting case in 1791 was that of Flore, an Indian slave residing in the island and belonging to a certain Sieur Basardy who worked on the King’s fleet. Flore married Basardy’s son known as Ramdoula, a free ‘lascard’ also working on the fleet. Due to unfortunate circumstances, Ramdoula perished in a shipwreck at Isle Bourbon. Flore already had two children born from this union but she did not have any written marriage contract to confirm the so-said union so as to obtain her manumission. Basardy intervened to state that he had already granted to Flore a partial manumission some seven years earlier, and, from that period, she managed to acquire a certain number of slaves. The necessary procedures were carried out by Basardy’s ‘fondé de pouvoir’ or power of attorney so as to confirm Flore’s manumission and that of her two children.¹⁸⁰

During the Decaen era, the requests for manumission were more detailed and contained the specific motives concerning the slave’s future freedom. In some cases, a letter of request was directly addressed to the General Decaen, bearing all the reasons and difficulties that the manumitter might be experiencing.

¹⁷⁸ “... the free or manumitted black who married his slave as stipulated by the church, would liberate her by this means and the children also would be freed and legitimate”, Article V, Code Noir in *l’esclavage à l’isle de France...* by Karl Noël, page 165.

¹⁷⁹ Register A65, act dated 2 messidor an 4 (20 June 1796), MA.

¹⁸⁰ Register A67, act dated 31 March 1791, MA.

In 1805, Ignace Payni, a free Malabar residing at quartier de La Rivière Noire, requested the manumission of his 50 year-old Malagasy slave, Marie Françoise whom he intended to marry. This marriage settlement was supposed to legitimate the two children he had with the slave and also to free them from bondage. The Civil Commissioner was authorized by General Decaen to celebrate the marriage and thus giving to Marie Françoise a chance of attaining freedom.¹⁸¹ That was also the case of Félicité, an Indian slave who got married to her owner, Louis Cherami, a free citizen. Soon after, she obtained her manumission.¹⁸²

An act dated 8 February 1809 proved to be much revealing about the manumitter's request and financial difficulties; Brutus Savard, a free coloured citizen residing Port Napoléon wished to manumit Thérèse, a 32 year-old Indian through marriage. Furthermore, three children were born from this illegitimate union : Celestine-8 years, Marie-5 years and Emile-2 years. Unfortunately, Brutus was unable to satisfy the financial needs to carry out the four manumissions; the notary had recourse to General Decaen to obtain his approval about a possible partial manumission. The request was accepted for Thérèse's manumission only since a marriage settlement would enable her to attain a free status and also legitimate the children.¹⁸³

Most of the slaves who obtained their freedom through marriage were females, and, among all these cases, only two dealt with male slaves who got married to their female owners. In December 1791, Colas, a Creole slave, settled a marriage contract with his owner, Pélagée, a free Indian woman. Pélagée's intention while marrying Colas was to manumit him.¹⁸⁴ Another case was that of Cyprien, a 50 year-old Mozambican slave, referred to in the act as the 'husband' of Marie Jeanne, herself a manumitted slave. In fact, the couple belonged to late Nicolas Olivier residing Port de la Fraternité and they got married on 24 May 1778. Since then, Marie Jeanne obtained her manumission from their late owner while Cyprien was still held in bondage. Twenty years after their marriage, Marie Jeanne sought to free her husband and the manumission was finally confirmed on 24 December 1798.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸¹ Register IE 51, act dated 1er fructidor an 13 (19 August 1805), MA.

¹⁸² Register IE 51, act dated 8 brumaire an 14 (30 October 1805), MA.

¹⁸³ Register GA36, act dated 8 February 1809, MA.

¹⁸⁴ Register A55, act dated 22 December 1791, MA.

¹⁸⁵ Register A57, act dated 4 nivose an 7 (24 December 1798), MA.

The Mayor approved Aza's request and he was appointed to accompany Sieur Coquerel as the latter's servant. This request from Aza brought a further analysis of this manumission case. According to the act, the owner, before his departure, granted him his freedom in 1792. The newly-freed slave chose to remain at his service like an indentured servant as perhaps he did not have the means to subsist on his own or bear no family in Isle de France.

1.3.14 Old age

Old age was another factor which enabled a slave to attain freedom; "Some scholars of American slavery have claimed that many slave owners manumitted old slaves who were past their productive years and that, in view of this fact, such manumission rates may be as much an index of cruelty as of benevolence".¹⁸⁹ Indeed, it was sad to note that some slaves finally obtained their manumission only at a very late age when they were no longer able to work. It appeared as if the owner enjoyed the services of the slave until the very last moment. Article XX of the 'Code Noir' stated that old slaves as well as infirms were totally under their master's responsibility and care. In cases where the slaves had been rejected, the owners were subject to a fine of four 'sols' per day for the subsistence of each slave in a nearby hospital.¹⁹⁰ Slave owners considered the responsibility of old slaves more as a burden and they preferred to free them. For Isle de France, the records showed only six cases of old age and illness as motivations for manumission. The case of Yandel, 72 years old, is worth consideration as, even after being manumitted at such an old age, he was supposed to continue working for the King. Yandel was at the King's service and employed in carpentry, he became 'Premier Commandeur' in 1767 and was offered the 'petite médaille d'argent' in 1785.¹⁹¹ The title and medal usually proved the slave's qualities in service and perhaps motivated his manumission.

Another case in 1790 was that of Guy, a Guinean slave manumitted by his brother-in-law, Colas. The age was not mentioned but it was said that Guy was very old - "*très avancé en âge*". The reasons for this manumission were mainly because of old age, and, Colas purchased Guy with the

stay in France and to serve him as in the past,....", Register A41, act dated 14 frimaire an 6 (4 December 1797), MA.

¹⁸⁹ R.Elphick & R.Shell: 'Intergroup Relations...' , page 206.

¹⁹⁰ K.Noël: *L'esclavage à l'isle de France...*, page 167.

¹⁹¹ Register A72, act dated 24 December 1790, MA.

aim to free him.¹⁹² This also revealed that these slaves were not casually abandoned since those who manumitted them wished to bring them in their household and take care of them.

Slave owners would normally free those slaves who were physically unfit and not in a condition to work. In October 1790, Sieur Pierre Garnier preferred to manumit his Malagasy slave, Victoire,

“attendu qu'elle est attaquée depuis deux ans d'une maladie incurable... qui la met hors d'état de travailler”.¹⁹³

The owner, however, provided her with the necessary means to subsist since she was somewhat considered as still dependent.

In 1796, a Guinean female slave, Suzanne Guiquantiné, 60 years old, was freed by the Republic because she was considered as having a 'physical disability'. Furthermore, her husband to whom she was legally married, had been manumitted earlier. Suzanne was freed mostly for two distinct reasons: her infirmity and the fact that her husband was no longer a slave, and, she would still continue to work for the Republic as an indentured servant.¹⁹⁴

1.3.15 Encouragement for other slaves

A most uncommon stated motive for a manumission was that the slave owner wanted to encourage his other slaves to be faithful and obedient. Sieur and Dame Etienne Bolgere residing at quartier de La Savanne, decided to manumit their Indian slave, Thérèse, for this reason as they believed

“... que c'est un encouragement qu'ils donnent a leurs autres esclaves d'être fidels”.¹⁹⁵

In fact, in all the cases of manumission recorded, this one is the only case in which, as Brana Shute explains, “... an owner indicated (s)he understood the importance of manumission as an incentive to trustworthy behaviour on the part of slaves,...”¹⁹⁶

¹⁹² Register A72, act dated 1 July 1790, MA.

¹⁹³ “she is affected since two years by an incurable disease... which made her totally unfit for work”, Register OA87, act dated 28 October 1790, MA.

¹⁹⁴ Register A66, act dated 2 pluviöse an 4 (22 January 1796), MA.

¹⁹⁵ “...it is an encouragement to their other slaves to be faithful and hence obtain their freedom.”, Register A37, act dated 24 August 1790, MA.

¹⁹⁶ R.Brana-Shute: 'Approaching freedom...', page 63 (Notes).

Brana-Shute's study revealed a single case for this type of manumission in Suriname, while, in Isle de France also, the analysis proved to be much the same as only one such motive for freeing a slave was recorded.

1.3.16 The 'already freed'

Some slaves who made requests for their manumissions defined themselves as 'free individuals', proclaiming that they were considered as already freed due to certain circumstances. As Wanquet stated, the terms used revealed to be most puzzling¹⁹⁷ - what could the expression "considered as already freed" possibly mean? It might be that the slave followed the same condition as his freed mother as stated in Article IX of the Code Noir. That could be the case of two slaves, Joseph Gabriel and Suzanne whose manumissions were finally confirmed in 1796. These slaves belonged to Sieur Jean Baptiste Desgaules, a free coloured citizen residing Camp des Malabares. He was convinced about the free status of Joseph Gabriel and Suzanne since their mother appeared to be a free coloured woman, herself manumitted on 30 September 1776. Since then, the children must have been considered as free following their mother's status, however, their legal guardian made nothing in favour of their free status. But Sieur Desgaules requested for their manumission as they were totally entitled to become free citizens.¹⁹⁸

Another case was that of four children: Benoit, Marie, Jeanne, George and Gabrielle, all Creoles, whose deceased mother, Thérèse, was a manumitted slave. All four children were born after the manumission which took place on 18 April 1773, and, since then, they were supposed to be considered as free citizens. However, no written act could confirm their free status, and, a request for confirmation was made on 4 February 1786:

*"Les suppliants ont toujours été considéré comme libres, et les pieces ci-jointes ne laissent aucun doute sur leur liberté puisqu'ils sont nés d'une mère libre; ils doivent suivre la condition de leur mere conformément à la disposition de l'article 9 des Lettres Patentes du mois de décembre 1723... et je crois qu'il n'y a aucun inconvenient à leur accorder la confirmation de leur liberté".*¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ C. Wanquet: 'Aperçu sur l'affranchissement ...', page 142.

¹⁹⁸ Register A56A/56B, act dated 2 floréal an 4 (21 April 1796), MA.

¹⁹⁹ "The supplicants have always been regarded as free, and there is no doubt about their freedom since they are born from a free woman; they must follow the same condition as their mother in compliance with Article IX of the 'Lettres Patentes' of December 1723, ... and there is no opposition to grant them the confirmation of their freedom", Register A67, act dated 25 April 1791, MA.

Certain slaves obtained their manumission long before 1789, but still they were not legally confirmed as being free. When the laws of manumission were passed in 1791, those slaves who considered themselves as already freed, requested a confirmation so as to breathe totally the air of freedom. The case of Perette, a Creole slave reflects a perfect example; she has been freed from slavery since fifteen years, in 1775, but her manumission was not taken as being valid. Still, she finally obtained it on 22 March 1791 after a request on 18 July 1790.²⁰⁰

There arose a controversy around the free status of a child born from a free mother. Jean Manent wished to manumit his Creole slave, Marie Catherine, 20 years old and pregnant. The owner's main intention was to see the child born as a free individual; unfortunately, the child, Jeanne Péline Bélonie, was born before the confirmation of her mother's manumission and thus her status as free was neglected. Jean Manent, however, declared as bearing no legal rights on the child and considered her as already manumitted. She was baptized as a child born from a freed mother and acquired the same status.²⁰¹

Charlette, another slave, was quite in the same situation as Marie Catherine; she was pregnant when manumitted by testament and it left no doubt that her child would be born free since he was born subsequently to the manumission and cannot be included among the slaves, as the mother has already acquired her freedom following her owner's wish.²⁰²

A most detailed case in 1808 made an account of an ignored manumission; Thérèse, a 35 year-old Malagasy 'slave' belonged to the succession of her late owner, Sieur Juin, who happened to manumit her through self purchase. After the owner's death, Thérèse still remained among the slaves of the estate while everything about her manumission was ignored. The petitioners learnt about her liberty and managed to gather several documents to prove her manumission, namely

- i. A note dated 4 fructidor an 11 (22 August 1803) by Juin whereby he stated that Thérèse purchased her manumission for 200 *piastres* paid in cash.
- ii. A census carried out in her name at quartier de Flacq where Thérèse lived.
- iii. A certificate stating that Thérèse showed the census to the tax collector.

²⁰⁰ Register OA87, act dated 22 March 1791, MA.

²⁰¹ Register A57, act dated 4 germinal an 6 (24 March 1798), MA.

²⁰² Register IE 46, act dated 14 ventose an 13 (5 March 1805) MA.

There was sufficient evidence that Thérèse was indeed a free citizen since 1803 and her manumission was officially confirmed in 1808.²⁰³

It also happened that some slaves already obtained their manumission long before they requested for a confirmation. But, due to unforeseen and unfortunate circumstances, they were either still considered as slaves or sold as slaves to other owners. That was the case of a Creole slave, Marie Magdelaine, 50 years old, whose late master, Sieur Blory, had already freed through a testamentary manumission. But the executors sold her as a slave to another owner and it was only by chance that her actual condition as a free citizen was made known to them. She finally got her manumission confirmed on 1 germinal an 3 (21 March 1795) and was also granted all that was bequeathed to her.²⁰⁴

Another slave, Christine, was more or less subject to the same situation; she belonged to Sieur Emmanuel Desjardins who wished to give her back her former status, that of a free woman. Christine was born free in India as the act stated - "...née de condition libre,..."²⁰⁵ but she was taken away from her parents and sold by deceit - "*supercherie*".²⁰⁶ The owner rewarded her through manumission and donated to her an amount of 3000*livres*.

A most unfortunate event deprived Jean Baptiste Modeste, a Creole slave, of his precious freedom; his late owner, Jean Baptiste Lecerf, had long before given to him his manumission but the heirs to Lecerf's succession could find no document to certify the so granted freedom as the manumission act had been destroyed in a fire. However, they were indeed honest to state their responsibility only as manumitters towards Jean Baptiste Modeste since he had always been known as a free citizen and the family had no legal rights upon him. Another act of manumission was forwarded to him on 24 December 1796 to replace the burnt one which was concluded on 20 April 1795.²⁰⁷

This analysis has shown the different motives which led owners to manumit their slaves and also the slaves' personal wish to get freed. It is noted that the importance of skin colour has not been cited as a major reason to free a slave. It must be pointed out that the correlation between skin

²⁰³ Register IE 47, act dated 31 August 1808, MA.

²⁰⁴ Register A56A/56B, act dated 1 germinal an 3 (21 March 1795), MA.

²⁰⁵ Register A55, act dated 14 March 1791, MA.

²⁰⁶ Register A55, *ibid*.

²⁰⁷ Register A65, act dated 4 nivose an 5 (24 December 1796), MA.

colour and freedom "...does not of itself validate..."²⁰⁸ manumissions of somatic nature. Shell explained that, at the Cape, "...certain slaves, because of their physical appearance, had 'somatic' advantages in obtaining freedom: broadly speaking, the closer in skin colour and physical appearance to their masters, the greater were their chances of freedom".²⁰⁹ In Isle de France, no actual case of manumission was of somatic nature as far as the acts revealed. There were of course owners such as the free blacks, the free coloured and also the manumitted slaves who were close in skin colour to the slaves they were liberating. But the somatic dimension was not mentioned as a motivation for such manumission. Among the records for Isle de France, some cases of manumission taking place in Isle Bonaparte were included in the same registers, and, a single case of 'somatic manumission' was found. The late owner, Sieur Evariste Delanux wished to free one of his slaves, Lin, a male Creole aged 32 years. He intended to manumit him because this slave

*"...est beaucoup plus blanc que beaucoup de blanc,....et l'empecher d'etre quelque jour confondu avec d'autres esclaves,..."*²¹⁰

This colour aspect shows that a very strong hierarchy of colour did exist in the island and it was considered as most outrageous that a 'White' could be held in bondage.

1.4 The 'opposition' against manumission

Of all the 3639 cases of manumission that have been recorded, very few cases deal with opposition. However, after much debate, the manumissions requested were subject to confirmation. As Shell analyses, "...heirs and relatives in a few cases felt cheated and challenged manumissions in court"²¹¹ and that was clearly the case of François, a slave belonging to late Sieur Jean Lebelle. He was temporarily entitled to the freedom granted to him by his late owner but had to face the heirs' opposition against this manumission. They refused to comply by the clauses enacted in the testament and impeded on the slave's way by not granting the annual means of subsistence. The laws of manumission insisted on the means of subsistence before confirming the slave's freedom, so that he might not depend on the colony. The manumission was confirmed only when there was enough evidence that the slave could live independently. Finally,

²⁰⁸ A.Bank: *The Decline of Urban Slavery...*, page 187.

²⁰⁹ R.Elphick & R.Shell: 'Intergroup Relations...', page 208.

²¹⁰ "...is far whiter than most whites, ... and must not be mingled with other slaves, ...", *Register GA36*, act dated 26 brumaire an 14 (17 November 1805), MA.

²¹¹ R.Shell: *Children of bondage...*, page 390.

in the act, it was stated that François received an annual sum of 360*livres* from the heirs and he was legally entitled to request for his manumission to be confirmed.²¹²

The case of Ayoul, a 27 year- old Indian slave, was worth considering since it made an account of the reasons lying behind the opposition against his manumission. The owner, Sieur Zacharie Blanc, residing at quartier de Moka, did not pay the amount due of 167*piastres* as stipulated in “Article Onzième” of the laws of manumission, which stated that 300*livres* must be paid to the ‘Commune Générale’ for every individual to be freed. This requirement not being carried out properly, the pay clerk, Sieur Bernard, was against this manumission

*“... il s’oppose formellement à l’affranchissement propose du nommé Ayoul jusqu’a ce que le dit Sieur Zacharie Blanc propriétaire du dit esclave lui ai payé la ditte somme de cent soixante piastres effectives...”*²¹³

Sieur Blanc managed to gather the amount required so that Ayoul’s manumission could be accepted.

As discussed earlier, the process of manumitting a slave in the Decaen era was more liable to legal requirements than during the revolutionary years. That does not imply that, from 1789 to 1802, manumission was an easy exercise; in fact, the procedures to be carried out were more or less to suit everyone, slave owners as well as slaves. Under Decaen, certain owners were much apprehensive towards freeing their slaves for any possible reason. In 1808, a slave owner, Sieur Pascal, intended to free his 27 year-old Creole slave, Marianne but he felt impeded by one of the clauses in Decaen’s laws which stated the necessary conditions required for manumission

*“II. Aucun esclave ne pourra être affranchi, s’il n’a servi son maître cinq ans au moins depuis qu’il est en sa propriété”*²¹⁴

Sieur Pascal made a request to manumit Marianne in 1808 but he acquired her from Widow La Panouilliere in 1805. Hence the stated period eligible for a slave to be freed in this case was not in

²¹² Register OA87, act dated 14 August 1790, MA.

²¹³ “...he formally opposed to the requested manumission of Ayoul until Sieur Zacharie Blanc, owner of the slave, paid to him the required amount of one hundred and sixty seven piastres...”, Register GA36, act dated 17 November 1809, MA.

²¹⁴ “No slave can be manumitted if he has not been his owner’s property for at least five years”, Code Decaen, page 114, MA.

line with Decaen's law. However, Widow La Panouilliere explained that despite being acquired in 1805, Marianne was already on a hire contract at Sieur Pascal's place since 8 years

*"...persuadé que le temps que la dite Marianne a été à son service comme louée peut suppléer aux cinq ans exigés par la loi,..."*²¹⁵

The owner, Sieur Pascal, believing firmly in the failure of his request, sent his slave to Tranquebar where manumission was more easily accorded but Marianne was declared property of the State. Nevertheless, after Widow La Panouilliere's intervention, the request was accepted and forwarded for confirmation.

This study has attempted to explain the process of manumission as it was carried out in the late eighteenth and early decade of the nineteenth centuries in Isle de France. The motivations for freeing a slave were most diverse as, according to this analysis, at least sixteen reasons have been found which enabled the slave to attain freedom. The concept of manumission shows that slaves were determined to gain freedom and resist the system of slavery which appeared as a form of social death. Orlando Patterson, a Jamaican slave historian, explained that "...for the slave, freedom begins with the consciousness that real life comes with the negation of social death"²¹⁶. This 'real life' was, in a sense, a rebirth of the slave, which, he or she attained with much struggle. It is seen also that manumission was not at every slave's reach since few slaves managed to purchase their freedom and that of their close relatives while the majority depended on their owners' generosity, wish and intention to feel 'real life'. Furthermore, a few cases have shown that freedom was limited to certain slaves because of the laws, especially during the Decaen era, and, some cases which met with opposition were finally approved and confirmed. The quantitative approach in the following chapter will try to bring a meaningful and complementary contribution to the present qualitative study.

²¹⁵ "...convinced that the period Marianne has been at his service on a hire contract can make up for the five years required by law,..." Register GA36, act dated 15 December 1808, MA.

²¹⁶ Orlando Patterson: *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*, Harvard University Press 1982, Cambridge, page 98.

CHAPTER 2

*Manumission and the
quantitative approach*

Chapter 2 : Manumission and the quantitative approach.

2.1 The quantitative method

This chapter attempts to analyse manumission in Isle de France through a quantitative approach. It has been possible to undertake such a quantitative analysis since there is a set of continuous data available in the archival documents spanning the years 1789 to 1810. The manumission certificates included “such measures as age, wealth, number of children, (which) are explicitly quantitative”¹, as Roderick Floud explains. He further argues that “if we use such measures in describing people who lived in the past, then we are using quantitative methods”². The quantitative approach is quite dated now and has become an integral part of historical research. It was given notoriety in slave studies by Fogel and Engerman’s Time on the cross³ in the early 1970’s. The quantification of manumission data enables one to carry out an indepth study of the different aspects of manumission such as the age structure, ethnic origins and gender. The interpretation of the quantitative data enables one to gain a better and greater understanding of the process of manumission in this period.

In the preceding chapter, a non-quantitative or qualitative approach was used to describe the process of manumission, how it was carried out and the means by which slaves were freed. A quantitative description very often holds a full meaning if numbers are considered and “many qualitative judgements or descriptions used by historians thus have an implicit quantitative significance which it is sometimes necessary to make explicit”⁴. It has been observed that the qualitative and quantitative approaches are inextricably linked as each complements the other, “neither can replace the other, and neither can pretend to comprehend the whole of historical study”⁵. So quantification alone is inadequate as it has no interpretation by itself, for example, systematically assembled figures alone cannot reflect an entire society if information from secondary sources are not provided as well for a better understanding. As John Tosh explains: “Today the findings of the ‘qualitative’ historians such as Trevelyan are being increasingly modified or refined by the quantitative analysis of data systematically assembled to reflect an

¹ Roderick Floud : An introduction to quantitative methods for historians, 2nd Edition, Methuen 1979, page 1.

² R.Floud, *ibid*, page 1.

³ Robert Fogel & Stanley Engerman: Time on the cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery, Volumes I & II, Boston 1974.

⁴ R.Floud: An introduction....., page 2.

⁵ R.Floud, *ibid*, page 3.

entire society. In this way not only the main trend is revealed but also the variations and exceptions which highlight the distinctive experience of a particular locality or group”.⁶

However, when dealing with experiences in the past such as, for example, the study of slave societies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the historian may sometimes face the problem of imperfect data due to omission of certain details like age and ethnic origins in the primary sources, and, this often tends to make the areas of study immeasurable. This problem of ‘imperfect’ data has already been dealt with in the introductory chapter, and, in areas where data is not complete, quantification also does not lead to a precise conclusion.

This chapter on quantitative manumission aims to analyse quantitatively the figures that have been recorded from the archival documents.⁷ The qualitative description from the acts, such as the age, sex, origin and profession of the slave to be manumitted can be supplemented by figures which will certainly broaden our view on manumission rates, gender, minority and majority castes, status and occupations of slaves. Here, quantitative manumission will be used to show the fluctuation in the number of slaves who obtained their freedom in the years 1789 to 1810. Figures available on ethnic origins, age and gender allow one to compare manumission with that of the earlier period of the Ancien Regime. The quantitative approach is increasingly being used by young historians. Peerthum, for example, confirms this since he states that “...quantitative manumission, (...) allows slave historians to compare and contrast the manumission rates of different slave societies and among the different segments of their slave populations”.⁸

2.2 Quantitative manumission and the openness of slave societies

The concept of the openness of a slave society can be understood as being the opportunities slaves had of being manumitted and able to achieve social mobility. Andrew Bank explains that one of the key indexes of the openness of a slave society lies in “the extent of accessibility of the unfree to freedom”.⁹ Elphick and Shell share this point of view but they add that “the rate at

⁶ John Tosh: *The Pursuit of History*, Longman Group Ltd 1984, UK.

⁷ This concerns the manumission registers for the years 1789 to 1810, Series OA, IE, A & G (Mauritius Archives).

⁸ Satyendra Peerthum: ‘Determined to be Free: A Comparative Study of Manumission, The Slaves, and The Free Coloured in the Slave Societies of Mauritius, The Cape Colony and Jamaica, 1767-1848’, *BA Honours Dissertation*, University of Cape Town, February 2001, page 42.

⁹ Andrew Bank : *The decline of urban slavery at Cape Town. 1806 to 1834* , Centre for African Studies 1991, University of Cape Town, page 172.

which slaves became free is another useful, but in itself incomplete, index of the openness of a slave society".¹⁰ The other indexes were the physical mobility of slaves, the interracial relations between free and slaves despite the laws and the relation between owners and slaves.

The number of slaves freed through manumission over a certain period of time enables the historian to measure whether that slave society was closed, rigid, harsh and severe. But, as Elphick and Shell discussed it, for the Cape, it is somewhat difficult to understand how fluid the slave society was, that is, it was not easy to determine how free the society happened to be. When the number of slaves who were manumitted happened to be low, it was assumed that this particular slave society was most harsh; slaves did not have great chances to become free and to achieve social mobility either because of legislation or because of the intentions of the owners. On the other hand, if a slave society had very frequent manumissions, it shows that such slaves had the possible opportunities of gaining freedom. Andrew Bank also concludes that "high levels of manumission have been seen to point to a relatively high degree of social mobility for slaves, whereas low levels of manumission have been seen as indicative of a relatively low degree of social mobility".¹¹

Manumission rates in the Dutch period helped historians at the Cape "to reinforce the impression of a rigid and relatively closed slave society".¹² This leads us to question the extent to which the slaves in Isle de France obtained freedom through manumission and this part will analyse whether the slave society of Isle de France during the revolutionary period was rigid or open.

As a French colony, Isle de France had a remarkably high manumission rate, during the revolutionary and post revolutionary years as compared with the years before the Revolution and the Decaen era. The study of manumission patterns during the last two decades of the Ancien Régime recorded a total of 785 manumitted slaves between 1768 and 1789.¹³ This makes an annual average of 37 slaves for 21 years. During the period 1789 to 1810, some 3639 slaves were manumitted or an annual average of 173 slaves for a same 21-year span. This annual figure contrasts with that of the Ancien Régime and is more than four and a half times higher. It is

¹⁰Richard Elphick and Robert Shell: 'Intergroup relations: Khoikhoi, settlers, slaves and free blacks, 1652-1795' in *The shaping of South African society, 1652-1840*, Edited by Richard Elphick and Hermann Giliomee, Maskew Miller Longman Ltd 1989, page 204.

¹¹ A.Bank: *The decline of urban slavery...* page 172.

¹² A.Bank, *ibid*, page 172.

¹³ Richard Allen : 'Economic marginality and the rise of the Free Population of Colour in Mauritius, 1767-1830', in *Slavery & Abolition*, Volume 10, 1989, page 130.

evident that between 1789 and 1810, Isle de France had a much higher manumission rate which meant that some types of slaves got the chance to be freed as compared to the preceding period. Therefore, this shows that under French rule and particularly under the French Revolution, a great number of slaves gained freedom through manumission, and, this fact questions the characteristic of the slave society, whether it was a rigid or an open slave society. The manumission figures from 1789 to 1810 compared to those of the Ancien Regime reinforces the argument that Isle de France had an open slave society whereby slaves enjoyed greater chances of becoming free and achieving social mobility.

According to this overall analysis, the annual average of the number of slaves freed by manumission during the revolutionary years and the Decaen era was 173. But, this may be subject to change as the figures varied across the years, and, it has been observed that each year, during the period 1789 to 1810, the figure differs in the number of manumitted slaves. A systematic study of historical evidence requires that the material be classified. Table I on the next page enables us to understand more clearly the quantitative dimension of manumission as it was carried out from 1789 to 1810. The figures are classified according to two distinct groups, 'Adults and Children', then the total number of individuals is calculated for each year.

Table 1 : Manumitted Population from 1789 to 1810

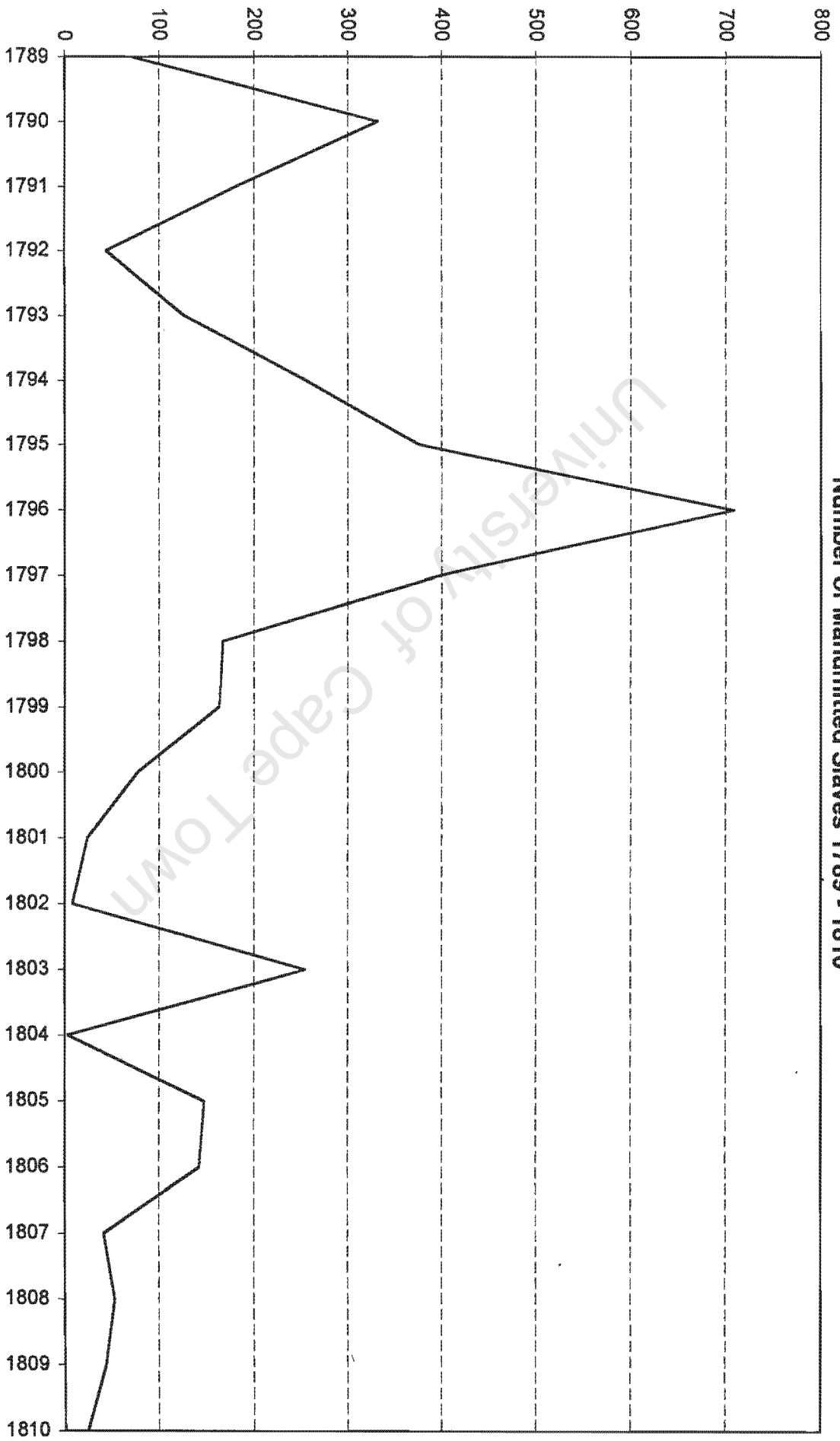
YEARS	ADULTS	CHILDREN	TOTAL
1789	39	31	70
1790	196	136	332
1791	121	60	181
1792	22	22	44
1793	82	44	126
1794	191	64	255
1795	239	137	376
1796	389	319	708
1797	226	172	398
1798	108	59	167
1799	112	51	163
1800	44	34	78
1801	9	15	24
1802	4	4	8
1803	217	37	254
1804	2	2	4
1805	83	64	147
1806	107	35	142
1807	23	18	41
1808	26	27	53
1809	24	20	44
1810	23	1	24
Total	2287	1352	3639

(Source: compiled from acts of manumission for the years 1789 - 1810, Series OA, IE, A & G, Mauritius Archives).

The figures cited vary greatly across the years; it must be pointed out that these data represent the number of manumitted slaves recorded from the manumission registers. Two distinct periods can be distinguished: the first phase from 1789-1802 and the second phase from 1803-1810. It is observed that the number of manumitted slaves was very high during the first phase, under the Revolution and post revolutionary years, whereas, during the Decaen era, manumission fell to a very low rate. It decreased dramatically in number which meant that the slave society acquired a rigid, and closed character.

The graph on the next page shows the manumission distribution across the years, and, where the line reaches its highest point, the corresponding year is considered as the 'peak' year.

University of Cape Town



Number of Manumitted Slaves 1789 - 1810

By analyzing the graphical representation, six 'peak' years can be identified: 1790, 1796, 1803, 1805, 1806 and 1808. The graph follows six distinct phases, and, each phase is defined by a constant increase and decrease. The possible reasons for the sudden increases are at least partially related to the legislative measures of that period and the social, economical and political conditions prevailing.

The first phase, 1789 to 1792, recorded the highest number of manumissions in 1790 resulting from the impact of the French Revolution. The Revolution in France promulgated the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity to help in the emergence of a society shaped according to the 'Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme'.¹⁴ Two Mauritian historians propose very convincing arguments : as Amédée Nagapen explains, the Revolution had indeed favoured the manumission exercise.¹⁵ Muslim Jumeer reinforces this argument and agrees that the Revolution gave to the slaves a certain 'mobility' to become free.¹⁶ The upheaval in France aroused hopes concerning changes in the colonial and political system of Isle de France; the dissolution of the Royal Government based on principles of absolutism should as well bring a possible end of the slave system since, if slavery was to be maintained, it would contradict the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity. In the French colonies, the political liberty of the free people would possibly lead to a general manumission of slaves but such a total freedom was thought to be inconceivable by the 'Société des Amis des Noirs'.¹⁷ In Isle de France, the General Assembly issued a decree on 27 October 1790 to show its complete opposition against any slavery abolition plan since this would mean a great loss for the colony as well as for slave owners.¹⁸ Article V of the decree further confirmed their intention to make the slave system milder and to favour more and more individual manumissions.¹⁹ As Claude Wanquet explains, though they existed before 1789, the abolition principles resulted mostly from a sudden opinion rather than a long and thorough thought.²⁰ With the abolition plan, the manumission issue was raised and it was considered most appropriate to grant manumissions on a gradual basis. Hence, the French Revolution set off the

¹⁴ Jean Georges Prosper: L'île Maurice-ancienne isle de France, fille de La Révolution, Port Louis 1989, Ile Maurice, page 83.

¹⁵ A.Nagapen : Histoire de la colonie Isle de France-Ile Maurice, 1721-1968, Port Louis 1996, page 50.

¹⁶ M.Jumeer : 'Les affranchis et les indiens libres à l'île de France au 18e Siècle (1721-1803)', Thèse pour le Doctorat de 3e cycle, Poitiers 1984, page 27.

¹⁷ Raymond d'Unienville: Histoire politique de l'isle de France (1789-1791), Mauritius Archives Publications 1975, page 76.

¹⁸ R.d'Unienville, *ibid*, page 77.

¹⁹ R.d'Unienville, *ibid*, page 77.

²⁰ Claude Wanquet: La France et la première abolition de l'esclavage 1794-1802, Editions Karthala 1998, Paris, page 37.

principle of liberty which aroused an abolition proposal which, in turn, resulted in the manumission process.

After 1790, the number of manumitted slaves decreased to only 44 in 1792. This could be the result of the application of the laws of manumission promulgated on 27 January 1791. These laws stated the necessary requirements for a manumission to be confirmed, such as providing donations worth not less than 1000*livres* to the slave to ensure his means of subsistence when freed and the amount of 300*livres* which must be paid to the 'Commune Générale' for every manumission to be carried out. It might be that slave owners were financially not able or ready to manumit their slaves as they had to satisfy all the clauses. Richard Allen also observed that "data presented to the Commission of Eastern Enquiry between 1826-1828, however, suggests that the number of manumissions each year probably remained low after 1790".²¹ My analysis shows that, after the 'peak' year 1790, the number of manumissions granted 'remained low' for the next two years, until 1792. Then, the number increased to reach the second 'peak' in 1796.

The Colonial Assembly observed that the process of manumission had been over-encouraged since 1789 as a result of two factors: the Revolution and the consent of the Governor and the Intendant to confirm a manumission was no longer applicable as under the Ancien Régime. The Colonial Assembly started showing some hesitation towards freeing the slaves as it feared that too many manumissions might seriously hit the colonial system. Karl Noël argues that the slave system was considered as a most essential 'tool' for the economical aspect of the colony, and, a shortage of labour followed by a decline in the colony's resources might account for the consequences of manumission.²² The Assembly decided to adjourn temporarily manumission grants until another decree be issued concerning new manumission laws.²³ This decree was finally passed on 11 April 1793 with more emphasis on certain clauses, for example, the donations granted to the manumittedes must be strongly valuable and sufficient otherwise the Colonial Assembly could oppose the manumission. Furthermore, if someone was aware of any moral depravity of the slave to be freed, that person had all rights to oppose the manumission.²⁴

²¹ Richard Allen : 'Creoles, Indian Immigrants and the restructuring of society and economy, 1767-1885', University of Illinois, PhD Thesis 1983, page 100.

²² Karl Noël: L'esclavage à l'île de France (Ile Maurice) de 1715 à 1810, Editions Two Cities ETC 1991, Paris, page 111.

²³ C. Wanquet: 'Aperçu sur l'affranchissement des esclaves à Bourbon à la fin du XVIIIe siècle', in Annuaire des pays de l'océan indien, Volume IV, 1977, Presses Universitaire d'Aix-Marseille 1979, page 148.

²⁴ C. Wanquet, *ibid*, page 148.

Wanquet further states that this decree was maintained during the whole revolutionary period, and, the years 1794 to 1797 witnessed an increase in the number of manumissions granted to slaves.²⁵

Wanquet's argument coincides with the second phase, 1793 to 1798, which demonstrates the highest 'peak' in 1796 with 708 slaves being freed. This relates to another attempt to abolish slavery in 1794, with the decree of 16 Pluviose an II (4 February 1794) whereby the Convention proclaimed the abolition of the slave system in the French colonies.²⁶ Slavery was not abolished but manumission was largely encouraged so as not to put a sudden end to the slave system. It was considered namely by the 'Société des Amis Des Noirs' that slaves were not ready enough to such a sudden outburst of freedom.²⁷ Thus, emancipation could come gradually through manumissions carried out over a number of years.

The number of manumitted slaves decreased dramatically during the Decaen era. The figures appeared most unusual when compared to those during the revolutionary years. Under Decaen, a most rigid and harsh system prevailed; slavery was maintained and various restrictive measures were applied to discourage manumission. Slave owners and other manumitters had to undergo a lengthy and costly process to free the slaves. It is clear that a few of them were determined to give their slaves their freedom especially in cases where close kin were freeing their relatives and parents. First, they had to comply with Decaen's legislation, and, furthermore face economic loss by freeing an economic asset. Furthermore, another decree of 12 vendémiaire an XIV (4 October 1805) reinforced the Governors' right to grant manumissions without the interference of the French Government.²⁸ This new law enabled the local Government to decide freely whether or not to free the slaves.

Hence, the ease and frequency of manumissions taking place from 1789 to 1803 indicate the openness of the slave society while the number of manumitted slaves in the Decaen era provide a crucial standard to measure the rigidity of the slave system. Slaves had relatively fewer chances to become free in these later years.

²⁵ C. Wanquet: 'Aperçu sur l'affranchissement....', page 148.

²⁶ C. Wanquet: 'Pas de 'Spartacus Noir' aux Mascareignes' in Slavery in South West Indian Ocean, Edited by Servansing and Bissoondoyal, MGI Press 1989, Moka, Mauritius, page 355.

²⁷ C. Wanquet: La France et la première abolition...., page 16.

²⁸ Sudel Fuma: La mémoire du nom— L'histoire des noms réunionnais d'hier à aujourd'hui à partir des registres d'affranchis de 1848, Tome 1, Université de La Réunion, (Undated), page 6.

2.3 Gender and Manumission

As mentioned earlier, the colony's number of manumitted slaves between 1768 and 1789 amounted to 785 slaves, while, for the years 1789 and 1810, the records showed some 3639 slaves who were freed. The table shows clearly the data in terms of numbers and percentage for the two periods, 1768 to 1789 and 1789 to 1810.

Table 2 : The Manumitted Population for the two periods

	<u>First Period (1768-1789)</u>		<u>Second Period(1789-1810)</u>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
Adults : Males	173	22	630	17.3
Females	347	44.2	1657	45.5
Children : Boys	133	16.9	561	15.4
Girls	132	16.8	791	21.7
Total	785		3639	

(Source: First period – compiled from M.Jumeer: “Les affranchissements et les libres à l’île de France à la fin de l’ancien régime (1768-1789)”, unpublished mémoire de maîtrise, Faculté des Sciences Humaines, Université de Poitiers 1979, page 26.

Second period – data recorded from acts of manumissions from 1789-1810, Series OA, IE,A & G, Mauritius Archives)

The pattern of these manumissions show undoubtedly high percentages of female slaves and children. For both periods, the number of adult women who were freed outnumbered that of adult males and boys, and this contributed to an unbalanced sex structure among freed slaves; “nearly

all studies of New World slavery have noted the preponderance of females among the manumitted but the next conclusion has rarely been drawn : manumission is largely a gender-related phenomenon".²⁹ Even among the children, the number of girls largely exceeded the number of boys especially in the second period. But, in the first period, the figures were more or less similar as boys outnumbered girls by only one. The preponderance of women and children during this period could be attributed to the fact that "a majority of these women had been the concubines of their white masters and had given birth to their masters' children".³⁰ Masters could as well manumit the children alone, but the need to manumit their mothers resulted in the type of relationship between the female slave and her master. She was not only performing the role of producing children as the relation could be one of love and affection. This tendency surely continued and can be applied for the second period as well since the records of female manumissions from 1789 to 1810 show cases of slave women being intimately involved with the slave-owner or the manumitter, and, in certain cases, bearing their children.

Besides the sexual character which tended to favour female manumissions, women slaves could be freed as a reward because they had looked after an old owner in case of a lengthy illness. Female slaves were manumitted due to the fact that they did not play a very active economic role as compared to men. Most slave women were concerned with domestic work as, in most of the acts, it was mentioned that the female slave was a seamstress, laundress and ironer, whereas some of the male slaves performed work in the fields and others at sea. The economic role of slave women will further be analysed in Chapter 3. There were multiple reasons to explain female manumission rates being higher than that of males, "but certainly one of the most important was the possibility of building up relationships with free males, relationships which often produced offspring as well as levels of affection both of which could lead to manumission".³¹

According to Elphick and Shell, the high number of child manumissions at the Cape could be explained "... due to the practice of manumitting children along with their mothers or other kin".³² This relates to the Cape but it is the same for Isle de France also. As described above, many slave owners had sexual liaisons with their female slaves, and, very often, the latter bore their children. As a slave owner, the master's role was highly paternalistic, and, this role was even more

²⁹ Rosemary Brana-Shute : 'Approaching freedom: the manumission of slaves in Suriname...', in *Slavery & Abolition*, Vol.10. No 3, Dec 1989, page 58.

³⁰ R. Allen : 'Creoles, Indian Immigrants...', page 99.

³¹ Libby & Paiva : 'Manumission practices in a late eighteenth century Brazilian slave parish Sao José d'El Rey in 1795', in *Slavery & Abolition*, Vol 21, No. 1, April 2000, page 111.

³² Elphick and Shell: 'Intergroup Relations...', page 207.

pronounced when he manumitted both the mother and the children, and, in such situations, it is often believed that the female slave was being freed primarily because of her child. The case of Victorine, a slave belonging to Sieur Jouridan, Captain in the Merchant Navy, is a perfect example; the act mentioned that she was freed mostly because of the two children procreated to her by the owner.³³

Rosemary Brana-Shute proposes a much profound analysis to explain this gender related manumission. She states that “females were perceived as less threatening and their access to free people was often eased by the fact they were women. ... Often perceived as more vulnerable and dependent, especially if they had young children, females were relegated to roles with the personal or domestic sphere where owners and slaves came into more regular and personal contact which in turn provided opportunities for social manoeuvring that could become the basis for a manumission”.³⁴ The case of Angélique, a Bengali female slave, sheds light on this ‘regular and personal contact’ between the slave and the owner; Angélique had three young children and she worked for the Sieur Jean Chastaing, residing at quartier des Pamplémousses. The act did not state clearly Angélique’s occupation but it appeared that she was like a nurse to him – “*les peines et soins que prend journellement pour lui...*”- and this role enabled a daily contact with the owner. This became a basis for a manumission as Sieur Chastaing granted to Angélique her freedom and donated to her a piece of land in the same region and a Mozambican male slave.³⁵

Another example was Marguerite, a Creole slave who was at the service of Joseph Latour, Capitaine des Troupes Nationales, residing at Trois Islots in Canton de Flacq. Marguerite was the mother of three children and she performed work in the owner’s household as wetnurse for her master’s children. Joseph Latour stated that Marguerite had nursed his children after his wife’s death and he intended to free her since she was considered as being almost part of the family due to her closeness to the children and to the owner.³⁶ The gendered nature of manumission, especially that of female slaves will be studied in much more detail in Chapter 3 whereby the different roles of the slave women in 18th Century French colonial society will be analysed.

³³ Register A55, ... 1796 (date and month missing), MA.

³⁴ R.Brana-Shute: ‘Approaching freedom...’, pages 58-59.

³⁵ Register A67, act dated 26 February 1791, MA.

³⁶ Register A77, act dated1796, (date and month missing), MA.

2.4 The origins of manumitted slaves

When explaining the complexity of Cape culture, Robert Shell states that “slaves were drawn from a multitude of starkly different geographic and cultural origins, constituting easily the most diverse population of any recorded slave society”.³⁷ This ‘diverse population’ was also applicable for the slave population of Isle de France since slaves who were freed during this twenty one-year period were from different origins and came mostly from Madagascar, Mozambique, India, Malaya and Guinea while a great proportion were born, raised and socialized locally, and they were known as Creoles. It has been noted that slaves were first brought from Madagascar, then Mozambique, Guinea and Senegal also.³⁸ However, among the slaves whose origins were mentioned, no slave from Senegal was to be found; in 1810, these slaves consisted about 2% of the total slave population of 160,000 which were in the Mascarenes islands, but no relevant figure was available for Isle de France.³⁹ The manumission acts mentioned the word ‘*caste*’ to define the ethnic origin of the slave, and, a large number of these acts have omitted the slave’s ‘*caste*’ and such slaves formed the ‘Unknown’ category. It could be that, among the ‘Unknown’, there were slaves from Sénégal. Table 3 shows the different origins to which the manumitted slaves belonged, and, for each origin, the number and the corresponding percentage are available as calculated from the manumitted population as a whole. A comparative analysis has been done with the slave population as a whole to determine whether the ethnic origins, considered as numerous in the total slave population, coincided with those in the manumitted population. The results of that analysis have shown that the ‘dominant’ ethnic origins in the slave population did not occupy the same position amidst the manumitted population. It is to be noted that, from the census consulted, figures for the slave population of each origin are available only for Mozambican, Creole, Malagasy and Indian slaves. There are no statistics for the other ethnic origins from the slave censuses.

³⁷ Slavery in South Africa- Captive labor on the Dutch frontier, Edited by Elizabeth Eldredge and Fred Morton, Westview Press 1994, page 11.

³⁸ Jean Claude Lau Thi Keng : Inter-ethnicité et politique à l’île Maurice, Collection repères pour Madagascar et l’Océan Indien, L’Harmattan 1991, page 12.

³⁹ Bernard Lehembre : L’île Maurice, Editions Karthala 1984, page 21.

Table 3 : Analysis of Ethnic Origins of Manumitted Slaves

<i>Origins of slaves</i>	<i>Total slave population-60,646 [census of 1806]</i>		<i>Manumitted population-3639 [between 1789 to 1810]</i>		
	Number	% of TSP	Number	% of MP	% of TSP
Mozambican	26,670	43.9	112	3.07	0.18
Creole	16,784	27.6	1617	44.4	2.7
Malagasy	11,030	18.1	375	10.3	0.6
Indian	6,162	10.1	1113	30.6	1.8
Guinean	Na	-	67	1.84	0.1
Malay	Na	-	18	0.5	0.02
Chinese	Na	-	2	0.05	0.003
Moslem (Maure)	Na	-	2	0.05	0.003
'Unknown'	Na	-	333	9.15	0.5
Total	60,646		3639		

MP : Manumitted Population

TSP : Total Slave Population

Na : figures Not available

(Source: For figures of TSP in 1806 – M.J.Milbert: Voyage pittoresque à l'île de France et à l'île de Ténériffe, Paris 1812, Tome 2, page 233.

For MP : calculated from data available from acts of manumission for the years 1789-1810, Series OA, IE, A & G, Mauritius Archives).

As the table shows, relevant figures for the total slave population are not available for ethnic origins of Guinean, Malay, Chinese, 'Maure' and 'Unknown' slaves. Hence, the corresponding percentage for each origin in the Total Slave Population cannot be calculated.

According to the data, from a total population of 3639 manumitted slaves, the two 'dominant' ethnic origins were Creoles and Indians, with high figures as compared to the other ethnic origins. Creoles accounted for less than half of the manumitted population while Indians were a lower proportion. However, it would be most interesting to analyse the 'Unknown' group since it can

greatly influence the other known ethnic origins in terms of numbers. Slaves from the Unknown group could as well belong to the Creoles, Indians, Malagasies, Mozambicans and the other ethnic origins. Hence, the 333 slaves might influence the number of freed slaves for each origin. Nevertheless, the priority ethnic origins would still be the Creoles and the Indians while the others may undergo a change in the order of priority only.

Creoles

In the context of slavery, the term 'Creole' refers to locally-born slaves, and, in Isle de France, slaves who were born in the colony were known as Creoles as opposed to those brought from other continents and islands. A child born in the colony from parents of similar ethnic origins, that is both mother and father were Indians or Mozambicans or Malagasies or Guineans, would be called a Creole. The same applies to a locally-born child of parents of two different origins, that is the mother and the father are Malagasy and Indian or Malay and Guinean. Robin Blackburn explains that "it seems appropriate that the new forms of life born in the colonies are often called Creole, with the more or less conscious realization that they represented a new synthesis or mixture, arrived at through the struggles within and between the various components of the colonial population".⁴⁰

The 20th and 21st centuries' definition of a Creole is different from that of the slavery context. Eric Saugera explains that a Creole normally designated a slave of African descent born in the American colonies;⁴¹ but, as stated above, in Isle de France, the Creole might not necessarily be of African descent, he could as well be of Malagasy, Indian or Malay descent.

The anthropologist Thomas Eriksen offers a much modern interpretation of the term Creole, understood through the aspect of colonialism as "namely the uprooting and displacement of large numbers of people in the plantation economies of certain colonies, such as Louisiana, Jamaica, Trinidad, Réunion and Mauritius. Both in the Caribbean basin and in the Indian Ocean, certain groups who contributed to this economy during slavery were described as Creoles".⁴²

⁴⁰ Robin Blackburn: The making of New World Slavery, From the Baroque to the Modern 1492-1800, London: Verso 1997, page 23.

⁴¹ Eric Saugera: Bordeaux Port négrier XVIIe – XIXe siècles, Editions Karthala, Paris 1995, page 289.

⁴² Thomas Hylland Eriksen : 'Tu dimunn pu vin kreol : The Mauritian Creole and the concept of creolization', in Révi Kiltir Kreol– Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture, No.1, Annual, February 2002, Mauritius.

In Isle de France, slaves who were born locally were known as Creoles as opposed to those brought from other continents and islands. Creoles of Isle de France were referred to as “créol de cette isle”⁴³ or “négresse créole”⁴⁴ in the acts of manumission to determine their origins. Some slaves were brought from Bourbon island and known as “créole de l’isle Bourbon” to distinguish them from those of Isle de France. There arose a few solitary cases where the ‘caste’ Creole seemed most ambiguous, since, as mentioned earlier, a Creole is normally a local born; hence, when a manumitted slave in Isle de France appeared to be a “créol de Goa”⁴⁵ or a “créol du Cap”⁴⁶, we are brought to question the origins of the slave. This normally means that the slave was born in Goa or The Cape and he was designated as a Creole from that specific place, because precise terms relating to the native country such as ‘Goan’, for example, did not exist. Milbert stated that Creoles of Indian origin were in Isle de France and they were called Creoles since they were born in the island.⁴⁷

From the data available, it is seen that, from a total population of 60,646 slaves, Mozambicans were more numerous than Creoles and the other ethnic origins. In fact, Mozambicans seemed to form the bulk of the slave population with some 26,670 slaves compared to only 16,784 Creoles, 11,030 Malagasies and 6,162 Indians.⁴⁸ But, in the manumission process, the number of manumitted slaves for each ethnic origin did not follow the same pattern as for the slave population. Creoles constituted about 27.6% of the total slave population while the number of freed Creoles amounted to only 1617 from a population of 60,646 slaves and a manumitted group of 3639 slaves. The percentage of Creoles was numerous only when compared to the manumitted population but from the slave population as a whole, the manumission rate was found to be rather low as Creoles who were freed formed only 2.7% of the total slave population.

It is interesting to observe that a large number of the manumitted Creoles of Isle de France were children as the majority of children were born in the island from Creole, Malagasy, Mozambique or Indian parents. This aspect greatly influenced the rise in the number of manumitted Creoles as the children were freed with their mothers in many cases. Very few children were of Indian, Malagasy or Mozambican origin, and, for these rare cases, the boys and girls were for the most

⁴³ “Creole of Isle de France”.

⁴⁴ “Creole negress”.

⁴⁵ “Creole from Goa”.

⁴⁶ “Creole from the Cape”.

⁴⁷ M.J.Milbert : *Voyage pittoresque à l’île de France et à l’île de Ténériffe*, Tome 2, Paris 1812, page 170.

⁴⁸ M.J.Milbert, *ibid*, page 233.

over ten years of age. It is clear that they were born in the country of origin and brought in Isle de France as slaves.

Besides the locally born Creoles and those from Bourbon island, the acts also mentioned a few “créol mûlatre / mûlatresse”; the term ‘mûlatre’ is usually applied to an individual born from a White male and a black female⁴⁹, very seldom from two ‘mûlatres’. In almost all cases of such types, the White male happened to be the owner himself. Jacques Cauna, who made a study of slavery in Saint Domingue in the 18th century, also mentioned the “Grifs” and the “quarterons”;⁵⁰ the “Grifs” are born from mulatto and Negro parents while the “quarterons” are from White and mulatto parents. However, these definitions of blood origins, typical of Hispanic societies, had not been recorded among the manumitted slaves of Isle de France.

Indians

The Indian manumitted slaves represented roughly less than half of the manumitted population after the Creoles; in her article on ‘Indian Slaves in Mauritius...’, Marina Carter explains that: “In general, Indians were depicted as some sort of an intermediary group between Africans and Europeans both in terms of mental abilities as well as physical resemblance”.⁵¹ These Indian slaves were further denominated according to specific sub-groups, namely the ‘Talingas’, the Malabares and the Bengalis, and, Milbert explained that these sub-groups were the three main groups Indians formed by themselves.⁵² A single case of a female slave from ‘Parchy’ origin was noted and the manumission act stated that, Panchique, a female slave, was from Pondicherry where her freedom had been granted to her by her owner, Mrs Catherine Cordieu, also living in Pondicherry.⁵³ The manumission granted to her as a reward for loyal service was confirmed in Isle de France. Almost all the Indian male and female slaves worked as domestic servants for private owners and also for the Government, as “esclave de l’état”. Among the known ethnic origins, no Indian slave was recorded to be working in the plantations as labourer and this aspect

⁴⁹ E. Saugera : Bordeaux....., page 289.

⁵⁰ Jacques Cauna : Au temps des îles à sucre – Histoire d’une plantation de Saint Domingue au XVIII^e siècle, Editions Karthala et A.C.C.T 1987, page 93.

⁵¹ Marina Carter : ‘ An Elite in Servility? Indian slaves in Mauritius, 1725-1825’, in The Indian Historical Review, Vol. XV, Nos 1-2, July 1988 and January 1989, page 239.

⁵² M.J. Milbert : Voyage....., pages 169-170.

⁵³ Register A55, act dated 28 February 1791, MA.

of their profession brought us to Napal's observation about the need of Malabare labourers in the island.⁵⁴

As the figures show, Indian slaves formed about 10.1% of the total population and the manumission rate was even lower for Indians as only 1.8% were freed as compared to 2.7% of Creoles from the population as a whole. But, compared to the manumitted population of 3639 slaves, a high number of Indian slaves obtained their freedom since they represented about 30.6% of this freed population.

Sadasivam Reddi explains that "the high number of manumitted Indians is due to the fact that there was a high proportion of women among Indian slaves and many later became concubines of the settlers and more likely to be manumitted as they bore the children of settlers".⁵⁵ This argument goes closely with Marina Carter who observes that more recent works such as Jumeer's among others "... have stressed that the colonists were more likely to seek mistresses from among the Indian female slaves, and ultimately more likely to enfranchise them".⁵⁶

Richard Allen stated that, during the period 1768 to 1789, Indians accounted for more than one-third of those freed altogether with disproportionately large numbers of Creole slaves who also acquired their freedom at this time.⁵⁷ He further argued that "while similar data have yet to be developed for the period after 1789, it is reasonable to assume that slaves from selected ethnic or cultural backgrounds continued to be manumitted in disproportionately large numbers well into the early nineteenth century".⁵⁸ From the data available for the years after 1789, it is clear that this was indeed the case that Creoles and Indians were freed in large numbers particularly when compared with the manumitted population.

⁵⁴ D.Napal : Les Indiens à l'île de France, Ile Maurice 1965, page 55

⁵⁵ S.Reddi: 'Aspects of Indian Culture in Ile de France during the period 1803-1810' in History, Memory and Identity, Edited by V.Teelock and Edward Alpers, Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture, February 2001, page 34.

⁵⁶ M.Carter: 'Indian slaves....', page 238.

⁵⁷ R.Allen : Slaves, freedmen and Indentured laborers in Colonial Mauritius, Cambridge University Press 1999, page 83.

⁵⁸ R.Allen, *ibid*, page 83.

Malagasies

Manumitted Malagasy slaves accounted for a relatively low proportion amidst the freed population as the data shows only 375 Malagasies who obtained their freedom from a Malagasy population of 11,030 slaves. They formed about 10.3% of the manumitted population but accounted to only 0.6% of the whole slave population. They were owned by individual owners and some were Company slaves; Malagasies were also referred by the term 'madecasse' in the manumission acts. A possible reason for the low rate of manumission among Malagasy slaves could be that they "were more prone to run away"⁵⁹ and such acts naturally made owners distrust them. Hence, the few who were freed could be considered as truly deserving their manumission since some of them obtained it by reward.

The remaining ethnic origins

Mozambicans, Guineans, Malays, Chinese and Moslems or 'Maure' formed the rest of the manumitted population. The Mozambique and Guinean slaves were mostly middle aged and old individuals, around 40 to 70 years. They were freed as reward and because of old age and illness.

The number of freed Mozambicans appeared to be very low when compared to the population of 26,670 slaves. By 1806, Mozambicans were about 43.9% of the total slave population and it is most surprising to note that only 10.3% of these slaves got their freedom. The rates of manumission for Mozambicans remained low both from the whole slave population and from the manumitted population – freed Mozambicans constituted only 3.07% of the 3639 slaves who got their freedom and the percentage went down to 0.18% when compared to the slave population as a whole.

The census of 1806 does not provide relevant figures for ethnic origins like Guinean, Malay, Chinese and Moslems or 'Maure'. Hence the data obtained for manumission cannot attempt any conclusion as a comparative study of the manumitted population with the slave population as a whole proves to be most uncertain.

⁵⁹ Vijaya Teelock : Mauritian History, MGI Press 2001, Moka, Mauritius, page 124.

Since the beginning of the 19th Century, the study of Malay slaves, according to the historian Gerbeau, was considered as being much 'limited' since these slaves were brought in Isle de France in very few numbers.⁶⁰ The study was 'limited' in the sense that there have not been many studies carried out on Malay slaves. Furthermore, the term 'Malay', in the 19th Century, defined an islander from the East Indies and South China Sea regions. But it could also refer to be a slave from the Maldives or Java islands.⁶¹ The Danish geographer, Konrad Malte-Brun, stated that it is difficult to describe this type of people as very little is known on them.⁶² Milbert mentioned that the Malays who were brought from the Sunda Islands were already free people as the news of the French Revolution about equality and liberty had reached them.⁶³

The number of Chinese and Moslem slaves who were manumitted seemed most unusual, as, out of a population of 3639, they accounted for only 4 individuals, but the rates cannot be justified as relevant data for the slave population as a whole is not available in the census. The term 'Moslem' is used here to define those slaves whose ethnic origin was mentioned as 'Maure' in the manumission acts. One possible reason for this low number can be due to the fact that there existed very few Chinese and Moslem slaves in Isle de France. Under the Crown Government, during Pierre Poivre's era, from 1767 to 1772, Indian and Chinese were brought in the island to work as gardeners on the cotton and tea plantations.⁶⁴ It is most important to note that the document mentioned the term 'gardeners' and not slaves, hence assuming that these Chinese were some kind of indentured workers. Unlike Isle Bourbon where the French left about eight French families and 'several Moslem slaves' to colonise the island, Isle de France did not include Moslem slaves among the slave population at the beginning of the 18th Century.⁶⁵ It is to be noted that the Moslem slaves in Bourbon island were bought from corsairs.⁶⁶

The number of manumissions in the 'Unknown' category must also be considered although the ethnic origin of the 333 slaves in this group has been omitted in the manumission records. This figure could alter the quantitative dimension of the other ethnic origins as the 'Unknown' might

⁶⁰ Hubert Gerbeau : 'Les esclaves asiatiques des Mascareignes au XIXe siècle', in Annuaire des pays de l'océan indien, Vol VII, 1980, page 176.

⁶¹ H. Gerbeau, *ibid*, page 176.

⁶² Konrad Malte-Brun: Précis de géographie universelle, Tome II, Paris 1870, page 556.

⁶³ M.J. Milber: Voyage pittoresque...., page 196.

⁶⁴ D. Helly : 'Des immigrants chinois dans les Mascareignes', in Annuaire des pays de l'océan indien, Vol III, 1976, page 107.

⁶⁵ Jean Barassin : La vie quotidienne des colons de l'île Bourbon à la fin du règne de Louis XIV : 1700-1715, Saint-Denis: Académie de La Réunion, Août 1989, page 104.

⁶⁶ J. Barassin, *ibid*, page 104.

include Creole, Indian, Malagasy, Mozambican, Guinean, Malay, Chinese and Moslem – ‘Maure’ freed slaves.

2.5 The age structure of manumitted slaves

The manumission acts indicate a varied age structure for the slaves being freed as the data in Table 4, on the next page, reveals that the manumitted population consists of freeborn offspring, infants, young and dynamic individuals, adults and a few old couples.

The number of individuals for each cohort has been calculated according to gender. The total number of manumitted slaves is given for each age cohort. It is noted that there are also manumitted slaves whose age was not specified in the act, and, these individuals are recorded in the ‘Age Not Specified’ or ‘Unknown’ cohort.

Table 4: Age Structure of the Manumitted Slaves Population

Age Cohort	Creoles			Indians			Malagasies			Mozambicans			Guinean			Malay			Chinese			Moslem (Maure)			Unknown			Total
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	
0 - 10	206	263	469	58	55	113	3	8	11	4	3	7	0	1	1	1	5	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4	8	615
11- 20	59	130	189	20	130	150	0	7	7	2	3	5	2	0	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	5	7	361
21- 30	70	169	239	65	284	349	17	35	52	10	11	21	0	1	1	1	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	40	53	718
31- 40	18	44	62	17	43	60	23	39	62	8	7	15	2	1	3	0	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	22	33	239
41- 50	7	20	27	11	16	27	29	45	74	2	9	11	4	3	7	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	22	13	35	183
51- 60	19	6	25	4	5	9	14	9	23	2	1	3	9	4	13	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	25	40	115
61- 70	1	1	2	0	4	4	3	2	5	1	2	3	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	18
71- 80	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	0	2	1	0	1	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3	11
80+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Age not specified																												
Adults	76	220	296	148	208	356	34	68	102	8	23	31	8	15	23	0	0	0	1	1	2	1	1	2	67	122	189	1001
Children	85	109	194	36	29	65	6	6	12	10	7	17	0	8	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	44	36	80	376
Total	541	962	1503	359	776	1135	131	220	351	48	66	114	32	33	65	3	15	18	1	1	2	1	1	2	182	267	449	3039

Sources: Recorded from Manumission Acts from 1789 - 1810, Series OA, IE, A & G, Mauritius Archives

It is clear from these figures that manumission among the adult population came around 21-30 years. It is most interesting to note that such slaves were being freed at an age when their economic productivity would have been greatest. It is observed that a high proportion of Creoles and Indians were freed in the cohort 21-30 years as the figures show a total of 239 Creoles and 349 Indians. Mozambican freed slaves from this cohort amounted to 21 compared to only 15 in the cohort 31-40 years, and, 11 in the cohort 41-50 years. Among Guinean slaves, 13 obtained their freedom around the ages of 51-60 years as compared to only 1 from the cohort 21-30 years and 3 from the cohort 31-40 years. Among the Malagasy freed slaves, the highest number was 74 in the cohort 41-50 years. The rate at which slaves of each cohort were freed was not the same for each origin as only the cohort 21-30 years accounted for the highest number of slaves from Creole, Indian, Mozambican and 'Unknown' origins.

Another important factor must be considered as the table shows also an 'Unknown' age range for those adults and children who were manumitted without their age being mentioned in the act. These figures would eventually alter the other cohorts and the number for each age decade might change. The question will remain whether the freed slaves from this Unknown age cohort were children precisely under or over 10 years, productive adults below the age of 50 or old slaves over 60 years.

The old slaves were for the most Government slaves, and, manumission were applicable for them since they were past their productive age while the privately owned slaves were freed mainly because of old age and illness. In the adult population, only 11 slaves who belonged to the cohort 71-80 years were freed, and, above 80 years, two slaves of Malagasy and Guinean origins were recorded. According to the data, the oldest slave among the males appears to be over 80 years, and, 84 years among the females, but, it must be noted that the oldest might be above 80-90 years since a few acts mentioned "grand âge" or "très avancé en âge" without specifying the age but which certainly means that the slave has reached a very old age. A Guinean slave, Guy, obtained his manumission from his brother-in-law who purchased his freedom from his owner, Sieur Duché. The exact age of the slave was not mentioned but, in the act, it was written that Guy was "très avancé en âge", meaning that he was very old.⁶⁷ As Robert Shell explains, for the Cape, these old slaves "...were freed through the efforts, not of their owners, but of their on families, who doubtless wished to bring them into their households".⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Register A67, act dated 1st July 1790, MA.

⁶⁸ R.Elphick and R.Shell: 'Intergroup relations...' in The shaping of South African Society..., page 206.

The very old slaves were not freed by testamentary manumissions, they were given their freedom because they could no longer work and the owners felt responsible for them. Allen explains that "...for the colonists, manumission could be a means of cutting costs by freeing elderly and unproductive slaves".⁶⁹ Teelock confirms Allen's interpretation as she explains that "aged slaves in particular, having outlived their usefulness as labour, became non-entities and a burden for their masters. Because they could not work as hard, the owner resented having to feed, clothe and house them".⁷⁰

Besides the adults, children and teenagers as well as new-borns accounted a little more than one-third of the manumitted population as the figure for the young population shows a total of 1352 individuals from a total of 3639 manumitted slaves. The age structure for freed children and youngsters ranges from 3 days old to 19 years but two cases showed unborn babies who were already considered as free since their mothers obtained their manumission before giving birth. In July 1808, Lolotte, a Creole slave aged 18, was manumitted through reward by widow Pilot. The young slave, at the moment of her manumission was seven to eight months pregnant as the act stated she was "*enceinte de sept a huit mois environ*".⁷¹

Another case was that of Henriette, a Bengali slave, freed in 1794 with her two children, Marie Joseph and Julien, and the third child to be born soon.⁷² The children, in these two cited cases, would get the free status of their mothers and that partly reflected "the practice of freeing slave mothers before they gave birth, thus rendering offspring freeborn".⁷³ Some owners wanted the freeborn child to have his share in the donations granted, and, in some cases, the rights of succession.

As far as the analysis reveals, the bulk of the manumitted population belonged to the first four age groups, 0-40 years, but, again the argument from which age cohort more slaves were freed cannot be calculated since exact evidence is not totally available due to the 'Unknown' age of certain slaves. However, this pattern of manumission as it appears with slaves freed before attaining the age of 40, helps to explain that "...if economic considerations were most important in the minds

⁶⁹ R.Allen: 'Local capital and the Rise of the Free Population of Colour in Mauritius, 1767-1830', Unpublished paper 1987, page 7.

⁷⁰ V.Teelock: *Bitter Sugar*, MGI Press 1998, Moka, page 181.

⁷¹ Register GA 36, act dated 13 July 1808, MA.

⁷² Register A 39, act dated 14 Prairial an 2 (9 May 1794), MA.

⁷³ Libby and Paiva : 'Manumission practices in Sao José...', page 113.

of owners, it seems likely they would have freed a slave before or after that slave reached a productive age”.⁷⁴

2.6 The status of manumitted slaves

The family profile of the slaves was one of the characteristics revealed in the manumission acts. When a slave was freed, his or her status as a single or married individual was also determined; it is not stated in the requests whether the slave was married or not but with certain information such as the slave had a spouse and children, it became clear to understand their family organization. An analysis of the ‘family’ profile of manumitted slaves in Isle de France has proved to be much varied since they can be categorized as singles, couples, nuclear-family type, ‘matrifocal’, ‘patrifocal’ and unmarried pregnant women.

It is argued that the organization of slave families in the American South “were more likely to be nuclear - a male, a female and their children- than matrifocal...”⁷⁵ But this is highly controversial as Stamppp argued that “slavery broke up families, that with ‘these conditions – the absence of legal marriage, the family’s minor social and economic significance, and the father’s limited role – it is hardly surprising to find that slave families were highly unstable’”.⁷⁶ Even where there existed slave families, the role of the slave as father was weak as slave men were deprived of their ‘paternalistic’ role.

This pattern among American slaves, as Stamppp defined it, could as well be justified for Isle de France. It is somewhat difficult to establish the existence of stable family patterns among the slaves who were freed as the majority was not legally married. The manumitted slaves can be categorized as : single females, single males, mother-child unit, couples, nuclear family, father-child unit and pregnant slaves. Figures for each category are given but it is not possible to compare these figures with total aggregate figures for the slave population as a whole since these data are not available. If figures for earlier or later periods are used, these also do not give detailed figures for the size of family units. It is possible that slave census for these family units

⁷⁴ R.Brana-Shute : ‘Approaching Freedom: The Mnaumission of slaves in Suriname ...’, page 48.

⁷⁵ Marietta Morrissey : ‘Women’s work, family formation, and reproduction among Carribean slaves’ in Carribean slave society and economy, Edited by Hilary Beckles and Verene Shepherd, IRP & James Curney Publishers 1991.

⁷⁶ M.Morrissey, *ibid*, page 274.

exist in France but they are not available in Mauritius yet. This analysis will be based only on the manumitted categories given in the following table.

Table 5 : Status of Manumitted Slaves for the period 1789-1810

<u>Profile of the manumitted</u>	<u>Number of cases</u>
Single females	1359
Single males	622
Mother-child unit	386
Couples	31
Nuclear family	22
Father-child unit	7
Pregnant slaves	2

(Source: compiled from the acts of manumission for the years 1789-1810, Series OA, IE, A & G, Mauritius Archives)

Single females

The data shows that single females outnumbered the number of manumission cases in the other types of 'family' units. The age structure of these single slave women ranges around 20-30 years, and, the fact they were freed at this age did not necessarily bring about the sexual dimension suggesting that female slaves were the owner's concubines or mistresses. Surely that was in certain cases an aspect which initiated a manumission but several other means have been found which made manumission possible. As discussed in Chapter I, slaves were freed through various means – self-purchase, testaments, exchange, reward, gratitude, love and affection of close kin, intention of owners and filial love. Some of these slave women bought their freedom while others were manumitted with the help and support of other freed family members. When it came to the owner's intention of freeing young women, it might be most possible that the reason behind this 'intention' bears a sexual connotation. However, none of the acts mentioned clearly the sexual aspect involved in the process of manumitting a female slave except in cases of mother-child units where the owner claimed the children to be his own. This will be dealt later on in the forthcoming parts.

In July 1794, Jean Pierre Bécane, surgeon working in the State's hospital, decided to manumit his Creole negress, Marie Françoise. He defined this act as being his intention to free this slave whose age was not stated. It is highly probable that there existed between them some sort of close relationship, but, as far as the act revealed, this interpretation cannot be justified.⁷⁷

The 'intention' to free a slave does not only concern male owners since female owners also freed their slaves because it was their 'intention' to do so. In May 1794, another Creole slave, Marie Louise, was manumitted as her owner, Jeanneton Desgranges, a free woman, intended to enfranchise her.⁷⁸

Another reason which might explain the high number of manumitted single females was that slave women were not especially valued as field workers, most of them were employed in domestic service, and, in a certain sense, they were considered as being 'closer' to the owners. Brana-Shute explains that "...slave women had greater access to free people and a greater likelihood of gaining freedom for themselves...because the contemporary perceptions of what constituted 'female character' and 'woman's work' (gender roles) allowed females more access to the personal lives of free people (potential manumitters) than was allowed to slave men".⁷⁹ This aspect will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Single males

Manumitted single males were fewer in number than single females who were freed, and, two main reasons could explain for such a low amount : the slave's occupation and the fact that personal contact with the household was not favoured by owners.

As discussed earlier, it has been observed that the majority of freed males were skilled artisans, privately owned and working for the Government. Since the colony's economy greatly depended on slave labour, manumission of slaves working in plantation fields were not encouraged if not approved. Slaves from Mozambique were mostly valued to work in agriculture while the Creoles and Indians were mainly artisans but this varied over time as, after the abolition of slavery,

⁷⁷ Register A39, act dated 21 July 1794, MA.

⁷⁸ Register A39, act dated 22 May 1794, MA.

⁷⁹ R.B-Shute : 'Approaching Freedom:....', page 57.

Indians were brought as indentured labourers to work in the plantation fields. Male slaves in the plantation area had a particularly poor chance of manumission, and, it was considered an 'advantage' for a plantation slave to be female so that a manumission could be negotiated more easily. The fact that a high number of males was involved in the fields did not constitute convincing reasons to effect a legal manumission since the frequency of manumissions would undoubtedly lead to a deterioration in the plantation sector. Those who were lucky to work in other areas got the possibility to be manumitted.

Another reason was that the less remunerative jobs such as ironing, sewing, childcare were mostly relegated to slave women, and, such jobs made possible "...contacts that were to some extent frequent and intimate"⁸⁰ since they were being performed in the owner's household. Such contacts could become the basis for a manumission but not for males as very few slave men were especially valued for domestic jobs.

The manumission of single males and females was carried out in higher numbers than that in the other types of family units. The financial aspect of manumission could account for this high number as the legislative measures for manumitting a slave involved heavy expenditures, and, manumitters were subject to payments and taxes. Hence, the process of freeing a slave alone proved to be less costly than when freeing a family consisting of two adults and a few children.

Some single men who worked as artisans for themselves obtained their manumission as they usually paid for their purchase price. For example, a male Indian slave, Joseph, who worked as bricklayer, self purchased his manumission from a free coloured woman residing in Port Nord Ouest. Since Joseph had enough money to pay his purchase price, he preferred doing so rather than waiting for his owner to free him.⁸¹

The mother-child unit

Mother-child units, also referred to as 'maternal families'⁸², were far more numerous than nuclear family units; such 'maternal families' consisted of a mother and her children, the latter, in most cases, belonging to the mother's owner. When a slave woman was liberated with her children, the

⁸⁰ R.B-Shute: 'Approaching freedom...', page 58.

⁸¹ Register A56A/56B, act dated 2 germinal an 4 (22 March 1796), MA.

⁸² M.Morrissey : 'Women's work, family formation...', page 280.

act did not mention the father's identity; in cases where a male owner was freeing his female slave and children, it became most probable that they were "...in fact, liberating their own (often unacknowledged) children or sexual partners".⁸³ It could be that sexual relations between masters and slaves were at least as likely to be rewarded with manumission particularly when there was a child. Some masters resented it a stigma to bear a slave child and this generally led them to grant the manumission so that the child at least be freed. However, a case in 1791 reveals that the owner, Jean Louis Servand, had a child with his Indian slave, Jeanneton, and it was stated in the act – "*il a le malheur d'avoir une enfant avec la négresse*" – this reflected a sort of embarrassment on Servand's part, but this statement could as well be the court officer's comment. The slave took advantage of this situation to seek her manumission but Servand had not enough financial means to free her and the child and to provide for their subsistence, or, maybe he claimed he could not because surely his profession as 'Commis aux écritures' enabled him to earn some money. Even if he considered it as most unfortunate to father a slave child, Servand intended at least to free his daughter and managed to find a donator who could provide for the donations. Finally, a donator, Sieur Pellin, offered to Jeanneton a plot of land and a small house and the manumission of both mother and child was confirmed.⁸⁴

In 1795, Marie, a 22 year-old Mozambican slave was freed with her Creole child, Azémia, four years old. The manumitter, Pierre Sapret, donated a considerable amount of money to each – 2000*livres* for the mother and 4000*livres* for the child. Furthermore, he requested his wish to keep the freed child under his care and responsibility.⁸⁵ Though it was not stated clearly whether Azémia was fathered by Sapret, it became most probable that she could be his child. The amount of money donated to her was twice the amount given to the mother, and, if the child had not been his own, maybe Sapret would not have taken her under his care.

Another case of mother-child unit was that of Françoise, a 40 year-old Bengali slave who was freed along with her daughter, Marie Jeanne, a Creole of 18 years. The owner, Jean Marie Chenel, manumitted them out of gratitude and stated he wanted to reward them. But, in this particular case, it was mentioned that Françoise happened to be Vincent's wife, another slave belonging to Chenel. It became most probable and perhaps logical that the girl was fathered by Vincent though another possibility might still be applicable – Marie Jeanne could be Chenel's

⁸³ Libby & Paiva : 'Manumission practices in Sao José...', page 112.

⁸⁴ Register A55, act dated 10 July 1791, MA.

⁸⁵ Register A66, act dated 4 frimaire an 4 (25 November 1795), MA.

illegitimate child since he was freeing only the mother and the young girl while Vincent was still in bondage. Furthermore, as donations, he offered 10,000*livres* to Françoise and 30,000*livres* to Marie Jeanne and proposed to keep them under his care and house them until his death.⁸⁶

In May 1798, a free coloured citizen, Soucroumania, residing at Camp des Malabares, requested the manumission of his Malabare female slave, Marianne and 'their' children – Mathurin, 5 years old and François, 3 years old, both creoles. The act stated that Soucroumania "...reconnait et adopte irrévocablement...ses véritables enfants procrées entre lui et la dite Marianne...".⁸⁷ This case was one of the rare cases whereby the manumitter confirmed the sexual relation he entertained with the female slave.

Not all mother-child units were freed by male owners who had fathered the children as some were manumitted by self-purchase, testaments and with the help of close kin. In September 1799, Marie Gaiqui, a coloured citizen, manumitted her sister Marguerite Perrine, a 22 year-old Creole slave and her 2 year-old child, Anne Charlette.⁸⁸ She wished to free them by purchasing their liberty and had to offer another slave as replacement.

Another reason that could account for mother-child units was maybe the existence of 'cross-household' unions. A study of cross-plantation unions in antebellum South Carolina has shown that the female slaves felt 'pressurized' to marry someone off their household rather than not marry at all.⁸⁹ According to Marli Weiner, "...female slaves were aware of the fact that they and their children were economic assets for slaveholders and that owners might sell them if they proved reluctant to increase his supply of slaves".⁹⁰ It is assumed that certain female slaves were either married or having a relationship with a male slave belonging to another owner and the slavewoman's master owned her as well as her siblings. This can best be explained following the size of the owner's slaveholding. An owner holding only a few slaves and having also female slaves of child-bearing age, would most likely encourage their slaves to make off-household unions particularly if no potential male partners were available in the same residence. Emily West

⁸⁶ Register A66, act dated 4 frimaire an 4 (25 November 1795), MA.

⁸⁷ "...acknowledged the children to be his own and those of Marianne...", Register A41, act dated 28 floréal an 6 (17 May 1798), MA.

⁸⁸ Register A41, act dated 22 fructidor an 7 (8 September 1799), MA.

⁸⁹ Emily West: 'Masters and Marriages, Profits and Paternalism: Slave owners' perspectives on cross-plantation unions in Antebellum South Carolina' in *Slavery & Abolition*, Volume 21, No. 1, April 2000, page 67.

⁹⁰ Marli Weiner: *Mistresses and Slaves: Plantation Women in South Carolina, 1830-80*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago 1998, page 136.

explains that "...any offspring of the female slave in question would have substantially increased the owner's stock of slaves, owners of smaller slaveholdings had a rested interest in encouraging their female slaves to marry elsewhere".⁹¹

Couples

Only 31 cases of slave couples have been recorded amidst the manumitted population. This figure is indeed very low as compared to the high number of cases for freed single males and females as well as mother-child units. An analysis of the mother-child units revealed the slave women to be most of the time concubines or mistresses of owners or that of freed males. They developed such types of connections and relationships because they considered that there existed for them so few avenues of economic gain and were for the most part dependent on men. As Teelock explains, these links with other men such as free blacks, free coloured, soldiers, fellow male slaves and owners "...played an important role in the lives of women slaves and can be considered as a path to self-advancement".⁹² Marriage after freedom was a way to form stable unions and maintain family links.

The low number of couples as compared to single slaves can be explained due to the fact that, being the property of their owners, the enslaved males and females faced many difficulties in trying to establish a conjugal relationship. White owners argued that "marriage amongst the slaves... was unnecessary and 'promiscuity' was a natural state of affairs".⁹³ This interpretation of the sexual habits among slaves in Caribbean society could well be possible for the slave society of Isle de France and, furthermore, this 'promiscuity' led owners to create stereotypes of slave women that slaves could not be faithful to each other.⁹⁴ But, as seen earlier and as will be discussed in Chapter 3, slaves mainly considered these relationships as mere opportunities for progress. The few manumitted couples were for the most those who came as already married slaves since they belonged to the Malagasy, Indian, Guinean and Mozambican ethnic groups. Only 3 cases of Creole couples were recorded. Furthermore, a study of these couples has revealed that most of them were around 50-70 years and this shows that they were well past their productive age. Both partners in the couple were of the same origin thus confirming that they were not separated in the colony and they belonged to the same owner.

⁹¹ Emily West: 'Masters and Marriages,....', page 66.

⁹² Vijaya Teelock: *Bitter Sugar*..., page 192.

⁹³ Barbara Bush : *Slave women in Caribbean society (1650-1838)*, London 1990, page 18.

⁹⁴ V.Teelock: *Bitter Sugar*..., page 193.

The following table gives an idea of the number of slave couples in relation to their ethnic origins.

Table 6 : Ethnicity of slave couples

<u>Ethnic groups</u>	<u>Number of couples</u>
Malagasy	9
Indian	4
Guinean	4
Creole	3
Mozambican	2
Unknown	9

These figures are subject to variation as the number for the Unknown group appears to be 9, and it means that those couples whose origins were not mentioned might as well belong to any of the other mentioned groups.

In October 1793, a Malagasy couple, Louis and Marie Joseph, was manumitted by their owner, a coloured citizen. The couple received as donations four acres of land with a small house built on it.⁹⁵ Another Malagasy couple, Jean Baptiste – 60 years old, and his wife Adelaide – 55 years old, was freed following the intention of their owner, Marie La Bauve d'Arifat. They each received an amount of 2000*livres* as donation.⁹⁶

In 1796, Jean Baptiste Bigaignon, requested his brother who acted as 'porteur de pouvoir' or power of attorney, to free a Malagasy slave couple belonging to him. Hence, Larose, 50 years and his wife Suzanne, 55 years were manumitted and got 2000*livres* each, as donation.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Register A39, act dated 29 October 1793, MA.

⁹⁶ Register A66, act dated 2 germinal an 4 (22 March 1796), MA.

⁹⁷ Register A66, act dated 2 floréal an 4 (21 April 1796), MA.

Another slave couple of Guinean origin was manumitted in the same year – Lajoie, an Indian from Guinea and his wife Rita, also of the same origin, were freed by Pierre Louis, a free coloured citizen who wished to express signs of affection towards the couple by performing this act.⁹⁸

Another reason that could possibly explain why members of freed slave couples belonging to one and same owner were fewer in number was because of 'cross-estate' or 'cross-household' unions. As observed from the cases studied, both husband and wife belonged to the cohort of 50-70 years and manumitted slave couples from the young cohort of 21-40 years are fewer. Young slaves when brought to Isle de France were single individuals and they were not given the freedom to choose their own spouses and marry in the Catholic Church as Article VI of the 'Code Noir' gave to owners the right to choose their slaves' spouses, a choice which would be in the slave's best interest, according to owners.⁹⁹ This paternalistic attitude of owners generally meant that they chose a spouse from the same household regardless of whether the slave approved this choice or not. But the male or female slave might prefer someone else from another estate or household and chose to bear children with this spouse, but, because it was not their owner's choice, they could not perform the marriage ceremony as the Catholic Church established it and hence could not consider themselves as married couples.

Nuclear family units

The study of manumitted slave families in Isle de France proves that there existed nuclear families consisting of the mother, father and their children. Some of these families were formed in the colony among slaves from the same owner while a few came to Isle de France as married couples and gave birth to children who were known as 'creoles' since they were born in the island. In 1798, Jean Jacques Piriou requested the manumission of a slave family belonging to him – François, a 40 year-old Malabare and his wife Malta, a 30 year-old Malay, were freed with their Creole daughter, Marie, 13 years old. Each one of them received 3000*livres* as donation.¹⁰⁰

As long as the nuclear family remained in bondage, "... the slave family was not a true family, as the husband was not the head of the household, the holder of property, or the provider and

⁹⁸ Register A66, act dated 2 ventose an 4 (21 February 1796), MA.

⁹⁹ Karl Noël: *L'esclavage à l'isle de France de 1715 à 1810...*, page 165.

¹⁰⁰ Register A57, act dated 4 nivose an 7 (24 December 1798), MA.

protector”¹⁰¹ according to Stamp’s interpretation. A gender-sensitive historian of the Cape, Pamela Scully, explains how slavery demasculinised the male slave who found his paternity and spouse roles snatched from him – “in a culture in which masculinity was formed in part through having authority over one’s kin, a slave man experienced a multiple negation of his identity. He was denied participation in the world of men by being robbed of authority”.¹⁰² That was indeed true since the male slave, although considered as the ‘head’ of the family, was deprived of all means to act as such because authority was in the hands of the owner. Only when manumission has occurred could the slave family become independent and subsist on his own. In April 1796, Emmanuel Joseph Gouillard wished to reward his Creole slave, Henry, 26 years old, and he freed the whole family. The wife, Marie Françoise, also Creole, aged 21, was a seamstress and laundress. They had a 3 year-old male child, Henry Joseph. Henry worked as carpenter for his owner, but, once freed, he would be able to work on his own, and, furthermore, he received an amount of 10,000*livres* from the owner for all three members.¹⁰³

Only 22 cases of nuclear family units have been recorded among the manumission cases; this can partly be explained due to the heavy expenditures the owners were subject to. When manumitting a slave, the owner had to pay a required amount as tax for each slave being freed, and, he must also ensure a considerable donation for each manumittee. Hence, the task of manumitting a nuclear family proved to be much onerous and only some rich owners could afford to free 3 to 5 slaves at a time. They prefer freeing single slaves who even obtained land, houses, animals, poultry as donations, whereas, the nuclear families studied here mostly received money as donations. The owner could not afford to donate to them land and houses or perhaps claimed he could not.

Another explanation could as well be relevant to explain this ‘shortage’ of nuclear-family units – as stated earlier, data on family patterns under slavery for the French period is not available and this makes the analysis of manumitted families with respect to slave families somewhat difficult. Teelock assumes that, during the British period, “under slavery, the possibility of forming permanent stable unions and relationships that resembled a nuclear family were difficult...”¹⁰⁴ and this might be the case for the French period as well.

¹⁰¹ B. Bush : *Slave women in Caribbean society*, page 19.

¹⁰² Pamela Scully: *Liberating the family? Gender and British slave Emancipation in the Rural Western Cape, South Africa, 1823-1853*, James Currey Ltd, Oxford 1997, page 28.

¹⁰³ Register A66, act dated 2 floréal an 4 (21 April 1796), MA.

¹⁰⁴ V. Teelock: *Bitter Sugar...*, page 187.

Father-child unit

The table shows that only 7 such cases have been recorded and this determines how infrequent this type of unit was amidst the manumitted population. When a male slave was manumitted with his child, it meant that the mother was still held in slavery otherwise, if she had already been freed, the child also would have been freed. Cases of manumitted father-child units showed that the father sought to purchase his freedom and that of the child. In November 1795, Cezard, a 40 year-old Malagasy slave purchased his manumission and that of his daughter, only 5 years old. The owner, Sieur Baly, produced a document whereby he confirmed that "...the two slaves belonged to him and they purchased their freedom in cash";¹⁰⁵ nothing has been said about the status of the child's mother, and, in such cases, it seems most probable that she was still a slave. If her child had been fathered by the owner, she would most certainly have been freed as well.

Father-child units also consisted of male slaves manumitted with their grand child as shown in the following case : in 1797, Widow Hector intended to free Marcel, a Creole slave of 40 years and his grandson Monroe, 3 years old, also Creole. Marcel received as donation three acres of land situated at Le Piton and a Mozambique slave, a '*noir de ploche*' of 30 years, while the child was given an amount of 2000*livres*.¹⁰⁶

Another case was that of Antoine, a 60 year-old Creole, who was manumitted with his grand child Elie, 3 years old. The act did not mention whether it was a manumission obtained by self purchase, reward or intention of owner.¹⁰⁷

Pregnant slaves

Pregnant slaves who were manumitted accounted for two cases only – Lolotte, a Creole slave and Henriette, a Bengali slave. Lolotte was 18 years old and seven to eight months pregnant when she was freed by her owner, Widow Pilot, since it was the latter's intention to do so.¹⁰⁸ Lolotte was a seamstress but she worked for the Pilot family and looked after the children. Her devotion and great care to the children became the basis for her manumission at such a young age.

¹⁰⁵ Register A66, act dated 4 frimaire an 4 (25 November 1795), MA.

¹⁰⁶ Register A57, act dated 4 thermidor an 5 (22 July 1797), MA.

¹⁰⁷ Register A66, act dated 4 vendemiaire an 4 (26 September 1795), MA.

¹⁰⁸ Register GA 36, act dated 13 July 1808, MA.

The case of Henriette was somewhat different from that of Lolotte as she already bore two children, Marie Joseph and Julien who were freed along with her. Moreover, she was pregnant and the child would be considered as a freeborn.¹⁰⁹ It was the intention of the male owner, Joseph Duserre, to free the pregnant mother and her children.

Both cases revealed to be most questionable in that the father's identity remained unknown, and subject to different interpretations particularly for the case of Lolotte. She was freed out of gratitude by a female owner, and, if it had been for a male owner, there was still the possibility that this child would have been fathered by him. But, here, maybe the father was a male slave working for the same owner or from another estate. Lolotte was not married and because of her young age, there was also the possibility that she underwent some sort of sexual abuse and became pregnant. A study of the social life of female slaves in the following chapter reveals that many of them indulged in sexual activities with soldiers from the Regiment while others were also victims of sexual abuse. This aspect will be analysed more profoundly in the next chapter, but it is not improbable that very young female slaves were involved sexually with the soldiers with the aim of securing liberty and finally found themselves pregnant.

The possibility of 'cross-household' unions was also to be considered here though the manumission acts did not mention these two female slaves as being married off their place of residence. But, as Emily West explains, "the love, support and companionship of a spouse mitigated against the harsher features of slave life...";¹¹⁰ as humans, the young slave women had consideration for slave romantic love.

2.7 Quantitative study of the manumission methods

In Chapter 1, the different methods which became a basis for manumitting a slave were studied following a qualitative approach while this part will tend to analyse 'in numbers' the motivations for a manumission. The table proposes in terms of quantity the means by which slaves were freed during this 21 year-period. The percentage has been calculated from a total of 1223 cases which mentioned the motivation for a manumission .

¹⁰⁹ Register A39, act dated 4 prairial an 2 (2 June 1794), MA.

¹¹⁰ Emily West : ' Masters and Marriages...' , page 67

Table 7 : Motivations for Manumissions for the period 1789 to 1810

Means by which slaves were manumitted	Number of cases	%
A. Reward	302	24.7
B. Testamentary Manumission	189	15.4
C. Gratitude	147	12.0
D. Filial love (piété filiale)	134	10.9
E. Self Purchase	101	8.2
F. Manumission by a third party ('fondé de pouvoir' or 'porteur de pouvoir')	76	6.2
G. Intention of owner	69	5.6
H. Exchange and Replacement	68	5.5
I. Purchase by another person with the aim of freeing the slave ('achat en vue de ...')	67	5.47
J. Departure of owner	25	2.0
K. Marriage	22	1.8
L. Slave has been freed before ('vécu comme libre')	10	0.8
M. Love / Affection (other than close kin)	6	0.5
N. Conditional Manumission	4	0.32
O. Old Age	4	0.32
P. Illness	2	0.2
Q. Encouragement	1	0.08
Total	1223	

(Source: compiled from manumission acts from the years 1789 - 1810, Series OA, IE, A & G, Mauritius Archives).

According to the data, the most common motive that initiated manumissions was reward. This can be explained in relation to the gender of those slaves who were manumitted as a reward for good work done. At least three-quarter of the manumitted slaves were females, most of them being single individuals while the mother-child units constituted for a rather low proportion. The male owners freeing their female slaves did so to reward them. A detailed study has been carried out in Chapter I but how far reward was in itself a basis to manumit a slave particularly a female slave? It could possibly be that reward was mentioned in the act only for legal requirements, while, in fact, it concealed more intimate motives. It has been found that a large number of the slave women were involved in intimate relationships with the male owner and such sexual liaisons formed the basis for a manumission. These reasons can partly account for the high number of this particular motive, but, besides single females and mother-child units, there were also old slaves who were freed and these slaves obtained their manumission as a reward for long years of service when they were past their productive age.

Testamentary manumissions accounted for the second most common motive to free a slave and this helps to explain how far owners were reluctant to manumit their slaves while they were still living. They preferred that the slave be freed after their death and the manumission performed by someone else. Manumission by will reflected a great deal the slave-owner's attitude towards freedom and, as Shell and Elphick state, "the owner had the best of both worlds"¹¹¹ - though he felt that the slave should remain at his service till his last breath, he still knew that he had honoured this slave with freedom in his will.

Manumission by self-purchase accounted for only 8.2% and this was relatively low because a great number of slaves could not afford to buy their own freedom. Many slaves spent a whole lifetime to save their money in the aim to purchase their manumission. Sometimes, this proved to be too much onerous for them since all legal requirements like tax, means of subsistence had to be satisfied before a manumission was confirmed. Those slaves who happened to save a considerable amount of money could afford to purchase not only their own manumission but also that of some other close kin, in most cases, their own children, nephews and nieces.

¹¹¹ R.Elphick and R.Shell : 'Intergroup relations...' in *The shaping of South African society....* page 211.

Self purchase and filial love were the two means whereby the decision to obtain manumission was essentially the slave's. The number of slaves who were manumitted by their close kin, parents and children was a little more than those who self purchased their freedom. One possible reason to explain this higher rate was that in cases of filial love, the payment of 300*livres* generally required for every manumittee was not applicable for the manumission of blood kin. Hence, freeing of slaves out of filial love appeared more affordable than self purchase. These two means showed that slave owners could not easily refuse to sell to slaves their liberty though they might see this as "...an intolerable attenuation of their property rights".¹¹²

Manumission through exchange (H) and purchase of a slave with the intention to free him or her (I), accounted for almost the same quantity, and, this was considered as relatively low. The freeing of a slave through exchange and replacement was mostly carried out by other freed slaves who wished to manumit someone of their own.. This appears in most cases to be much difficult, as, not all such manumitters who had been former slaves, could find an easy way to replace the slave they wished to liberate. Only those who were well settled as free people, who owned several slaves and other assets, were able to offer another slave in replacement, and, hence manumit their close relative, either he or she being privately owned or a Company slave.

Very few individuals intended to buy a slave from his current owner in view to free that slave. This was considered as too costly since the manumitter not only had to spend a large amount of money through the purchase of the slave, but, he also had to comply to all the legislative clauses applicable when manumitting a slave. Hence, freeing a slave by that means (I) was mostly performed by rich owners and by very close relatives.

Not all slave owners, when leaving the colony, were preoccupied with the future fate of their slaves. Only some 25 owners were really concerned for their slaves' welfare and decided to manumit them either before or following their departure from Isle de France. They wanted to ensure that the slave who had been at their service could at last breathe the fresh air of freedom. Other slave owners left the island and their slaves in the hands of executors and heirs especially if the slave happened to be the property of a whole family.

¹¹² John Mason : 'Fit for Freedom : The slaves, Slavery and Emancipation in the Cape Colony, South Africa, 1806 to 1842', PhD Thesis, Yale University 1992, page 507.

The figures relating to the three last means (O, P & Q) appeared most unusual but subject to explanation, because, as analysed in the preceding parts, the manumitted population was revealed to be mostly young. A large proportion also was middle aged but very few were referred to as “very old”. However, among these few, at least six slaves were freed because they were considered as being too old and prone to illnesses to be able to continue their service and were viewed “...as an economic liability rather than as an asset. Freeing such a slave could save his or her owner a substantial sum, despite the legal requirement that masters had to provide new freedmen with enough money or property to ensure that they did not become a public charge”.¹¹³

As seen in Chapter I, there was only one case of a slave being freed as an encouragement for other slaves to work and earn their manumission. That was really uncommon since, maybe slaves were for the most disillusioned about their chances to deserve the manumission even if they had eagerly worked to obtain it.

The quantitative approach has been most essential in this chapter to establish a better understanding about the manumission process as it was carried out in the years following the Revolution up to British rule, in 1810. It is seen that the use of figures has helped to a large extent to define the manumission patterns in terms of gender, age cohorts, ethnic origins, family units, increases and decreases in the number of manumissions. John Tosh explains that: “Finally, at its most ambitious, quantitative history seeks to elucidate an entire historical process by measuring and comparing all the relevant factors (...) quantitative history stakes its claim to be not simply an ancillary technique, but to take over the center ground of historical enquiry”.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ R.Allen: Slaves, freedmen...., page 84.

¹¹⁴ Jonh Tosh: The Pursuit of History.., page 154.

CHAPTER 3

Slave women and Manumission

Chapter 3 : Slave women and Manumission

The analysis of slave experiences and manumission as a theoretical construct has shown a lack of attention to slave women particularly during the French period. In the 'Preface' to Lakshmi's Legacy, Marina Carter emphasizes the fact that "women's studies in general, and the history of women in particular, have yet to become current in Mauritius"¹ However, much has been researched on the slave women during the British period, and, Anthony Barker proposes a very interesting and revealing picture of the lives of female slaves under British rule.² This chapter will attempt to consider several aspects of the experiences of the slave women and will examine their roles before they obtained freedom. Barbara Bush states that "popular stereotypes of slave women have portrayed them as passive and downtrodden work-horses who did little to advance the struggle for freedom"³ This view of slave women in the British West Indian Colonies was somewhat different from what prevailed in Isle de France; the high number of manumitted females in the colony distorts the picture of slave women as being "passive and downtrodden" since they have struggled most actively to obtain their manumission.

3.1 Sexual role of the slave woman

In Chapter 1, the different motivations which led to manumissions were analysed. The information concerning these motivations were extracted from the acts of manumission and included, for example, reward, self-purchase, intention of owner, exchange and replacement among other means. Out of 3639 manumitted slaves for the years 1789 to 1810, some 2448 were women and female children. Although the lack of figures by gender for the slave population as a whole makes it difficult to assess the proportion of females who obtained freedom, it is clear that there is a high proportion of manumitted female slaves. This high number of freed slave women leads to an analysis of one of the major factors which facilitated the access of the unfreed woman to freedom – her sexual role.

Although a detailed study of the manumission acts concerning slave women has shown some reasons that led to manumission, there also existed another strategy used by female slaves to gain

¹ Marina Carter : Lakshmi's Legacy, Editions de l'Océan Indien 1994, Mauritius.

² Anthony Barker : Slavery and antislavery in Mauritius, 1810-1833, Macmillan Press 1996, Chapter 7- The trauma of slavery.

³ Barbara Bush : 'Towards Emancipation: Slave women and resistance to coercive labour regimes in the British West Indian Colonies, 1790-1838' in Abolition and its aftermath – The historical Context: 1790-1916, Edited by David Richardson, Frank Cass 1985, Chapter 2, page 27.

access to freedom. The complaints made at the 'Bureau de Police' provide much evidence on the way slave women lived in Revolutionary Isle de France and the type of relationships they established with free males. Their sexual role which is a concealed reason in the manumission acts is clearly brought out in the complaints to the Police, and, this sexual role created a basis for manumission.

Though the acts of complaints and the manumission acts were different and distinct from each other, it is seen that the two are almost complementary. From the complaints available, it is possible to see other aspects which motivated the slave woman's manumission. The purpose of this study is to investigate the hypothesis that the underlying basis of female manumission is their sexual role.

The manumission cases showed that most of the slave women obtaining freedom were single females and mothers with their children. Very few formed part of stable slave couples and families. This relates to Vijaya Teelock's explanation that "...families were torn apart from the point of origin, from the moment slaves were kidnapped from their villages and sold to traders".⁴ Marriage also proved to be not so easy for slaves since they had to get their master's approval to get married as stipulated by Article VII of the Code Noir.⁵ Even the priest could not perform the marriage if the slave's owner opposed.

Sexual freedom

Among the strategies that female slaves used to obtain manumission was to exploit the sexual freedom which existed at this time in Isle de France. They developed relationships especially with free males and military officers. As mentioned earlier, at the beginning of this chapter, the sexual freedom of slave women was not mentioned in the acts of manumission as a means to get freed, but the connections they had with other males helps to establish a link between sexual freedom and manumission.

⁴ Vijaya Teelock: *Bitter sugar : Sugar and slavery in 19th Century Mauritius*, MGI Press, Mauritius 1998, page 186.

⁵ Article VII: "Défendons très expressément aux curés de procéder aux mariages des esclaves, s'ils ne font apparoir du consentement de leurs maîtres" in Karl Noël *L'esclavage à l'isle de France de 1715 à 1810*, Editions Two Cities ETC 1991, Paris, page 165.

In 18th Century Isle de France, social life existed mostly in the urban area of Port Louis, and, as the period studied coincided with the Revolution, many officers, soldiers, Captains and other military men sent to the colony were concentrated in this region. Port Louis ruled over the whole colony because of its seaport and its active commercial activity. People who were in the island during that period, like Chevalier de Mautort and an Italian priest, expressed their feelings and attitudes on the style of life which prevailed. Chevalier de Mautort described the urban region as a place of amusement bearing the characteristics of French society at the end of the Ancien Régime – insouciance and a much pronounced sexual freedom.⁶ The Italian priest, Fra Paolino da San Bartolomeo accounted for the ‘immorality’ of the urban inhabitants and the sexual freedom shared by colonists and women. He even questioned whether the name of the colony should be changed from Ile de France to Ile de Cythère or Ile de Vénus.⁷

Toussaint confirmed these 18th Century views that “during the Revolutionary years, the moral character and virtues of certain people in the urban area were greatly influenced by more libertine principles from Paris...”.⁸ These principles resulted in building contacts and relationships, and, in the realm of these relations, the slave women exploited fully their sexual role in their own personal advantage to get freedom. Megan Vaughan, in her forthcoming book, makes mention of ‘libertinage’⁹ amongst slaves and free people but, to what extent can the term ‘libertinage’ characterize the behaviour of slave women in 18th Century revolutionary Isle de France when each and every slave was craving for freedom. Certain slave women used their sexuality as a means to be freed especially in the urban area where they could have links with officers.

The urban inhabitants made complaints at the ‘Bureau de Police’ about the behaviour of slave women, claiming they enjoyed too much freedom of movement and were free to establish relations with other free people. This behaviour is best explained in relation to the urban employment context. Rural slaves did not accede to much mobility as the slaves in Port Louis since they resided in their owner’s household or in slaves’ ‘cases’ near the household. After a day’s work, they were normally restricted to their close surroundings and ‘socialising’ with free people were more or less unknown to them. But the urban slaves were completely different as many of them worked in their master’s house but they lived elsewhere in the different ‘Camps’ –

⁶ Auguste Toussaint: *Histoire des Iles Mascareignes*, Mondes d’Outre-Mer, Editions Berger-Levrault 1972, Paris, page 104.

⁷ A. Toussaint, *ibid*, page 104.

⁸ A. Toussaint: *Port Louis Deux siècles d’histoire (1735-1935)*, La Typographie moderne, Port Louis 1936, page 164.

⁹ Megan Vaughan: ‘Love in the torrid zone’ in *forthcoming book*, Chapter 5, page 20.

Camp des Malabares, Camp Yoloff – and the regular movement from the house to the ‘Camp’ gave the slave women greater opportunities to meet people. Owners in the rural regions sometimes hired their slaves to people in Port Louis and this enabled the ‘hired’ slave women to enjoy more liberty as they were not confined in their owner’s household. The following examples are complaints which show how some slave women left their master’s household and were found involved in intimate relationships with soldiers from the Régiment. These complaints, though they do not deal with manumission, do, in a sense, ‘set the scene’ for cases of slave women who were freed by military officers. Certain manumission acts dealing with slave women defined the manumitter’s identity as a soldier, military officer or officer in the Merchant Navy without further details on the type of relationship they were possibly having with the female slave they were freeing. In most of these cases, the manumitter was not the slave’s owner and sometimes the reasons for freeing the female slave were not made evident in the act. So, the idea underlying behind such manumissions can be better understood through the complaints.

A very interesting case in 1797 shows the freedom enjoyed by a Creole slave, Henriette, belonging to the citizen Dufay. In December 1797, this female slave, dressed up like a man, was arrested in the vicinity of the Cazernes and she was drunk. The fact that she was disguised probably meant that women were not free to move in this area which was mostly visited by officers, soldiers and military men; she did not also want to be recognized as she was after all a slave and a woman who had been drinking in a public place. Furthermore, her master might not be aware that she was elsewhere, but later, Henriette explained the true motive of her attire. The citizen Jean brought her to the ‘Bureau de Police’ where she affirmed that she belonged to a certain François, sailor on board ‘*La Preneuse*’. Since she was in a state of drunkenness, she was sent to prison, but, on the next day, she declared that her owner was the citizen Dufay, residing at Moka. To explain her curious attire, she stated that she wanted to surprise her lovers - ‘*surprendre ses gallants*’. Another free coloured woman, Marie Louise, affirmed that the female slave came to drink at her place the previous night, accompanied by two military officers - a Dutch soldier named Baltot and a gunner named Riche. She qualified Henriette as a bad subject- ‘*un mauvais sujet*’; the slave was brought back to her owner.¹⁰ This case reveals a lack of attention to these matters by owners since the slave can allow herself the ‘liberty’ to spend the night elsewhere. Though this case does not say anything about the slave obtaining freedom, it reveals however a concealed aspect linked with manumission which is made clear in the following example.

¹⁰ Z2B – *Journaux et rapports*, No.8, Bureau de Police (23 Septembre 1797-21 Septembre 1798), case dated 24-25 frimaire an 6 (14-15 December 1797), MA.

Henriette's case shows that there arose the possibility of obtaining manumission through contacts with soldiers, naval and military officers. The slave woman formed links with people with an economic and social status who perhaps offered to her opportunities for self-advancement. For example, Marie Jeanne, a Creole slave of 18 years, obtained her manumission with the help of a marine officer who also offered to her an amount of 4000*livres*. This manumission case took place in October 1796, and, the manumitter was Jean Louis Zamudio Cadet, who, as far as the act revealed, was not the slave's owner. Furthermore, the means by which she obtained this manumission was not mentioned, and, again, it became probable that she had freedom of movement to meet free people in the urban region, as the officer Cadet resided in Port Nord Ouest. Like Henriette, in the preceding complaint case, Marie Jeanne belonged to someone else living elsewhere.¹¹

In 1790, the citizen Maréchal complained about the misbehaviour - '*mauvaise conduite*' - of his neighbour, Nanette, a freed slave who was accused of leading an indecent life as her house welcomed several soldiers from the Régiment. She offered them arack to drink and also female slaves who fulfilled actively their sexual role. The citizen Maréchal stated that the soldiers and female slaves committed very "sinful acts" which he could not possibly mention.¹² Here also, it appeared as if slave owners ignored the activities in which their female slaves were involved, but they enormously benefited if the woman fell pregnant since they owned the children. Here, the slave woman's potential role as a breeder of new slaves gained a greater significance. This example of slave women involved in 'free' sexual activities gives other interpretations about young female slaves who were manumitted with their babies. For example, in 1796, a female six month-old child, Prosper, was freed by Louis Enard LaHausse who was 'Capitaine au Régiment d'Artillerie'. The slave Prosper was the child of a Creole slave woman, Babet, who belonged to Sieur Cossigny.¹³ No information was available in the act about the reasons for this manumission but the preceding complaint case can help in speculating about the sexual role of the female slave, Babet. Her child was freed by someone else other than her owner and this could possibly mean that Prosper was the manumitter's daughter or Babet formed links with him in the aim to seek her child's manumission.

¹¹ Register A65, act dated 4 brumaire an 5 (25 October 1796), MA.

¹² "commettent mille horreurs que la décence le force de taire", Z2B-No.6, *Journal de Police* (1er Juillet 1790 au 29 Janvier 1791), case dated 13 September 1790, article 29, MA.

¹³ Register A65, act dated 4 messidor an 4 (20 June 1796), MA.

Another case was that of Honorine, a 16 month-old child who was manumitted by Pierre Philippe Laflemmehere, 'Capitaine au 107e Régiment'. The identity of the child's mother was not revealed nor her relation with the manumitter, but sexual freedom could highly determine this manumission case as Honorine's mother could have set up links with this military officer so as to get greater opportunities to obtain manumission.¹⁴

The role of the freed slave Nanette in the above-mentioned complaint case also gave another feature of the life of ex-slave women in urban areas. It was clear that she was involved in prostitution which "...indicated the continuation of 'improper' relationships between white men and women of colour".¹⁵ Melanie Newton further argues that such a profession could be seen "...as yet another example of the 'immorality' of ex-slave women and more importantly, the profligacy of white men of all classes in general,...".¹⁶ But, here what did prostitution symbolize?- immorality or a means of survival or building temporary links for the purpose of freedom? This was not exactly 'immorality' as prostitution represented first, the challenge which the urban area posed to the owner's control over his female slaves. It could also be that Nanette, an ex-slave woman could find no suitable work and she turned to this profession. Furthermore, besides fulfilling a sexual role with the soldiers, the slave women formed connections that could enable them to free themselves. This sexual role could as well illustrate the basis lying behind the following manumission case: Angélique Sampa, a 20 year-old Bengali slave, was freed by Pierre Gagniere, 'Caporal au 107e Régiment', who did not own this slave. Gagniere resided in town but he did not state in the act his intentions for freeing this female slave. He offered to her an amount of 2000*livres* for her subsistence and no further relevant information was available to determine the motivations for this manumission.¹⁷ But, as argued earlier, it could be that Angélique established contacts with such free people, maybe through prostitution, to secure her freedom.

Another interesting case in 1790 was that of a Mozambican slave, Françoise who was brought to the 'Bureau de Police' by a naval officer, Yves Rio. The slave belonged to Joseph Bail, a Malabard, and she was hired out by the day - '*travaillant à la journée*' - but, according to Rio, she was suspected of doing '*le métier de macquerelle*', that is, she was probably the keeper of a

¹⁴ Register A65, act dated 4 brumaire an 5 (25 October 1796), MA.

¹⁵ Melanie Newton: 'New ideas of correctness: Gender, amelioration and emancipation in Barbados, 1810-50' in *Slavery & Abolition*, Vol 21, No.3, December 2000, page 95.

¹⁶ M.Newton, *ibid*, page 95.

¹⁷ Register A65, act dated 4 brumaire an 5 (25 October 1796), MA.

brothel in town and induced other young female slaves in these activities.¹⁸ The officer concluded that the slave had a most suspicious behaviour and she was considered as a '*soutireuse*', that is, a loose woman encouraging young female slaves in sexual activities. This example of female sexuality raises another question – whether the 'sexual activities' of the slave women were related to poverty which forced them into prostitution in order to provide for their subsistence.

This complaint case further suggests another interpretation for the manumission of slave women especially very young mothers. In 1796, a very young female slave, Louise, a 16 year-old 'Talinga' – a sub-group in Indian ethnicity - was freed with her son Jean Louis Marie, only two months old. The manumitter was an employee of the Government, Jean Louis Hevin residing at Canton Port Nord Ouest. Details on the slave's owner and the relationship the slave had with Hevin were not available in the manumission act. However, the slave's age, the child's name and the residential area of the manumitter enable a possible interpretation that maybe Louise had a sexual relationship with Hevin. She gave birth to his child and it is observed that both had 'Jean Louis' in their names.¹⁹

In 1798, Zaire, a 24 year-old Malagasy slave was freed by a certain Barthélemy Collet, 'Second Capitaine' on board the ship "l'Apollon". She was offered an amount of 300,000*livres* and a Mozambican slave, Louise, 12 years old, as donation. The manumission was carried out by a third party, a 'porteur de pouvoir' since Collet was away from the colony. We are brought to question the possible reason for this manumission : what could be Collet's interest in the freeing of this particular Malagasy slave? Since he was a ship Captain and 'de passage' in town, it was highly probable that they had been intimately linked.²⁰ Furthermore, Zaire benefited highly from this relationship as, besides her freedom, she obtained a considerable amount of money.

A similar situation occurred in 1795 when Cathérine, a 22 year-old Talinga slave, was freed by Pierre Pacquet, soldier at the Régiment and residing at Port de la Montagne. He donated to Cathérine an amount of 1500*livres*.²¹ Here also, the residential urban area renders possible romantic and sexual contacts between female slaves and military officers.

¹⁸ Z2B.No.6, case dated 20 September 1790, article 50, MA.

¹⁹ Register A66, act dated 2 messidor an 4 (20 June 1796), MA.

²⁰ Register A57, act dated 4 floréal an 6 (23 April 1798), MA.

²¹ Register A66, act dated 4 fructidor an 3 (21 August 1795), MA.

In September 1794, a Malagasy slave, Julie, 23 years, obtained her freedom which was granted to her by François Robert Descaugny, lieutenant at the Régiment 108 in town.²² Here also, the reasons for this manumission lay buried but the possibility of an intimate relationship is not to be discounted. In the same year, the citizen Chambosse Montambert, Captain at the Régiment of Pondicherry and residing at Port de la Montagne, expressed his intention to manumit Sophie, a 26 year-old Creole slave, seamstress and laundress. He donated to her an amount of 2000*livres* and her two illegitimate children, Louis and Hypolite.²³ These children suggest another interpretation for Montambert's 'intention' to grant this manumission - it was most probable that he fathered Sophie's children.

Another factor is worth considering in such behaviour from the slave woman's perspective – sexual role represented an easy way to obtain her manumission. Those officers who were found to free female slaves were perhaps more deeply and 'emotionally' involved with them and their 'intention' to manumit the slave woman showed that they were not just sexual partners. The act of freeing the female slaves also showed that the officers and their slave partners were quite capable of forming stable and permanent relationships if they had been given the opportunity and the freedom of choice. The slave women's sexual behaviour cannot be judged as 'immoral' as Melanie Newton stated since it represented a way to establish connections and relationships which played an important role in their lives if considered as a path to self- advancement.²⁴

Slave women's relationship with male slaves

The manumission acts do not provide sufficient details to enable a detailed analysis of the relationship between male and female slaves. In all the cases studied, a low number of female slaves were manumitted with their male partners, and these few cases of slave couples provide a possible understanding of the male and female slaves' relationship. The slave couples who obtained their freedom were already married, old and considered as husband and wife, and, in almost all cases, they belonged to the same owner. It was found that a certain stability, love and affection were present amidst such couples, and, the female slave's perspective towards such a relationship was long-term and affectionate. For example, in June 1796, Jolycoeur, a Malagasy slave of 72 years was manumitted with his wife, Antonia, a Malabard slave of 68 years. The two

²² Register A39, act dated 15 fructidor an 2 (1st September 1794), MA.

²³ Register A39, act dated 19 messidor an 2 (7 July 1794), MA.

²⁴ M. Newton: 'New ideas of correctness...', page 95 (for the 'immoral' perception).

slaves had been at the service of the Fleuriot family at Trois Islots for a very long time and they were freed because of their old age.²⁵ The role of the female slave here was that of a wife who had been 'consistent' with her slave husband and not subject to sexual freedom as was the case with certain single female slaves studied earlier. Pamela Scully explains that, at the Cape, slaves did accord respect to such relationship and each spouse counted on the other for emotional and physical support.²⁶ Here, the residential area also is of importance since Trois Islots, situated in the vicinity of Flacq, a rural region, was quite far from the urban region and it did not give much mobility to the slaves to create relationships with free people and get loose influences.

AnneMarie was another female slave whose union with her male companion, Jacques, was recognized as legitimate. Both were Creoles and the married couple belonged to the citizen Denis Daudint. AnneMarie and Jacques were both 48 years old, and, from their work and savings, they possessed six slaves. This union refers to the slave woman as a stable partner and a wife.²⁷ The couple obtained their manumission from Daudint. Another example of such characteristics in female slaves was Marie, a 40 year-old Malagasy slave. She was married to Scipion, 40 years, also Malagasy and both belonged to late Marin Magnien. Each received an amount of 3000 *livres* as donation.²⁸

In 1789, a nuclear family unit was manumitted by means of self-purchase; Michelle, a 40 year-old Malabard slave and considered as the legitimate wife of Silvestre, a Malagasy of 60 years, was freed with her husband and their child Philippe. The couple owned a piece of land situated at *La Rivière des Calbass* and had sufficient means to subsist. In this case as well, the female slave fulfilled her role as wife and mother.²⁹

Emily West studied the practice of cross-plantation unions and same residence partnerships in Antebellum South Carolina and owners' perspectives on such relationships,³⁰ she concluded that owners approved cross-plantation unions when it suited them to do so, and, in general, owners had little to gain from such unions. For Isle de France, the manumission acts of female slaves

²⁵ Register A77, act dated 13 prairial an 4 (1st June 1796), MA.

²⁶ Pamela Scully: Liberating the family? Gender and British slave emancipation in the Rural Western Cape, South Africa, 1823-1853, James Currey Ltd 1997, page 30.

²⁷ Register A57, act dated 4 prairial an 5 (23 May 1797), MA.

²⁸ Register A57, act dated 4 prairial an 5 (23 May 1797), MA.

²⁹ Register OA87, act dated 6 June 1789, MA.

³⁰ Emily West: 'Masters and marriages, profits and paternalism: Slave owners' perspectives on cross-plantation unions in Antebellum South Carolina', in Slavery & Abolition, Vol.21, No.1, April 2000, pages 56-70.

made no mention about the characteristics of their unions with male slaves, whether they had 'cross-plantation' or 'cross-estate' unions or 'same-residence' unions. The documents eventually showed a manumitter who could be the master or mistress of the slave or someone else, another free citizen who wished to free the slave. But no document mentioned a union with another slave as a possible means to manumit the slave. A complaint made at the 'Bureau de Police' in 1808 reveals that 'cross-estate' relationships between male and female slaves did exist in the colony. The case concerned a Mozambican slave, Nina, who belonged to a certain Madam Marguaye. She was arrested at about ten in the night and stated to the police that she was on her way "to go and sleep with her husband".³¹ This case proves that male and female slaves, though belonging to different owners, could have sexual relationship, and, the slave woman had the freedom of movement to visit her companion in another household to fulfill her sexual role.

The above-mentioned case shows that, in the slave society of 18th Century Isle de France, slaves who were perhaps intimately close before sales transactions or slave auction sales, were frequently sold away from kin or 'spouses'. Sometimes, the slaves tried to gain recognition of their relationship to live together, but if the owner did not approve, they were most likely to maintain contact and visit their partners despite the fear of undergoing punishment as a result. Pamela Scully explained that at the Cape, "despite slaveholder opposition, slaves and bonded laborers forged emotional bonds which crisscrossed the farmlands of the Western Cape recognizing few barriers of distance, confinement or law. Evidence suggests that while relationships were not recognized by law, slaves did accord them respect and counted on spouses for emotional and physical support".³² That could be the situation with Nina who proclaimed she had 'to sleep' with her husband and this further shows that among certain slaves, faithfulness did exist in spite of being separated from each other.

Such unions can explain some cases of manumission dealing with mother-child units whereby the children were not fathered by the owner. Unfortunately, the manumission acts do not reveal such details about the slave woman's relationship with a male slave. When the owner did not acknowledge the child of his female slave to be his own, it became probable that the slave woman was related intimately to a male slave either in the same household or on another estate or plantation. According to the 'Code Noir', slaves could get married only if their owner gave his

³¹ "...allait a-t-elle dit coucher avec son mary", Z2B, no.16, complaint dated 17 December 1808, MA.

³² P.Scully: Liberating the family...., page 30.

approval.³³ If not, they were likely to live either in concubinage or to make regular visits to the other partner and sometimes produced illegitimate offspring.

The complaints made at the 'Bureau de Police' offer sufficient evidence about female slaves leaving their owner's house to visit other male slaves with whom they had an intimate relationship and perhaps also having children. In January 1791, the citizen Duclos Guyot complained that Charlot, an Indian slave belonging to the Government, had tried to strangle one of his slaves, Sophie. The male slave, Charlot, explained that he was intimately involved with another female slave belonging to Guyot, that he 'kept' her, and, this relationship created a feeling of jealousy in Sophie who sought to beat him.³⁴ The term 'he kept her' - "*...qu'il gardait une négresse*" clearly demonstrates the nature of the relationship between Charlot and the female slave. It was evident that they were not married but they were physically intimate though both belonged to different owners. As will be discussed in the forthcoming cases, the offspring manumitted in mother-child units could as well be that of a slave woman and a male slave either belonging to the same owner or to another owner. But the offspring could be the property of the slave woman's owner who manumitted both mother and child.

Another complaint showed that female slaves did not hesitate to leave their owner's household and go to live secretly with male slaves. In December 1797, the citizen Chapuy stated at the 'Bureau de Police' that his Malagasy slave, Constance, had left his household and he suspected that she was with Crispin, another Malagasy slave belonging to the citizen Carto. Crispin was arrested but he did not reveal where Constance was to be found.³⁵ In June 1798, Pingo, a Mozambican Government slave, concealed for twenty days Zaire, a Mozambican female slave belonging to the citizen Levergé. The slave was finally brought back to her owner.³⁶ Such complaints made by owners shed light upon the unrecognized unions between male and female slaves and also an aspect of their private lives, but also the owner's refusal to consent to their marriage and living together. If an owner authorized his female slave to marry a slave in another household, he would most probably undergo an economic loss if the slave woman sought to live with her spouse in the other household. Furthermore, in such a case, the slave woman's owner would not benefit if a child was born since he would not own this slave child. So owners

³³ "Article VII : Défendons expressément aux cures de procéder aux mariages des esclaves, s'ils ne font apparoir du consentement de leurs maîtres," in K.Noël's *L'esclavage à l'isle de France (Ile Maurice) de 1775 à 1810*, page 165.

³⁴ *Z2B, No.6*, complaint dated 14 January 1791, MA.

³⁵ *Z2B, No.8*, complaint dated 13 frimaire an 6 (3 December 1797), MA.

³⁶ *Z2B, No.8*, complaint dated 8 messidor an 6 (26 June 1798), MA.

preferred their female slaves to have 'cross-estate' or 'cross-household' relationships and own their illegitimate children as an added source of labour.

A manumission case in 1799 involving a mother with her child could be considered following an unrecognized union between a male and a female slave. In September 1799, Marc Allet, health officer residing at Canton des Trois Islots, rewarded through manumission his Creole slave, Marie Joseph, 28 years and the latter's one year-old son, Jacques, also Creole.³⁷ The act stated the illegitimacy of the child, who, as it may well seem, could have been fathered by a slave.

Two other cases of mother-child manumissions in 1800 could be accounted for by male and female slaves' relationships. However, facts relative to such unions are not available in the acts, but, certain details help to bring about such possible interpretations; for example, in May 1800, a Guinean slave, 22 year-old Margueritte Perine, was freed with her daughter Anne Charlotte, two years old. This manumission was granted to them by a female coloured citizen, Marie Gaigui and she did not state the reasons for freeing them nor the identity of the child's father.³⁸ It was highly probable that Anne Charlotte was the daughter of a male slave either from the same household or elsewhere.

The second case revealed a manumission effected by the female citizen Coulon, also known as Widow Chiron. She manumitted Julie, an Indian slave of 25 years and her two children – Jacques, a Creole of 10 years and Marie Louise, also Creole, aged 4 years. The age of the elder child showed that Julie was still very young-only 15 years old - when he was born.³⁹ An analysis of young female slaves being 'prematurely' pregnant showed that they were maybe involved sexually with military officers or suffered sexual abuse. But, intimate relationship with male slaves also were worth considering since they were very young and seeking love. Megan Vaughan refers to Bernardin de Saint Pierre's conception of love among slaves, love which "...was a defence against the melancholy which was intrinsic to their state".⁴⁰ If the child was presumed to be another male slave's offspring, the question of this slave's paternal presence arose. If they lived in separate households, did slave fathers aspire to visit their families? Pamela Scully explains that, at the Cape, "...slave men attempted to play an important role in their

³⁷ Register A77, act dated 3 vendemiaire an 8 (25 September 1799), MA.

³⁸ Register GA36, act dated 15 May 1800, MA.

³⁹ Register GA36, act dated 24 June 1800, MA.

⁴⁰ M. Vaughan's forthcoming book, 'Love in the torrid zone', Chapter 5, page 19.

children's lives".⁴¹ It is difficult to trace this paternal aspect in the manumission acts of Isle de France as the documents made no account of the male slave's role as father as far as mother-child manumissions were carried out.

Slave women's relationships with free blacks and free coloureds

The higher percentage of female slave manumissions than male could be explained by a most important factor – their possibility to build up relationships with free blacks and free coloured citizens. These relationships very often produced children as well as bonds of affection between the female slave and the free black male, and, they were most likely to lead to manumission.

Though Article V of the 'Code Noir' stipulated that free blacks and manumitted blacks were not allowed to live in concubinage with slaves, it was most evident that manumission granted by free and manumitted males were the result of intimate relationships with slave women.⁴² In June 1798, Javotte, a 33 year-old Malagasy slave was freed by Jean Jacques, a freed slave residing at Plaines Saint Pierre, Canton de La Rivière Noire. He offered to her an amount of 500,000*livres* as donation, and, the act stated that Javotte was living with Jean Jacques.⁴³ This case is only one example among others to show that concubinage did exist despite the clauses in the 'Code Noir'. In January 1799, the citizen Jean Baptiste Canan, a free citizen residing in town, manumitted Anne, a Creole slave of 18 years and her child, Athanase, 8 months old. He offered to each of the two an amount of 150*piastres*.⁴⁴ Here, further details on the relationship between Jean Jacques and Anne were not available in the act, but the child being freed with his mother offered the possibility of an unrecognized union between the slave and the free citizen.

Another case involved Françoise and her illegitimate daughter who were manumitted by Guillaume, a freed slave residing at Camp des Malabards.⁴⁵ The child, born from an unrecognized union, belonged perhaps to Guillaume.

⁴¹ P.Scully: *Liberating the family...*, page 32.

⁴² "Article V:...défendons...même aux Noirs affranchis ou nés libres, de vivre en concubinage avec des esclaves;" in K.Noël's *L'esclavage à l'isle de France*, page 164.

⁴³ Register A57, act dated 4 messidor an 6 (22 June 1798), MA.

⁴⁴ Register A57, act dated 4 pluviôse an 7 (23 January 1799), MA.

⁴⁵ Register A39, act dated 27 September 1793, MA.

A female Guinean slave, Marie Joseph, was freed with her daughter Anne Marie by François, a free black residing in town. The manumission was effected through exchange and replacement of the two slaves since they belonged to the State.⁴⁶ Such types of manumission were normally carried out by the slaves themselves if they proved to have all the means to subsist. François' role here did not prove to be much essential as he was not the manumitter. It was the State which represented the manumitter and furthermore, he offered no donations to Marie Joseph and her daughter as they already owned a house at the Camp des Noirs Libres.

Article V of the 'Code Noir' further stipulated that the free citizen who did not marry his slave while living with her in concubinage, could do so and the slave would be manumitted by marriage.⁴⁷ A case in March 1796 showed a free coloured citizen, Jean Baptiste Mercure residing at Canton des Pamplemousses, who intended to marry Jeanne Marie, his Indian slave. They had a child, Michel, who was considered as illegitimate, but, through this recognized union, the boy would be legitimized.⁴⁸ In the same year, another coloured citizen, Denis Boudret also living at Canton des Pamplemousses, declared his intention to marry his Creole slave, Marie Thérèse and thus free her and 'their' daughter Joséphine.⁴⁹

In May 1796, a free coloured citizen, Pierre known as Lagoniviere, freed his six month-old son, Gustave, whom he acquired from the couple Censay and Junon, both coloureds. The manumitter and father of the child wished to legitimize him and give him rights to his succession. According to what was stated in the act, it was clear that the child's mother was a slave belonging to the couple Censay and Junon since Gustave was their property.⁵⁰ This case gives another aspect of the female slave's relationship with a free coloured other than her owner. Nothing was mentioned about the female slave and it seemed that she was still held in bondage otherwise the child would long have been freed following the free state of the mother. This case also refers to another type of relationship – the 'outside-household' link whereby a female slave had intimate connections with free people. Another factor is worth considering: if the slave woman had contacts with a free man of colour, she was surely hoping to have this man as her manumitter, but, here, the citizen

⁴⁶ Register A39, act dated 13 November 1793, MA.

⁴⁷ "Article V: ...l'homme noir affranchi ou libre qui n'était pas marié Durant son concubinage avec son esclave, épousera dans les formes prescrites par l'église, ladite esclave, qui sera affranchie par ce moyen, et les enfans rendus libres et légitimes", in K.Noël's *L'esclavage.....*, page 165.

⁴⁸ Register A66, act dated 22 March 1796, MA.

⁴⁹ Register A65, act dated 4 fructidor an 4 (21 August 1796), MA.

⁵⁰ Register A66, act dated 2 prairial an 4 (21 May 1796), MA.

Lagoniviere freed the child alone. It could be because he lacked the financial means to free both and felt that the child needed to be legitimized, so he freed him.

Not all relationships of slave women with free blacks were of sexual nature since a few cases gave examples of consanguine ties between the free black male and the female slave. The enslavement of the woman represented her alienation from natal ties, and, Scully explained that, in early 19th Century Cape, "... slaveholder power rested upon the power to alienate slaves from their natal ties, to sell them away from their kith and kin".⁵¹ This alienation existed in the slave society of Isle de France as some of the manumissions carried out by freed slaves and free people for their close kin showed their need to reconstruct torn families. In July 1790, Zephir, a free citizen, freed his sister Therese. The manumission was effected through the purchase of the slave by her brother who freed her. Zephir donated to Therese a little house situated at the Camp des Noirs Libres and he sold to her a little Mozambican slave, Gros, worth 500*livres*.⁵² Another free black, Hector, manumitted his aunt Samba and offered to her two slaves as donation.⁵³

In July 1790, Marie Louise Pelagie, a Malagasy slave, obtained her manumission from Jacques Philippe, a free black living at La Rivière basse du Rempart. It happened that Pelagie was Jacques Philippe's niece and also 'his slave'. He donated to her three acres of land at quartier de La Rivière du Rempart, a house which was to be built – "*de lui faire batir incessament*" - and two Malagasy slaves, Fortune and Cozette.⁵⁴

Another example of blood ties between female slaves and free blacks was that of Marie, a Creole slave aged 38 years and belonging to a certain Sieur Boudru. She was freed from bondage by her brother Guillaume St.Pierre, a free Creole residing at quartier des Pamplemousses. He purchased his sister's manumission for an amount of 2400*livres*.⁵⁵ It is observed that most of these manumissions were performed through purchase and this act of buying someone else's freedom showed the free individual's challenge to the violent domination of slavery.

⁵¹ P.Scully: *Liberating the family...*, page 27.

⁵² Register OA87, act dated 20 July 1790, MA.

⁵³ Register OA87, act dated 26 July 1790, MA.

⁵⁴ Register OA87, act dated 5 July 1790, MA.

⁵⁵ Register OA87, act dated 19 May 1790, MA.

Female slaves and their relations with owners

The manumission of certain female slaves was the consequences of the type of relationship slave women had with owners, and, possible intimate and sexual contacts were to be considered as well. The reason for sexual contact between the owner and his female slave was not necessarily because of 'loose' morals of the slave woman. Scully cited De Kock's perception that these relations "... were seen as being the result of the promiscuity of slave women, not as the result of domination by slaveholders".⁵⁶ But, was it 'promiscuity' on the part of slave women? This could be explained if one understood the female slave's psyche: it was clear that, under slavery, most slaves suffered the separation of kin, couples and children. They felt helpless and, under the trauma of enslavement and separation, they resented the need to feel loved. Despite being treated like beasts of burden, they were first of all humans who reacted to signs of affection, physical and emotional pleasures.

Slave women were more prone than their male counterpart to find themselves involved in a physical relationship with their owner mainly because of their sexuality and also because of their proximity with owners. It will be seen later, in Part 3.2, that the majority of the manumitted female slaves performed work in the owner's household. This 'closeness' favoured much the slave woman who had more chances in obtaining her freedom. Hence, the aspect of sexuality cannot be depicted as promiscuous and wanton on the slave woman's part since it appeared as another strategy to further obtain her manumission.

The following manumission case can account for the female slave's close contact with the owner who freed her: Perrine, a Malabare slave of 25 years obtained her freedom from her owner Philippe Deplauque who resided at Rue des Pucelles, in Port Nord Ouest. The slave resided and worked in the owner's household and Deplauque wished to free her because he was grateful for her loyal service. Perrine was given an amount of 5000*livres* as donation. Though the owner stated officially the reason for this manumission, the basis to free Perrine could be much more than mere gratitude.⁵⁷

Another case dealt with Marie, a Creole slave of 18 years who resided with her owner, François Batteau at Canton de La Rivière du Rempart. The owner manumitted her and donated to her an

⁵⁶ P.Scully: *Liberating the family....*, page 28.

⁵⁷ Register A65, act dated 4 frimaire an 4 (21 August 1796), MA.

amount of 2000*livres*.⁵⁸ These two cases show the slave women being freed at an age of active productivity – Perrine was 25 years old while Marie was only 18 years old.

Vaughan explains that “though between masters and women slaves there were sometimes consensual, long-term and affectionate relationships which might result in the manumission of the woman,...there were many more which were non-consensual and violent”.⁵⁹ However, those ‘non-consensual and violent’ relationships were not elaborated in the manumission acts. Not much could be said about the levels of affection or brutality that slave owners showed towards their female slaves.

The offspring of a slave woman and her owner could be the result of a love relationship or a sexual abuse; the woman slave, in many cases, was not considered as a ‘desiring object’ since “her sexuality had no separate existence, it was part and parcel of the labour she performed”.⁶⁰ As discussed earlier, her ‘sexuality’ was, in a way, a means to get manumitted later especially if she gave birth to her owner’s children. Barbara Bush explained that “...the slave woman was always amenable to the sexual advances of white men; by this means she could gain favours...”.⁶¹ Some slave owners tended to free their children first before granting to the mother her manumission.

That was the case of Marie Joseph, 23 years old, a Creole slave belonging to Marc Ollet, surgeon residing at Canton des Trois Islots. She saw her children being manumitted across the years before she was finally freed several years later. In June 1796, Marc Ollet freed Jean Baptiste - 6 years, Jean Charles and 6 month-old Marie Genevieve, all ‘*créols mûlatres*’ and considered as the illegitimate children of Marie Joseph who lived with her owner – “*residente avec lui*”. A year later, in April 1797, another female child, Clarisse, 4 months old, was freed. It was only in 1799 that Marie Joseph obtained her manumission together with another child - Jacques, only 1 year old. The surgeon Ollet expressed that he wanted to ‘reward’ the slave by manumitting her and the children, but, was this not merely a way to free from bondage his own children? It is interesting to note that the children happened to be ‘*créols mûlatres*’ thus confirming the offspring of a white or coloured and a slave. It was considered a stigma for some whites to have intimate relationships with female slaves since such unions were not approved by the ‘Code Noir’ as Article V stated that male and female whites of either sex were not allowed to marry their slaves, otherwise, they

⁵⁸ Register A65, act dated 4 frimaire an 4 (21 August 1796), MA.

⁵⁹ M.Vaughan’s forthcoming book, ‘Love in the torrid zone’, Chapter 5, pages 20-21.

⁶⁰ M.Vaughan: ‘Love in the torrid zone’, page 21.

⁶¹ Barbara Bush: *Slave women in Caribbean history (1650-1838)*, London 1990, page 17.

were subject to punishment and penalty.⁶² Hence, the children were not legitimized but this owner was most conscious for their welfare and he freed them. Each child was given as donation an amount of 2000*livres* and their mother obtained 25 acres of land, donated to her by Ollet, at Canton des Trois Islots.⁶³

Another example of the female slave and owner relationship was the case of Victoire, 25 years, who was manumitted with her two year-old daughter, Joséphine. The manumitter, René Gaiquy, who worked as 'Concierger' in the National Garden, acknowledged the child to be his own, born from his intimate relationship with his slave, Victoire - "*comme issue de ses oeuvres... avec la dite Victoire...*". He further stated that the manumission was granted so as to reward the slave for the good work done since she was at his service and also to fulfill his manumission commitment towards the citizen Barbier from whom he acquired Victoire. Both mother and child received as donation an amount of 6000*livres*.⁶⁴

In January 1796, Louis Pondard, residing at Canton des Pamplemousses, manumitted a six month-old 'créole mulâtresse', Louise Marie Adelaïde. In the act, Pondard did not acknowledge the infant to be his own but it became most probable that he fathered the girl as he took her under his care till her 'majority age' and donated to her an amount of 2000*livres*.⁶⁵ The fact that the infant was a 'créole mulâtresse' confirmed that she was born from white and black skinned parents. Her mother was most certainly a slave still belonging to Pondard while her slave child had already obtained her manumission.

A case in July 1794 further showed the willingness of the owner to own legally his child born of a slave woman. The citizen Louis Bedel, trader residing in the colony, decided to free Fany, a 4½ year-old 'créole de couleur' because of 'peculiar reasons' - "*pour des raisons particulieres*" - which he did not mention. Here also, the child Fany might have been born from an intimate relationship with a slave woman. He took the child under his care and responsibility and gave to her a life annuity of 2400*livres*;⁶⁶ in a sense, the owner was "... combining paternity and sexual control with the patriarchal principle already over-determined in the role of 'master'".⁶⁷ De Kock

⁶² "V. Défendons à nos sujets blancs de l'un et de l'autre sexe de contracter mariage avec les Noirs, à peine de punition et d'amende arbitraire,..." in K.Noël's *L'esclavage...*, page 164.

⁶³ Register A77, act dated 3 vendémiaire an 8 (25 September 1799), MA.

⁶⁴ Register A65, act dated 4 fructidor an 4 (21 August 1796), MA.

⁶⁵ Register A66, act dated 2 pluviôse an 4 (22 January 1796), MA.

⁶⁶ Register A39, act dated 6 thermidor an 2 (24 July 1794), MA.

⁶⁷ M.Vaughan's *forthcoming book*, 'A baby in the salt pans: mothering slavery', Chapter 4, page 8.

argued that, in the history of Cape slavery, "...the mother ,as well as the offspring begotten by a master with her, should never be sold, whether the estate were solvent or insolvent, but should be emancipated after the death of the master".⁶⁸ Surely there existed testamentary manumissions of mother and children in Isle de France but the above cases provided enough evidence that owners freed their offspring long before their death while, perhaps the mother would be subject to manumission by wills.

How did slave owners' wives react to the slave woman – owner relationship? Evidence from the manumission acts showed two different perspectives : some owners' wives proved to be most jealous of the female slave while others accepted their husband's liaison and even adopted the children he bore with 'the other woman'. In June 1796, Louis Roch, a coloured citizen residing at Canton de Flacq, manumitted four children whom he considered as his own, born from his liaison with a female slave belonging to him. All four children were Creoles : Adélaïde-4 years, Marie Louise-8 months, François-8 years and Jeanne-9 years. Roch's wife, Marie Magdelaine, declared her intention to adopt the four children and to give them their rights to the family's succession. Each child received an amount of 2000*livres* as donation.⁶⁹

Not all owners' wives reacted the same way as Marie Magdelaine since complaints made by slave women proved that their mistresses often badly treated them out of jealousy, "white mistresses were notoriously cruel, reflecting perhaps their underlying jealousy of attractive female slaves who were also expected to perform 'unofficial' duties as concubines".⁷⁰ In November 1808, Zaïre, a Malagasy slave, complained that her owner's wife, Mrs Toussaint, compelled her to remove her clothes and told her to leave the household. The slave stated she was two months pregnant and had nowhere to go.⁷¹ The fact that she was pregnant shed light on the type of relationship she was possibly having with her owner especially when it happened that the owner's wife was jealous and chased her from the household. Zaïre stated that Mr Toussaint ignored the ill-treatment his wife was causing to her and she was treating her most badly because she was jealous – "*ces maltraitemens sont ... par jalousie*".

⁶⁸ De Kock: Those in bondage: An account of the Life of a Slave at the Cape in the Days of the Dutch East India Company, London 1950, page 122.

⁶⁹ Register A65, act dated 2 messidor an 4 (20 June 1796), MA.

⁷⁰ Barbara Bush: Towards Emancipation....., page 31.

⁷¹ Z2B, No.16, complaint dated 12 November 1808, MA.

A manumission case in 1796 was most revealing about jealousy being a feature of the attitude of the owner's wife towards the female slave. In fact, Thecte, slave belonging to late Nicolas Forancy, was manumitted by testament. The late Forancy donated to her an amount of 1000*livres*, a male slave known as l'Industrie and some clothes. Widow Forancy showed a complete refusal to comply to the donations granted by her late husband to Thecte. However, following the adjudicator's decision, she was asked to give to the slave all that had been donated to her as stated in her husband's will⁷². With reference to these two cases, the owner's wife perceived the slave woman as a 'competitor' and that she was not worth being treated generously by the owner. The slave mistress felt that, as a 'blackwoman' the slave was far less superior than her but still she gained favours from her husband – the owner. Patrick Beaton explained that though the slave mistress was the 'softer sex', she was not necessarily soft-hearted, and, "it is with sincere regret that we are compelled to state, that the records of slavery present woman less in the guise of a guardian angel, watching over the poor slave, and speaking words of womanly sympathy and hope, than in that of an avenging fury, brandishing the whip..."⁷³.

Female slaves and sexual abuse

As described before, in certain manumission cases, the slave women appeared as very young mothers with children. The possibility that the child was fathered by the female slave's owner or by a male slave or another free male has already been considered. Still, there arises another factor, sexual abuse, which can explain why some slave women became mothers at such a very young age, around 15-16 years. The extent to which manumitted women had been victims of rape cannot be totally justified since it was considered as difficult "to distinguish between sexual abuse and consent under a system that did not permit the individual much latitude".⁷⁴ This creates an ambiguity on the births of babies from slave women since these children might be the product of love as well as of rape; the raped slave woman, generally helpless, sometimes kept the child while others resorted to abortion. The following two manumission cases accounted for two young female slaves who were freed with their children.

⁷² Register A77, act dated 26 brumaire an 5 (16 November 1796), MA.

⁷³ Patrick Beaton: *Creoles and Coolies*, London 1859, page 72.

⁷⁴ Hélène Lecaudey : 'Behind the mask' in *Discovering the women in slavery*, Edited by Patricia Morton, University of Georgia 1996, page 261.

In 1796, Phillibert Gailletonne, residing in Canton de La Savanne, freed his Creole slave, Cécile, 24 years and her two daughters: Marie Victoire, 8 years and Marie Justine, 2 years.⁷⁵ The second case also involved a young slave woman, Marie, a 17 year-old Indian who was manumitted with her son, Frederick, 1 year old, by Antoine Esmiol who lived in Port de La Montagne.⁷⁶ Both cases dealt with female slaves who obtained their freedom with their children and these two examples resembled so many others which had already been considered. However, a most important aspect needs to be analysed here, especially when the slave woman's age is considered. Both Cécile and Marie were only around 16 years old when their child was born, and, giving birth at this age could as well suggest that the pregnancy was the consequences of sexual abuse. But, still, this cannot be totally justified since the manumission acts do not mention anything about the legitimacy of the children being freed. It should be noted that female slaves and even slave children were victims of sexual abuse as the following complaint clearly reveals.

The complaints registered at the Police demonstrated clearly that female slaves and even slave children were often victims of sexual abuse. For example, in 1798, the citizen Moreau who lived at the Camp des Gens de Couleur, stated at the 'Bureau de Police' that his male slave, while fetching wood in the vicinity of Le Pouce mountain, found a little slave girl, who, as it appeared, had been raped. She was only six years old and yet she had already undergone such a trauma as the act expressed that her 'private parts' were bruised and bloodstained - "*cet enfant ayant les parties naturelles meurtries et ensanglantées il à paru que l'on avait essayé de la forcer*" - it would be most difficult to determine who performed this act of sexual abuse, but this case happened to be only one among others and it suggested that certain slave women were victims of rape and some became pregnant. The slave girl was brought back to her owner, the citizen Potet.⁷⁷ Scully explains that "slave women had lived with sexual violence legitimated through an intersection of ideas about masculinity and slaveholder power which made slave women vulnerable to rape by slaveholders and by slave men".⁷⁸ This rape case also suggests that the female slaves could find themselves with non-desired pregnancies when they were still very young but they struggled to get access to freedom either by their own will or with the help of other people.

⁷⁵ Register A65, act dated 4 brumaire an 5 (25 October 1796), MA.

⁷⁶ Register A65, act dated 4 fructidor an 4 (21 August 1796), MA.

⁷⁷ Z2B.No.16, complaint dated 27 nivose an 6 (16 January 1798), MA.

⁷⁸ P.Scully: Liberating the family..., page 175.

3.2 The economic role of slave women

The manumitted slave women had either been employed as domestic servants in households or had been slaves owned by the Government. The manumission acts consulted did not include in the mentioned occupational distribution slave women who worked in plantation fields. This may be partly because of the great demand for sugarcane cultivation during that period in Isle de France, and, hence, if slaves engaged in field work were manumitted, the plantation society would be greatly affected. North-Coombes states that “towards the end of the French Revolution, when news of the destructive rebellion of slaves at St.Domingo reached the Isle de France, a large number of its inhabitants applied themselves exclusively to the cultivation of sugarcane”.⁷⁹ This fact helps to explain why plantation slaves, males and females, were less manumitted because they were an important asset for the plantation economy. Furthermore, female slaves engaged in household tasks, because of their closer proximity to their masters and mistresses, were perhaps in a more privileged position than field workers to obtain their manumission. Another reason to explain the ‘absence’ of field slaves among manumitted female slaves was perhaps the fact that certain cases did not account for the slave woman’s occupation.

Following the manumission records, the most common occupations of enslaved women happened to be seamstress, laundress or washerwoman and ironer. From a population of 1657 manumitted female slaves, only 231 cases mentioned the occupations of those slave women. Hence, the remaining cases which did not mention the occupation could as well include field slaves. This aspect will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter because the ‘absence’ of plantation slaves among the freed concerns the male slaves as well.

The occupational distribution of freed female slaves can be categorized as:

<i>Occupations and Number</i>	
Seamstress, washerwoman and ironer	154
Embroideress	2
‘Cangeuse’ (starching of clothes)	2
‘Matellassière’ (upholstery works) :	1
Cook	1
Maid	8
Midwife and wetnurse	2

⁷⁹ Alfred North-Coombes: The evolution of sugarcane culture in Mauritius, Mauritius 1937, page 14.

Hawker and 'bazardière' (market slave)	3
Slaves owned by the Government	39
Slaves 'à talens' (who can perform different kinds of work)	19

Occupations of female slaves in private households

An analysis of the occupational pattern showed that a high proportion of the slave women who obtained manumission worked as seamstress, washerwoman and ironer; out of the 231 cases, 154 were involved in such tasks while slaves working as cook, midwife and wetnurse accounted for only one in each occupation. Some eight slave women worked as maids in the owner's household and 19 were referred to as "*esclave à divers talens*" - slaves who could perform different kinds of tasks. Privately owned slaves were also able to work as hawkers and three slave women performed such tasks.

Enslaved women who were concentrated in sewing, laundry and ironing dominated domestic service and it was believed that those who worked in households enjoyed a higher status than field women. Following the high number of manumitted female slaves who performed household duties, it was most certain that they managed to get their manumission because they were 'closer' to the owners. There was also the possibility that many of these slaves were an economic resource of perhaps marginal value to their owners. Besides, they had means to subsist such as an adequate amount of money, some managed to acquire a house, and, once freed, they would not be dependent on the colony.

In July 1791, Annette, a 30 year-old Bengali slave belonging to late Jean Mathias, surgeon residing in Port Louis, was manumitted through a testamentary manumission dated 24 March 1788. In fact, the owner died some two years ago but his testamentary request for the slave's manumission was totally ignored by the executor. But Annette proved her financial independence as she was a seamstress, laundress and linen maid - '*lingère*'. With her savings, she was able to buy two little houses at the Camp de Détachement, and, obtained as donation two small houses from the Mathias succession. Her manumission was finally considered and confirmed in July 1791.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Register A72, act dated 2 July 1791, MA.

In August 1794, Pierre Farcon, '*matelassier*' - working in upholstery - decided to free his Indian slave, Marie, as he intended to leave the colony for France. He donated to the slave an amount of 1000*livres* and was certain that Marie could earn a living as she was a talented seamstress, laundress, she was good at starching clothes and also performed upholstery work.⁸¹ It appeared that such tasks – seamstress, washerwoman and ironer – enabled the slave women to earn their living as a few of them managed to acquire houses, and, when freed, they continued with the same occupations. In July 1794, Pierre St.Aubin residing in his household at quartier des Plaines St Pierre, freed his Creole slave, Annette. The slave who was also a seamstress owned two small houses situated at Camp des Noirs Libres, which she acquired from her own savings in 1792.⁸²

Another case in July 1794 involved Françoise, a 29 year-old Creole slave manumitted by Pauline Mengard residing at Canton de La Montagne. Besides being a seamstress, laundress and ironer, Françoise was also a '*brodeuse*' - she made embroidery works - and with this type of occupation, she was certain to earn her living and subsist on her own.⁸³ Another Creole slave, Rosalie, 23 years, followed the same occupational pattern as Françoise. She was a '*brodeuse*' as well and also good at starching clothes – '*cangeuse*'.⁸⁴ These cases showed that the manumitted women did not reside in their ex-owner's household once freed. They moved in their own household and participated in the formation of an independent free black society.

A few of the female slaves were also freed out of filial love, and, as Allen explains, "...often these slaves were not chattel property which could be exploited unconditionally, but family members whose freedom had not yet been purchased or otherwise secured".⁸⁵ In August 1794, the free coloured woman, Moutamale, residing Camp des Malabards, requested the manumission of her daughter Nannette, a Malabard slave belonging to the citizen Cheramy, also malabard. Nannette was a seamstress and owns an amount of 3400*livres* with which she purchased her freedom. When she obtained her manumission, she left Cheramy's household and resided with her mother at Camp des Malabards.⁸⁶

⁸¹ Register A39, act dated 15 thermidor an 2 (2 August 1794), MA.

⁸² Register A39, act dated 7 thermidor an 2 (25 July 1794), MA.

⁸³ Register A39, act dated 7 thermidor an 2 (25 July 1794), MA.

⁸⁴ Register A56A/56B, act dated 22 prairial an 3 (10 June 1795), MA.

⁸⁵ Richard.B.Allen : 'Economic marginality and the Rise of the Free Population of Colour in Mauritius, 1767-1830' in *Slavery & Abolition*, Vol.10, 1989, page 137.

⁸⁶ Register A39, act dated 15 thermidor an 2 (2 August 1794), MA.

In February 1794, the Creole citizen René Gaiquy, 'Concierge' in the National Garden, showed his intention to free Marie Louise Gaiqui, his sister, also Creole. He stated that she was also his 'slave', and, through bonds of affection, he wished to free her from bondage; Marie Louise was a good seamstress, washerwoman and ironer. He donated to her an amount of 2000*livres* and her manumission was secured as she had sufficient means to subsist.⁸⁷

Professions like midwife, wetnurse and private cook were not common among these manumitted slave women maybe because of the specific skills required to perform such occupations. Among the manumission cases studied, only one case for each occupation has been recorded for female slaves. In February 1798, Pierre Saunois residing at Canton des Trois Islots, wanted to reward his slave Ester, a 47 year-old Malagasy woman. He manumitted her and offered to her 2000*livres* as donation. Ester was a midwife and, in the act, it was stated that she practiced this profession very well in Canton des Trois Islots. Once freed, she would live independently in her own house while performing the same occupation.⁸⁸

In September 1795, another Malagasy slave, Gouv, 60 years, was freed by Louis Alexandre Chermont residing at Canton des Pamplemousses. The slave was a wetnurse in Chermont's household but the act did not mention whether she would continue with this occupation. She received an amount of 2000*livres* from Chermont as donation.⁸⁹

Another Malagasy slave, Jeanneton, 40 years, belonging to late Marin Magnien was freed by a testamentary manumission in 1797. The slave was a cook in her late owner's household, and, she was given an amount of 3000*livres* to enable her to subsist as nothing was said about her occupation once she would be freed.⁹⁰

Slave women and the informal economy

Barbara Bush explains that West Indian planters were reluctant to supply slaves with sufficient food needs and this became instrumental in developing a degree of independence and resilience in Caribbean slaves. This activity enabled the slave to earn money and the owner did not need to

⁸⁷ Register A39, act dated 20 February 1794, MA.

⁸⁸ Register A77, act dated 9 ventose an 6 (27 February 1798), MA.

⁸⁹ Register A66, act dated 4 vendemiaire an 4 (26 September 1795), MA.

⁹⁰ Register A57, act dated 4 prairial an 5 (23 May 1797), MA.

feed his slaves.⁹¹ The slave woman, with her earnings, was able to purchase her own freedom as will be seen in the forthcoming cases of manumission.

Some slave women belonging to private owners contributed as well to the informal economy and this reflected a considerable degree of energy and enterprise. Slave women were involved in occupations such as '*colporteuse*' - hawker, and, '*bazardière*' - market slave. Being a market slave meant that the slave woman spent most of her time in Port Louis where she most probably ran a small business for her owner. Such an activity gave the female slave a degree of economic independence and self-reliance, and, her role in the slave community also was positive and dynamic. Barbara Bush explains that "the informal internal marketing system, created primarily by the slaves themselves and in which women played a prominent role, was fundamental to the creation and integration of Creole slave society and constituted a positive adaptation to slavery".⁹² These occupations enabled the slave women to gain a sort of entrepreneurial independence, and, "participation in the informal economy thus not only offered women independence from black men but a way to freedom from white masters".⁹³ Allen observes that these women with their economic status, helped in the development of the 'Freed' community later, "...that women played a very important role in the social and economic organization of the free coloured population during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries".⁹⁴

In January 1799, a family of six members was manumitted by testament. The late Benoit Jubin requested in his will that his slaves be freed – Noël, Mozambique, 30 years; his wife, Louise, a 25 year-old Indian and their four Creole children. Louise was a washerwoman and a market slave as well. Her occupations meant that she most certainly did the laundry work in her master's household and also had a small business in Port Louis as the owner resided at Rue des Pamplemousses in Port Louis.⁹⁵

Another case of a market slave was Flore who purchased her freedom from Widow Perimboldon residing at Camp des Malabards. Her mistress stated that she was free to do her marketing business in Port Louis and elsewhere. The fact that Flore obtained her manumission by self-

⁹¹ Barbara Bush: 'Towards emancipation...', page 40.

⁹² Barbara Bush, *ibid*, page 39.

⁹³ B.Bush: 'Towards emancipation...', page 41.

⁹⁴ R.Allen: 'Creoles, Indian Immigrants and the restructuring of society and economy 1767-1885', PhD Thesis 1983, University of Illinois, page 102.

⁹⁵ Register A57, act dated 6 pluviöse an 7 (25 January 1799), MA.

purchase implied that as a market slave, she had been able to acquire a degree of economic and financial independence.⁹⁶

Genie was a 22 year-old Indian slave residing at Mapou, Canton des Pamplermousses. She was a hawker and moved from one place to another to sell her stuff. As she resided in a rural area, it was most probable that she did her selling elsewhere in town since it appeared that she acquired a considerable profit from these transactions. Genie owned some assets which were worth 5000-6000*livres*, and, she purchased her freedom from a certain Branellec for an amount of 12,000*livres*.⁹⁷ This huge sum provided enough evidence that, as a young woman, she was successful in her business. As a newly manumitted female slave, she was already independent and fully able to subsist by her business.

Slave women owned by the Government

Besides the privately owned slaves, there existed as well another community of slaves : those owned by the Government. They were designated according to the different regimes governing the colony – ‘Esclave du Roi’⁹⁸ under the Crown Government (1767-1793), ‘Esclave de La République’⁹⁹ during the Revolutionary period (1793-1803) and ‘Esclave de l’Etat’¹⁰⁰ as from 1803.

The majority of these slaves were involved in work in the seaport, and, most of the slave women were primarily found working in the ‘atelier de la voilerie’- shipworks dealing mainly with the sails. Some were also found in the ‘atelier du Génie’- engineering works - while others worked as cooks in certain departments. Each slave was referred to by a particular number, and, once freed, the other slave offered in replacement or exchange took the same number. For example, Sophie was a Malabard slave assigned in the sailworks. As a slave owned by the King, she bore the number 2268 and resided at Port & Parish of St. Louis, in town. She purchased her manumission and offered in replacement a Mozambican male slave, known as Lafortune. Sophie obtained 1500*livres* as donation from the coloured citizen Baptiste Baugard also residing Port & Parish of

⁹⁶ Register IE46, act dated 11 fructidor an 13 (29 August 1805), MA.

⁹⁷ Register A66, act dated 4 vendemiaire an 4 (26 September 1795), MA.

⁹⁸ ‘Slave owned by the King’

⁹⁹ ‘Slave owned by the Republic’

¹⁰⁰ ‘Slave owned by the State’

St. Louis. Her manumission was confirmed in October 1793.¹⁰¹ The difference between a slave who self-purchased (his) or her freedom and a slave who obtained the manumission as a reward was that the latter was required to continue being at the King's or the Republic's service for a certain period especially if the slave was still young. But once a manumission had been self-purchased, the slave was considered as totally free and not obliged to continue working for the Government. That was mainly Sophie's situation, but, the act did not provide further evidence about her occupation as a freed slave.

Another example was the Guinean slave, Claudine Marie Philippe and her daughter Adeline who were both employed as Government slaves at the 'Curement du port'. The mother was registered under the number 127 while the child had the number 121. Claudine purchased their manumission and offered a Malagasy slave as replacement. Claudine had much income since she acquired a small house and a Malagasy slave whom she hired for labour at the 'Curement du port'.¹⁰²

Luce was a Creole urban slave who was privately owned. She was known as having particular talents – "*talents particuliers*" – maybe in skilled occupations and proved to earn much income since she purchased her manumission and even bought a slave of 'lascard' origin from the citizen Curé, for 2000 *livres* showing that, as a freed woman, she was already owner of a slave.¹⁰³

Annette Samba was a Guinean slave who belonged to the Republic; like Sophie, in the above-mentioned case, she was assigned in the sailworks - '*Détail de la Voilerie*'. She was granted her manumission as a reward for her devoted service but, she was obliged to continue working as a freed slave. No other slave was offered in exchange or replacement since she would still be working. She obtained as donation from the 'Administration des Finances' an amount of 2000 *livres*.¹⁰⁴

Marie was a 17 year-old Creole Yoloff slave, also assigned in the sailworks. Her sister, Marie Joseph, a free coloured, wished to have her manumitted and she offered another slave in exchange for her sister's freedom.¹⁰⁵ Despite her young and productive age, she was not asked to

¹⁰¹ Register A39, act dated 4 October 1793, MA.

¹⁰² Register A39, act dated 2 messidor an 2 (20 June 1794), MA.

¹⁰³ Register A39, act dated 21 November 1793, MA.

¹⁰⁴ Register A41, act dated 4 brumaire an 5 (25 October 1796), MA.

¹⁰⁵ Register IE51, act dated 1er thermidor an 13 (20 July 1805), MA.

remain at the service of the Government since another slave had already replaced her. She was free to work on her own and it was most certain that her sister would help her to subsist.

Annie, a 56 year-old Malagasy slave was one of the few female slaves involved in ironwork- '*attaché à la serrurerie de La République*'. She was manumitted by the Republic as a reward for her devoted service but would still continue to work. Annie owned a house at the Camp des Gens Libres and had saved an amount of 12,000*livres*.¹⁰⁶

The children of the slave woman were also the property of the King, the Republic or the State, and, they were generally assigned in the same workshop as the mother. In 1790, Magdelaine, a slave belonging to the King, requested her manumission and that of her two young children – Françoise and Marie. Through her earnings, she was able to offer three slaves in exchange for the three manumissions. Her request was not easily approved since she did not provide enough means for subsistence. A certain Dugauls, a free black, donated to her two small houses and a kitchen covered with shingles at the Camp des Malabards. She was also given three slaves as her own property – Hercule, Pedre and Rafare. The manumission was confirmed a year later, in 1791.¹⁰⁷

Marie Jeanne, a Creole slave and her son, Antoine, were both the King's slaves - '*affectés aux travaux du Roi*' - and, they were manumitted by Anne, a freed woman residing Camp des Yoloffs. Anne, who was also Marie Jeanne's cousin, donated to her a house with its kitchen at Camp des Yoloffs, two Mozambican slaves : Pierrot and Marie, some poultry and livestock. Two slaves were given in exchange and who took their respective numbers so that Marie Jeanne and Antoine were considered as totally free and not committed in any way to work for the King.¹⁰⁸

The citizen Joseph Nayna, a Malabard residing at quartier Malabar, performed an act of filial love by manumitting his 70 year-old mother, Javeny, an Indian slave bearing the number 124. Joseph Nayna requested an exchange of slaves so that his old mother be freed. Hence, he offered to the 'Matricule des Esclaves' a Malagasy slave, l'Eveillé, belonging to him. The exchange was approved and Javeny obtained her manumission. Nayna stated that he would take care, feed and house his mother till death.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Register A41, act dated 4 vendemiaire an 4 (26 September 1795), MA.

¹⁰⁷ Register A67, act dated 11 May 1791, MA.

¹⁰⁸ Register A67, act dated 25 April 1791, MA.

¹⁰⁹ Register A56A/56B, act dated 4 frimaire an 4 (25 November 1795), MA.

In cases where exchange or replacement of the slave had not been carried out, the Republic insisted on the slave's service even after manumission, and, sometimes infirm slaves were not exempted. Suzanne Guigantuie was a 60 year-old Guinean slave owned by the Republic. She was granted her manumission because of her physical disabilities and also as a reward for good work done. But, despite her weaknesses, she had to continue working for the Republic and earn her salary.¹¹⁰

Manumission for this category of slaves was subject to exigencies from the King, the Republic or the State. Slaves who were able to give other slaves in exchange or replacement could be considered as totally free, whereas, others who could not provide for this had to continue their service. For such slaves, only their status had changed – they were no longer considered as 'slaves belonging to the King' but as free blacks working for the King.

This chapter has tried to analyse a most ordinary yet concealed aspect in the lives of slave women. It deals mostly with their sexual role, which, as it has been found, contributed much in their struggle to secure their freedom and that of their children. Though the sexual aspect was not commonly referred in the acts as a means to obtain manumission, it became nevertheless a strategy for female slaves for self-advancement and to get access to freedom. The manumission acts alone cannot unveil the real motives why slave women were freed by free males such as military, naval officers and soldiers if an aspect of their lives available from the Complaints register is not considered as well.

¹¹⁰ Register A56A/56B, act dated 2 pluviöse an 4 (22 January 1796), MA.

CHAPTER 4

*The manumitted male slaves,
the 'Freed' and their 'new'
society*

Chapter 4: The manumitted male slaves, the 'Freed' and their 'new' society.

The manumission rates of male slaves has been studied in Chapter 2 as well as a preliminary analysis of their status and age profile. This chapter will focus on the occupational distribution of male slaves as there seems to be interesting elements of comparison with female slaves. The occupations of slave men were not only highly varied as compared to those of slave women as discussed in the previous chapter, but many male slaves were privately owned as well as owned by the King, the Republic and the State. Manumission concerned domestic slaves and 'government'¹ slaves; as in the case of female slaves, not all the manumitted male slaves had their occupations mentioned in the acts of manumission. Among those whose occupational roles were not stated, it is highly probable that they were plantation slaves. This aspect will be discussed further in this chapter.

4.1 The economic role of male slaves

At the moment of their manumission, male slaves were either engaged in an occupation or they were in apprenticeship, that is, they were learning a trade. These were mainly in areas such as: carpentry, tailoring, masonry or shoemaking. The acts studied showed apprenticeship mostly in the tailoring and carpentry trades. Young boys, in majority, were apprentices when they were freed, but, the fact that they were manumitted together with their mother meant that, as far as the authorities were concerned, they had enough means to subsist. Others, who were freed alone, proved most able to earn a living through their apprenticeship.

The occupational distribution of the male slaves can be represented as follows in Table 8 on the next page. This distribution shows a total of 186 slaves and it includes both the slaves who were privately owned as well as 'government' slaves. But, it must be noted that the total of 'government' slaves amounts to 76 while for the privately owned, the total is 158 slaves. The occupational pattern shows 158 privately owned slaves and only 28 'government' slaves, thus giving a total of 186. For the remaining 48 'government' slaves, the occupations are not specified in the acts, so the slaves are not listed according to specific occupations.

¹ This refers to my own terminology of the slaves who were owned by the King, the Republic and the State.

Table 8 : Occupational Distribution of Manumitted Male Slaves from 1789 to 1810

<i>OCCUPATIONS</i>	<i>NUMBER</i>
Carpenter	39
Tailor	31
Driver (Commandeur)	21
Fisherman	14
Wigmaker / Barber	10
Shoemaker	10
Servant (Domestic)	7
Cook	7
Blacksmith	7
Coopersmith	7
Bricklayer	6
Painter	5
Cartwright	3
Launderer	2
Hawker	2
Apprentice in surgery	2
'Chasseur'	1
Butler	1
Gardener	1
Market Slave	1
Butcher (Boucher)	1
Pork Butcher (Charcutier)	1
Confectioner (Confiseur)	1
Roofer (Couvreur)	1
Stonecutter	1
'Ouvrier tourneur'	1
Mechanic	1
Tanner (Tanneur)	1
Peon (Pion)	1
Total	186
'government slaves'	48
Total	234

(Source: compiled from acts of manumission for the years 1789-1810, Series OA, IE, A & G, Mauritius Archives).

Some of the 'government' slaves who were involved in more diverse occupations amounted to 48. The number for each category is not given as, in the acts, the Government slaves were generally referred to as working for the King or the Republic or the State, without specifying in all cases the workshops to which they were normally attached. But it is assumed that they must have been working in the workshops listed below as, in the manumission acts, it is often mentioned that the 'government' slave to be freed, worked in a particular workshop, for example, '*attaché à la serrurerie de l'état*', but not defining exactly the slave's occupation, whether he was locksmith or not. The workshops were as follows:

'Bataillon de Chasseurs'

'Service aux troupes de couleur'

'Les ateliers' – la charpenterie (carpentry)

la forge (blacksmith workshop)

la ferblanterie (ironmongery)

la tonnellerie (cooperage)

au calfatage (caulking)

la briquetterie (brickworks)

la serrurerie (locksmith workshop)

(Source: compiled from acts of manumission for the years 1789-1810, Series OA, IE, A & G, Mauritius Archives)

The manumission acts do not all mention the slave's occupation when he was freed, only 234 cases showing the occupation of the slave were recorded out of 630 adults and 561 boys who obtained their freedom. The 234 cases revealed enough on the work male slaves performed during the French period to be able to make an analysis of their occupational roles. As in the case of the female slaves studied in the preceding chapter, some 957 males were freed without any indication of their professions. It could be that field slaves were also included among the manumitted, but this occupation was not mentioned, and, one possible reason might be because of the hierarchical status of the slave's profession. A skilled slave had more chances of getting his or her manumission confirmed by the authorities as he could earn a salary through his work. Some owners who were perhaps freeing field slaves omitted to mention the occupation since they feared the authorities might oppose these manumissions on the grounds that field slaves would not have a profession as Freed people.

Manumitted private slaves were higher in number than 'government' slaves as the figures showed only 76 slaves from the latter category being freed as compared to 158 slaves who were liberated by their owners. Manumission was not easily granted to 'government' slaves because most of them were involved in works in the port and, therefore, were not always dispensable. The maritime activities generally included the building of ships, repairs and maintenance, and, these meant that slaves were highly needed in all the workshops. Between 1804 and 1808, maritime commercial activity increased and this resulted in expanding the works performed by 'government' slaves².

The two most common occupations performed by male slaves were in tailoring and carpentry as the distribution showed some 39 carpenters and 31 tailors as compared to a much lower number in the other tasks. Corinne Masson explains that, among the slaves working in the artillery, there were some who were considered as being more 'intelligent' and talented, and, these slaves performed tasks which were not part of the artillery. They worked as tailors so as to make and mend the workshop's clothes.³ Also, services in carpentry and tailoring were required in the building of ships and making of clothes particularly for the marine officers. The carpenters also sawed wood and made beams to build the slaves' 'case'.⁴ Allen defines the 'case' as being a "...small one or two-room structures, often only several hundred square feet in area, and frequently constructed of boards and covered by wooden shingles or straw thatching".⁵

The privately owned male slaves : tailors, carpenters, painters and bricklayers.

Most of the manumitted slaves who belonged to private owners were skilled artisans. They learnt their professions either from the owner who may have been an artisan or from someone else with whom they were acquainted. The majority of the male slaves performed tasks related to carpentry and tailoring. Some of these slaves were able to purchase their freedom with the money earned from their skills.

² Corinne Masson: 'Les esclaves de l'Etat à l'île de France 1803-1810. Le cas des Noirs de la direction d'artillerie et des ateliers portuaires' in Revue Historique des Mascareignes, 2e Année 2000, No2, page 103, (Association Historique Internationale de l'Océan Indien).

³ C.Masson, *ibid*, page 105.

⁴ Jacques Cauna: Au Temps des îles à sucre-Histoire d'une plantation de Saint Domingue au XVIIIe siècle, Editions Karthala et ACCT, 1987, page 113.

⁵ Richard Allen: Slaves, freedmen, and Indentured Laborers in Colonial Mauritius, Cambridge University Press 1999, page 87.

In January 1798, Lindor, an Indian slave of 18 years was freed by a testamentary manumission. The late Nanette, a free citizen who granted to him his freedom, also donated a part of her belongings. Lindor was not yet of age to possess what had been bequeathed to him, but, he was a tailor and this profession would help him to subsist until he became the sole proprietor of Nanette's belongings.⁶

The late citizen, Marin Dupré, requested in his testament dated 2 May 1796 to manumit his slave Antoine Ally, an Indian of 24 years. The executor, Germain Dupré, obtained the confirmation of this manumission in October 1798 since Antoine Ally had all the necessary means to subsist - he worked as tailor and he obtained an amount of 500,000*livres* as donation.⁷

Cupidon was a 45 year-old Malay slave who secured manumission by self purchase from Martin Virieux, residing at Canton du Grand Port. Cupidon worked as tailor and this profession enabled him to save a considerable amount of money to purchase his freedom.⁸ Another slave, Jonquille, a 31 year-old Mozambican also self purchased his manumission by means of his earnings from André Chenu. He worked as tailor, and, once freed, his profession would be his means of subsistence.⁹ Hercule also was a tailor who purchased his manumission from his owner Cristophe Forty for an amount of 20,000*livres*. Besides his tailoring occupation, he had other means for his subsistence.¹⁰

In October 1796, François Houet, residing at Plaines Wilhems, manumitted his Malagasy slave Corantin, 32 years, who was a carpenter. He gave to Corantin an amount of 2000*livres* only and Houet considered this amount as sufficient since the slave's skill provided him with enough means to live on his own.¹¹ Another slave, Noël, a 20 year-old Mozambican belonging to the free citizen Babet Dimba offered to him an amount of 4000*livres* as donation.¹²

Augustin, a Malagasy slave of 25 years, purchased his freedom from the citizen Létimié. He worked as painter and, at the moment of his manumission, he owned a sum of 1500*livres* from

⁶ Register A57, act dated 4 pluviôse an 6 (23 January 1798), MA.

⁷ Register A57, act dated 4 brumaire an 7 (25 October 1798), MA.

⁸ Register A57, act dated 4 ventose an 7 (22 February 1799) MA.

⁹ Register A39, act dated 13 germinal an 3 (2 April 1795), MA.

¹⁰ Register A65, act dated 4 vendemiaire an 5 (25 September 1796), MA.

¹¹ Register A65, act dated 4 brumaire an 5 (25 October 1796), MA.

¹² Register A65, act dated 4 brumaire an 5 (25 October 1796), MA.

which he managed to buy his long-sought freedom.¹³ François, an Indian slave belonging to the citizen Antoine Blaise residing at Canton des Pamplémousses, was considered as a very skilled tailor - '*bon tailleur d'habits*'; due to his profession, he was able to purchase his manumission from the citizen Blaise. He obtained as donation from Blaise an amount of 2000*livres* which the latter found as most sufficient for him since he was a skilled artisan - '*une somme de 2000livres qui sera plus que suffisante avec sa profession de tailleur*'.¹⁴

Young boys who were freed without their mother were required to furnish enough evidence for subsistence especially if they had not reached the age of 18 years. In 1796, Louis Banian, a free coloured citizen residing at Camp des Yolloffs, freed a 17 year-old Creole slave Louis, who, as it appeared, belonged to the Republic and performed carpentry works. The citizen Banian purchased the boy's manumission and offered another male slave in replacement. Hence, Louis was free to work on his own, and, since he was an artisan, he had the possibility to live without depending on the colony. The citizen Banian also donated to him two small houses situated at the Camp des Yolloffs and the act stated that Louis was already residing there.¹⁵

A Malagasy slave, Ramponneaud, acquired carpentry skills from his owner Nicolas André Maheu who was a carpenter. In the act, it was mentioned that Ramponneaud was manumitted mostly to satisfy the last wishes of Maheu's late wife. Ramponneaud's occupation as carpenter gave him the opportunity to save a considerable amount of 6000*livres* and he was given 1500*livres* as donation.¹⁶

In 1796, Lindor, a Mozambican slave of 36 years requested to be manumitted from his owner Marceline, a free woman residing in Port Nord Ouest. Lindor's occupation as painter was a sufficient means for him to live without depending on the colony and he received 6000*livres* as donation from Marceline.¹⁷ In 1797, Antoine Moutou Comméra residing at Camp des Malabards, manumitted his Indian slave Gabriel, 31 years. As bricklayer, the slave proved to be self-sufficient and Jacques Cauna explained that a bricklayer was responsible of building operations and new constructions.¹⁸ This skill was much prized as the colony needed these artisans for its development and port constructions. Though Gabriel was a privately owned slave, it could be that

¹³ Register A56A/56B, act dated 2 pluviôse an 4 (22 January 1796), MA.

¹⁴ Register A56A/56B, act dated 2 pluviôse an 4 (22 January 1796), MA.

¹⁵ Register A65, act dated 4 frimaire an 5 (24 November 1796), MA.

¹⁶ Register A41, act dated 4 thermidor an 3 (22 July 1795), MA.

¹⁷ Register A56A/56B, act dated 2 messidor an 4 (20 June 1796), MA.

¹⁸ J. Cauna: *Au Temps des îles à sucre...*, page 113.

he was hired out to work for the Government. It is interesting to note that some manumitters were quite generous in their donations despite the slave being involved in a skilled occupation. Here, Comméra offered an amount of 6000*livres* to Gabriel thus making him more independent financially.¹⁹

Some manumitters offered a small sum of money as donation if the slave to be manumitted proved to be financially well able to subsist and fend for his needs. That was the case of Henry, a Creole slave of 24 years who belonged to the coloured citizen Benjamin, a skilled shoemaker residing at Port Nord Ouest. He did not grant any donation to Henry since the slave was a tailor and he had 'in hand' a sufficient amount of money- '*...possède une somme suffisante...*'²⁰

Another case involved Mercure, a Malagasy slave whose occupation was that of bricklayer. He was freed by a testamentary manumission and his late owner, Marie Bezé, did not bequeath anything in terms of money or assets as donation. The late Marie Bezé had mentioned in her will that Mercure had sufficient means to subsist as he was well set up as a bricklayer.²¹

There were also cases where donations were not made in cash but in kind and three cases of manumission showed that the manumitted slave was offered as donation the tools he required for his profession. In October 1789, Patrice, a 'créol mulatre' of 24 years was freed by a testamentary manumission. Patrice did carpentry works and his late owner, Sieur Lejongard, bequeathed to him an amount of 3000*livres* and all the tools he needed for his profession - '*tous les outils de sa profession*'.²²

In January 1790, another testamentary manumission was confirmed as a Mozambican slave, Augustin Bracq, was freed. Like Patrice, he was a skilled carpenter and, as donation, he got all the tools for carpentry works and also 2000*livres*.²³

When the citizen Jean Baptiste Commans freed his Creole slave Laurent, he donated to the newly-manumitted all the tools a blacksmith needed for his work. It seemed as if Laurent would

¹⁹ Register A65, act dated 4 ventose an 5 (22 February 1797), MA.

²⁰ Register A41, act dated 16 frimaire an 8 (7 December 1799), MA.

²¹ Register A56A/56B, act dated 4 vendemiaire an 4 (26 September 1795), MA.

²² Register OA87, act dated 3 October 1789, MA.

²³ Register OA87, act dated 16 January 1790, MA.

have his own blacksmith workshop since he was given iron, bellows, an anvil, a hammer, a pair of tongs and other necessary tools.²⁴

Fishermen, wigmakers and barbers.

Fishing was another occupation that concerned only a small group of the male manumitted slaves but it played an important part in defining an aspect of slave economic activity. Some of these slaves worked for their own private income while others worked with the owner who was also a fisherman. Scipion was a Mozambican fisherman of 27 years belonging to a certain Mobute, also a fisherman of 'lascard' origin; Scipion was manumitted and he was given a house at Camp des Malabards and an Indian slave of 23 years, Lindor, who was also a fisherman. It seemed that all of them were involved in the fishing activity, and, once freed, Scipion would actively take in hand this profession with his 'slave' Lindor.²⁵

Fishing was surely for slaves residing in rural areas near the sea and in Port Louis as the seaport was not faraway. Three of the fishermen slaves lived in Canton de Flacq, a rural region in the east of Isle de France, not far from the sea. In 1796, Charles, a Creole slave, obtained his manumission from Jacques Vivier residing at Canton de Flacq. Charles' occupation as fisherman and the donation of 2000*livres* were found enough for his subsistence.²⁶ Two other cases in Flacq involved Louis and Abraham, both Creole slaves who were in the fishing activity. Their occupation and the amount of 3000*livres* as donation enabled both of them to live independently.²⁷

Another category of manumitted slaves includes wigmakers and barbers although only 10 such skilled slaves were freed during the period 1789 to 1810 as compared to tailors and carpenters. No detailed study based on this particular occupation exists and not much information could be found on whether wigmakers and barbers were highly prized or not. Therefore, it is beyond the scope to analyse the importance of these professions. It was most probable that their services were required by Europeans residing in Isle de France as wigs were 'in fashion' at that time and the French style of wearing wigs was adopted mostly by the upper class. It seemed that the slaves could earn much money through this profession since a few were able to purchase their

²⁴ Register A39, act dated 7 thermidor an 2 (25 July 1794), MA.

²⁵ Register A39, act dated 12 frimaire an 3 (2 December 1794), MA.

²⁶ Register A77, act dated 11 prairial an 4 (30 May 1796), MA.

²⁷ Register A77, act dated 7 prairial an 5 (26 May 1797), MA.

manumission. For example, Gerbin, an Indian slave belonging to widow Delaunay, purchased his freedom and paid for the price in cash. He did not obtain any donation as he had his profession of wigmaker and barber to subsist.²⁸

Auguste, an Indian slave, also a wigmaker and barber, was freed through a testamentary manumission. His late brother Alexis, a freed Indian, stipulated in his will that a certain amount of money be deducted from his wealth to purchase Auguste's manumission. It would be as if Auguste got his manumission by self purchase - '*...comme s'étant racheté lui même...*'. The executor, Jean Pierre Geslin, donated to Auguste an amount of 4100*livres* which would enable him to become self sufficient.²⁹ Another Indian slave, Jean Jacques, also a skilled wigmaker - '*bon perruquier*' - was freed by the citizen Grandcourt residing at Canton des Plaines Wilhems. The act did not state the means by which the manumission was carried out, but Jean Jacques received an amount of 1200*livres* as donation. This sum and his occupation were considered to be more than sufficient for him to live without being dependent on the colony as his work could enable him to cater for the needs of other people.³⁰

Market slaves and hawkers

Slaves belonging to 'small' owners, that is owners having a small number of slaves, in contrast to owners of estates who usually possessed up to a hundred slaves, were also involved in marketing transactions and this category of slaves was that of market slaves and hawkers. Vijaya Teelock explains that "these were slaves sent regularly to the market either in Port Louis or the local market to sell various goods: produce, furniture, shoes, bread and milk, all goods produced on the premises".³¹ Though Teelock's study refers to the British period, the tasks of market slaves and hawkers were more or less the same during the French period. It appeared that the goods the slaves were supposed to sell were assigned to them according to their ages: milk was sold by mostly young slaves around 15 years while field slaves sold vegetables and aged slaves sold poultry. Market slaves and hawkers who were manumitted were particularly low in number maybe because most owners depended on them to sell their produce. When going to Port Louis or

²⁸ Register A77, act dated 10 messidor an 4 (17 June 1796), MA.

²⁹ Register A39, act dated 12 frimaire an 3 (2 December 1794), MA.

³⁰ Register A39, act dated 15 fructidor an 2 (1 September 1794), MA.

³¹ Vijaya Teelock: *Bitter sugar: sugar and slavery in 19th century Mauritius*, MGI Press, Moka 1998, page 162.

to the local market, they "...had the opportunity to socialize with different sorts of people and hear the latest news".³²

The acts made no mention about the means by which the slaves obtained their manumission, whether it was by reward or self purchase since it was highly possible for a hawker or market slave to buy his freedom with his earnings. Hawkers and market slaves were expected to bring to their owner the amount of money obtained by their selling, and, perhaps they kept a small amount for themselves which enable to acquire a house and other assets. In December 1793, Chety Moutou, an Indian slave was freed. He worked as hawker and belonged to a freed Indian, Anarsellon Modeliar Asvingien residing at Camp des Malabards. Chety Moutou was not given any donations as he owned a small house worth more than 3000*livres* and he had acquired, according to the authorities, by honest means his wealth - "...une fortune asser honnête...".³³

Two other cases revealed that the manumitted slaves received donations from their owners and these slaves did not provide any proof of their self sufficient status. In 1794, Samedy, a 35 year-old Malabard slave was manumitted by Moutou Coméra, a free Malabard residing at Camp des Malabards. The freed slave was a hawker and he obtained 1200*livres* as donations for his subsistence.³⁴

In 1799, Noel, a Mozambican slave of 30 years was freed with his family by a testamentary manumission; Noel was a market slave and he performed laundry work as well. He was manumitted together with his wife, Louise and their four children. The late owner, Benoit Jubin stated in his will that an amount of 100*piastres* be donated to the family.³⁵ These two cases justified to some extent the manumitted slaves' dependence for subsistence. It also suggests that the owners took all the money the slaves obtained from their marketing transactions which did not allow them to save even a small amount.

³² V. Teelock, *Bitter Sugar*, page 162.

³³ Register A39, act dated 2 December 1793, MA.

³⁴ Register A39, act dated 6 February 1794, MA.

³⁵ Register A39, act dated 6 pluviôse an 7 (25 January 1799), MA.

Butchers and confectioner

The manumission records accounted for only 3 cases of slaves performing such professions, and, from these, one manumission was carried out by self purchase. The other two were obtained through reward and filial love. In April 1794, Colas, a Malagasy slave of 41 years belonging to widow Angibout, purchased his manumission. His occupation as a butcher enabled him to make savings and buy his freedom; he also owned a Malagasy slave he had acquired from an auction sale and two small houses at the Camp des Gens Libres. On this piece of land, he also reared livestock and poultry and this small private activity surely would be an asset for his profession.³⁶

Pedre was an Indian slave of 28 years who obtained his manumission as a reward for his loyal service. He was a pork butcher and belonged to a free coloured woman, widow François. His occupation certainly provided a sufficient means of subsistence as he did not obtain any donations from the widow François. Furthermore, the manumission was confirmed in 1807, during Decaen's era whereby the laws for manumitting a slave were most exigent.³⁷

Only a single case of a slave working as confectioner was recorded and this manumission was carried out by filial love. The free coloured woman, Marie Louise Bertran, freed her son Louis Didier, a Creole of 18 years and donated to him an amount of 100,000*livres*. Both resided at Camp des Malabards in Port Louis, and, this proximity to an urban area made it possible for Louis Didier to be actively involved in the making of confectionery as an economic activity³⁸. The act did not provide details on his profession but Louis Didier may be either owning a small shop or working for someone else. Vaughan explains that "...it often made economic sense for a smaller slave owner to 'hire out' a skilled slave for a period, or to put a slave in charge of a small business enterprise such as a bar or canteen".³⁹

³⁶ Register A39, act dated 25 April 1794, MA.

³⁷ Register IE47, act dated 20 February 1807, MA.

³⁸ Register A41, act dated 4 nivose an 6 (24 December 1797), MA.

³⁹ M. Vaughan: 'Slavery and colonial identity in Eighteenth Century Mauritius' in *History, Memory and Identity*, Edited by V. Teelock and Edward Alpers, Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture, February 2002, page 52.

Servants (domestics)

From the 234 cases dealing with the occupational pattern of male slaves, around 17 were involved in domestic work. The tasks were varied and could be categorized as such: 7 servants, 7 cooks, 2 launderers and 1 butler. Only two male slaves performed the tasks of washing clothes since these chores were overwhelmingly performed by women as stated in the preceding chapter.⁴⁰ Even if the tasks were varied, the domestics attached to the owner's household were subject to a different treatment and status as compared to other slaves not working in the household. Teelock explains that "popular myth has it that they ate, dressed and lived better compared to most others".⁴¹ Because they were in closer contact with members of the household, they were given certain privileges; some became the 'personal' domestic of the owner, a servant whom he could trust and rely on. In November 1789, Jacques Maissin, 'Ecuyer Chevalier de l'ordre Royal et militaire' requested the manumission of his Malagasy male servant Hector, whom he qualified as '*homme de confiance*'-someone who had all his trust. He wished to reward the slave for his good conduct and loyal service. Hector received as donations money and assets enough for him to subsist.⁴²

Cezar was an Indian slave working for Jean Jacques Leconte who happened to be an ex-councillor at the 'Conseil Supérieur' of the colony. Cezar was assigned one of the most superior tasks in the owner's household since he was his butler. It appeared that Cezar was placed in a unique position unlike all other slaves and he also owned a piece of land and two slaves at the moment of his manumission.⁴³ Being Leconte's butler, Cezar had probably a very close relationship with his owner and this level of 'intimacy' helped in the manumission process. It could be possible that, compared to other slaves working in the household, Cezar owned more possessions and also dressed better.

Two other domestics were freed without the reasons for their manumission being stated but it could be that they obtained their freedom through reward. In 1797, Pompée, a 34 year-old Indian slave working as domestic, was manumitted. His owner, the citizen Jean Baptiste Roch, a surgeon residing at Canton de La Fraternité donated to him an amount of 3000*livres*.⁴⁴ Another domestic,

⁴⁰ See Chapter 3, Part 3.2.

⁴¹ V. Teelock: *Bitter sugar*..., page 159.

⁴² Register OA87, act dated 25 November 1789, MA.

⁴³ Register OA87, act dated 22 April 1789, MA.

⁴⁴ Register A57, act dated 4 messidor an 5 (22 June 1797), MA.

Aza, a Malagasy of 42 years belonging to Philippe Faivre du Bouvot, was freed and he obtained as donation a sum of 2000*livres*.⁴⁵

Two cases of testamentary manumissions were recorded for two domestics; Lindor, an Indian slave of 21 years working as domestic and wigmaker for the late Pierre Thomas, was freed in April 1798 by a testamentary manumission. The will stated that Lindor be offered an amount of 16,500*livres* as donation.⁴⁶ The other case involved another Indian slave, lafleur, who belonged to the late Sieur Jean Constantin. Lafleur's wife, Charlette, was also a domestic and both were manumitted together following the clauses of the testament dated 22 January 1799.⁴⁷ Their manumission was confirmed in 1805 and this date revealed that almost six years had elapsed between the date of the request and the confirmation of the manumission. This might be because of the laws for manumission under Decaen's rule - the slaves to be manumitted had to provide enough proof of subsistence and owners were subject to pay taxes while freeing their slaves. The act did not mention any donation or whether the two slaves would still be at the family's service but the fact that their manumission was confirmed was enough to determine that they were freed.

A most interesting manumission case occurred in 1789 whereby a Malagasy war prisoner known as Auguste was freed from slavery. The slave was working as domestic for the Baron Beniowsky but he was caught and held as a war prisoner. A request was made to the Governor of the Isles de France and Bourbon that Auguste be set free from prison and also from slavery since his owner was withdrawing all rights of property he had on him. Auguste was set free and no longer considered as the Baron's domestic as he was only a freed war prisoner - '*qu'il ne peut plus le considerer que comme prisonnier de guerre libre...*'.⁴⁸

Those slaves who were engaged as cooks in private households mostly obtained their freedom as reward for the good work performed. In 1794, Flore Lassale, a free woman residing at Port de La Montagne, manumitted her Bengali slave, Jasmin for his loyal service. The slave was a cook and Flore donated to him an amount of 3000*livres*.⁴⁹ A month later, Charles François Michelet residing at the same place, rewarded his Malagasy slave, Pierre by granting to him his freedom.

⁴⁵ Register A39, act dated 7 February 1794, MA.

⁴⁶ Register A57, act dated 4 floreal an 6 (23 April 1798), MA.

⁴⁷ Register IE46, act dated 9 vendemiaire an 14 (1 October 1805), MA.

⁴⁸ Register OA87, act dated 25 May 1789, MA.

⁴⁹ Register A39, act dated 14 prairial an 2 (2 June 1794), MA.

The act stated that his talent as a cook - '*le talent de cuisinier*' - would enable him to subsist, and, furthermore, he also obtained an amount of 1000*livres* and some clothes.⁵⁰

Apprentices in surgery

A most unusual profession for slaves at that time was in surgery, and, it appeared very surprising that certain slaves found the ability to perform such tasks given the nature of this profession at that time. To become a surgeon in 18th century Isle de France meant a high degree of financial investment as people needed to leave the colony for France or England to be trained. It was mostly difficult for slaves to acquire such skills but, if the owners were surgeons, they could make their slaves learn this skill. Only two cases of manumission involving slaves in surgical occupations had been recorded. In November 1793, Azor, a Malagasy slave purchased his manumission from a free Malagasy couple - Alexandre and his wife Héb  - for 2000*livres*. He performed certain surgical treatments through which he obtained the means to buy his freedom - '*exerçant l'art de la chirurgie et ayant opéré des cures qui lui ont facilité les moyens de se racheter*'. Azor owned two Malagasy slaves: Pierre, 25 years and Th l maque, 30 years.⁵¹ No information was available in the act how Azor learnt this skill as his owner was not a surgeon.

The other case concerned another Malagasy slave, Jean, who belonged to Ernu Ferlene, a surgeon residing at Camp des Malabars. Jean was Ferlene's student in surgery - '*...son eleve en chirurgie...*' and he obtained his manumission since Ferlene was leaving the colony for India. Besides being his student, Jean also performed tasks such as bricklayer and stonecutter and he received an amount of 3000*livres* as donation. It is seen here that the owner made his slave learn his own profession, and, according to the act, Jean was already considered as a 'surgeon' - '*... que provisoirement l'affranchy soit fait d'exposer l' tat de chirurgien...*'.⁵² These two cases suggested that the freed slaves could nurse privately sick people and account for their physical state.

⁵⁰ Register A39, act dated 19 messidor an 2 (7 July 1794), MA.

⁵¹ Register A39, act dated 17 February 1794, MA.

⁵² Register A39, act dated 15 thermidor an 2 (2 August 1794), MA.

Coopers and cartwrights

The cooper's task consisted mainly in making and repairing barrels used in the sugar factories and for other purposes. Seven coopers obtained their manumission during the period 1789-1810 and, among them, there was only one privately owned cooper while the others were 'government' coopers.

The privately owned cooper was a young boy of 13 years who belonged to a coloured citizen, Jean Baptiste Desgaules residing at Canton de La Montagne. The young slave, François, was freed along with four other slaves, all of them belonging to the same owner. It was clear that François, because of his young age, was still an apprentice in the cooperage profession but he would be under Desgaules' care till his majority age and, afterwards own his private cooperage activity. Furthermore, the donations given to the five slaves were more than sufficient for their subsistence – three houses worth 6000*livres*, 200*livres* and a surplus of 280*livres* for each one, a Bengali female slave of 30 years worth 3000*livres* and two maize grinders worth 75*livres*.⁵³

The other coopers were employed by the colony and even after their manumission, they would still continue to work. In December 1795, Baptiste Qualquy, a Creole slave of 31 years, cooper working for the Republic, obtained his manumission. He was also offered an amount of 1500*livres* while still being at the service of the Republic.⁵⁴ Another Creole slave, Jeannot, 51 years, involved in the cooperage workshop, was manumitted and despite his age, he would still be working as a freed slave.⁵⁵

Only three cartwrights were manumitted, and, usually their tasks were mainly to construct and repair carts. Jacques Cauna explains that cartwrights repaired mainly old carts but the owners' beautiful carioles in rural regions were usually sent to be repaired in town.⁵⁶ Carts were used to transport the cane from the fields to the mills but also in other activities like transporting goods to and from town. In December 1796, Louis, a Malagasy slave working as Cartwright for the Republic was freed. It was most probable that he would still be at the service of the Republic as a

⁵³ Register A39, act dated 19 messidor an 2 (7 July 1794), MA.

⁵⁴ Register A66, act dated 4 nivose an 4 (25 December 1795), MA.

⁵⁵ Register A41, act dated 3 messidor an 7 (21 June 1799), MA.

⁵⁶ JCauna: *Au temps des îles à sucre...*, page 113.

freed slave though the act made no mention about this. He owned a small house and some livestock and, since he resided in town, he was well settled in his profession.⁵⁷ For the other two cartwrights, unfortunately the acts consulted were too brief and did not give sufficient information about the profession, the slave's means of subsistence, his residential area and the manumitter.

Tanner (Tanneur et coroyeur)

Toussaint was a Malabard slave belonging to the late Antoine Cavallo. The slave worked as tanner and currier with the Sieur Serret who was a skilled tanner. The work of a tanner consisted in transforming animal skins into leather and this profession was highly prized as leather was used to manufacture shoes and many other things. Toussaint was the only slave in this profession to be freed and he was manumitted through a testamentary manumission. The late Cavallo expressed his wishes that Toussaint be freed as he had proved to be most loyal. Since the slave worked with the Sieur Serret, it was most possible that he would continue to be at his service till he was able to own his private workshop.⁵⁸

Another single case of an occupation performed by one of the manumitted male slaves was that of gardener. In 1807, Elie, a Creole slave of 24 years was manumitted. He worked as gardener since 5 years for the citizen Jean Louis, cultivator residing at quartier de La Rivière Noire. The act did not mention whether Elie would remain at Jean Louis' service and no information about donations and means of subsistence for Elie were available.⁵⁹

The 'government' slaves

Among the slaves who were freed, there existed a particular group who was owned by the Government following the different regimes between 1789 to 1810. Corinne Masson explains that the existence of this category of slaves dates back to the beginning of the colonization of the island. The French Governor, Mahé de Labourdonnais employed slaves to work in the ports since 1735, and, during the Intendant Pierre Poivre's administration between 1767 to 1772, the number of slaves employed in the seaport works increased.⁶⁰ Various workshops were created – the

⁵⁷ Register A41, act dated 4 nivose an 5 (24 December 1796), MA.

⁵⁸ Register IE46, act dated 9 vendemiaire an 14 (1 October 1805), MA.

⁵⁹ Register GA36, act dated 11 April 1807, MA.

⁶⁰ C.Masson: Les esclaves de l'état..., page 99.

artillery, carpentry, blacksmith, ironmongery, cooperage, caulking, brickworks, locksmith and most of these workshops were situated in the vicinity of the port at Trou Fanfaron. During the period 1789 to 1810, some 76 male slaves belonging to the different regimes were manumitted, and, among them, single cases of manumission in particular tasks were recorded, such as: '*couvreur*' or roofer, '*ouvrier tourneur*', mechanic, garden employee and peon. A few of these slaves, though belonging to the Government, were freed by other people.

In November 1790, a Malagasy slave, Mercure, working as roofer - '*couvreur*' - in the colony's workshop was finally freed. The '*couvreur*' was mostly responsible of the works concerning the roofs of buildings. During French colonization, almost all buildings and houses had roofs made of shingles and skilled slaves were required to perform the tasks of making and repairing roofs. It is mentioned in the act that Mercure had already been freed long before, since 1783, but he was held in bondage in Madagascar and brought to Isle de France as a slave. Here, a free citizen, Joseph Santos, a Creole from Manille requested his manumission. Mercure had acquired a house worth 2000*livres* with furniture worth the same value at Grande Rivière. He also cultivated a land rented to him by a certain Mademoiselle Magon. Joseph Santos purchased this manumission for 2000*livres*; the act did not state whether Mercure would continue to work for the Republic but it was most probable that he would be self employed as his freedom had been purchased and he had enough means to subsist.⁶¹

In March 1796, Lindor, an Indian slave of 18 years was freed by Pierre Arboireau, trader residing in Port Nord Ouest. Lindor was an '*ouvrier tourneur*' - a 'turner' apprentice in one of the workshops. This manumission was not granted by the Republic, it was carried out by a private manumitter, Etienne Payet, who acted as a '*porteur de pouvoir*' or power of attorney. Since Lindor was still an apprentice, either he would continue his service at the workshop or he might also work privately for someone else.⁶²

An interesting case involved a 29 year-old Creole slave, Pierre also known as Tolbig. He worked both as carpenter and mechanic in the colony's workshop but he obtained his manumission from a private manumitter, Sieur François Giblot, a ship Captain residing at Plaines de Wilhems. The Sieur Giblot stated that he intended to free Pierre since the slave had been most loyal to him and had done much for him. He requested that the name 'Tolbig' be added to the slave's name, and,

⁶¹ Register A67, act dated 3 November 1790, MA.

⁶² Register A66, act dated 2 germinal an 4 (22 March 1796), MA.

in fact, this was only an anagram of his name 'Giblot' - '*... il soit ajouté au prenom Pierre, le nom de Tolbig, qui est le renversement de mon nom...*'. He wanted the freed slave to be distinguished among all other slaves whose names were 'Pierre'.⁶³

Certain slaves obtained their manumission directly by the colony's administration, either through reward, self purchase or exchange and replacement. In June 1799, Jeannot also known as Sanon, a 51 year-old Creole slave working in the cooperage workshop, was manumitted by Jean Baptiste Chauvalon, General Commissioner in the French establishment. Jeannot was assigned the number 26, and, if he was to be replaced, the slave offered in replacement would be registered under the same number.⁶⁴

François Moussa was a creole slave working in the carpentry workshop. He self purchased his manumission from the Republic and would not continue his service in the carpentry workshop as he offered a Malagasy slave, Azor in exchange. Since he was a skilled carpenter, he could as well work on his own and he already owned a house covered with shingles at the Camp des Gens Libres and another one which was straw-roofed.⁶⁵

When slaves belonging to the Government were freed, there were usually a few witnesses to account for the means of subsistence of these slaves even though they intended to continue their service for the colony. In 1796, Silvestre, a 56 year-old Creole slave involved in the brickworks- '*attaché à la Briquetterie de La République*' - obtained his manumission. Three witnesses: Pierre Charlot - locksmith, Yandel and Jean Mamedy - carpenter, confirmed that Silvestre owned a small house at La Briquetterie, two Mozambican slaves and an amount of 2000*livres*. Furthermore, he would still work for the Republic in the brickworks.⁶⁶

Amic was a Malagasy slave of 56 years employed in the locksmith workshop and, like Silvestre, he was freed by the Republic. The same witnesses confirmed that Amic owned an amount of 12000*livres* and a small house at the Camp des Gens Libres. He would still work as locksmith in the Republic's workshop.⁶⁷

⁶³ Register IE46, act dated 11 fructidor an 13 (29 August 1805), MA.

⁶⁴ Register A39, act dated 4 messidor an 7 (22 June 1799), MA.

⁶⁵ Register A39, act dated 20 Septembre 1794, MA.

⁶⁶ Register A65, act dated 4 vendémiaire an 5 (25 September 1796), MA.

⁶⁷ Register A65, act dated 4 vendémiaire an 5 (25 September 1796), MA.

Zéphir was a 28 year-old Indian slave whose occupation was 'Chasseur' in the 'Bataillon de Chasseurs' and he was the only slave to be manumitted in this profession. The 'Bataillon de Chasseurs' was, in fact, the name given to a new military body which was created by General Decaen. The ancient 'Corps des Volontaires de Bourbon', dissolved in 1783, was renamed 'Chasseurs de La Réunion' by Decaen through a decree of 10 Brumaire an XII (2 November 1803). He adjoined an artillery body to this military organization and the new body was known as 'Bataillon de Chasseurs'.⁶⁸

This manumission case is most interesting since Zéphir had already been freed by his owner, Sieur Pinaud, but his manumission was not confirmed as a result of Decaen's laws on manumission. In 1802, Sieur Pinaud freed Zéphir who happened to be his domestic at Tranquebar in India and he brought him to Isle de France. While Pinaud was in India for a short stay, Zéphir entered in the service of the 'Bataillon des Chasseurs' in Isle de France and requested to get his manumission act. Decaen was already ruling in the colony and his laws on manumission obstructed the complete fulfillment of Zéphir's act of confirmation. Sieur Pinaud wrote to General Decaen whereby he expressed Zéphir's free status: he was born in Masulipatan, in India where all his relatives were free people. Furthermore, Zéphir was not brought to Isle de France among other slaves. The 'Capitaine Commandant' from the 'Bataillon de Chasseurs' also confirmed to Decaen that Zéphir had long been manumitted by Pinaud and he was 'Chasseur' in this 'Bataillon' - '*...le nommé Zéphir...est enrolé à la dite Compagnie et y fait le service de chasseur*'.⁶⁹ The manumission was finally confirmed in 1808, some six years after Zéphir was freed by Pinaud in 1802.

A single case of manumission of a slave working in Mon Plaisir Garden was recorded; 'Mon Plaisir' was the rest house of the Governors of the French East India Company. The Intendant Pierre Poivre bought it in 1767 and worked towards the creation of a magnificent garden. When Poivre left the colony in 1772, the Crown Government acquired this garden which became the 'Jardin du Roi'. The only people employed there were: the Director, a clerk, a blacksmith, a caretaker and three gardeners.⁷⁰ The slave, René, was manumitted mainly as a result of his devotion and interest in his profession but his exact occupation was not stated in the act.⁷¹ The

⁶⁸ Auguste Toussaint: L'administration française de l'île Maurice et de ses archives, Ile Maurice 1965, page 29.

⁶⁹ Register GA36, act dated 27 July 1808, MA.

⁷⁰ A. Toussaint: L'administration française....., page 57.

⁷¹ Register OA87, act dated 5 July 1790, MA.

other single case concerned a slave who worked at the 'Bureau de Contrôle' as peon - 'pion' - that is, someone who was responsible for cleaning the office and doing errands. The 'Bureau de Contrôle' had diverse functions such as control over the colony's expenses, prices and issuing of banknotes. The decrees issued from France as well as the local ordinances were registered at the 'Bureau de Contrôle'.⁷² He was manumitted with his mother Marie, a Bengali slave, by a testamentary manumission. The late Philippe, a free Malabard, stated in his will dated 15 march 1775 that these two slaves be freed and the manumission was finally confirmed some fifteen years later.⁷³

The 'Commandeur' and 'Chef d'atelier'

Every workshop had a 'head' slave to control and supervise the other slaves' work, and, this 'head' is commonly known as Driver, but the manumission acts mentioned the term 'Commandeur' or 'Chef d'atelier' as it was used in the French period. Corinne Masson explains that this position of superiority is a means to encourage competition among slaves. Good conduct and loyal service were the primary factors to determine whether the slave could acquire a higher position in the workshop.⁷⁴

The Commandeur's task was primarily to ensure that work was being carried out in an orderly and disciplinary way. He was responsible of the slaves in the workshop and had to organize their daily work. According to Milbert, the Driver was also responsible to punish offences committed by slave husbands and wives, particularly those of the male slave. He had all rights to whip the male slave, but, if the offender happened to be the wife, the slave husband had the right to whip her in the Driver's presence.⁷⁵ Two types of Commandeur were distinguished among the manumitted-the Commandeur 'à grande médaille' and the Commandeur 'à petite médaille'. Jacques Cauna defines the Commandeur as someone having a certain authority over the other slaves.⁷⁶ This 'prestigious' function guaranteed him a stable occupation and some advantages like a private household and sometimes his manumission.⁷⁷

⁷² A.Toussaint: *L'administration française...*, page 33.

⁷³ Register OA87, act dated 11 August 1790, MA.

⁷⁴ C.Masson: *Les esclaves de l'état...*, page 109.

⁷⁵ M.J.Milbert: *Voyage pittoresque à l'île de France et à l'île de Ténériffe*, Tome 2, Paris 1812, page 175.

⁷⁶ J.Cauna: *Au temps des îles à sucre...*, page 115.

⁷⁷ J.Cauna, *ibid*, page 115.

In December 1790, Charles Dimbar, a 72 year-old slave owned by the King, obtained his manumission. He was Commandeur 'à grande médaille d'argent' in one of the workshops, and, despite his old age, he would still continue his service in the workshop. Charles Dimbar was in the colony since 1745 and he became Commandeur in 1750, but was freed only some 40 years later mainly because of his old age.⁷⁸

On the same date, another slave, Yandel, also 72 years old, was freed from slavery. He was in the colony since 1746 and acquired the status of 'Premier Commandeur' in 1767 in the carpentry workshop. In 1785, he was honoured with the 'petite médaille d'argent' and was finally manumitted in December 1790 under condition that he would continue to work.⁷⁹

In December 1794, two other Commandeurs were manumitted: Grand Jouan was a Mozambican Commandeur in one of the workshops of the port while Jean Maury was a Creole Commandeur 'à grande médaille' in the artillery workshop. Both were freed by the Republic but the reasons for their manumissions were not specified.⁸⁰ Since there was no account of what they owned, it was highly probable that it was a manumission granted through reward for loyal service.

In January 1795, a free citizen, Marie Jeanne residing at Le Piton, Canton des Pamplémousses, requested the manumission of Charles du Bocage, a slave belonging to the Republic. Charles was Commandeur 'à médaille d'argent' in the cooperage workshop, and he owned a small house and sufficient earnings to subsist. The citizen Marie Jeanne donated to him an amount of 1200*livres*. Since he provided enough proof to subsist independently and also to reward him for his loyal service, the Republic confirmed his manumission.⁸¹

Among the manumitted, there were no carters who were freed but a Malagasy slave was found to be a Driver of the Republic's carters - 'Commandeur charretier de La République'. This slave, Pierre, was 70 years old and he obtained his manumission in September 1795. He owned an amount of 10,000*livres*, a house at Camp des Yoloffs and he would still be at the service of the Republic.⁸²

⁷⁸ Register A67, act dated 24 December 1790, MA.

⁷⁹ Register A67, act dated 24 December 1790, MA.

⁸⁰ Register A39, act dated 6 nivose an 3 (26 December 1794), MA.

⁸¹ Register A39, act dated 8 pluviôse an 3 (27 January 1795), MA.

⁸² Register A41, act dated 4 vendémiaire an 4 (26 September 1795), MA.

There also existed a hierarchy among the Commandeurs: besides the two types of medals- 'grande' and 'petite'- which distinguished two different positions, there was also a 'head' responsible of all the Commandeurs and, he was known as a 'Chef des Commandeurs'. Only two such 'Chefs' were recorded among the manumitted. In October 1794, Jean Baptiste Canau obtained his manumission from the Republic and his occupation as 'Chef des Commandeurs des Noirs' gave him a superior status which enabled him to own a small house, a slave, some livestock and poultry. He had also been honoured with a 'grande médaille d'argent' and his service for the Republic was duly rewarded by a manumission.⁸³

In March 1796, Philippe, a 38 year-old Creole was manumitted with his wife and two children. Philippe was a 'Chef de tous les ateliers et de tous les Commandeurs' and it appeared that his occupation was most superior since he was in charge of all the workshops as well as the Commandeurs. His manumission was requested by widow Chazal residing at Canton des Pamplemousses. She was fulfilling her late husband's wishes to free Philippe and offered 1500*livres* as donation to each member of the family. Even though he belonged to the Republic, Philippe was freed by a testamentary manumission but he intended to continue his service for the Republic.⁸⁴

4.2 Stereotyping of professions by origins

An analysis of the occupations of male slaves shows that there existed stereotypes of professions by origin of slaves. Robert Shell explains that, at the Cape, "...individual slave owners' awareness of broad differences in the origin of their slaves occasioned the wholesale construction of slave stereotypes by origin...Philip Curtin and other scholars have noted that stereotyping by origin characterized all New World slave societies...".⁸⁵ Shell further states that such stereotypes may be seen in the auction prices of the slaves, prices which varied according to their origins.⁸⁶ Not only were prices directly influenced by the geographic origin of slaves as this study of manumission in Isle de France also accounts that the slave's occupation was based partly on his geographic origin.

⁸³ Register A39, act dated 30 October 1794, MA.

⁸⁴ Register A66, act dated 2 germinal an 4 (22 March 1796), MA.

⁸⁵ Robert Shell: 'The Tower of Babel: The slave Trade and Creolization at the Cape, 1652-1834' in Slavery in South Africa Captive Labor on the Dutch Frontier, Edited by Elizabeth Eldredge & Fred Morton, Westview Press 1994, page 19.

⁸⁶ Shell, *ibid*, page 19.

Following Shell's observation that, at the Cape, "settlers' and officials' perceptions, subject to a variety of influences, appear to have been the most decisive factor in stereotyping slaves and assigning slaves' occupations"⁸⁷, it is seen, for example, that slave women imported from Bengal or the coast of Coromandel had a reputation for being skilled needle women, and, they were assigned such tasks in the household rather than sent to work in the fields.

The study of the economic role of the manumitted male slaves in the preceding part has shown that stereotypes of origins were pronounced since skills became attributed to origins. At the Cape, "...stereotyping by geographic origin prevailed throughout the eighteenth century...In other words, it had become the entrenched way of classifying slaves at the Cape".⁸⁸ In Isle de France, the occupations of manumitted slave men were very diverse as compared to those of slave women and, it is observed that the number of slaves recorded as being assigned to a particular profession was attributed to origins. Table 9, on the next page, gives an idea of the classification of manumitted male occupations by origins in Isle de France from 1789 to 1810.

The table shows a total of 234 slaves classified according to their occupations and origins. However, it is important to consider the 48 'government' slaves who did not have their occupations specified in the manumission acts since these 48 slaves can alter the number of slaves assigned in the other occupations. The 28 'government' slaves with specified occupations are included among those listed in the table.

⁸⁷ Shell: 'The Tower of Babel...', page 21.

⁸⁸ Shell, *ibid*, page 21.

Table 9 : Classification of Occupations by Origins

<i>Occupations</i>	<i>Creole</i>	<i>Indian</i>	<i>Malagasy</i>	<i>Mozambique</i>	<i>Guinean</i>	<i>Malay</i>	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>Total</i>
Carpenter	20	4	6	3	2	0	4	39
Tailor	9	13	0	3	0	4	2	31
Driver	5	0	4	2	0	0	10	21
Fisherman	4	6	0	3	0	1	0	14
Wigmaker	1	7	0	2	0	0	0	10
Shoemaker	4	5	0	0	0	0	1	10
Domestic	0	4	3	0	0	0	0	7
Cook	0	2	2	1	0	0	2	7
Blacksmith	3	0	2	0	1	0	1	7
Cooper	4	0	1	0	0	0	2	7
Bricklayer	1	3	2	0	0	0	0	6
Painter	0	0	1	1	0	0	3	5
Cartwright	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	3
Hawker	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Launderer	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
'Surgery'	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
'Chasseur'	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
M.Slave	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Butler	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Butcher	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
P.Butcher	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Gardener	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Confectioner	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Peon	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Roofer	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Stonecutter	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Mechanic	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Tanner	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
'Tourneur'	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
G.Slaves	6	0	5	0	17	0	20	48
TOTAL	60	51	32	20	20	5	46	234

M.Slave : Market slave (Bazardier)

'Surgery': Apprentice in surgery

P.Butcher: Pork butcher (Charcutier)

G.Slaves: Government slaves (whose occupations were not specified in the manumission acts)

(Source: compiled from manumission acts, Series OA, IE, A & G, from 1789-1810, Mauritius Archives).

From this table, it is observed that Indians were actively involved in skilled professions like: tailor, shoemaker, wigmaker and barber, fisherman, domestic, bricklayer, hawker and butler. A single Indian slave working as 'Chasseur' was recorded among the manumitted 'government' slaves whose origins were mentioned. The Creoles were mainly attached to jobs such as carpenter, blacksmith, cooper and Driver – 'Commandeur'. From the 'government' slaves whose origins were mentioned but occupations not specified, it is seen that the Guinean outnumbered the other groups with 17 slaves as compared to 6 Creole and 5 Malagasy slaves. It must be noted that the 'Unknown' origin group of 20 slaves can lead to a variation in the number of 'government' slaves in each origin.

Shell states that Cape householders developed an elaborate set of attitudes of group attribution and the division of labor was based entirely on perceived attributes of origin.⁸⁹ In Isle de France as well, these stereotypes had an arbitrary history of their own and Milbert's description of the slave population also shows that slaves' occupations were classified following their origins.⁹⁰

The table shows that Indian slaves were mostly skilled artisans and were employed as domestics in private households. This argument is reinforced by Milbert's stereotyping by individual origin as he stated that Indians were prized as domestics because they were neater and more submissive than the other groups of slaves. Some of the Indian slaves could read and they became very skilled artisans.⁹¹ Among the 7 domestics and 6 bricklayers who were freed, Indians accounted for a higher number than the Creoles and Malagasies for each occupation: 4 Indian domestics and 3 Indian bricklayers were manumitted as compared to 3 Malagasy domestics, 2 Malagasy and 1 Creole bricklayers. Milbert explained that some of the male Indians were hired out as domestics. Many of them were workmen, bricklayers and carpenters.⁹²

Although according to Milbert, the Indian male slaves were carpenters, the quantitative study in the table shows that a very low number of manumitted Indians were involved in carpentry works. In fact, slaves performing this occupation were freed mostly from the Creole group as 20 such slaves obtained their manumission while the other groups consisted of only 4 Indians, 6 Malagasies, 3 Mozambicans, 2 Guineans and 4 Unknown. This does not imply that Indian slaves, compared to the known ethnic origins, were not skilled enough in carpentry works and did not

⁸⁹ Shell: *The Tower of Babel...*, pages 21-22.

⁹⁰ M.J.Milbert: *Voyage pittoresque...*, page 170.

⁹¹ Milbert, *ibid*, page 170.

⁹² Milbert, *ibid*, page 173.

perform works in carpentry as it could be highly possible that one of the reasons which accounted for this low number of manumitted Indian slaves was because they were prized as carpenters and manumission was not easily granted to them. It is also possible that the 'Creole' group, that is, those born in the island, were of Indian origin.

Milbert described the Malay slaves as being "intelligent and refined", they were also considered as being "...much superior in all kinds of works where a ready imagination and genius is required,..."⁹³ A British official at the Cape assigned to Malay slaves occupations like tailors, painters, shoemakers, carpenters and fishermen. This official further argued that "...they are usually engaged in everything where what is called cleverness is required".⁹⁴ This study accounted for only 4 Malay tailors and 1 fisherman who were freed amidst 31 tailors and 14 fishermen.

Not all slave societies developed the same stereotypes. At the Cape, it was considered 'natural' that Malagasy slaves worked in the fields.⁹⁵ But, in slave societies other than the Cape, such as Isle de France, a different stereotype developed for this same group. Milbert stated that, in Isle de France, the Malagasies were mostly involved in domestic work and this can be partly confirmed by the data available.⁹⁶ The manumitted Malagasy males performed works in private households such as cook and domestic. Others worked as skilled workmen either privately or for the Government. The Malagasy manumitted slaves could as well have worked in the fields but this argument cannot be totally justified since they could be part of the 333 freed slaves of the Unknown ethnic group.

4.3 The 'Freed' and the emergence of a 'new' society.

This section will analyse the roles in society of some of the manumitted slaves and how they eventually contributed in the rise of a society of their own in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The term 'Freed' is used here to define those slaves who obtained their manumissions and became freed citizens in contrast to those who were born free and known as 'free' citizens since they had never been slaves. The 'Freed' citizens consisted of both black and coloured manumitted slaves, and they contributed in a significant way to the structuring and

⁹³ Milbert: *Voyage...*, page 174.

⁹⁴ Shell: *The Tower of Babel...*, page 23.

⁹⁵ Shell: *The Tower of Babel...*, page 22.

⁹⁶ Milbert: *Voyage...*, page 164.

growth of a Freed social strata.⁹⁷ Historians such as Richard Allen and Andrew Bank use the terms 'free coloured' and 'free blacks' to define the group of manumitted slaves who rose in society. Allen explains that the free coloured population "drew its membership from two principal sources: (1) the free laborers and skilled craftsmen, often Indian, brought to the colony under contracts of service, and (2) the small number of manumitted slaves found on the island".⁹⁸ Jean Tarrade explains that it is mostly a matter of terminology since the manumitted slaves became 'free coloured' according to the vocabulary used long ago, during French colonization.⁹⁹ Andrew Bank attributes the emergence of the free blacks at the Cape to the direct consequences of manumission - "Slave manumissions were directly responsible for the creation and growth of a free black social strata,..."¹⁰⁰ The same could be said for Isle de France as the rise of the free blacks at the end of the 18th century resulted from slave manumissions. Megan Vaughan explains that the 'free black' population originated from manumitted slaves but also from "the original free workers of Indian origin who had been imported by Labourdonnais and his successors as skilled workers,..."¹⁰¹

This study of the Freed people showed them as a community whose formation was directly linked with manumission. Land grants happened to be a most important factor in the development and settlement of the Freed society since a great proportion of the manumitted slaves received plots of land as donation from their owners. Allen states that "in Mauritius, as in the New World, the acquisition of real property was crucial to free colored attempts to carve out a significant place for themselves in colonial society".¹⁰² Not only the 'free coloreds' wanted to rise as a distinct group in colonial society as the manumitted slaves also wished to be identified as a newly-formed community of Freed people and the acquisition of land and slaves was most important to determine the structure of this elite.

⁹⁷ This refers to my own definition and analysis of the freed slaves.

⁹⁸ Richard Allen: 'Creoles, Indian immigrants and the restructuring of society and economy 1767-1885', University of Illinois, PhD Thesis 1983, page 98.

⁹⁹ Jean Tarrade: 'Affranchis et gens de couleur libres à la Guyane à la fin du XVIII^e siècle d'après les minutes des notaries' in Revue Française d'Histoire d'Outre Mer, Tome XLIX, 1^{er} Trimestre 1962, page 101.

¹⁰⁰ Andrew Bank: The decline of urban slavery in Cape Town, 1806-1834, Centre for African Studies 1991, University of Cape Town, page 191.

¹⁰¹ Megan Vaughan: 'Maroons and Masquerade: Mauritius in the Eighteenth Century', Paper presented to International Conference on Slavery, Unfree Labour and Revolt in Asia and the Indian Ocean Region, University of Avignon, 4-6 October 2001, (Draft), page 8.

¹⁰² Richard Allen: Slaves, freedmen..., page 85.

It was mostly the privately owned slaves who benefited from land grants as compared to 'government' slaves who were not granted lands and very few were found to have bought public lands. Allen explains that, during French colonization, the Compagnie des Indes inaugurated a policy of making land grants to attract settlers and the Royal Government also continued this policy after 1767. But, in 1789, after the fall of the Ancien Régime, the Government ceased making land grants, and, instead, public lands were sold at reasonable prices. The 'reasonable' prices explained why colonists and free people of colour managed to secure lands, and these people, while freeing their slaves, donated to them generous plots of land.

The plots of land granted to the Freed were not concentrated only in the urban region of Port Louis as slave owners resided in every part of Isle de France, and, while manumitting their slaves, they very often donated lands situated in the same area. But the most common areas where the Freed received concessions were in the peripheral suburbs of Port Louis—the 'Camp des Malabards', 'Camp des Noirs Libres' or 'Camp des Gens libres', 'Camp Yoloff' and 'Camp des Noirs de Détachement'. Others received concessions in regions like Plaines de Wilhems, Rivière du Rempart, Trois Islots, Savanne, Quartier des Pamplemousses and other rural areas thereby setting the stage for the subsequent emergence of a Freed elite.

Some of the Freed received only a piece of land and they had to build houses on it while others obtained land with houses already built on them. This tended mostly to show the private possessions of the manumitters, some could not afford too much whereas the wealthy owners gave sufficiently enough to the slaves they were manumitting.

Richard Allen states that the free coloured who acquired lands during the 1770's "...do not seem to have occupied any special position in colonial society or government...colored recipients of land grants appear to have been rather simple men and women,...".¹⁰⁸ The occupational positions of the manumitted slaves who were granted plots of land during the 1790s and 1800s did not change much in relation to Allen's analysis of the 1770s. As explained earlier, those Freed citizens who received land and houses had been privately owned slaves, and, most of them worked as artisans.

¹⁰⁸ R.Allen: 'Creoles, Indian immigrants...', page 107.

In October 1796, a free coloured citizen, Louis Banian residing at Camp des Yoloffs manumitted a 17 year-old Creole slave, Louis. He worked as carpenter and received from Banian two houses worth more than 15000*livres* at Camp des Yoloffs.¹⁰⁴

Another citizen, Jeanne Bathio also residing at Camp des Yoloffs freed Adélaïde, a creole slave of 25 years and her daughter Agnès aged one and a half years. The citizen Bathio donated to them a small house built on a piece of land at Camp des Yoloffs.¹⁰⁵ The cases of Louis and Adélaïde show that the land and houses granted to the Freed were situated in the same residing areas of the manumitters thus helping in establishing a certain majority in these regions.

In August 1790, Sieur Pierre Maillard manumitted his slaves - Jean, his wife Charlette and their children, Mathurine and Julie - as reward for loyal service. Sieur Maillard donated to the family a piece of land of 62 acres situated at Le Camp de Masque in quartier de Flacq. The land formed part of an estate which belonged to Sieur Maillard and his wife.¹⁰⁶ With the land already acquired, Jean could build a house for his family and the proximity with the former master's estate might give them an opportunity to work there as freed slaves.

Another freed slave also obtained land in the same area; Jean Baptiste Pipon, the King's employee, acquired some twelve acres of land from Sieur Maillard in the same region as previously mentioned - Le Camp de Masque. Pipon freed his Mozambique slave Azor and donated to him the land he acquired from Sieur Maillard. Already, a few Freed citizens were found to be occupying this area, and, eventually, it would lead to the formation of a small Freed group.¹⁰⁷

In August 1790, a Freed citizen, Catherine Marie Erchal formerly a slave, purchased the freedom of her daughter Félicité from Sieur Le Gous. The act mentioned two sales transactions between Catherine and a certain Sieur Jean Le Brun. On 14 October 1788, Sieur Le Brun sold to Catherine a Malagasy slave, Calou, for 1000*livres*. On 17 October 1788, he sold to her a piece of land with a house built on it at the Camp des Noirs Libres for an amount of 6000*livres*.¹⁰⁸ As a Freed woman, Catherine was well settled and started on the road to economic prosperity.

¹⁰⁴ Register A41, act dated 4 brumaire an 5 (25 October 1796), MA.

¹⁰⁵ Register A41, act dated 4 brumaire an 5 (25 October 1796), MA.

¹⁰⁶ Register OA87, act dated 9 August 1790, MA.

¹⁰⁷ Register OA87, act dated 10 August 1790, MA.

¹⁰⁸ Register OA87, act dated 11 August 1790, MA.

A manumission case in 1795 included grants of land made to minor manumitted slaves whereby the colony's surveyor, François Duplessis, accounted for the area of the different plots allocated to the three young manumittedes – Félix, Marie and Etienne. The land was situated in the Upper Plaines Wilhems and each of the three slaves were to be given two acres and ten perches. The surveyor mentioned in the act that the land was measured and distinct boundary marks were placed so as to distinguish between the three plots.¹⁰⁹ This case shows that land could be granted to young people as well but they would be entitled to own 'personally' the asset and have full rights on this possession only at their majority age. Though the freed young people could not benefit at once from this land, this grant appeared as a long-term investment and would contribute in structuring afterwards a Freed group.

The Freed community got involved in economic activities such as owning slaves, buying and selling lands, granting lands to other newly-Freed, rearing poultry and livestock. This particular activity became common among the Freed in the 1790s as the manumitted slaves obtained also a henhouse and livestock among the donations. In October 1793, Babet, a free coloured citizen residing at Réduit, Quartier de Moka, manumitted a Malagasy slave couple - Louis and Marie Josephe. She donated to the couple four acres of land with a small house and a henhouse built on it.¹¹⁰

In January 1794, Marie Josephe, a Creole slave formerly belonging to the King was manumitted by her sister Françoise through exchange. Since Marie Josephe would not be at the Republic's service, she was well provided with donations from Françoise to enable her to subsist and play a modest role in the economy. She obtained two slaves: Antoine - a Mozambican and Sophie - a Malagasy, a small house, a kitchen and several animals: 4 she-goats, 3 sows, 10 hens and 6 ducks.¹¹¹ Françoise, the free colored woman who sought to free her sister, gives much information about the role of the free colored population. These people who were either manumitted slaves or free men and women of colour bought and sold slaves and bequeathed them to family and friends. The case of Marie Josephe shows clearly this pattern: her sister Françoise was already a well-settled free woman who acquired slaves and she donated two of her own slaves to Marie Josephe who was rising as a Freed woman with an ownership of two slaves.

¹⁰⁹ Register IE47, act dated 20 fructidor an 3 (6 September 1795), MA.

¹¹⁰ Register A39, act dated 29 October 1793, MA.

¹¹¹ Register A39, act dated 6 January 1794, MA.

A month later, Pierre Rambaud, a Marine carpenter residing at Tamarin, Canton de La Rivière Noire rewarded his Creole slave Marie by freeing her. She was given as donation pieces of furniture, clothes, livestock and poultry and an amount of 1000*livres*.¹¹²

Rafaze was a female Malagasy slave belonging to the Republic and she was freed by a testamentary manumission. The late Sébastien Déhénain was most indebted to Rafaze and stated his wishes to manumit her. The donations she received were more than sufficient for her to live independently - she was given a quarter of the whole amount of money left by the late Déhénain, a large chest containing clothes, a well stocked henhouse and also an amount of 6000*livres*. Rafaze offered another slave in exchange since she would not continue her services to the Republic.¹¹³

Allen states that "...free colored ownership of slaves was a fact of colonial life no later than 1755..."¹¹⁴ He further argues "...that slave ownership became much more widespread within the free colored population as a whole. By 1810, two-thirds or more of free colored households owned at least one slave compared to only one-third of all such households some thirty years earlier".¹¹⁵ The following two cases show how the freed slaves acquired slaves by gifts or purchase from free people, and, this slave ownership became an integral part of the Freed's rise as a distinct community.

A manumission case in August 1805 showed that the Freed could as well acquire a considerable number of slaves by means of donation. In August 1805, Sieur Joseph Lousteau residing at Quartier de La Savanne, freed his slave Josephine, a 'mulatresse creole' of 18 years. Sieur Lousteau offered to her an amount 1000*piastres* from which 700*piastres* would be invested in the purchase of eleven slaves, both males and females. The Freed woman Josephine became the sole proprietor of eleven slaves who could be categorized as follows:¹¹⁶

¹¹² Register A39, act dated 28 February 1794, MA.

¹¹³ Register A39, act dated 30 January 1794, MA.

¹¹⁴ R.Allen: *Slaves, freedmen...*, page 90.

¹¹⁵ Allen, *ibid*, pages 90-91.

¹¹⁶ Register IE46, act dated 30 August 1805, MA.

<i>Malagasy</i>	<i>piastres</i>	<i>Mozambique</i>	<i>piastres</i>	<i>Indian</i>	<i>piastres</i>
Hubenne	100	Bazile	100	Marie	50
Perrine	50	Catherine	100		
Vieux Hector	25	Manuel	100		
Zaïre	50	Vieux Pèdre	20		
		Brandis	55		
		Jeannette	50		

Another example of a Freed woman acquiring slaves was Charlette, an Indian slave of 31 years who belonged to Sieur Lefevre. When she obtained her manumission, she received as donations from her former master: (1) 9 acres of residential land situated at quartier de La Rivière du Rempart, (2) 5 slaves identified as follows:¹¹⁷

<i>Mozambique</i>	<i>Age(Years)</i>	<i>Malagasy</i>	<i>Age(Years)</i>
Louis	28	Laïde	12
Baptiste	20		
Michel	20		
Jasmin	22		

These case studies provide evidence about the means by which the Freed acquired their wealth and how they worked and improved their economic condition. The donations received from former masters contributed enormously to shape the social and economic position of the Freed in the society of Isle de France. Acquiring slaves, rearing of poultry and livestock offered the Freed the possible means to pave their way towards economic prosperity. Allen has suggested that "...for the very poorest, slave ownership was a very marginal benefit, and may have been a cost, yet socially slave ownership was a necessary condition of individual 'freedom'"¹¹⁸.

Skilled slaves had perhaps more chances and direct opportunities to rise both socially and economically especially if they worked or owned a shop in the urban region of Port Louis. The cases of Claire and Brutus give an idea how both found the means to make use of their skills and start a transaction of their own. In August 1805, Claire, an Indian slave of 28 years obtained her

¹¹⁷ Register GA36, act dated 21 September 1808, MA.

¹¹⁸ Quoted from M. Vaughan: 'Maroons and Masquerade...', page 6.

manumission. Her former owner, Sieur Jean Herchenroder offered to her three slaves and a piece of land in the vicinity of quartier de Moka. Claire was considered as a slave '*à talents*' and she already acquired from her earnings two slaves and a small location in the port area.¹¹⁹ The act made no mention about her profession, but, since she owned a location in such an active place in the port, her transaction could be most flourishing. Furthermore, one of the slaves she received as gift was a carpenter and, with such assets in hand, she was surely well equipped to frame her position in the colonial society.

Brutus was an Indian slave of 23 years who worked as tailor with Sieur Marc Savard, a skilled tailor in Port Nord Ouest. Brutus self purchased his manumission for 400*piastres* and worked as a tailor's apprentice in Savard's workshop from 1791 to 1792. Thirteen years later when Brutus requested the confirmation act of his manumission, Sieur Savard stated that the slave had all possible means to be considered as a skilled tailor. As Brutus resided in the urban region, he had various opportunities to excel in his profession.¹²⁰

4.4 The 'freedom consciousness'

The social dimension in Isle de France during the Revolutionary years must also be considered if one is to understand the factors which contributed in the rise of the Freed community. Was there a sense of 'freedom consciousness' present in slaves' mind? It is interesting to study the impact of the French Revolution on the social structure of Isle de France, particularly on slaves. The issue of slavery was greatly challenged with the outbreak of the Revolution but the protest against slavery mattered well before 1789 as the writings and thoughts of certain French philosophers accounted. Raynal, one of the philosophers, mentioned the possible creation of a 'Code Blanc' which would make slaves triumph over white domination.¹²¹ Diderot, another philosopher questioned the state of the slave as a man and human being and the act of selling this human being represented the disintegration of man.¹²² Before the events of 1789, L'abbé Baudeau suggested the end of the slave system. He proposed that slaves in colonies be freed and that they worked as 'free' people.¹²³

¹¹⁹ Register IE46, act dated 13 August 1805, MA.

¹²⁰ Register IE46, act dated 13 August 1805, MA.

¹²¹ Yves Benot: *La révolution française et la fin des colonies*. Editions La Découverte, Paris 1989, page 28.

¹²² Y. Benot, *ibid*, page 30.

¹²³ Y. Benot, *ibid*, page 32.

In August 1789, the National Assembly endorsed a text known as the 'Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et de Citoyen' which proclaimed a complete overthrow of the Ancien Régime and mentioned above all the principles of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. These principles meant that man could no longer be held in bondage, but, despite these humanitarian issues, there was reluctance to accept the abolition of the slave system mainly because of economic reasons. With the 'Déclaration', the free coloured understood their rights and gained consciousness about their equality with the whites. The decree of 13 May 1791 gave to them the right to vote.¹²⁴

What did the principle of Liberty mean to slaves? How far the slave as a human being felt concerned with the 'Déclaration', did the notions of 'Droit de l'Homme' well valued for him? Slaves were aware of the change from Monarchy to Republic and this had an impact on them particularly when they got to learn about the rights of man as a free being. However, the system of government may have changed from one regime to another, but, so far, that meant nothing for the slaves as long as they were held in bondage and as the system of slavery continued. For slaves, the principles of 'liberty' and 'equality' meant above all a total freedom underlying two main aspects: social liberation and abolition of slavery.

The quest for freedom was strongly felt by slaves and Wanquet explains that, if the Revolution did not bring about the end of the slave system, this social upheaval did influence them to seek their liberty by pacific means.¹²⁵ The slave revolt in Saint Domingue was most convincing in the quest for freedom, but, in the Mascarenes, it appeared that slaves were not determined to use violent means to reach their ends. If their great expectation following the wave of the Revolution was that of being liberated, they acted without any revolt, no mass rebellion could be detected either in Isle de France or Bourbon island during the years 1790 to 1793.¹²⁶ Though they could not voice their opinions, they tried all possible means to obtain freedom, and this 'freedom consciousness' was particularly seen amidst slaves who sought their manumission without depending on the slave owners to grant it to them by their own will. Instead of expecting the owner to free him or her by reward, gratitude or will, the slave self-purchased the manumission and, in certain cases, purchased the freedom of close kin also. This purchase sometimes proved onerous for slaves but it shows that the Revolutionary principle of 'liberty' did in fact reach them,

¹²⁴ Claude Wanquet: 'Apports et limites de la Révolution aux Mascareignes' in *L'île Maurice et la Révolution Française*, MGI Press 1990, Moka, page 18.

¹²⁵ C. Wanquet, *ibid*, page 18.

¹²⁶ Raymond d'Unienville: *Histoire politique de l'île de France (1789-1791)*, Ile Maurice 1975, page 76.

and, through manumission, they were challenging the system of slavery. As studied in Chapter 2, Part 2.7, filial love and self purchase accounted for the fourth and fifth common means to obtain freedom after manumission granted by the owner.

The study of male slaves in this chapter has shown that their occupational roles were highly diverse and very different from those of slave women. It is also noted that the stereotyping of occupations was not only by origins as studied in Part 4.2 but also by gender as these professions were very typical of male slaves. This gender-wise stereotyping can further be confirmed when compared to the occupational pattern of slave women in Chapter 3 since the manumitted female slaves performed 'soft' and light tasks in relation to their sexual identity. Male slaves obtained their manumission mostly through common means like reward, self-purchase, filial love and will of the deceased owner. Slave manumissions contributed in the creation and growth of a Freed community which was a new identity slaves gained as free individuals within the colonial society. The position and status of the Freed showed to what extent slaves fought for greater individual freedom and wished to gain their human dignity.

CHAPTER 5

Slave owners and Manumitters

Chapter 5: Slave owners and Manumitters

Literary works based on 18th century colonial society of Isle de France, such as Paul & Virginie¹, Voyage à l'isle de France², Brasse au Vent³ tend to portray the typical slave owner as being European when, in fact, the majority may have been Coloured. An analysis of the manumission acts shows that there were different types of slave owners in Isle de France – the white settlers from France, the free blacks and free coloured people, the Freed and also some owners whose residence was in Pondicherry and Goa.

It should be noted that not only the white colonists could be slave owners since slaves were owned as well by free blacks and free coloured citizens in the 18th century and early 19th century. A slave owner is generally referred to as a person owning an estate and having a considerable number of slaves working for him, and, in most cases, such owners were the settlers from France and Brittany. A person who owns only one or two slaves is also defined as a slave owner though he does not own a large estate and a considerable number of slaves.

Another feature of the manumitter was that of a slave owner who could not be present to manumit his slave, but, he could assign another person to carry out the manumission on his behalf. In such cases, the manumitter could be either an executor, a 'porteur de pouvoir' (power of attorney) or a close kin who committed himself to free the slave belonging to another owner. Many slave owners left the colony for France or Pondicherry and they stated their wishes to have their slave freed by a 'porteur de pouvoir', that is someone who was legally entitled to proceed with the manumission in the owner's absence, and, who eventually was listed as the manumitter. When the slave owner himself freed his slave, then he was also considered as the manumitter.

5.1 Profiles of slave owners

The Freed

As discussed earlier, in the preceding chapter, the term 'Freed' generally applies to a slave who had obtained his freedom as opposed to a person who was born free and had always been considered a free citizen. It becomes sometimes confusing to differentiate between the free born citizen and the Freed citizen as the acts tend to mention the terms 'free black' - *noir libre*, and,

¹ Bernardin de Saint Pierre: Paul & Virginie, Editions de l'Océan Indien 1989, Ile Maurice.

² Bernardin de Saint Pierre: Voyage à l'isle de France, Editions de l'Océan Indien 1986, Ile Maurice.

³ Marcel Cabon: Brasse au Vent, Editions de l'Océan Indien 1989, Ile Maurice.

'free coloured' - *citoyen de couleur libre* for both. But some of the manumission acts did state whether the free black or free coloured had been a former slave. This part will focus on those slaves who were manumitted long before 1789 and who began to emerge as Freed people. These manumitted slaves acquired slaves of their own either by means of gifts from their former owners or by purchasing them from other owners. The Freed became slave owners the moment these slaves became their personal property. The following examples show former slaves who later became owners of slaves.

Barbe Courette was a Freed woman, formerly a slave manumitted by Sieur Bourbier de Saint Martin. In 1790, she freed six slaves whom she referred to as her children and grand children as well as slaves belonging to her. She obtained her manumission long before 1789 and she purchased her close kin as slaves thus having on them all rights of property. She finally freed them in 1790 and offered them donations like all slave owners generally did.⁴ Another example was Hector, a Freed who was also a former slave belonging to Sieur Mandemans. Hector acquired for himself a certain number of slaves among whom there was his aunt Samba. In 1790, he freed her and gave her a donation of two slaves.⁵ This donation revealed two important aspects: Hector was a slave owner as he could afford offering at least two slaves of his own to his aunt. For Samba, this donation signified the accession to a new status, as a slave owner.

Another similar example was Jeanneton, a Freed woman herself manumitted by another citizen Marie Monique. Jeanneton requested the manumission of Jean Pierre, her Malagasy slave of 48 years. She gave to him an amount of 3000*livres* for his subsistence. The act did not mention whether Jeanneton acquired Jean Pierre at the moment of her manumission or afterwards but the slave was her own property.⁶

Another case of a Freed woman who was formerly a slave was Sophie. She had been freed by the citizen Laurent on 9 June 1799 and, her son Laurent Pierre was included among the slaves she acquired from her former master. As a newly established slave owner, Sophie freed her own son a few months later, in August and donated to him an amount of 2000*livres*.⁷ This case gives an example of the way the newly freed managed to rise economically, and, as both mother and son had become Freed citizens, they might acquire more slaves and establish themselves as 'small'

⁴ Register OA87, act dated 19 July 1790, MA.

⁵ Register OA87, act dated 26 July 1790, MA.

⁶ Register A65, act dated 4 frimaire an 5 (24 November 1796), MA.

⁷ Register A41, act dated 22 thermidor an 7 (10 August 1799), MA.

slave owners. It is most unfortunate that, as far as those Freed were concerned, the manumission acts did not state their occupations. He or she was only defined as *noir libre affranchi* or *homme/femme de couleur libre affranchi de...*, without any reference to their profession.

The Free people (blacks and coloured)

The Free people were those who were born free and had never been held in slavery. It is quite easy to locate this category of citizens in the manumission acts since the term 'affranchi' was not used to define their status. It is most interesting to note that the respective occupations of some of these Free people were given in the acts and the occupational distribution appears to be very varied. Table 10, on the next page, gives an idea of the different professions these slave owners practiced in the 18th and early 19th centuries.

As in the cases of manumitted slaves studied in the previous chapters, the occupations of the Free people as slave owners and manumitters were not mentioned in all the acts of manumission. Table 10 accounts only for those whose professions were specified.

Table 10: Occupational Pattern of Free Slave owners

<i>OCCUPATIONS</i>	<i>NUMBER</i>
Carpenter	50
Tailor	40
Trader in town / Hawker	20
Shoemaker	20
Fisherman	20
Sailor	15
Blacksmith	12
Locksmith	10
Coopersmith	10
Painter	10
Sailmaker	10
Stonecutter	5
Cartwright	5
Café owner	1
Innkeeper	1
Maitre d'hôtel	1
Canteen keeper	1
Wood Seller	1
Caterer	1
Cook	1
Butcher	1
Cutler (Marchand coutelier)	1
Jeweller	1
Concierge du Jardin National des Plantes	1
Maker of edge tools (Taillandier)	1
Teacher	1
Cultivator	1
Mechanic	1
Tanner (Tanneur)	1
Peon (Pion)	1
Hat Maker (Chapelier)	1
Total	245

(Source: compiled from manumission acts for the years 1789-1810, Series OA, IE, A & G, Mauritius Archives).

It must be noted that, for these slave owners whose professions were not mentioned in the acts of manumission, the acts only referred to the slave owner as '*noir libre résidant...*' or '*citoyen de couleur libre...*' without specifying his or her occupation.

Most of the Free people did not own estates and were rather skilled artisans who owned a few slaves, and, from the occupational pattern, it seems that they did not hold prestigious positions in society. Sieur Joseph Jacquin, for example, was a free citizen working as cultivator and residing at Canton de Flacq. He wished to free his Indian female slave Marie, 45 years, whom he had owned for fifteen years.⁸

Another 'small' slave owner was Dame Agnès Lepignette who happened to be the only teacher recorded among the slave owners. She owned the slave Perrine Rose, an Indian of 26 years since 1791 and she acquired her from Anfray, a slave trader.⁹ Perrine Rose remained her property till the year 1808 when she decided to manumit her.

Jacques Olichon worked as carpenter in Port and Parish of St. Louis. He had an Indian slave Marie, in his service for fifteen years. It was evident that Olichon owned some more slaves as he donated to Marie three of his own slaves worth 6000*livres*: (1) Bienaimé, a Malagasy of 28 years also working as carpenter, (2) Jupiter, a Malagasy of 26 years, (3) Rosalie, also Malagasy working as seamstress. Since Olichon was a skilled carpenter, he trained the slave Bienaimé as a carpenter.¹⁰

Sieur Dupuy, another 'small' slave owner, worked as cook in the port department and he acquired some eight years earlier a Bengali slave, Soret, 45 years old. He freed her and offered to her an amount of 3000*livres*, a house, a small location in town and two slaves: Auguste - a Malagasy of 22 years, Marie - a Bengali of 32 years.¹¹

The citizen Antoine Cantin was the only hat maker recorded among the slave owners. He freed two female slaves belonging to him – Isabelle, a 21 year-old Indian and her Creole daughter,

⁸ Register IE46, act dated 19 August 1805, MA.

⁹ Register GA36, act dated 11 October 1808, MA.

¹⁰ Register A67, act dated 18 February 1791, MA.

¹¹ Register A67, act dated 29 March 1791, MA.

Adèle, 18 months old.¹² In 18th century and early 19th century Isle de France, hat making was considered as an important occupation since many people adopted the style of wearing hats.

These slave owners, with their professions and earnings, managed to acquire slaves, lands and houses part of which they gave to their own slaves at the moment of their manumission. Chadoux, a '*noir lascard libre*' - a free citizen of Muslim origin- working as fisherman and residing at quartier de La Poudre d'Or, wished to free his Malabard slave, Catherine. He acquired the slave several years earlier from another citizen, Jeanne Françoise Sophie and donated to her several small houses at Camp des Malabards and also two young male Mozambican slaves.¹³

There were also owners who were infirm, and generally had a female slave to care for them. One such owner was Nizam of 'lascard' caste, referred to as 'invalide' and he manumitted Manon, an Indian slave who had looked after him for 16 years.¹⁴ Another infirm was Gabriel Berthomieu, residing at Port Nord Ouest, who freed his Creole slave Véronique. He did not express his intentions for freeing this slave, but he donated to her an amount of 2000*livres*.¹⁵

As far as the acts could reveal, the attitudes of these slave owners towards manumission seemed to be quite flexible as some of these slaves were freed out of gratitude and to reward them for loyal service. It was somewhat difficult to state whether the owners were for or totally against manumission mainly because of financial factors but no factual evidence could really prove this attitude. The slave owner did not express in the manumission act whether he was unable to follow the requirements for a manumission.

The thoughts of 'small' slave owners were not easy to uncover. The slaves were manumitted when they were still at a productive age and the owner also was still alive. Unlike some slave-owners of big estates who manumitted their slaves mostly by testamentary manumissions, the Freed and Free people as slave owners preferred to manumit their slaves while they were still alive. It is quite evident that the slave-owners, who had formerly been slaves, would find the process of manumission as the ultimate aim of any slave. They had been held in slavery before and were in a better position to feel and understand the slave's urge to become free.

¹² Register GB27A/27B, act dated 30 August 1800, MA.

¹³ Register A67, act dated 25 April 1791, MA.

¹⁴ Register A72, act dated 25 April 1791, MA.

¹⁵ Register A65, act dated 4 fructidor an 4 (21 August 1796), MA.

Another feature of 'small' slave owners as manumitters is the close relationship that existed between master and slave. Family relationships seem predominant among the slaves they manumitted. Slave owners 'owned' their relatives, children or parents as slaves. They also seem intent on giving their close relatives their freedom. Thus, testamentary manumissions were few among these slave owners.

The Government employees

Besides the Free people who owned slaves, there was another category of Free people who owned slaves and who were employed by the Government. This group of people consisted mainly of those who worked in ships, in the army and other establishments; it is important to consider that they hold more or less senior and high positions in their professions as compared to the Free people who were mostly self-employed. The different occupations of the Government employees were varied as can be seen in Table 11, on page 176. Some of the professions are quoted in their original designation since they were mostly titles given to the Government officers.

In this case also, since not all the acts of manumission mentioned the professions of slave owners, it is highly possible that there were more Government employees as slave owners and manumitters than the 73 listed in Table 11.

Table 11 : Occupational Pattern of Government Employees who were Slave owners

<i>OCCUPATIONS</i>	<i>NUMBER</i>
Sergeant	10
Lieutenant	10
Artillery Lieutenant	10
Captain in The Merchant Navy	10
'Lieutenant des Vaisseaux'	8
Surgeon	5
'Chevalier de Marine Marchande'	3
'Chevalier de l'ordre Royal et Militaire'	2
Notary	1
Lawyer	1
Chief Surveyor	1
Dentist	1
'Intendant des Isles de France et de Bourbon'	1
Consul of the United States of America	1
'Lieutenant de Juge'	1
'Conseiller Honoraire'	1
'Ecrivain des Colonies'	1
'Chirurgien Major des Vaisseaux du Commerce'	1
'Directeur des Ponts et Chaussées'	1
'Directeur de La Poste'	1
'Directeur de l'hôpital du Roi'	1
'Commis à la conduite du four à chaux'	1
'Traducteur pour la Langue Anglaise au service du Roi'	1
Total	73

(Source: compiled from acts of manumission for the years 1789-1810, Series OA, IE, A & G, Mauritius Archives).

The following manumission cases show slaves being freed by slave owners who were Government employees. For example, in March 1790, a female slave, Brigitte, obtained her manumission from Sieur François de Bonnefoy who was employed in the naval offices and he was also formerly an English translator at the service of the King. He was found to be among the very few Free people who occupied such positions in society. He offered to the slave an amount of 4000*livres* as donation.¹⁶

Another example was Sieur Mathurin Collard Cadet residing at quartier des Pamplemousses. He was a Captain in the National Militia and he owned a 'creole mulatresse' slave Julie whom he wished to reward by manumitting her. Sieur Cadet owned quite a few slaves as he offered two of his own slaves to Julie and also six acres of land in the same area at quartier des Pamplemousses.¹⁷

Suzanne, an Indian slave and her four children were freed by their owner Antoine Sambuc, also known as Chevalier Montvert. He was an ancient Captain in the Infantry and had been honoured with the title of 'Chevalier de l'ordre royal et militaire'. He wanted to reward Suzanne who had long been at his service and donated to her a small house at Camp des Malabards and three slaves.¹⁸ Another slave owner, Sieur Jean Baptiste Bellouard, ancient officer in the King's fleet, manumitted his Creole slave Marie Therese. The reason for this manumission was most interesting as he stated that he was most indebted to Marie Therese who had breastfed his children.¹⁹

An important aspect in these occupations showed that some of the slave owners were 'ancient' Captains or officers. This refers to the Ancien Régime when the colony was still under Crown government and these slave owners were employed under its rule. In 1790, after the dissolution of the Crown government, some of the professions related directly to the King's services were no longer applicable. The employees were transferred to other offices, some of them joined other occupations but they were still considered as the 'ancient' officers of the King.

Another one of these 'ancient' officers was Sieur René Charles Grainville de Forval - he was formerly Colonel in the Infantry and had been made 'Chevalier de l'ordre royal et militaire'.

¹⁶ Register OA87, act dated 11 March 1790, MA.

¹⁷ Register OA87, act dated 17 April 1790, MA.

¹⁸ Register OA87, act dated 17 April 1790, MA.

¹⁹ Register OA87, act dated 25 May 1790, MA.

According to the act, he appeared as a rich slave owner as one of the male slaves who was freed happened to be Commandeur in his estate. The seven slaves who obtained their freedom were part of the same family and they obtained an amount of 21,700*livres* as donation. Furthermore, Sieur de Forval also offered some 24½ acres of land and nine slaves to the newly freed.²⁰

The Consul of the United States, William Macarty residing in Port Nord Ouest was also among the slave owners. In January 1797, he manumitted two of his slaves: Marie Joseph, a 30 year-old Creole and Therese, a Malagasy slave of 40 years. As donation, the slaves received an amount of 6000*livres*.²¹

Slave owners on estates

Though among the manumission cases consulted no slave had been recorded as plantation slave, it is still highly possible that those freed slaves whose occupations had not been mentioned included field slaves among them since some of the manumitters were found to be estate owners.

It has been observed that, among the different categories of slave owners, those having estates and 'habitations' were most reluctant to free their slaves. The sugar industry had not yet expanded too much in the 18th century and early 19th century, but "...slave owners resisted even more attempts at manumission as they feared an exodus from their estates".²² Slave owners having big estates invested largely on slaves and freeing them too early would mean a rapid economic loss. This explains why a majority of such slave owners expressed their intentions to manumit some of their slaves through testamentary manumissions and these slaves obtained their freedom only after the owner's death.

The late Sieur Nicolas Fleury, surgeon formerly residing on his 'habitation' at Montagne Longue in quartier des Pamplemousses stated in his testament dated 20 May 1785, the manumission of Marguerite, one of the Creole slaves in the 'habitation'. Sieur Fleury was a rich owner according to the donations granted to Marguerite. He bequeathed to her some eleven slaves from the 'habitation', a female slave child and some 78 acres of land included in his 'habitation' at Montagne Longue. The manumission was confirmed only in February 1791.²³

²⁰ Register OA87, act dated 23 October 1790, MA.

²¹ Register A65, act dated 4 pluviöse an 5 (23 January 1797), MA.

²² V. Teelock : *Bitter sugar...*, page 220.

²³ Register A67, act dated 26 February 1791, MA.

In 1796, the Gallet family requested the manumission of four adult slaves belonging to the succession of their late mother. The late Dame Gallet owned a number of slaves and she stated that four particular slaves be freed after her death: Marie Jeanne - a Mozambican of 60 years, Antoine - also Mozambican aged 60, Monique – also a Mozambican of 45 years and Louison - a Creole of 30 years.²⁴

Three of the slaves were not so young and the need to free them when they were past a productive age did not appear much as a loss for the owner.

The late Sieur Chazal owned an estate at La Montagne Longue and after his death, His wife, widow Chazal fulfilled his wishes by manumitting a slave family and another male slave child belonging to the estate. The occupation of the male slave, Philippe, 38 years revealed much about the estate itself. Philippe was assigned as 'Chef' of all the workshops and the Commandeurs on the estate.²⁵ It appeared that the Chazal estate was considered as well equipped and the extent of slave ownership became an indication of the owner's economic and social status.

Jean François Villard was another slave owner residing at Trois Islots in Canton de Flacq and, he expressed in his testament dated 1st June 1793 his wish that several of his slaves be manumitted on the day of his death- "*... au jour de son décès affranchis et mis en liberté...*".²⁶ Hence, Louisa, a Mozambican slave of 45 years, her six children and a 30 year-old Creole slave, Jean, were freed soon after Villard's death in 1798. The late owner was qualified in the act as a benefactor- '*bienfaiteur*' - as he donated to Louisa and her children a lifelong yearly pension and a considerable piece of land at Canton des Trois Islots. Jean also was given an annual pension and a piece of land in the same place. Not all slave owners could afford a lifelong pension to their slaves after freeing them since it was an economic investment and only the rich owners were capable of doing so.

Another well-established estate was the Latour family estate at Plaines de Wilhems. The late Sieur François Latour requested in his testament the manumission of one of the slaves he

²⁴ Register A66, act dated 2 pluviôse an 4 (22 January 1796), MA.

²⁵ Register A66, act dated 2 germinal an 4 (22 March 1796), MA.

²⁶ Register A77, act dated 1er nivôse an 7 (21 December 1798), MA.

obtained from his parents' succession. Casimir, a Creole Commandeur, was freed in 1809 and his occupation as Commandeur meant that the estate had quite a number of slaves.²⁷

Cécile, a Creole slave of 24 years was freed by a testamentary manumission in March 1809. During Decaen's era, a slave could be freed by his owner only if he had been the owner's property for at least five years. When Cécile's manumission was requested, a census had to be carried out on her late mistress slave ownership. An extract from the slave inventory of Port Napoléon for the year 1802 confirmed that, at that period, Cécile figured among the slaves of the late widow Cardonne, her mistress. She was then 17 years old and five other slaves were also included in the inventory, showing that the late widow Cardonne was the proprietor of at least six slaves of Indian and Creole origins. The inventory of 1802 was as follows:

<i>Slaves</i>	<i>Origins</i>	<i>Age</i>
Sotsy (infirm)	Indian	47
François	Creole	26
Jean Charles	Creole	20
Suzette	Indian	50
Cécile	Creole	17
Edouard	Creole	11 ²⁸

Widow Cardonne requested the manumission of only one slave and what happened to the others was not mentioned, whether they would be sold to other owners or remain in the family's succession.

Some estates were held in partnership and, on these, approval was needed from all partners before a slave was manumitted. There were at least three owners associated with the Fleurent estate at Montagne Longue. To carry out the manumission of slaves meant having the approval of all the partners involved in slave ownership. In 1796, ten slaves belonging to the estate were freed and each slave was offered an amount of 2000*livres* as donation. A little Creole slave, Hubertine Emilie, 3 years, was among the ten freed slaves and, because of her young age, she needed

²⁷ Register GA36, act dated 19 January 1809, MA.

²⁸ Register GA36, act dated 24 March 1809, MA.

someone to take care of her until her majority age. One of the owners, Charles Jocet, was assigned this responsibility.²⁹

The French elite slave owners

The French came to Isle de France, settled in the colony, established estates and acquired slaves to work and cultivate their lands. The majority of these settlers married the free women in the colony and emerged as owners of well-established estates. The following two case studies provided a detailed analysis of the French slave owner's acquisition in lands and slaves.

Case study No.1 : Sieur Charles François Couacaud

Sieur Couacaud arrived in the colony in 1770 from Rochefort, his native land and he practiced as surgeon. In Isle de France, he married a Free woman, Thérèse Boudret and settled at Rue de Paris in Canton du Port de La Montagne. In this urban region, he owned an estate with fourteen slaves: eight males and six females. The slaves' occupations were mainly carpenters, shoemakers and domestics. No plantation slave was found in the inventory as the estate's location in an urban area did not much favour agricultural work in the fields.

In 1808, Azor, an Indian slave working as domestic in the estate, obtained his manumission from Sieur Couacaud. It is interesting to analyse the perceptions of the owner when granting this manumission: the document mentioned an act of gratitude and a reward for Azor who had long been the property of Sieur Couacaud, but Azor was only 35 years old while the other male slaves were much older. It could be that the owner freed him in relation to his occupation as Azor was a domestic among 11 other domestics while there were only 2 carpenters and 1 shoemaker. The slave owner was also considering the economic aspect of his ownership.³⁰

²⁹ Register A65, act dated 4 frimaire an 5 (24 November 1796), MA.

³⁰ Register GA36, act dated 29 June 1808, MA.

Case study No.2: Sieur Henry Labour

The second case study helps in determining the owner's views while manumitting his slave and gives an idea of the 'large' estate as it existed in 18th century Isle de France.

Sieur Henry Labour, a military officer born in St. Laurent de Nogent Le Rotrou in France, arrived in the colony in 1748. He married Marie Jeanne Leroux, a native of Isle de France and settled in Canton de Flacq. He could be considered as a rich owner since an inventory of his estate in 1794 showed that he possessed the following:

Assets	Number
Adult male and female slaves	113
Slave children	3
Livestock and poultry	156
Palanquin	1

The estate comprised of about 729 acres of land meant mostly for the plantation of:

Plantation	Acres
Wood	200
Indigo	180
Maize	15
Cassava	60
Vegetable growing & garden	1/3 (one third)
Savanna land	373 2/3 (373 two thirds)

Sieur Labour had a total of 116 slaves working on his estate and the different occupations of the 113 adult slaves can be categorized as follows:

Occupations	Males	Females
'Noir de pioche'	70	31
Commandeur	4	-
Caulker (calfat)	1	-
Carpenter	3	-
'Seamstress	-	1
Cook	-	2
Servant	-	2

The data shows that the highest number of slaves for both sexes lies in the plantation labour. Very few slaves were skilled artisans as even the female slaves worked in agriculture as 'négresse de pioche'.³¹

Fifteen years later, in 1809, one of the female slaves who worked as servant was freed by a testamentary manumission. The late Henri Labour requested in his will the manumission of Françoise, a Creole slave of 29 years and her two children. Furthermore, she would have to remain at the service of widow Labour until the latter died.³²

This manumission shows that the slave owner's possible views on the process of freeing his slave at a moment when the plantation society was emerging. To manumit the plantation slaves would mean a shortage of labour while the overall impact on society when freeing a servant or a skilled slave might not be of such important consequence. Even as a freed slave, Françoise had to remain on the estate and was maintained by the late owner's wife.

These two studies also show that the household was the place around which the slave owners organized their social and economic lives, they arranged production and subordinated their slaves. As Mason explains, the slave owner's household "... was the institution within which the master's family of wife, children, slaves, and servants pooled income and resources...".³³ The owner's household can be defined in patriarchal terms as it brings at least "...master and servants

³¹ Register IE49, act dated 7 brumaire an 3 (28 October 1794), MA.

³² Register GA36, act dated 20 December 1809, MA.

³³ John Edwin Mason: 'Paternalism under siege' in *Breaking the chains – Slavery and its legacy in the Nineteenth-Century Cape Colony*, Edited by Nigel Worden & Clifton Crais, Witwatersrand University Press 1994, page 58.

together in some sort of quasi-familial relationship...(and) this relationship has little to do with 'human warmth'".³⁴ Françoise's case in Sieur Labour's household confirms this aspect of paternalism as there existed some sort of exploitation – only one servant was freed from 116 slaves, and, furthermore, the freed slave had to continue her service in the household.

A complaint available from the 'Bureau de Police' helped in establishing the type of relationship that some slave owners had with their female slaves. In 1808, Marianne, a Creole slave belonging to Sieur de La Hesnouye residing in Flacq, complained about the bad treatment she endured with her master. She left the household in her state of pregnancy, and, furthermore, showed signs of lashes on her buttocks.³⁵ Like Marianne, there existed other female slaves who were badly treated by their owners. Such cases of slave women being flogged on the posterior showed, in a sense, the male supremacy and the whipping of nearly naked women reduced their "...threshold of shame thus making them more liable to engage in licentious behaviour".³⁶ Male owners, as Verene Shepherd explains, "...considered these women to be personal property and therefore they could do whatever they wanted to do with them...Enslaved women had no say in the matter".³⁷ They were undergoing a sort of debasement of character and an utter annihilation.

Whipping occupied a central role in the master-slave relationship and the whip was used by slave owners so as to discipline their slaves and exercise over them a form of social control. Whipping enabled slave owners to remind slaves of their subordinate position and also to prevent any possibility of equality between them. Orlando Patterson states that "there is no known slaveholding society where the whip was not considered as indispensable instrument".³⁸ The whip was surely an 'indispensable instrument' as it gave to slave owners this paternal authority over their subordinate 'children' in the household.

Besides these two French owners in Isle de France, another example of a French owner was recorded as a most interesting and rare case. In 1785, a most distinguished man known as Seigneur François Cecile Bunan residing in his castle in France, came to Isle de France. He purchased a male slave, André, from the 'habitation' of Louis Monneron in Flacq and brought the

³⁴ Mason: 'Paternalism under siege...', page 59.

³⁵ Register Z2B, No. 16, complaint dated 28 October 1808.

³⁶ Pamela Scully: Liberating the family? Gender and British slave emancipation in the Rural Western Cape, South Africa, 1823-1853, James Currey Ltd 1997, page 37.

³⁷ Women in Caribbean History, Edited and Compiled by Verene Shepherd, UK 1999, page 59.

³⁸ Orlando Patterson: Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study, Harvard University Press 1982, Cambridge, page 4.

slave with him in France. André remained at his service till 1789 when the Seigneur Bunan manumitted him at Saint Malo in France.³⁹

The 'Déclaration' of 1738 confirmed the slave owner's rights to bring his slave with him in France in view to instruct him, make him practise Catholicism and also learn a profession. But, in fact, the French owners brought the slave back with them mainly because they needed to be attended by a domestic during the sea voyage. In most cases, the owners did not return to Isle de France and the slave remained at their service until manumission or death.⁴⁰ No details were available about André after his manumission and it was not mentioned whether he came back to Isle de France or he stayed there in Saint Malo.

Some of the manumitting slave owners were actively involved in the slave trade, and, in fact, many of them traveled to the French establishments in India to acquire slaves. Sieur André Baudouin was a French slave owner residing usually in Calcutta and he traded with other slave owners and traders in Isle de France. He acquired a female Indian slave, Dorothee and her son Elie from Sieur Jean Fortieu in Isle de France, in 1784 and he brought them with him in India. Five years later, he freed both mother and child in Chandernagor. The manumission act included a document from Sieur Fortieu whereby he confirmed the sale transaction with Sieur Baudouin in 1784.⁴¹

5.2 The manumitters

Among the manumitters, not all of them were necessarily slave owners as, at the time of manumission, the slave's owner was not necessarily the same person who had first owned the slave. It could be that someone else bought the slave from his current owner so as to free him. But, in many cases, when the manumission process was undertaken, the manumitter was often identified as the only owner the slave had had meaning that the slave had not been sold to someone else during his bondage.

³⁹ Register OA87, act dated 24 June 1789, MA.

⁴⁰ Eric Saugera: Bordeaux Port négrier XVIIe – XIXe siècles, Editions Karthala 1995, page 294.

⁴¹ Register OA87, act dated 4 October 1789, MA.

During the period 1789 to 1810, in Isle de France, many free people bought slaves with the only aim of freeing them. Rosemary Brana-Shute writes of a similar process in Suriname and explains that “it is a secondary, internal slave trade that transfers slaves from one owner to one or more owners, not for use as labour but with the intention of freeing that specific slave”.⁴² In the manumission acts, this ‘internal trade’ was normally defined by the terms ‘*achat en vue de procurer la liberté*’⁴³, and, in some cases, the identity of the first slave owner was not revealed.

A manumission case in 1797 showed clearly the ‘internal slave trade’ which transferred the slave from one owner to another before the slave was finally freed by someone else. Joseph Chartier, tailor residing at Canton de La Fraternité, became the final manumitter of the slave Etienne, a ‘*creol mulatre*’ of 17 years belonging to the late citizen Le Roux, his first owner. Etienne happened to be the son of Brigitte, one of late Le Roux’s slaves. In his days, Le Roux offered the boy to another owner, the citizen Thioux, on condition that the latter would manumit him. The citizen Thioux left Etienne under someone else’s responsibility - the citizen Samson who resided in Port Nord Ouest. On 16 November 1786, Samson made an agreement with another citizen, Joseph Chartier, to manumit the child and make him learn the tailoring profession upon which Chartier agreed. He requested the young boy’s manumission and donated to him an amount of 1000*livres* besides his commitment to take Etienne as his apprentice for seven years.⁴⁴

This transfer from one owner to another appeared as a most ambiguous chain since the true motives of each owner lay hidden. In the first place, the intentions of Le Roux should be questioned: Etienne could very probably be his own son since the boy was a ‘mulatre’ born from one of his slaves and because he did not perhaps wish to feel stigmatized, the child was not sold but given to another owner. In this internal slave trade, only Chartier was found bearing the intention to free Etienne as he seemed economically and financially well set to carry out the manumission. This case was the only example of a complex ‘internal slave trade’ found among the records and the other cases revealed to be most simple.

In November 1789, Sieur Jean Baptiste Lislet, draughtsman in the port workshop and his wife purchased the slave Justine, a ‘*mulatresse creole*’ from Isle Bourbon, from her respective owner

⁴² Rosemary Brana-Shute: ‘Approaching freedom: The manumission of slaves in Suriname, 1760-1828’, in *Slavery & Abolition*, Volume 10, No.3, December 1989, page 52.

⁴³ ‘Purchase of the slave with the intention to free him/her’.

⁴⁴ Register A65, act dated 4 floréal an 5 (23 April 1797), MA.

with the only aim to free her. They offered her an amount of 3000*livres* as donation.⁴⁵ Here, the manumitter was not a close parent who wished to free his kin out of filial love, but only an individual who had the means to procure to the slave her freedom. In fact, many such manumitters did not have slaves of their own, and, perhaps, their philanthropic views made them perform this generous act. Some of the manumitters had formerly been slaves and their experience in bondage enabled them to understand the slave's urge to become free. Those freed slaves who had acquired enough wealth and money performed voluntarily the act of manumitting the slave of another owner. In 1789, Marianne, a freed slave formerly manumitted by Sieur Cordier acquired two slaves from Sieur Latour with the firm intention to free them.⁴⁶

In the majority of cases studied, the manumitters proved to be a close parent of the slave, and, because of this consanguinal tie, they felt it their responsibility to free their kin. Several examples of such manumitters were recorded and this showed that, in a way, the manumitter acted as a facilitator as well since he enabled the owner to avoid expenses in donations and also avoid the legal procedures for the manumission. Marie, a freed Malagasy formerly belonging to Sieur Bulle, wished to free her seven children and grand-children who were still the slaves of her former owner. She purchased all the seven slaves from Sieur Bulle and manumitted them. It should be noted that Marie, the manumitter, invested considerably in this manumission as she needed to purchase the seven slaves and provide them with sufficient subsistence.⁴⁷

Another example of a mother performing the role of a manumitter was Madelaine, a Bengali freed slave who sought to free her son René, a Creole slave belonging to Sieur Saint Rémy. She purchased the boy from his owner for an amount of 1250*livres* and undertook the procedures in view to free René. She had already acquired for him a small location as René worked as carpenter, a few small houses at Les Salines and two slaves. A document in the act confirmed the acquisition of six small houses at Les Salines by the manumitter, to be offered to the freed slave.⁴⁸ A free black, Hector, working as a skilled carpenter and residing at quartier des Pamplemousses, bought his own children from their slave owner to get them back as freed slaves. Silvain and Françoise, the two children, were each given an amount of 2000*livres* and two slaves as donations.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Register OA87, act dated 13 November 1789, MA.

⁴⁶ Register OA87, act dated 27 August 1789, MA.

⁴⁷ Register OA87, act dated 25 November 1789, MA.

⁴⁸ Register OA87, act dated 22 March 1790, MA.

⁴⁹ Register OA87, act dated 6 April 1790, MA.

Some manumitters expressed firmly in the act their intention to free the slave when they had bought him. François Larue, a free black residing at Camp des Malabards purchased a 12 year-old Creole slave, Joseph from Sieur de Vaudreville for 1400*livres*. A document by Sieur de Vaudreville, included in the act, confirmed that the manumitter did not acquire Joseph for use as labour as he gave his word to manumit him - "...il s'engage par cet écrit de lui donner sa liberté,..."⁵⁰ The manumitter Larue had already acquired for Joseph a small house at Camp des Malabards, a female slave and a sufficient amount of money.

A manumitter could also acquire slaves in auction sales carried out in certain estates. In 1790, Colas, a free 'noir de détachement' and his wife Marie Joseph, both residing at Camp des Noirs Libres, acquired a Guinean slave, Guy from an auction sale of Sieur Eston's succession. The manumitters, Colas and Marie Josephe, were both former slaves belonging to Chevalier Desroches, and, they purchased Guy for 805*livres* in view to manumit him. He was offered a house at Camp des Noirs Libres and a slave.⁵¹

5.3 The primary and secondary manumitters

An analysis of the manumitters further categorises them into two distinct groups: the primary and secondary manumitters. This distinction is applicable mainly in testamentary manumissions and other types of manumissions whereby the primary manumitter could not be present. This primary manumitter is normally the person who requested the slave's manumission, provided him with all the necessary means of subsistence, but, for one reason or another, found himself unable to carry out personally the manumission.⁵² This refers to people who stated in their will their intention to have a slave freed after their death and to those who very often were absent from the colony. As primary manumitters, they always left a document bearing their signature, either the will or another act which confirmed their intention to grant the slave's manumission. The document was generally given to an executor, 'fondé de pouvoir' or 'porteur de pouvoir' so that he could carry out the manumission request. This person is known as the secondary manumitter since he was only fulfilling the intentions of someone who had already granted a manumission.⁵³ The following cases will clearly define the roles of the two types of manumitters.

⁵⁰ Register A67, act dated 18 February 1791, MA.

⁵¹ Register A67, act dated 1st July 1791, MA.

⁵² This refers to my own interpretation of a primary manumitter.

⁵³ My own interpretation of a secondary manumitter.

In 1796, Jeanne Préaudet, a coloured woman residing at quartier de Bois Rouge manumitted four slaves belonging to her. For some reason left unmentioned in the act, she was found unable to perform the legal procedures and she entrusted François Sarbourg, her 'fondé de pouvoir', to carry out the manumission in her place. Here, the two different manumitters are distinguished clearly as François Sarbourg acted as the secondary manumitter. Jeanne Préaudet's agreement with Sarbourg was as follows:

"Je soussigné Jeanne Modeste Préaudet femme de couleur donne pouvoir au citoyen François Sarbourg de pour moi et en mon nom signer chez Durand notaire l'acte de liberté de la nommée Thérèse Creole et ses trois enfants mes esclaves..."

Au quartier du Bois Rouge ce 7 vendemiaire an 5

Signé J.M.Préaudet.⁵⁴

Pierre Henry Saucet, Chief Surveyor residing at Canton des Pamplemousses, acted as secondary manumitter for the manumission of a female slave, Therese, belonging to the citizen Therese Piston. Saucet was assigned as the 'fondé de pouvoir' of Therese Piston who originally granted the slave her freedom.⁵⁵

In the same year, the citizen Rochecouste intended to free his Creole slave Denis Mathurin, 33 years but he authorized his son-in-law, William Keating to act as a secondary manumitter and perform the act of manumission in his place. The following document confirmed the legal rights Rochecouste conferred to William Keating to manumit the slave :

"Je prie le citoyen Keating mon gendre auquel je donne par le present tout pouvoir... de se presenter chez un notaire... d'y declarer en mon nom que j'affranchie le nommé Denis Mathurin creol a moi annoncé par les Gazettes..."⁵⁶

⁵⁴ "I, the undersigned, Jeanne Modeste Préaudet, coloured woman, authorizes the citizen François Sarbourg to sign at the notary Durand, on my behalf, the manumission act of my slaves Thérèse and her three children..." in Register A65, act dated 4 brumaire an 5 (25 October 1796), MA.

⁵⁵ Register A65, act dated 4 brumaire an 5 (25 October 1796), MA.

⁵⁶ "I give full rights to the citizen Keating, my son-in-law, to go to the notary... and confirm that I have freed Denis Mathurin, a Creole slave..." in Register A65, act dated 4 brumaire an 5 (25 October 1796), MA.

Marguerite, a Creole slave of 50 years, obtained her manumission from her owner Estienne Bolgard, who, in fact was the primary manumitter. He assigned a secondary manumitter, Laurent Trublet to confirm the manumission of the slave. Trublet was a Marine Commissionner and happened to be Bolgard's son-in-law. Like in the preceding manumission cases, Estienne Bolgard expressed his intentions that the slave be freed by a secondary manumitter:

*“Je donne pouvoir à mon gendre Laurent Trublet de faire toutes les demarches necessaires pour procurer à la nommée Marguerite, sa liberté et l'autorise à signer chez le notaire...”*⁵⁷

In July 1796, the citizen François Latour and his wife Marguerite Bigaignon decided to free one of their slaves: a 5 month-old male child, Pierre, who was the son of Marie Jeanne, a slave belonging to them. The mother was still held in bondage while the child obtained his freedom and the reason to manumit him was mainly a sign of gratitude towards the mother who had shown long years of devoted service to the owners. Latour and his wife, as primary manumitters, requested the child's manumission but they appointed another citizen, known as Bretonache, to carry out their intentions. They left a signed document which read as follows:

*“Nous soussigné François Latour et Marguerite Bigaignon mon épouse de moi autorisée, donnons pouvoir au citoyen Bretonache de se transporté en l'étude du citoyen Chasteau notaire et de faire dresser en notre nom l'acte d'affranchissement du nommé Pierre créole, agé de cinq mois, fils de la nommée Marie Jeanne notre esclave...”*⁵⁸

These cases have shown the primary manumitter as a slave owner but it could be the State as well and these manumissions concerned mostly the 'government' slaves. Usually the Intendant or 'Administrateur des Finances' performed the role of the secondary manumitter and confirmed the slave's manumission. For example, in 1796, Bastien, a Mozambican slave belonging to the Republic and working as Driver – 'Commandeur à petite médaille' – requested his manumission from the Republic. The Intendant, André Julien Dupuy, was responsible to get this manumission

⁵⁷ “I give full rights to my son-in-law Laurent Trublet to grant to Marguerite her freedom and sign the relevant documents at the notary...” in Register A65, act dated 4 frimaire an 5 (24 November 1796), MA.

⁵⁸ “We, the undersigned, François Latour and wife, give full rights to the citizen Bretonache to go to the notary Chasteau to have the manumission of Pierre, our Creole slave, confirmed. The child is our slave Marie Jeanne's son”, Register A65, act dated 4 thermidor an 4 (22 July 1796), MA.

confirmed and it was stated that Bastien had all the means to subsist independently and he would still continue to work for the Republic as a Freed citizen.⁵⁹

Another manumission carried out by Dupuy was that of Hamart, a Guinean slave of 56 years who worked as caulker in the Republic's workshop. His manumission was confirmed but, as Bastien, he would still work for the Republic as a Freed citizen. As a secondary manumitter, Dupuy had to ensure that the slave to be freed had all the necessary means to live without depending on the colony. A Creole slave, Mathurine, 20 years old and belonging to the Republic obtained her manumission and she was also offered an amount of 3000*livres* as donation from the secondary manumitter. The act made no mention about the continuation of her service to the Republic, but, since she did not offer any slave in exchange and replacement and she was still at a very productive age, it was probable that she would continue working for the Republic.⁶⁰

The Fleuriau brothers – Paul Marie Benjamin and François Aimée Gabriel were both slave traders. A genealogical study of the Fleuriau family revealed that these two brothers formed part of the family branch of Isle de France and Paul Marie Benjamin arrived in the colony in 1788.⁶¹ His brother came later and, in 1796, he requested the manumission of a young male Bengali slave, Paul Zaoul. Since he was a trader and was very often absent from the colony, he appointed Paul Marie Benjamin as the secondary manumitter to carry out the boy's manumission.⁶²

Another interesting manumission case took place in Pondicherry whereby the primary manumitters, Sieur and Dame Dufay residing in Isle de France, sent their 25 year-old Bengali slave, Sophie, to be freed by Jean Joseph Herchenroder, the secondary manumitter. Herchenroder was 'Capitaine quartier maître trésorier du Régiment de l'isle de France' and he was based in Pondicherry. Dame Dufay sent a letter to Herchenroder stating her request that Sophie obtained her manumission there and the slave was embarked for Pondicherry.⁶³

The above mentioned cases demonstrate the secondary manumitter as only one individual who had the responsibility to execute the manumission. A case in 1796 shows that two persons were

⁵⁹ Register A65, act dated 4 fructidor an 4 (21 August 1796), MA.

⁶⁰ Register A65, act dated 4 frimaire an 5 (24 November 1796), MA.

⁶¹ Jacques Cauna: *Au temps des îles à sucre...*, page 255 (Annexes).

⁶² Register A66, act dated 2 floréal an 4 (21 April 1796), MA.

⁶³ Register OA87, act dated 14 April 1789, MA.

assigned the roles of secondary manumitters – Louis Pigeot and Joseph Maingard both residing in town. A lieutenant in the Republic navy, Montalembert, wished to free his Indian slave, Justine and, as he was very often at sea, he requested two other manumitters to confirm the manumission he had already granted to his slave. According to the act, it appeared that both secondary manumitters had to be present to perform this task before a notary:

“Je soussigné donne pouvoir aux citoyens Louis Pigeot et Joseph Maingard de faire annoncer dans le journal la nommée Justine mon esclave pour parvenir a son affranchissement.....

..... comme si moi meme était present”

Le vingt quatre brumaire

Signé Montalembert Lieutenant des Vaisseaux.⁶⁴

The document by Montalembert was dated 24 brumaire an 4 (15 November 1795) and the secondary manumitters got the manumission confirmed in June 1796.

Sieur Pierre Bolge expressed in his testament dated 25 September 1784 that eight slaves, both males and females, belonging to him, be manumitted after his death. His executor, Sieur Gouv, residing at quartier des Pamplemousses played the role of the second manumitter. Six years later, in 1790, the manumission of the eight slaves were confirmed.⁶⁵

Another testamentary manumission defined the secondary manumitter’s function as sole executor of the deceased primary manumitter. The late Sieur de Cadenazi, formerly Captain at the Regiment of Bourbon, stated the manumission of his slaves Joseph Bernard and Maya in his testament dated 17 September 1788. The executor, Sieur Jean Baptiste de Cuivre, working as a skilled carpenter, had to confirm the manumission of the two slaves after the death of the primary manumitter and offer the donations as stated – an amount of 1500*livres* to each and a piece of land situated near the river Pucelles.⁶⁶

Another example of the secondary manumitter’s role as executor was that of the citizen Jean Clément who had to confirm the manumission of two female slaves requested in the will of late

⁶⁴ “I, the undersigned, give all rights to the citizens Louis Pigeot and Joseph Maingard to publish the manumission of my slave Justine in the Gazette...” in Register A65, act dated 12 messidor an 4 (20 June 1796), MA.

⁶⁵ Register OA87, act dated 18 January 1790, MA.

⁶⁶ Register OA87, act dated 29 March 1790, MA.

Pierre Leblanc, a native of Saint Malo residing at Canton de La Rivière Noire. Leblanc expressed his intentions that Marie, a Bengali slave and her daughter Lucile, a Creole of 9 years be freed after his death and he appointed Jean Clément to carry out this task as stated in the abstract:

"...Je prie le citoyen Jean Clément... de vouloir bien s'interessar en faveur de ces négresses de faire pour elles toutes les démarches nécessaires,... et de vouloir être mon exécuteur testamentaire;..".⁶⁷

A case of testamentary manumission in 1790 revealed to be most interesting as it involved a sale transaction between the primary manumitter and a Freed woman. Catherine was formerly a slave belonging to Sieur Patté Bergerac and, following a slave auction sale of Sieur Bergerac's succession, she acquired a few slaves with the help of another purchaser, the late Sieur Gervais de Sainte Foye. In his testament, the late Sieur de Sainte Foye requested the manumission of two of the slaves he purchased for Catherine and also requested the two secondary manumitters, Sieur Besnier and Sieur Potel to get the amount of 4552*livres* which Catherine owed him. Here, the role of the secondary manumitters seemed more complex as they not only had to confirm an already granted manumission but also to execute all that Sieur de Sainte Foye requested about donations and the sale transaction.⁶⁸

Following these examples which define the roles and functions of the two types of manumitters, it is most important to consider what their perceptions were in relation to the manumission they executed. It is evident that the primary manumitter was most willing to have his or her slave freed as the signed documents proved this intention, usually after his death! But, what could possibly be the secondary manumitter's perception? In all cases, his function consisted only to have the manumission confirmed in the primary manumitter's place irrespective of whether he approved or opposed this manumission. But, if the primary manumitter was still alive, the secondary manumitter could as well put forward his opposition if ever he felt that the slave did not deserve to be freed. As far as the manumission records for the period 1789 to 1810 in Isle de France, there has been no opposition from the secondary manumitter.

⁶⁷ " I ask the citizen Jean Clément to act as my executor and do all that is required to get the two slaves' manumission confirmed..." , Register A65, act dated 4 nivose an 5 (24 December 1796), MA.

⁶⁸ Register OA87, act dated 17 August 1790, MA.

When the secondary manumitter was performing the role of an executor, he held no grounds to oppose the manumission granted by the deceased primary manumitter and his sole function was only to execute the latter's requests.

It is clear from this study that a manumitter might not necessarily be an owner of slaves while the slave owner, in most manumission cases, was the manumitter though he did not personally perform the task of freeing his slaves and this brings about the roles of the primary and secondary manumitters as analysed in the last part of this chapter. Stereotypes of slave owners in literary works and factual accounts of voyages like Paul et Virginie⁶⁹ and Voyage à l'isle de France⁷⁰ tended to portrait them as White colonists who were constantly exercising domination over their slaves; this study has showed that slave ownership was not restricted to the White people only as also Free blacks, Free coloured and the Freed as well could own slaves. Though the manumission acts provided no indication about the treatment inflicted by owners to their slaves, it must be noted that the spirit of paternalism was present in slave owners perspectives to exercise authority over their slaves.

⁶⁹ B. de Saint Pierre: Paul & Virginie, Editions de l'Océan Indien 1989, Ile Maurice.

⁷⁰ B. de Saint Pierre: Voyage à l'isle de France, Editions de l'Océan Indien 1986, Ile Maurice.

CONCLUSION

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This study has tried to analyse critically the process of manumission, the roles of the manumitted slave men and women, the emergence of a Freed community during the revolutionary and post-revolutionary years in Isle de France, from 1789 up to British rule in 1810. As explained in Chapter 1, the legal definition of manumission means the act of freeing a particular slave in a society where slavery existed, where slaves formed part of the social strata. The process of manumission was different from that of emancipation as, in the latter situation, all slaves were freed as a result of the ending of the slave system. In this study, it is observed that manumission defines another concept of freedom, namely that of individual freedom; Thomas Holt explains that this type of freedom means self-possession or possession of oneself and freedom of action.¹ This individual freedom created in slaves the determination to become free by their own efforts without depending on the generosity of owners.

When studying the process of manumission in Isle de France, it is extremely important to look briefly at the legal framework and the different manumission laws which were passed in an attempt to both encourage and discourage owners and slaves to request manumission. The French Revolution of 1789 acted as a turning point in the history of slavery in the French colonies as the Principles of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity were in perfect contrast to the slave system which was considered by Miers and Kopytoff as an "...economic, social, and political deprivation, legal impotence and oppression" for slaves.²

Even before the Revolution, the 'Société des Amis des Noirs', founded in 1788, proclaimed the end of the slave trade and gave to the Free Coloureds the same rights as the White people. As far as slaves were concerned, a 'gradual' emancipation process was required since it was thought by the 'Société' that slaves were not ready yet to live as totally freed citizens.³ As Wanquet stated, in Isle de France, long before 1789, certain people like the Intendants and Governors condemned the slave system;⁴ in 1767, the Intendant Pierre Poivre put forward an indictment against slavery. In 1775, Governor Ternay also condemned the system of slavery. Therefore, it is seen that, long

¹ Thomas.c. Holt: The Problem with Freedom : Race, Labour and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938, Baltimore 1992, page 4.

² Suzanne Miers & Igor Kopytoff: 'African slavery as an Institution of Marginality' in Slavery in Africa, Edited by S.Miers & I.Kopytoff, University of Wisconsin Press 1977, Madison, pages 4-5.

³ Claude Wanquet: La France et la première abolition de l'esclavage, 1794-1802, Editions Karthala 1998, Paris, page 16.

⁴ C.Wanquet, *ibid*, page 19.

before the revolutionary outburst in 1789, people in Isle de France became aware of the political and philosophical anti-slavery thoughts in France. The Intendant Cheveau and Governor Souillac, in 1781, also criticized certain slave-owners' domination over their slaves.⁵

It was assumed that if the French Revolution gave political rights to the Free Coloureds, it would eventually also lead to the emancipation of all slaves. The General Assembly in Isle de France issued a decree on 27 October 1791 whereby the Article V stipulated that all slaves could not be freed so suddenly but that individual manumission would be encouraged and granted more easily than before.⁶ An overview of the Mauritian manumission historiography during the French period shows the contribution of a few historians such as Karl Noël⁷, Muslim Jumeer⁸, Richard Allen⁹ and Claude Wanquet¹⁰, whose works are partly related to the manumission process and practices in Isle de France. Karl Noël affirmed that, during the Revolution, the number of manumissions granted to slaves increased to such an extent that the Colonial Assembly started to limit these manumissions.¹¹ Claude Wanquet also was of opinion that the number of manumissions increased during the revolutionary period.¹² In his Doctoral Thesis, Muslim Jumeer confirmed these two interpretations as he stated that manumission indeed attained a 'cruising speed' - *vitesse de croisière* - with the Revolution.¹³ The present study has focused on the process of manumission during the years 1789 to 1810 and the analysis shows that the years from the Revolution to 1803 witnessed a considerable rise in the number of slaves who obtained their manumission. Some 3639 slaves were manumitted during this 21-year span in contrast to 785 slaves who were freed from 1768 to 1789.¹⁴

⁵ C. Wanquet: *La France et la première abolition...*, page 19.

⁶ Raymond d'Unienville: *Histoire politique de l'île de France, (1789-1791)*, Mauritius Archives Publications 1975, Mauritius, page 77.

⁷ Karl Noël: *L'esclavage à l'île de France (Ile Maurice) de 1715 à 1810*, Editions Two Cities ETC 1991, Paris.

⁸ Muslim Jumeer: 'Les Affranchis et les Indiens libres à l'île de France au 18^e siècle (1721-1803), Thèse pour le Doctorat de 3^e cycle, Poitiers 1984 ; 'Les affranchissements et les libres à l'île de France à la fin de l'ancien régime (1768-1789), *Mémoire de Maîtrise*, Poitiers 1979.

⁹ Richard Allen: 'Economic Marginality and The Rise of the Free Population of Colour in Mauritius, 1767-1830' in *Slavery & Abolition*, No. 10, 1989.

¹⁰ Claude Wanquet: 'Aperçu sur l'affranchissement des esclaves à Bourbon à la fin du XVIII^e siècle' in *Annuaire des pays de l'océan indien*, Vol. IV 1977, Presses Universitaires d'Aix-Marseille, février 1979; 'Apports et limites de la Révolution aux Mascareignes' in *L'île Maurice et la révolution française*, MGI, Moka 1989.

¹¹ Karl Noël: *L'esclavage à l'île de France...*, page 111.

¹² C. Wanquet: 'Apports et limites...', page 17.

¹³ M. Jumeer: 'Les Affranchis et les Indiens Libres...', page 54.

¹⁴ For the record of 3639 slaves, this refers to my analysis; for the record of 785 slaves, this refers to Jumeer's 'Les Affranchis et les Indiens Libres...', page 60.

This massive increase was mainly the consequence of certain social and political measures: firstly, under the Republic, the laws of manumission issued on 27 January 1791 were not as restrictive towards the practice of freeing a slave as were the clauses in the Code Decaen which showed that slaves were not freed following a policy of ease and frequency. The laws of 1791 were more or less within the financial means of slave owners and those slaves who wanted to purchase their freedom while the Code Decaen put some restrictive measures like tax, testamentary guarantee in cases of testamentary manumissions and a slave ownership of not less than five years as stipulated by the 1804 decree.¹⁵ From 1789 to 1800, a total of 2898 slaves comprising of 1783 adults and 1115 children obtained their manumission in contrast to only 455 slaves who were freed from 1804 to 1810. During the years 1801 to 1803, manumission was suspended since new laws would be issued by Decaen. The only manumissions which were confirmed were those requested before 1800, and, the number of freed slaves amounted to only 286 during that period.¹⁶ From 1803 to 1810, during the last years of French colonial slavery known as the Decaen era, the number of slaves being manumitted decreased.

The fluidity in manumissions from 1789 to 1800 helped to determine the openness of the slave society: it is observed that the high number of slaves being manumitted during these years was an indicator that slaves were in a more open slave society which provided them with possible prospects of becoming free. This slave society was more open than that during the Decaen era as, from 1789 to 1800, it is assumed that some 263 slaves were freed per year while only some 185 slaves obtained their manumission from 1804 to 1810.¹⁷

Peerthum explained that "...a slave society with high levels of manumission, or where manumissions were very frequent, shows that the slaves in that society had much greater chances of becoming free and in achieving social mobility".¹⁸ But, a slave society where manumissions were not practiced with ease and frequency "...was a clear indicator that the slaves in that society had extremely few chances of becoming free and in achieving some type of social mobility".¹⁹ Following the dramatic decrease of manumissions after 1800, it was seen that freedom was not

¹⁵ Henri Prentout: *L'île de France sous Decaen 1803-1810, essai sur la politique coloniale du premier empire*, Paris Hachette 1901, pages 137-138.

¹⁶ This refers to my analysis in Chapter 2.

¹⁷ My analysis of the number of slaves freed annually during the 11 year-period (1789-1800) as compared to the number of slaves freed during the 6 year-period (1804-1810).

¹⁸ Satyendra Peerthum: 'Determined to be free: A Comparative Study of Manumission, The Slaves, and The Free Coloureds in the Slave Societies of Mauritius, The Cape Colony, and Jamaica, 1767-1848', *BA(Honours) Dissertation*, February 2001, University of Cape Town, page 39.

¹⁹ S.Peerthum, *ibid*, page 39.

easily accessible to slaves during the last years of French rule. The slave colonial society was characterized as being closed because slaves had not much chances of becoming free in contrast to the years preceding 1800.²⁰ These facts reinforce the argument that Isle de France had a relatively open slave society after the fall of the Ancien Régime till 1800.

Jumeer's analysis of the manumission pattern from 1768 to 1789 has shown high percentages of adult women and children amidst the manumitted population of 785 slaves: namely 173 men, 347 women, 133 boys and 132 girls obtained their freedom through manumission.²¹ This pattern continued during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as the following figures revealed that 630 men, 1657 women, 561 boys and 791 girls were freed from 1789 to 1810. This quantitative gendered manumission showed that more female slaves were freed than their male counterparts, since 67.2% accounted for females while only 32.7% accounted for males from the 3639 manumitted slaves.²² Various possible reasons could explain the preponderance of women and children. Many of these female slaves worked within the owner's household and this proximity gave them more access to freedom. Some slave women were the concubines or mistresses of owners and free people and these connections and contacts enabled them to pave their way towards freedom. A detailed study of the manumitted slave women in Chapter 3 has also revealed that they used sexual freedom as a strategy to obtain manumission, and, this sexual freedom helps to explain certain hidden aspects such as the high number of mother-child units and pregnancy among young female slaves.

Richard Allen explained that slave women and children were manumitted in large numbers "...because, like aged or infirm slaves, they could be an economic liability rather than an asset to their owners".²³ It is observed that this pattern of gendered manumission continued during the first decades of British rule, in the 1810s and 1820s, as, according to Peerthum's study, "more female slaves were freed than their male counterparts".²⁴ He further explains that "...more female slaves were manumitted because, in terms of their value, they were cheaper and performed less work than the male slaves".²⁵

²⁰ This refers to my analysis in Chapter 2.

²¹ M.Jumeer: 'Les affranchissements et les Indiens libres...' page 26.

²² Analysis in Chapter 2 .

²³ R.Allen: 'Economic Marginality...' , page 131.

²⁴ S.Peerthum: 'Determined to be free...' , page 134.

²⁵ S.Peerthum, *ibid*, page 134.

This aspect of slave women performing 'less work' than the slave men leads to an analysis of their economic role in 18th century Isle de France. The manumission records mentioned the occupations of female slaves in 231 cases only from a population of 1657 adult manumitted women. The most common occupations were seamstress, washerwoman and ironer; in fact, from the 231 cases which mentioned the slavewoman's profession, these three tasks accounted for about 66% while the remaining 34% concerned other types of domestic occupations like maid, cook, wetnurse, embroideress, 'cangeuse'. Some of the slaves were also market slaves and hawkers as well as 'government' slaves. The female 'government' slaves were mostly assigned to the sailworks in contrast to male slaves whose occupations in the Government workshops were very diverse as they were found to be working in the cooperage, locksmith, coopersmith, carpentry and masonry workshops. From the occupational pattern of the slave women, very few of them were found to be skilled artisans: only one slave who did upholstery works – *matellassière* – and 19 slaves who could perform different tasks – *divers talens* – were possibly skilled slaves. How far female slaves performed 'less work' than male slaves cannot be totally justified as a considerable number of these women were freed without any specification of their occupations. Furthermore, the possibility of having female field slaves – *négresse de pioche* – among the manumitted must also be considered since those cases whereby the occupations had not been mentioned could as well include plantation slaves.

The same feature was applicable to male slaves whose occupations were not specified in almost more than 300 cases from 630 cases of adult freed slaves. All of them were privately-owned and 'government' slaves who worked as skilled artisans, craftsmen, domestics and hawkers. Only 22 among the manumitted males were employed as drivers - 'Commandeurs' - in certain households, estates and by the Government and they represented a small elite namely because this profession was, in a way, superior to others. It was probable that, here also, plantation slaves could have been freed but this occupation was not specified in the act. One reason which can explain why owners and slaves who were requesting a manumission omitted to specify the slave's occupation if he or she was a field slave, was mainly because, once freed, this occupation would not necessarily provide for the means of subsistence of the slave. A skilled slave was usually considered as a much better slave since the profession would guarantee for his subsistence while a plantation slave doing manual labour in the fields did not hold the same status as the artisan.²⁶ If an owner was freeing a field slave, normally this slave would not continue his services for the slaveholder as was the case for 'government' slaves. Therefore, he would have to prove that he

²⁶ My analysis.

could live without depending on the colony, and, mentioning his occupation as field slave could bring about an opposition to this manumission. In cases where possibly field slaves had obtained their freedom, the owners usually donated to them a considerable amount of money, sometimes land and houses. The manumission cases which did not specify the slave's occupation did, in fact, account for such types of donation granted to the freed slave.

The total slave population in 1806 amounted to 60,646, and, amidst this population with diverse ethnic origins, the Mozambicans greatly outnumbered the other origins with 26,670 slaves in contrast to 16,784 Creoles, 11,030 Malagasies and only 6162 Indians.²⁷ The Creole slaves occupied the second position after the Mozambicans in order of hierarchy in the slave population but they had better chances of being manumitted than the foreign-born slaves. According to the quantitative analysis in Chapter 2, it is seen that Indian and Creole slaves greatly outnumbered the other slaves in the manumitted population. Mozambican slaves formed the bulk of the slave population or almost 43.9% of this population while those freed accounted for only 0.18% of the whole slave population. Manumitted Creoles and Indians formed about 2.7% and 1.8% of the slave population. It should be noted that the 'Unknown' origin group could as well include Mozambicans but this would not alter the priority order of the ethnic origins in the manumitted population.

The quantitative analysis of age of manumitted slaves has shown that the highest number of slaves who obtained their manumission belonged to the age cohort 21-30 years. The number of freed children was also high and Allen notes that the reason for freeing children was mainly because they were "a financial liability".²⁸ This tendency of manumitting children during the period 1789 to 1810 followed the same pattern as before 1789 as Allen further states that there were "...high percentages of children manumitted between 1768 and 1789..."²⁹

This thesis has tried to study the different means by which slaves obtained their freedom and it is seen that manumission was not accessible to all slaves. As defined earlier, in the 'Introduction', manumission was highly discriminatory as only certain slaves were able to secure this long-sought liberty.³⁰ The general desire of all colonial slaves was to make a better life for themselves as Freed individuals but only the fortunate ones managed to pave their way out of the world of

²⁷ M.J.Milbert: *Voyage pittoresque à l'ide France et à l'île de Ténériffe*, Tome 2, Paris 1812, page 233.

²⁸ Allen: *Slaves, freedmen...*, page 84.

²⁹ Allen, *ibid*, page 84.

³⁰ 'Introduction', pages 2-3.

oppression. An analysis of the means by which manumission was obtained further reveals two other aspects: in a sense, freedom was in the hands of slave owners as they decided whom to manumit and when to free that particular slave. But the more fortunate slaves, those who were most determined to be free, did almost everything that was possible to achieve this noble objective. They did not rely on owners to free them, they rather gathered the amount sufficient enough to purchase their freedom. Through perseverance and sacrifices, they earned their freedom and also that of other close relatives and kin. As Peerthum explains, those slaves who self purchased their manumission "...rejected their inferior status vis-à-vis their owners and they wanted to improve their lives as free individuals in colonial society".³¹

Though manumissions obtained by reward and will accounted for the two most common means, self purchase concerned at least 8% of the total motivations for freeing a slave. Many slaves could not afford to come up with the required amount to purchase their manumission as, besides this money, they also needed to pay a sum of 300*livres* to the 'Commune Générale', and, furthermore, were required to prove for their subsistence. This meant generally enormous sacrifices and not many slaves had access to financial resources.

The less fortunate slaves were condemned to rely on their owner's intention or wish to secure manumission. Many owners freed their slaves following the latter's long years of faithful service and devotion. The acts of manumission show that slave women were freed through reward but, in certain cases, did this term conceal another more intimate motive? This could have been possible as seen through the role of the slave women with owners and free people in Chapter 3.

Some slaves were even less fortunate as they had to await the owner's death to breathe at last the air of freedom. Testamentary manumissions revealed much about the slave owner's attitude towards freeing his slaves. In a colonial society where slavery and white supremacy existed, the common belief of whites was that they must rule over the slaves and hold them in bondage. This common belief created in certain owners the reluctance to make their slaves reach the same free status as themselves while they were still living, and, they requested the slaves' manumission in their will, to be confirmed only after their death!

The slaves, after manumission, tried to emerge as a distinct community of Freed people, and, with the acquisition of land, slaves and houses from owners and manumitters, they were able to

³¹ Peerthum: 'Determined to be free...' ,page 135.

establish themselves in the rural and urban regions in Isle de France. Those who obtained land and houses in the urban region settled mainly in the Camp des Malabares and Camp des Gens Libres. Many of the Freed people started to rise as owners of slaves since they acquired slaves either by receiving them as donation or by purchase, and, they, in turn, sought to manumit their close ones.

A profile of the slave owners and manumitters has been attempted in the last chapter of the thesis; slave owners were seen to hold various positions in society, some of them were self-employed while others were Government employees. Two case studies of slave owners enable to distinguish that their ideological commitment to paternalism was present. A slave owner was generally also a manumitter though, in certain cases, he did not 'physically' perform the act of manumitting the slave. He was considered as the primary manumitter since he only requested the slave's manumission in a will or another written document which was usually entrusted to a secondary manumitter, who, in turn, had the responsibility to free the slave.

This thesis has tried to complete, at least, partially the study of manumission in the Mauritian historiography, namely for the years after the French Revolution till the last year of French colonial rule. Though the Revolutionary principles did not bring an end to the slave system, slaves showed resistance against slavery through marronnage but also through manumission. But this form of resistance was mostly an 'individual resistance' bringing about another interpretation of manumission which is also seen "...as being a passive act of individual resistance against slavery, because the slaves did not seek to abolish slavery, but rather to improve their status and living conditions in colonial society by freeing themselves forever from the shackles of forced servitude".³²

³² Peerthum: 'Determined to be free...', page 135.

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