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Histories under Construction

Slavery, Emancipation, and Post-Emancipation in the French Caribbean

Ulrike Schmieder

INTRODUCTION: HISTORIOGRAPHY

This article surveys the existing state of research about slavery, emancipation, and post-emancipation in the French West Indies, except Guyana, with particular attention to gender issues. Research has not answered many questions about this topic, especially with regard to the microhistorical view on slavery and post-slavery and the perspective from below, i.e., looking at the agency and discourse of (former) slaves. As Carolyn Fick also treats Haiti in this volume, I will concentrate on Martinique and Guadeloupe and mention Haiti only occasionally.

In early times, the French Caribbean islands produced tobacco with indentured labor of white engagés. With the sugar revolution, beginning about 1640, African slaves replaced the engagés. The sugar revolution took off with the settlement of Dutch and Jewish planters and merchants in the French Caribbean, after the recuperation of North East Brazil by the Portuguese (1654). In Martinique there were 119 sugar factories in 1671; in 1719, 398; in 1742, 456 (Nicolas, 1996, I: 115). The war of 1672–74 provided the occasion for the expulsion of the Dutch from Martinique (Chauveau, 1973: 24); the Jews, already discriminated against, were forced to leave about 1683–85 (Chauveau, 1973: 77–79; Arboll, 2001: 294).

At first, the French robbed slaves from the English islands or bought them from the Dutch in Curaçao. In 1664, the Compagnie des Indes Occidentales obtained the privilege of introducing slaves from Africa (Saint-Louis, Gorée, Ouidah). After 1767, slaves could be traded overseas without monopolistic restriction (Nicolas, 1996: 142–43). Most of the slaves who came to Martinique in the seven-
teenth century were from the Bight of Benin (72.1%), while some were from the Gold Coast and Senegambia. In the eighteenth century, 33.1% of the slaves were imported from the Bight of Benin, 21.6% from West-Central Africa, 11.4% from the Bight of Biafra, some came from the Gold Coast, Senegambia, Sierra Leone, and a very small group from Southeast Africa. In the nineteenth century, 27.3% of the slaves embarked to Martinique were from the Bight of Biafra, 11.3% from West-Central Africa, the rest from Senegambia, Sierra Leone, the Windward Coast, and Southeast Africa (the origin of 46.2% of the slaves is unknown, probably because they were smuggled). The first slaves on Guadeloupe were imported from the Bight of Benin and Senegambia. In the eighteenth century, slaves came from West-Central Africa (23.4%), the Bight of Biafra (18.8%), the Bight of Benin (12.4%), the Gold Coast, the Windward Coast, Senegambia, Sierra Leone, and Southeast Africa. In the nineteenth century, slaves were introduced to Guadeloupe from the Bight of Biafra (36.3%), West-Central Africa (18.6%), and Senegambia (12.3%), Sierra Leone, the Bight of Benin, the Windward Coast, and the Gold Coast. The two biggest groups of slaves shipped to Saint Domingue over the century of slave trade were from West-Central Africa and the Bight of Benin (Elts et al., 1999).  

In 1687, 18,000 Whites and 27,000 slaves lived on all French islands, 16,000 in Martinique and 7,000 in Saint Domingue; by

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1 It is difficult to define a correspondence between the geographic indications of the most complete data about the transatlantic slave trade of Elts and his colleagues with information about ethnic origins of French West Indian slaves given by other authors. For example, Gautier writes that in the seventeenth century:

“Angolais” (Bantu), “Sénégalais” (Wolof, Serere, slaves of the Moors and Bambara) and “Aradas” came to the French Caribbean. Most slaves who came to Martinique in the eighteenth century were “Aradas,” sold by the king of Ardra, from the “Slave Coast,” who could be Yoruba or Makis, followed by Bantu/Congos, who formed nearly the half of the slaves introduced to St. Domingue and an important part of the slaves imported to Guadeloupe. The majority of slaves imported in the nineteenth century to the French islands were Ibo, Congos and, above all, Yoruba (1985: 57).

According to Nicolas, up until 1740 approximately half of the slaves came from Senegambia, Guinea, Liberia, Ivory Coast, and the Gold Coast. In the eighteenth century the center of slave trade to the French Caribbean was the Slave Coast (Nigeria-Togo). Angola and the Congo delivered more than 40% of the slaves in the second half of the eighteenth century. After 1780 slaves were also brought from Mozambique to the French West Indies (1996: I, 144).

1701 there were already 44,000 slaves (Parry, Sherlock & Maingot, 1987: 67). Grand marronage, the flight of slaves to the interior of the islands (often to the surviving Caribs), had been a major problem since the seventeenth century.

The French Revolution led to the Slave Revolution in Saint Domingue/Haiti (1791) and the liberation of Haiti from colonial rule (1804). Slavery on Guadeloupe was abolished for some years (1794–1802), while slavery persisted on British-occupied Martinique. In Martinique, numerous new sugar plantations were founded in the 1820's. Around 1836, the extensive growth of the sugar economy reached its limits and the planters had to intensify sugar agriculture with wind, water, and steam sugar mills and the cultivation of Otaheite sugar cane instead of Creole sugar cane. But compared with sugar cane production in Cuba or sugar beet production in France, productivity was low (Tomich, 1990: 30–31, 61–75). Slavery was finally abolished on both islands in 1848.

French West Indian slavery is well researched in its big structures and long-term development (Peytraud, 1973; Debieu, 1974; Gisler, 1981; Hall, 1971; Tomich, 1990). Recent studies also refer to slave women and the particularities of their situation (Gautier, 1985; Moït, 2001; Cottias, 2001). However, I could not find studies about slave masculinity.

There are innumerable studies about the Haitian Revolution and its immediate aftermath (James, 1989; Pluchon, 2004; Zeuxke & Munford, 1991; Geggus, 2002; Schüller, 1992; Fick, 1990; LaCerte, 1993; Nicholls, 1996; Cauna, 1997; Trouillot, 1995). As surveyed by Geggus, the major research questions concerning this particular slave revolution, and slave rebellions generally, were:

- Which factors hindered slave revolution (“atomization”) of slaves because of different origins and languages; “self-debasement”—acceptance of slavery by the slaves themselves; “a more advanced material culture”—superiority of weapons of slave owners; “material and psychological awards,” such as individual emancipation; etc. and which facilitated it (concentration of slaves in “large units”; quantitative superiority of slave population and high ratio of “recently enslaved”; distraction of the colonial power and slave owners by war or civil war; “eco-
nomie depression”; “maroon activity”; “emancipationist rumors”; etc.]

- What role did Christian, Muslim, or African religion or European revolutionary ideas play as ideology of the slave revolution?
- Was the slave revolution of Haiti a “restorationsman,” a “bourgeois-democratic,” or a “proto-peasant revolution”? (Geggus, 2002: 55–68).

The first abolition of slavery in Guadeloupe (1794–1802), was intensively discussed in historiography, particularly around the bicentenary of the first abolition and reintroduction of slavery (Adelaide-Merlande, 1992; Bangou, 2002; Geggus & Gaspar, 1997; Dubois, 2004; Régent, 2004).

There are three types of studies about the second, final abolition of slavery in the French West Indies of 1848: a) publications about the economic crisis of sugar economy in the French West Indies, based on slave labor (Schnakenbourg, 1980; Tomich, 1990); b) studies about the abolition process in France and the French abolitionists, particularly Victor Schoelcher (Jennings, 2000; Schmidt, 1999; 2000; Federini 1998); and c) investigations of the events on the islands (Elisabeth, 1983; Nicolas, 1967; Léotin, 1991; Lépine, 1999; Pago, 1998).

With respect to Martinique, one has to read all studies very critically. The debate over whether the ban on slavery achieved by French abolitionists with the decree of April 27, 1848, or the slave rebellion of May 22, 1848 merits the honor to be the official date that commemorates the end of slavery, is an aspect of the present day political conflict between supporters of the actual status of the island as French Overseas Department and adherents of its separation from the mother country (Lépine, 1978: 25–166). Catherine A. Reinhartd emphasizes that French politicians often refer to abolition as the achievement of the grande nation and its humanitarian ideals, but ignore the role of maroons and slave insurrections for abolition and do not treat the profits from slavery and coerced labor (2006: 2–11).

As far as the post-emancipation period is concerned, the existing studies refer to the politics of France as a colonial power and the political conflicts in the Caribbean colonies (Lara, 2005, a document collection with commentary; Sainton, 1997; Bangou, 1987; Nicolas, 1996); the transition from slave labor to contract labor, 

wage labo; and share cropping, as well as to conflicts about houses and gardens of former slaves on plantation land (Tomich, 1995; Massé, 1980; Renard, 1993); and the resistance of former slaves to coercion, vagrancy laws, and racial discrimination (Nicolas, 1971; 1996). Other studies discuss the immigration of Indian, African, and Chinese contract laborers, who would replace the former slaves and lower salaries on sugar plantations (Northrup, 2000; Renard, 1993; Smeralda-Amon, 1996; Cardin, 1990).

Gender relations in the postslavery period are analyzed by Pago (1998), who considers the role of women in the process of abolition in Martinique between 1848–52; Fallope (1989, 1992), who deals with marriage, cohabitation, and hierarchies corresponding to ethnic origin and sex in post-emancipation Guadeloupe; and Cottias (1996; 2003; 2004), who looks at gender aspects in labor court trials, name-giving to former slaves, and citizenship of former slaves. Memory discourses concerning slavery are treated by Cottias (1997), Giraud (2005), and Glissant (2007), the latter representing the official policy about the foundation of the planned Centre National pour la Mémoire des Esclavages et leurs Abolitions after France had declared slavery a crime against humanity in 2001.

Laws on Slavery

The legal aspects of slavery have been widely and thoroughly investigated. Under the Ancien Régime, the French Crown stipulated laws on slavery overseas, as did the Spanish and Portuguese monarchy for their colonies. This stood in contrast to British colonies, where the planter assemblies could make their own laws (Lucena Salmoral, 2005; Hugold Lara, 2006; Goveia, 1970). The Code Noir of 1685 was the decisive instrument for regulating slavery in the French Caribbean colonies and was based on Roman law. Slaves were regarded as chattel that could be bought and sold. All they possessed or gained was considered the property of their owner.  

1 Archives Départementales de la Martinique (ADM), Ordonnance du Roi concernant la discipline de l’Église, et de l’état, et qualité des Négros esclaves aux Îles de l’Amérique, Mars 1685.

The Code Noir prescribed sufficient food and clothes for slaves, limited working hours, prohibited work on Sundays and Catholic holidays, and ordered the provision of food and medical treatment for ill and old slaves. Slaves had to be baptized and instructed in religion. Neglected and abused slaves could complain at the Procureur Général, the representative of the Crown in the colonies (Goveia, 1970: 41). The protective aspects of law were seldom enforced, although authorities sometimes imposed fines (rather than arrest) against brutal slaveholders. Slave owners let their slaves starve, and regularly flogged and tortured them; they killed them mercilessly if they suspected slaves of damaging plantations or poisoning livestock (Nicolas, 1996, I: 171).

The maintenance of social order in the colonies was considered more important than humanitarian treatment and protection of slaves. After 1771, slaveholders were punished secretly in order that slaves would think that their masters were invulnerable. In the French Overseas Archive in Aix-en-Provence, there is documentation of cases of terrible crimes against slaves—torture, homicide, burning alive—which were investigated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but not punished (Moitt, 2001: 101–24; Gisler, 1981: 48–49). For this reason, the view held by Hall that the protective regulations of the Code Noir were more consistently enforced than protective laws for slaves in Cuba is dubious (1971: 88–89).

The Code Noir also included repressive regulations against slaves. Slaves were not allowed to carry arms or to assemble with slaves of other plantations. Serious offenses of slaves were to be punished by courts, not by masters. Slaves who beat their owner, his wife, or children in the face or wounded them so that they bled were to be punished by death. Slaves were also punished by death for larceny or if they tried to escape for the third time. The first and second attempts to flee were penalized by cutting the ears and cutting the hollow of the knee respectively. Both attempts led to branding with the Bourbon lily on the shoulder. Masters were allowed to flog slaves or put them in chains, but not to torture, dismember, or kill them. The restrictions referred to private punishments. Judges could condemn slaves to death by burning alive or by breaking on the wheel.

Slaves could marry, but only with consent of the master. The children of a female slave belonged to her owner. Married couples and their children could not be separated, if they were possessed by the same slaveholder (Gautier 1985: 146). A master who had children with his slave had to marry her, which then led to the liberation of her and her children. Concubinage with slave women was forbidden. A White man who maintained a slave as concubine had to pay a fine. If he owned her, she and her children were to be taken away. However, they were not to be freed, but sent to the Hospital instead. Also the Code Noir abolished earlier provisions that foresaw the manumission of Colored children in order to penalize the slaveholder for the interethnic sexual relation (Garraway, 2005: 202–03). But these stipulations were never complied with and in everyday life, many slave concubines and their children were manumitted.

Freed slaves were equal subjects of the French Crown. But the originally liberal attitude toward manumissions, which were explicitly allowed by the Code Noir, changed in the eighteenth century. After 1713, all manumissions in Martinique required the permission of the colonial authorities, and in 1736, fines were fixed for infringement of that stipulation. After 1768, priests had to determine during baptism if mother and child had acquired their freedom through legal means, and notaries could certify manumission records only with license from the Governor (Moitt, 2001: 154–55). After 1775, high taxes were levied for all manumissions in Saint Domingue (Hall: 1971, 123). In practice, many people became libres de fait, who were allowed to live like free persons, but whose freedom was not guaranteed by law. In 1778, marriages between White and Black persons were forbidden (Peabody, 2005: 61–62).

On the one hand, manumissions were restricted in the eighteenth century, while on the other hand, protective regulations were repeated or newly proclaimed. After 1786, in all French colonies, owners and overseers were allowed to give “only” 29 lashes to a slave (Moitt, 2001: 103). Royal Decrees of 1784 and 1785, first

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4 Code Noir, § X, XII, XLVII.
5 Code Noir, § IX.
6 The tax was 1000 livres for the manumission of a man, 2000 livres for the manumission of a woman, if the slave had not acquired special merits for the colony.
referring to Saint Domingue, and after 1786 to the other islands, ordered that work on Sundays and nights was only permitted in urgent cases during harvest time. Pregnant and nursing mothers were entitled to have a break from 11 A.M. to 3 P.M. (instead of 12 A.M. to 2 P.M.), and they could go home half an hour before sunset. They should never work at night. Masters could never give more than 50 lashes under penalty of 2000 livres, and killing a slave was condemned as murder (Gisler, 1981: 46-47).

The stipulations of the Code Noir prescribed a diet for slaves with exactly defined rations (l'ordinaire), while slaves lived normally from food from the kitchen gardens. These stipulations were changed by the Ordonnances of 1784 and 1786: the existence of kitchen gardens was accepted, but their products should compete the ordinaire instead of replacing it. After the 1840's, Crown authorities valued more highly slave work in kitchen gardens, while autonomous work and commercialization of agricultural products were now seen as aspects of "civilizing" the slaves. The Mackau law (1845) allowed slaves to cultivate land instead of getting the ordinaire. The produce of provision grounds, but not the land itself, belonged to them. According to an Ordonnance of 1846, slaves could choose between the ordinaire and the free Saturday. Access to land was regulated: the provision grounds should lay in a circle of one kilometer around the center of the plantation; the grounds should have a dimension of 6 ares on sugar plantations, 4 ares on coffee plantations, and 3 ares on other agricultural units. The master had to deliver tools and seeds at the beginning of the first year a slave had a garden. The free day was for the self-provisioning of one slave. Family members had the right to the ordinaire. It was possible to give additional land and "free time" to a slave mother who provided for her children's food herself (Tomich, 1991).

By producing their own food in their kitchen gardens, the slaves developed capacities as peasants and vendors of their products that proved useful after emancipation. But during slavery, this type of provisioning was highly problematic: the gardens often were too small and the slaves did not have enough time to cultivate them, so that they often suffered from hunger (Tomich, 1991). The revolutionary French Convention abolished slavery on February 4, 1794 (as a reaction to the abolition in revolutionary Saint Domingue on August 29, 1793), but Napoleon reintroduced it on May 20, 1802. In 1803 the status of all free Colored people was verified and persons who could not show a valid muniment document were auctioned off in favor of the state (Moitt, 2001: 155-56).

In 1818, the overseas slave trade to the French West Indies was abolished de jure. After the French Revolution of July 1830, the slave trade finished de facto in 1832. A law of 1832 abrogated the tax on emancipates. The Macau law of 1845 promoted the rachat amiable, which meant that slaves could buy their freedom on good terms. Payment could be made in installments. The law also regulated the rachat forcé, the forced purchase of freedom, for which the state authorities fixed the price (Moitt, 2001: 167). The French Monarchy of July also abolished legal restrictions on the free Colored people (Fallope, 1989: 515-52), which included the prohibition of certain professions, extra-regulations in labor law, separation of Whites and Colored in church, theater, and other public institutions, the prohibition of assembling, the exclusion from inheritance from their fathers, the proscription of taking surnames from White families, etc. (n.a., 1824: 26-26, 89-102). Restrictions of political rights were also terminated, but only within the margin of the limitations foreseen for all inhabitants of the French colonies by the Charte coloniale.

In 1840, the flogging of women slaves was forbidden and the flogging of male slaves reduced to 15 lashes (Moitt, 2001: 103).

Gender and Slavery: Demographic Data

From the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, 54,162 slaves were imported to Guadeloupe, 156,572 to Martinique, and 886,601 to Saint Domingue (Elitis et al., 1999). By 1832 in Guadeloupe, 80.1% of all people on the island were slaves (Yacou, 1992: 195-96). In the seventeenth century, the sex ratio of the slave population of French Saint Christopher was nearly 50:50 (Moitt, 2001: 5). The slave importations to the French Caribbean of the eighteenth century brought about two-thirds men and one-third women on average (Moitt, 2001: 26-28), but with big differences from year to year, and with varying data about the imported children (Cegger, 1989: 23-44). The data provided by Elitis and his research group

1 From 1715 to 1792, in a sample of 176,997 slaves, the ratio between men and women oscillated around 117:100 (Bight of Biafra) and 229:100 (Southeast Africa).
state that during the entire time of the transatlantic trade, male slaves made up 68.2% of the slaves imported to Saint Domingue, 62.5% of those introduced to Martinique, and 59.3% of those who disembarked in Guadeloupe (Eltsi et al., 1999).

The surplus of men changed to a surplus of women in the nineteenth century in Martinique and in the late eighteenth century in Guadeloupe (Tomich, 1990: 85). In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Martinique, the birth rate was lower than the death rate, while in the nineteenth century it was slightly above. In the 1840's in Guadeloupe, the death rate was still more or less the same as the birth rate (Fallope, 1992: 95–96; Moitt, 2001: 92). As long as the Atlantic slave trade existed, the importation of African slaves was cheaper than the protection of pregnant and nursing mothers and provision for slave children. The abolition of the slave trade forced the slaveholders to reduce the workload of nursing mothers, but those mothers seldom worked more than two hours less than other laborers (Gautier, 1985: 129). In addition, mothers got a small sum of money for every born child. The stipulation that a mother having borne more than six surviving children had to be freed, was seldom realized, apart from the fact that only very few women had so many living children. Infertile women and mothers whose children died soon were severely punished because the low birth and survival rates were ascribed to the slave women instead of the living conditions under slavery (Moitt, 2001: 95).

**Gender and Slavery: Gender-Specific Division of Labor**

African female slaves had to perform the same heavy fieldwork as the male slaves. Female slaves were often used in the first gang, the grand atelier, where they had to work the soil with a hoe and to cultivate and harvest the sugar cane; clearing was a task for men. Women had also to work in the sugar mill, in night shifts after 12 hours of fieldwork, where feeding the mill with sugar cane often resulted in human beings accidentally falling into the machine, leading to dismemberment or death.

As the qualified artisan jobs (carpenter, mason, carter, cooper, and herdsman) and the position as driver in the first and second gang were given to men, the percentage of female slaves who worked in the fields was higher than that of men. Women were used as drivers of the third gang, where children and old people performed lighter work. Women also worked as midwives and nurses in the plantation hospital. As midwives, they risked being accused of letting the newborn perish if the latter died of illness or malnutrition.

In towns, slave women also worked as washerwomen, seamstresses, and street vendors who sold food or other merchandise for the profit of their mistresses. They also did most domestic work (the cooks normally were men) and nursed children and sick persons. In Martinique, many slave women were the property of poor and indebted slaveholders (more than half of them women) who fed their slaves insufficiently and mistreated them often (Pago, 1998: 40–41).

**Gender and Slavery: Slave Families**

Contrary to the stipulations of the Code Noir, mothers and children were often separated. Beside the requirement of a license to marry, only a small number of slaves did so, above all those slaves who, as skilled workers, had an upper rank in the hierarchy of plantations (Gautier, 1985: 89). It is possible that a Christian marriage confirmed a higher social status. During the eighteenth century, the number of weddings between slaves in Martinique and Guadeloupe declined, although there were exceptional plantations with a higher percentage of married bondsmen and bondswomen (Gautier, 2000: 984).\(^6\)

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\(^6\) According to Vanony-Frisch (1985: 88) qualified work was given preferentially—referring to men and women—to Colored slaves, Sosos (from rural Guiana, Sierra Leone, Liberia) and Capitans (from West Ivory Coast), and Creole slaves (in this order), more seldom to most African slaves.

\(^7\) Pago estimates that 22,000 slaves, i.e., 50% of the adult slave population, were property of small slaveholders known for their cruelty.

\(^8\) In Martinique, in case of pilot, the number of legitimate births sank from 1760–69 (14.5%) to 1785 et seq. (5%) (David, 1975 as cited in Gautier, 2000: 984). In Gua-
Marriages between White men and their female slaves who served as concubines and housekeepers were rare; it was more frequent that Colored masters married their slave partner (Gautier, 1985: 169). Sexual relations between White men and Black women—from brutal violations through "voluntary" paid intercourse to cohabitation—were common in the French colonies, and, in spite of the sanctions of the Code Noir and the hostility of the colonial governors against the mélange de sangs, they did not normally lead to problems for the White man as long as he did not try to introduce his partner into the social elite. The "guilt" of such concubinages was ascribed to the "seductive," "promiscuous," and "money-seeking" Colored women. The men were excused because of the supposed effects of the hot climate on the sexual drive of men (Cottias, 2001). Sexual relations and cohabitation between White women and Black men were tolerated at the bottom of social hierarchy, but a liaison of a wife or a daughter of a plantation owner with a slave led to severe punishment, which usually took the form of seclusion of the woman and cruel execution of the man (Munford, 1991: I, 703–07, 710).

In the French Caribbean colonies, slaves were baptized by the Catholic Church and instructed in religion (often very superficially) by Capuchins, Dominicans, and Jesuits—until the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1764. The Church, with the exception of some priests such as the Abbé Grégoire, did not condemn slavery, because its institutions and orders, which often possessed plantations and slaves themselves, profited economically from slavery (Delisle, 2000: 27–33). The Christianization of slaves was hindered by the masters, who did not want slaves to interrupt their work for confession or to go to church on Sundays (Delisle, 2000: 43–48). Although Capuchins and Jesuits did not demand the abolition of slavery, they demanded better treatment of slaves and protested against the punishment or execution of particular slaves (Peabody, 2002; Latimer, 1971). Slave owners interpreted this as unjustified intervention in their affairs. In addition, the religious instruction of slaves, although it demanded obedience, was based on acceptance of their humanity and stood in contrast to their treatment as chattel.

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&emsp;deloupe, the number of married slaves declined from 7.3% 1774–78 to 2% 1792–94 (Archives Départementales de la Guadeloupe).

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Slaveholders also opposed the religious education of slaves because the Christianized slaves wanted to marry, and slave owners were convinced that married slave women bore fewer children than concubines. In addition, they did not want to be impeded from selling slave couples separately. However, one may doubt that all slaves aspired to marry. Men presumably did not want to share a wife with the master or the overseer and saw in marriage another source of conflict. Perhaps they preferred to have carnal relations with more than one woman or wished to have a polygamous family. Women probably did not seek just another man who commanded and controlled, or perhaps mistreated them because of jealousy. In informal partnerships, slave women could maintain more independence. And, despite the rules of the Code Noir, marriage did not protect them against separation from their children through separate sale, which was most likely a major concern for slave women. Thus, slave weddings happened seldom (Rey, 1881: 61–32), although there was a slight increase during the "moralization policy" of the last years of slavery (Cottias, 1996: 142). However this does not mean that there were only mother—children—families, as many couples simply lived together in permanent, stable partnerships, without being formally married.

**Gender and Slavery: Slave Resistance**

Many slave men and women attempted to run away from their masters. Some stayed away for a few nights (petit marronnage), while others tried to escape forever and hide in the mountains for the rest of their lives (grand marronnage). Some slaves, men and women, were regarded as notoriously rebellious and ran away many times, and, in spite of all the cruel punishments, maroon groups were formed by slaves of both sexes (Moitt, 2001: 136).

Poisoning livestock and persons was also a form of slave resistance very much feared by slave owners. Often women were accused of this crime. Of course, one does not know if diseases and natural food poisoning were sometimes interpreted as rebellion by

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18 In Martinique, during the period 1834–47, of 1000 White marriageable women, 21 marry per annum; of 1000 free Colored marriageable women, 12–13 marry per annum; of 1600 slave women, 2 marry per annum.
slaves. Slave women were often punished for verbal attacks against masters and drivers and for refusal to work.

Under the influence of the French Revolution, there was not only the great slave revolution of Saint Domingue, but also insurrections on other islands, such as the rebellion in Saint Pierre (Martinique) in 1789 (Geggus, 1996a: 107–17) and the insurrection in Trois-Rivières in Guadeloupe in 1793 (Dubois, 2004: 23, 126–36).

In Guadeloupe, Victor Hugues executed the decree of abolition of 1794, but also forced the former slaves to continue plantation labor. But they resisted this policy and went to towns or military camps, trying to create an independent existence by doing wage labor or opening small businesses. The men worked as carpenters, bricklayers, dockworkers, and fishermen, while women worked as domestic servants, seamstresses, washerwomen, and merchants (Dubois, 2004: 196–97, 207, 248–51, 266–69, 271–72). Slavery could only be re-established in Guadeloupe in 1802 after General Antoine Richepanse suppressed a great rebellion of former slaves and Colored officers. Those who witnessed the rebellion were surprised by the bravery of the Black fighting women (Dubois, 2004: 388–401; Moitt, 2001: 128–29).

Because Martinique was occupied by British troops from 1794 to 1802, the abolition decree of the French Convention was not applied there (Nicolas, 1996: I, 280–85). In 1800, freedmen and slaves under Jean Kina rose up against a law that allowed the resale of a freed person if the judicial regulations in the process of manumission were not observed properly (Geggus, 1996a: 118–27). Local slave revolts took place in 1811, 1822 (Geggus: 1996a: 127–32; Thesée, 1993), and 1851 (Nicolas, 1996, I, 343–48).

Gender and Slavery: Manumissions

Women and children were more often Liberated than men, and urban slaves had better chances to become free than rural ones (Geggus, 1996b: 268–69). Women could use their personal rela-

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14 From 1784–89, two-thirds of the freed slaves of Saint Domingue were women (Geggus, 1996b: 268–69). Between 1781 and 1785, about 60% of all manumitted slaves in Martinique were women (Rey, 1851: 50). In the period 1831–47 in Guadeloupe, 400 manumissions of 1000 referred to women, 370 to children, 290 to men (Rey, 1878: 35).
COERCED LABOR AND IMMIGRATION AFTER SLAVERY

As the former slaves in Martinique did not have access to their own land, in the first year after emancipation, two-thirds of them stayed on the plantation where they had worked as slaves. Most former slaves worked as contract workers in the system of contrat de association, propagated by the Republican Government, which was a contract between landowner and the community of field hands, who had to work nine hours, five days a week on the plantation. They had to provide for their own food and get a third of the gross output or half of the net output of cultivated products (Tomich, 1995). Immediately after abolition big conflicts arose, as the slaves regarded the houses and gardens that they had constructed on the plantations as their own, but the Colonial Government and the planters perceived those houses as the property of the landowner. Perrinon reported from his visits to habitations that the former slaves wanted to stay in their houses and use the products of their gardens without compensating the proprietor for them. He ordered their expulsion when they did not give in and accept the association contract. The workers preferred to work for a daily salary instead of being bound by a contract, as the latter did not correspond to the full freedom of movement to which they aspired.

Conflicts between planters and field workers were put before the jurys cantonaux, labor courts that existed between 1848 and 1852. The labor courts were responsible for resolving problems as a neutral body, but often defended the interests of the planter class.

91) ordered the creation of ateliers de discipline; vagrants and beggars were to work on the roads and get religious instruction; the women should perform "labor of their sex." 

(Cottias, 2004). Many sentences against the farm hands contributed to social protests and unrest, a steady phenomenon in post-slavery Martinique. In view of the problems of the contrats d'association, the share cropping system, or colonage partiaire, was later preferred. The landowner leased land to a tenant who had to pay a rent and employed wage laborers with whom he produced sugar cane.

Under Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte, coerced labor became more important. The decree of February 13, 1852, abolished the jurys cantonaux, stipulated fines and arrest for refusal to work and for vagrancy, and strengthened the system of the livret. Everyone who did not have a labor contract for more than a year had to carry a booklet in which personal data, advanced payments, former and current labor contracts had to be recorded (Renard, 1993: 85).

The introduction of a head tax which was higher in town than in the countryside (Renard, 1993: 85), and harsh punishments for vagabondage was intended to force the former slaves to continue to work on the plantations. People who had tax debts had to work for them in the ateliers de discipline or on private properties. Subservient and hardworking farm hands got medals and rewards (Renard, 1993: 88-89). Under Governor Geydon, these forms of coercion were strictly enforced. Free primary schools introduced by the Republican administration became subject to charges and the aforementioned head tax reduced the number of children of farm workers who could go to school (Nicolas, 1996, II: 45-47; Fallope, 1992: 423). It seems that the element of coercion and repression in labor relations played a more important role in the French and Danish West Indies than in the British and Spanish Caribbean (Füllberg-Solberg, 2007: 76-77; Scott, 2005: 114-28).


97) CAOM Aix-en-Provence; Papiers Perrinon; FM, SG: Commission du régime de travail, Police de travail. FM, SG: Amérique carton 8, Répression d'éméutes de 1848 à la Martinique.

97) ADM, Bulletin Officiel de la Martinique, 1852, 352-59.

97) ADM, Bulletin Officiel de la Martinique, 1852, 1853, 1854, Decrees of 9.10.1852, 9.2.1853 and 16.5.1854.

97) In studies about Cuban vagrancy laws, chain gangs and pass systems are not mentioned, but I am not sure that these things did not exist at all.

The phenomenon of different degrees of coercion and its possible causes (bigger problems with labor shortage in the French Caribbean, different cultural traits of
In 1870 in the south of Martinique, in Rivière-Pilote, an insurrection of African Martiniquans broke out. The causes were general dissatisfaction about labor coercion, racial discrimination, and a shortage of supplies in context with the German-French War of 1870. The immediate occasion was the Lubin affair. The African Martiniquan Léopold Lubin was arrested in August 1870 and condemned to five years in jail and a heavy fine of 1,500 francs, because of bodily harm against the White, Augier de Maintenon. But Lubin had only reacted to a previous attack by Augier that state authorities failed to prosecute, even though Lubin had been wounded. The insurrection of former slaves and African immigrants began on September 22, after the notice of the Proclamation of the Third Republic in Paris had arrived in Martinique. Some Whites were killed, and plantations were set on fire and plundered. On September 26, the rebellion was suppressed and many participants were shot. Four leaders were later executed and many people condemned to jail or banishment to Guyana (Nicolas, 1996: II, 78–93; Nicolas, 1971).  

Despite the repression, many descendants of slaves in Martinique migrated to towns like Fort-de-France and Saint Pierre, while others settled as small-scale farmers on abandoned plantations, public properties, and terres des mornes. In Guadeloupe, it was easier to become a small-scale peasant, because not all land was used for the cultivation of sugar cane and the proprietors also sold uncultivated parcels of land to the former slaves (Renard, 1993: 80–81; Bangou, 1987: II, 19).

In order to replace these people in the cane fields, the French government bought slaves in Africa, particularly in the Congo, “freed” them, and brought them as contract workers to the Caribbean islands. These Africans, like contract laborers introduced from India and China, were used as competitors to former slaves and reduced the wages in the French West Indies (Bangou, 1987: II, 37ff.). Resolving the problem of labor shortage after slavery by forced or voluntary immigration, e.g., from India, China, and Af-rica to the British Caribbean (Look Lai, 1993; Schuler, 1980), or from Spain, Jamaica, and Haiti to Cuba (Bergad, 1984/85; Knight, 1985; Lundahl, 1992), was a common phenomenon of post-abolition Caribbean, but it differed in the degree of coercion and ethnic composition of labor immigrants.

About 10,000 Africans and 25,000 Indians were brought to Martinique, and about 6,000 Africans and 42,000 Indians were introduced in Guadeloupe (Massé, 1980: 27–28). It seems that the Africans were integrated faster into the African Caribbean population than the Indians (Fallope, 1992: 507; David, 1973: 127, 133), but this research problem is not sufficiently resolved yet. The Indian workers, engagés, of whom 24% were women in the period 1858–60, 36% 1861–70, and 40% after 1870 (Northrup, 2000: 251), stood on the bottom of the social pyramid of the population of Martinique and Guadeloupe (Fallope, 1989: 695–96). The separation of African and Indian field workers complicated the resistance against over-exploitation. The economic recession of sugar production in the decade of 1880 led to an end of the immigration from India. The last ship came in 1889 (Northrup 2000: 258–59). The decline of the sugar economy also brought an extension of small farming, a chance for some descendants of slaves to gain economic independence (Fallope, 1992: 499).

Postslavery and Gender

After slavery, most African Caribbean women had to continue field labor. The documents of criminal courts, colonial functionaries, and the jerys cantonaux show that female field workers of African descent did not behave in accordance with European middle-class and Christian ideas of weak, shy, retiring women. This should not be very surprising, as their lives were so different from the lives of White middle-class women.

Female slaves participated at the insurrection of May 1848, although most of the accused were men: For example, 13 persons, among them a nineteen-year-old seamstress named Eusélie Cazenave, were condemned for the plundering and destruction of the habita-

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French colonialism, stronger resistance or more economic alternatives for former slaves in other regions) has not been investigated yet. It will be one of the research questions of a project of comparative post-emancipation history of the Caribbean and Africa planned at the University of Hanover.

CAOM, Greffes, Cour d'Assises, Martinique; Fort-de-France, DPPC GR 915 (1868–1872), 19.08.1870, Criminal case against Léopold Lubin.

About 500 Chinese people were brought to Guadeloupe, 754 to Martinique (Chauvel, 1979: 42). According to Massé, approximately 978 Chinese were brought to Martinique from 1859–60 (1980: 28).
After slavery, the number of marriages by former slaves increased in all French Caribbean colonies and many men recognized their natural children. These men probably aspired to confirm their new social status by legitimizing their informal unions. If these decisions were influenced by the propaganda of Church and colonial government in favor of the patriarchal family, it has not been investigated up to now. Shortly after, the marriage rate sank again and the rate of illegitimate births grew, e.g., in Martinique from 61% (1845–65) to 70% in 1885 (Cottias, 2002: 332). Of course, statistics do not account for life partnerships and visiting unions.

OPEN RESEARCH QUESTIONS

A microhistory "from below" of the postslavery period exists only in rudimentary form, particularly for regions outside Haiti. We know very little about livelihood strategies, gender-specific division of labor, and family structures of former slaves. We know less about the ideas and everyday life of African Caribbean people during the post-emancipation era concerning couple relations, family and gender-specific honor, and about their consent or resistance to state and church propaganda with respect to European-modeled gender roles.

Most comparative studies of postslavery societies in the Caribbean are collected in edited books of specialist historians, but they stand side by side without referring to each other. Studies written in English, French, and Spanish often are not read in other regions because of language barriers. Research often moves inside the

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25 CAOM, Greffes, Cour d'Assises, Martinique Fort-de-France 910, 5.12.1848. FM SG Amérique carton 8, (cote: amer8): Esclavage 1848–1849, Répression d'émeutes de 1848 à la Martinique: Draft of report 1–9, "Pillage en bande armée," habitante Dérivée (Rivière Sable), 27.05.1848: seven male, two female (one cultivatrice, one seamstress) participants.


27 CAOM, FM, SG, Martinique, carton 56, dossier 464, reports of Perrinon to the Minister of the Marine and Colonies, 25.07.1848 and 9.08.1848.


29 For the period 1848–53, the number of marriages among African Guadeloupian rose from 101 to 907 annually (Fallaup, 1992: 410). In the period 1853–44, marriage ratio in Martinique was 1.9 per 1000; in the period 1845–54, it was 10.6 per 1000 (in Guadeloupe it was 11.7 per 1000) (Cottias, 2002: 332). According to Gautier, after abolition, 40,000 marriages, 20,000 legitimations, and 30,000 recognitions of children took place in Guadeloupe, Guyana, Martinique, and Réunion (2006: 988).

30 When Louis Thomas Husson, Directeur proviseur de l'intérieur, announced the abolition of slavery (St. Pierre, March 31, 1848), he called for the slaves to work and to marry ("M. le curé là pour dire zautes faut travaille, faut marier pour gagner París") (Cottias, 1998: 80–83; see also, Cottias, 1996).

31 Marriage rate for Martinique in 1855–66: 4.9 per 1000; 1877–81: 3.4 per 1000, and Guadeloupe respectively 5.4 and 3.2.
borders of former colonial empires. We therefore need more studies in which the research about different regions is really interwoven.

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