**Chapter 5**

**European Fleets in the Indian Ocean**

In 1760, the governor of Île de France (present-day Mauritius) wrote a letter complaining of food shortages on the island.[[1]](#footnote-1) “It is cruel,” he wrote, “to struggle each instant against famine.”[[2]](#footnote-2) He explained that he had sent ship after ship to Madagascar to purchase rice to feed the island's colonists, soldiers, and slaves. French captains reported that wars along the east coast between the ruler of Foulpointe and his neighbors prevented them from buying the rice needed by the colony. Conflicts greatly diminished supplies of grain and created shortages along the coast. A devastating cyclone and the spread of epidemic disease among the coastal populations further reduced the rice stores of communities in eastern Madagascar.[[3]](#footnote-3) For the rest of the year, settlers in the Mascarene Islands were precariously close to starvation. Many of the slaves on the island died and the governor sent ships to eastern Madagascar in search of food and more slaves.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Agricultural production on the two French islands of Île de France and Île Bourbon (Réunion) was not sufficient to support their populations.[[5]](#footnote-5) Throughout the eighteenth century, French ships purchased cattle, rice, and slaves in Madagascar to supply the islands with food and labor. When the famine of 1760 struck, however, it was during the middle of the Seven Years’ War, also referred to as the Third Carnatic War in the Indian Ocean. British, French, and Indian (Maratha) forces fought three wars for the control of southern India’s coastline, referred to as the “Carnatic.” The majority of clashes occurred on the land and sea surrounding India but the soldiers on land required naval support.

Over a period of almost twenty years (1744-1748, 1748-1754, and 1756-1763), the French and British governments sent squadrons of five or more ships into the Indian Ocean annually to support land battles in India. [[6]](#footnote-6) The crews and soldiers of these ships required food and labor, so their captains turned to islands in the southwestern Indian Ocean, primarily Madagascar and Anjouan, to sustain their military campaigns. The British directed their ships to St. Augustine's Bay, while the French attempted to replenish their ships in the Mascarenes. The British were successful at obtaining sufficient quantities of food, wood, and water from the Sakalava. Due to persistent shortages in the Mascarenes, French naval commanders frequently could not replenish their stores of food in the ports of the islands.[[7]](#footnote-7) Instead, they sailed to Madagascar and spent months off the island’s east coast attempting to purchase supplies. The French wasted valuable time in negotiating with the Malagasy and frequently could not purchase enough food to support their soldiers. The British had fortuitously established a trading relationship with the more stable Sakalava Empire.

These struggles over food provide a new perspective on the history of European monopoly companies in the Indian Ocean. Europeans relied upon supplies in Madagascar, a reliance that placed limits upon their expansion into the ocean. The Sakalava Empire could supply the goods needed by British military leaders. This access to commodities in Madagascar helps to explain British successes and French failures in India. This trade also increased the extent to which the British and French depended on supplies from Madagascar and increased their interest in political developments within the island.

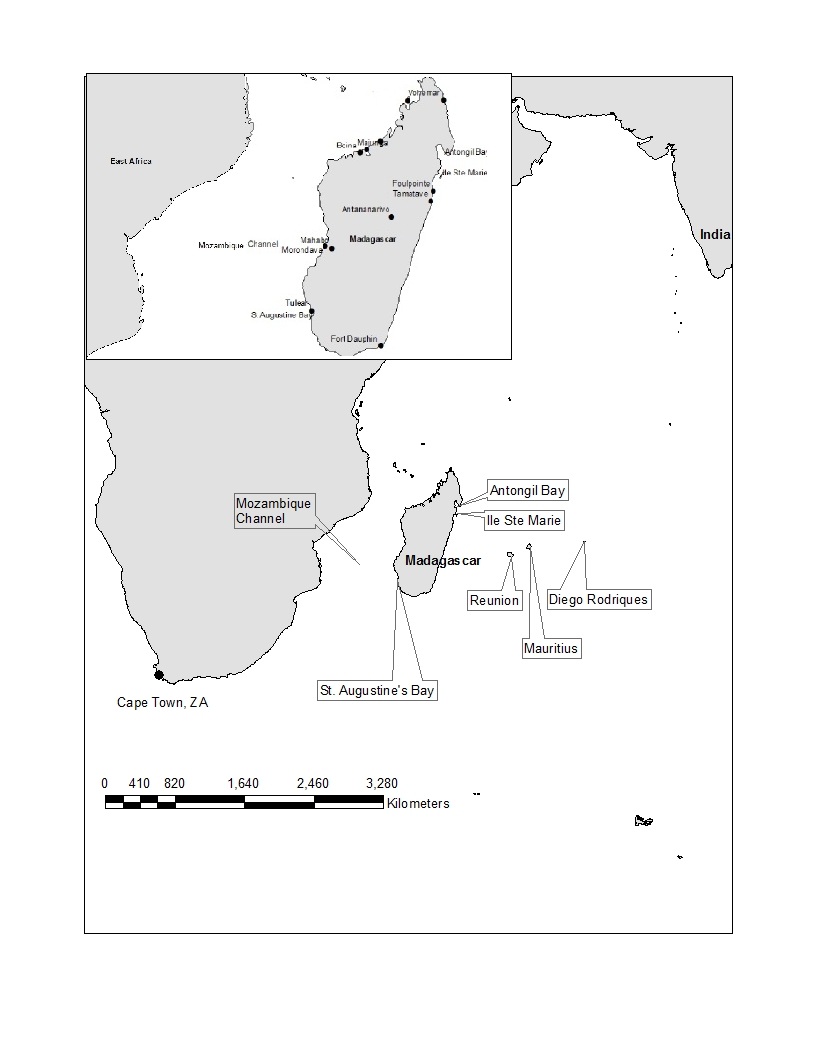
Much of the scholarship on the French East India companies fixates on the failures of the French traders and administrators in comparison to their Portuguese, Dutch, and English counterparts.[[8]](#footnote-8) The French did not send enough ships, make cogent plans, or invest adequate financial resources in these endeavors. Many historians focus on the economic imperatives that determined the formation of early French trading companies and contrast these with the English and Dutch monopoly companies. Historians tend to describe the limitations that mercantilist policies placed on the French East India Company.[[9]](#footnote-9) As a result, historians usually blame constant funding struggles for hampering French access to prime markets in the Indian Ocean.[[10]](#footnote-10) There is a tendency to isolate the decisions of the companies' directors in France from events within the Indian Ocean.

Scholars typically fail to consider how events and circumstances in the Indian Ocean affected these plans. During the seventeenth century, French plans centered on the island of Madagascar and French officials became obsessed with painting a "rosy picture" of Madagascar, according to one scholar.[[11]](#footnote-11) Most scholars do not note that the seventeenth-century French colony at Fort Dauphin failed primarily due to Malagasy antagonism, not the failures of French colonial administrators to fund the endeavor adequately. [[12]](#footnote-12) When scholars work on presenting a general history of the French *compagnie des indes*, they tend to ignore that the plans for a colony in southern Madagascar, from a strategic point of view, were sound, but the colonists faced unforeseen difficulties. Yet few scholars have examined the role of Madagascar in shaping French commerce in the Indian Ocean.[[13]](#footnote-13)

Likewise, the possession of Île de France was seen as a crucial link in developing French commerce, as it provided the French with large and viable ports near the center of the ocean.[[14]](#footnote-14) The functionality of the island’s ports, however, proved less than expected, in light of frequent cyclones and frequent food shortages. Such colonial failures should be attributed to the negative influence of diseases, such as dysentery, malaria, or various *flux* described by Europeans, and natural disasters, such as *sauterelle* (locust) infestations, rather than blamed upon poor management or funding.[[15]](#footnote-15)

The battle for the control of the Carnatic coast exacerbated these challenges to the French Mascarene colonies. Megan Vaughan has argued that scholars have not paid enough attention to the role of warfare in the history of the Mascarene Islands.[[16]](#footnote-16) These islands were home to sugar plantations but the French originally intended the islands to be provisioning stations for French ships sailing to India. French officials, however, decided to convert the land to sugar plantations.[[17]](#footnote-17) These plantations required constant influxes of labor and, due to the influx of warships to the ocean, the colonial governors had difficulty investing in the development of a labor force on the island. The Mascarene plantations did not start to import large numbers of laborers until the 1770s, after the wars had ceased.[[18]](#footnote-18) Despite these importations of slaves, when the British seized control of Mauritius several decades later, they found its land still underdeveloped.[[19]](#footnote-19)

The constant need for slaves to develop the islands induced the French to rely on Madagascar for food and slaves, imports that became more important during the Carnatic Wars. In many ways, British and French reliance on Madagascar paralleled Sakalava commercial expansion. These groups all required food and labor to expand their economic and military influence during the eighteenth century though a combination of violence and alliances. Sakalava leaders and Europeans also began to purchase large quantities of slaves by the end of the century, most of them from East Africa. [[20]](#footnote-20) This period marked a deepening dependence between Europeans and Malagasy leaders. This dependence accelerated the rate of political change and transformation in and around Madagascar, as Europeans grew interested in directly harnessing the resources of Madagascar for themselves.[[21]](#footnote-21)



Map 5: Madagascar and the southwest Indian Ocean

**European Competition**

The French complained that the Malagasy were frequently at war. They explicitly connected military power with economic stability and complained about the disruption that local conflicts caused to trading networks.[[22]](#footnote-22) During wartime, people fled their lands and failed to cultivate crops.[[23]](#footnote-23) Entire communities disappeared, their people enslaved. Quarrels prevented food supplies such as cattle from moving throughout the island.[[24]](#footnote-24) The French identified the Sakalava in particular as aggressors and the “most ignorant and most aggressive of all the people of the island.”[[25]](#footnote-25) Battles, such as those described in Chapter 4, convinced Europeans that the Malagasy were savages, with no interest in long-term economic gain.

By examining political developments in early modern Europe, however, the Malagasy could have made similar observations about Europeans. The French and British focused on the relationship between war and commerce within Madagascar, but failed to consider their own actions in the Indian Ocean. European wars interrupted commerce in the ocean and affected the number of Europeans who traded in Madagascar. European states relied upon foreign trade for prosperity and for maintaining the strength of their commercial establishments abroad. Blockades were the most prevalent naval strategy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and British warships frequently patrolled French ports in an attempt to cut off maritime traders.[[26]](#footnote-26) The officers of European monopoly companies, the Dutch, Portuguese, French, and English, constantly worried about attacks on their merchants by warships.

The impact of European disagreements on trade in the Indian Ocean pre-dated the Carnatic wars. Malagasy observed hostilities between various European groups, as they struggled to evade other European traders in and around the ports of Madagascar. These evasions helped to determine European trading patterns. Battles for control of commerce in the ocean encouraged traders to visit previously unused coastal regions, such as St. Augustine's Bay, and influenced the development of trade in these ports. By the middle of the eighteenth century, the English and French had become the most influential and frequent European traders in Madagascar. The Dutch replenished their Indian Ocean-bound ships at the Cape of Good Hope and sent only small trading ships to western Madagascar to fetch rice and slaves.[[27]](#footnote-27) The Portuguese consolidated their forces in Mozambique and Angola. They imported food from northwestern Madagascar with some regularity, but their voyages were probably not as frequent as those of the English and French.[[28]](#footnote-28) After 1744, however, the English and the French relied heavily on Madagascar and nearby islands, especially Anjouan, to supply their ships passing through the southwestern Indian Ocean.

During the first decade of the seventeenth century, the English sent large numbers of ships on spice and cloth trading missions throughout the northern Indian Ocean. English East India Company (EIC) merchants focused on establishing trading posts in locations such as Batavia, in present-day Indonesia, and Fort St. George, on the coast of India. Madagascar fed the passing traders and their crews and provided slaves to work these EIC establishments.[[29]](#footnote-29) By the mid-eighteenth century, the English became fixated on addressing the shortage of maritime laborers in the Indian Ocean and they developed two strategies to solve this problem. English captains focused on improving the health of their sailors through diet and rest on the shores of provisioning points such as St. Augustine’s Bay. They also began to hire short-term contract laborers in the Indian Ocean called lascars. These were sailors typically from the northern Indian Ocean coastal regions, particularly the Indian subcontinent and near the Persian Gulf.[[30]](#footnote-30)

These strategies were expensive but, as a result, the English were relatively more successful in sending ships across the oceans. In 1746, for instance, the captain of the EIC ship Houghton was forced to sail into St. Augustine's Bay when he had “26 men down with the scurvy, etc, uncapable [sic.] of duty and others falling down daily.”[[31]](#footnote-31) After sending the sick to the shore to recover, the captain filled his ship with fresh water, wood, beef, and rice. The Houghton set sail three and a half months later for the English holdings in “Bencoolen” (Benkulen, in Sumatra), Madras, and Bengal. Most of the crew had recovered during their stay in Madagascar, probably due to a combination of the short visit and the arrival of the ship during a period of cooler weather (August).[[32]](#footnote-32) To speed the recovery of his crew, the captain likely purchased oranges, lemons, fish, and milk, in addition to the usual purchases of rice and beef in St. Augustine’s Bay.[[33]](#footnote-33) English captains such as that of the Houghton gathered knowledge on how to trade in the Sakalava western ports, in order to gain provisions such as these. After years of visits, the English knew of the “customs” necessary for trading in the bay.[[34]](#footnote-34) By the end of the eighteenth century, European captains could replenish supplies within a week or two.[[35]](#footnote-35)

On the east coast of the island, however, EIC traders had trouble in purchasing provisions. [[36]](#footnote-36) Years of visiting the west coast eased trading relations and meant that the English did not know how to trade on the east coast. In fact, the Malagasy of Fort Dauphin expressed surprise when the English visited their port, as they had heard the English were afraid of the French and so did not frequent that part of the island.[[37]](#footnote-37) Furthermore, the English complained supplies were far more limited on the east coast than on the west.[[38]](#footnote-38)

It only took about two weeks to sail between the east coast of Madagascar and the Mascarene Islands.[[39]](#footnote-39) The Mascarenes attracted the attention of both the Dutch and the French, but they both depended on Madagascar for supplies of food and labor. After taking possession of the uninhabited island of Mauritius in 1638, Dutch commanders sent several small ships to Madagascar to purchase slaves for the colony.[[40]](#footnote-40) Despite periodic investments, the Dutch decided to abandon Mauritius in 1710 following difficulties caused by runaway colonists, frequent storms, locusts, and rats.[[41]](#footnote-41) In 1665, the French had taken control of another uninhabited island in the region, Île Bourbon [present-day Réunion]. Frenchmen, along with their Malagasy slaves (and wives) from Fort Dauphin, were the first settlers on Île Bourbon. After the French lost their colony in Fort Dauphin in 1674, they decided to invest in developing trading posts in India, the Middle East, and the Mascarenes.[[42]](#footnote-42) The French assumed control of Mauritius in 1717, renaming it Île de France, and attempted to develop it into a provisioning center for the French in the Indian Ocean.[[43]](#footnote-43)

The islands' governors, however, were not satisfied with growing wheat and herding cattle for passing ships. They transformed the farms on the islands into plantations that grew coffee, sugar cane, indigo, and cotton. They envisioned the islands becoming even more profitable than Saint-Domingue (present-day Haiti), France's Caribbean colony. These plans relied upon steady supplies of food and labor from Madagascar to succeed, especially since sugar plantations required large influxes of slaves to work them.

Unfortunately, the islands never lived up to French expectations, in part due to a continual lack of supplies from eastern Madagascar, a difficulty the French governors could not have foreseen. By 1698, the French colonists required frequent imports of slaves from Madagascar to help with clearing land and establishing agriculture on the islands.[[44]](#footnote-44) Slave ships also frequented Mozambique and the Indian subcontinent during the eighteenth century. French officials compared slaves from Madagascar unfavorably with those from “Malabar” or Mozambique.[[45]](#footnote-45) Despite negative opinions about Malagasy slaves, ships would return from Madagascar with a small number of *captifs* along with the rest of their cargo, primarily rice and cattle.[[46]](#footnote-46) Traders from the Mascarenes undertook multiple voyages a year to the island and rarely visited the Sakalava-held ports on the north and west coasts of the island.[[47]](#footnote-47) The danger of bringing large numbers of Malagasy slaves to a relatively uninhabited island became clear. The governors constantly debated what to do about the *marons*, or runaway slaves, usually of Malagasy descent.[[48]](#footnote-48) Marons robbed French colonial farms and encouraged rebellion among slaves. Some reportedly stole canoes in an effort to return to Madagascar.[[49]](#footnote-49)

Colonists used slave labor to develop ports, farms, and plantations. Company governors dictated trading quotas to the settlers and began encouraging coffee cultivation by 1735.[[50]](#footnote-50) In response to these quotas, the demand for slaves on the island remained high throughout the eighteenth century.[[51]](#footnote-51) Slave traders sold slaves to the colonists on the island for pre-arranged prices. As a result, sources frequently refer to the slaves as a “noir pièce d'inde” or “negresse pièce d'inde,” meaning a “black” valued at “a piece of India cloth.”[[52]](#footnote-52)

Even with slave labor, the plans of the company’s directors quickly unraveled. The crops on the islands failed repeatedly following a series of natural disasters (primarily droughts and cyclones) in 1725, 1728, 1730, and 1737.[[53]](#footnote-53) The colonists and their slaves struggled to grow wheat, maize, and rice, and to raise cattle on the islands. Coffee growing proved even more difficult. Locusts and rats consumed crops, especially the prized wheat.[[54]](#footnote-54) Droughts dried up rice fields and diseases struck cattle and slaves. Cyclones wiped out crops and destroyed the recently constructed ports. In one year, slave mortality among the company's slaves was above ten percent.[[55]](#footnote-55)

To solve the problems that faced the colonies, the French leaders made several pragmatic decisions. One of the most important was the introduction of manioc. As manioc grew well throughout Madagascar, colonial leaders assumed it would provide the slaves with a steady food supply. By 1733, manioc became a staple crop for non-Europeans in the Mascarenes.[[56]](#footnote-56) Despite this innovation, the French preferred to eat rice, usually imported from Madagascar.[[57]](#footnote-57) They purchased rice at the ports of Foulpointe, Île Sainte Marie, and Antongil Bay. Ships from eastern Madagascar returned with large quantities of rice and a few slaves. For instance, in 1725, the small ship belonging to the islands, the Ruby, returned from the east coast of Madagascar with several thousand tons of rice, 32 male and 4 female slaves. This supply of rice appeared to the grateful colonists as “manna fallen from the sky” against the next famine. The food was retained for distribution among the troops on the island and the company's various workers, until the next harvest.[[58]](#footnote-58) From Fort Dauphin, the ships could purchase hundreds of live cattle at a time, required to “populate” the islands.[[59]](#footnote-59) Although, with cattle mortality rates as high as fifty percent during the transit, this project was costly.[[60]](#footnote-60)

These voyages provided support that would satisfy the needs of the colonists in most years, but were not sufficient when natural disasters ruined crops on the island. In 1730, following a particularly violent cyclone, many homes and buildings were destroyed on the islands. In 1733, mice and rats consumed many of the remaining crops.[[61]](#footnote-61) With little food available, the governors sent several additional ships to eastern Madagascar.[[62]](#footnote-62) Following this crisis, the governors decided to develop a colony on Île Marotte in Antongil Bay, which was quickly abandoned (see Chapter 4). The leaders of the islands tried repeatedly to establish colonies in Madagascar in an effort to secure food and labor for the Mascarenes.[[63]](#footnote-63) Perhaps due to these attempts, the French faced more hostility from leaders in eastern Madagascar as the eighteenth century progressed.[[64]](#footnote-64)

**Exporting War**

By 1744, the EIC relied upon India for imports of cloth and spices but faced competition from the French for the domination of this commerce.[[65]](#footnote-65) The French embarked an ambitious plan to conquer the Carnatic coast of India. The conflict resulted in the First Carnatic War, with official fighting beginning in 1744. In subsequent years, the British and French fought the Second Carnatic War from 1748-1754, and a third in 1756-1763 (also known as the Seven Year's War). Even after their defeat, the French continued to supply the Indian Maratha Empire with firearms and military training. The French attempted to assist them in their battle against the British in the three Anglo-Maratha wars, fought between 1774 and 1818.[[66]](#footnote-66)

As a result, the British and French remained involved in military engagements in India for over half a century. In return for supplies from Madagascar, the British provided the Sakalava Empire with a constant infusion of firearms and other foreign imports. In 1744, about ten British warships joined the usual “India ships” of the EIC visiting St. Augustine’s Bay.[[67]](#footnote-67) The British officer described the “melancholy condition of the ship's company,” with 110 men sick, “most of which were dangerously ill.” [[68]](#footnote-68) The men went ashore where they recovered by sleeping in tents and eating “[every] sort of food or fruits that could be proper for their different disorders.” [[69]](#footnote-69) British commanders found plentiful beef and water in the bay, after sending the usual present to King Baba in Tulear.[[70]](#footnote-70) The ships set sail with only a little salted meat, rice, and callavances (a type of bean) because, according to the commander, they had not spent enough time to wait for the traders to bring the food items to St. Augustine's Bay. He mentioned that, if they had had more salt, he could have purchased many more cattle from King Baba.[[71]](#footnote-71)

The French also turned to Madagascar for supplies of food and labor during the wars. As early as 1746, the French government at Île de France and Bourbon sent multiple ships to Madagascar in search of cattle and other animals to supplement supplies for the warships.[[72]](#footnote-72) The French bought hundreds of cattle, including 470 cattle in one year from Foulpointe alone.[[73]](#footnote-73) In 1749, a French ship bought 400 cattle at Fort Dauphin but lost all but 180 of them on the voyage back to the Mascarenes.[[74]](#footnote-74) The importation of food, especially cattle, was necessary to restore the supplies of the islands after the annual visits of the French fleets and their “*grande consommation*.”[[75]](#footnote-75) Each warship consumed an estimated fifteen cattle each during their stay. Visits of eight or ten ships would require 120-150 cattle a year.[[76]](#footnote-76) The French turned to tortoise meat to feed their soldiers and sailors. They sent ships to the nearby island of Diego Rodrigues (present-day Rodrigues), where sailors would capture hundreds of tortoises.[[77]](#footnote-77)

The French probably profited a great deal from exports of coffee and other exotic commodities and hoped to purchase food in Madagascar with the proceeds.[[78]](#footnote-78) Their plans would have succeeded, except supplies from Madagascar were not forthcoming. Even if the French could purchase the necessary food from the island, they constantly worried about the threat of an English invasion of their islands.[[79]](#footnote-79) French fears of British attacks near Madagascar were not unwarranted, as the British did contemplate invading Mauritius and conducted surveillance on the French forces on the islands.[[80]](#footnote-80) Fear of the British also likely discouraged the French from purchasing food from the west coast of Madagascar.

In an effort to secure more supplies for passing warships, the French decided to establish a colony off Madagascar in 1750.[[81]](#footnote-81) The French signed a treaty with the east coast ruler of Foulpointe, Princess Bety.[[82]](#footnote-82) The self-declared sovereign of Île Sainte Marie, the queen and the other *grands* (chiefs) from the east coast agreed to give the French possession of the island in “perpetuity.”[[83]](#footnote-83) The colony lasted only a few years. A few months after a small contingent of soldiers had arrived, a trading ship passed by the island. The captain of this ship discovered that the people of Île Sainte Marie had massacred a French colonial officer, Gosse, for reportedly mistreating the Malagasy. The French placed more soldiers on the island, but moved the establishment to a small island off Île Sainte Marie, Île Caye. On this island, the settlers struggled to trade for provisions and the colony was disbanded by 1754. Many of the Malagasy fled from the island to the mainland in fear of French reprisals, further disrupting communities on the east coast.[[84]](#footnote-84)

By 1754, the French had failed to create a lasting trading settlement on Île Sainte Marie but they had succeeded in creating considerable unrest on the east coast. For the first time, the French found the communities along the coast without rice or cattle for sale. Intermittent war, probably caused by a lack of food along the east coast of Madagascar, interrupted trade, as did several droughts and the spread of a virulent epidemic. [[85]](#footnote-85) By the outbreak of the third Carnatic War in 1756, the French worried seriously about food shortages affecting their populations and sent ships to western Madagascar and even East Africa in search of supplies.[[86]](#footnote-86) The governors also began sending vessels to the Cape of Good Hope to buy food from the Dutch.[[87]](#footnote-87) They begged merchant ships to bring rice to the islands from the French colonies in Indonesia.[[88]](#footnote-88)

French commanders continued to visit eastern Madagascar, but the prices for goods had increased dramatically.[[89]](#footnote-89) French ships contracted debts the company could not pay at Foulpointe, effectively halting trade there even further.[[90]](#footnote-90) Without an influx of piastres, the islands could not pay off their debts to the Malagasy nor procure new supplies.[[91]](#footnote-91) In the words of French merchants, the trade of eastern Madagascar was “ruined.”[[92]](#footnote-92) The final indication of their problems was the pleas of the governors for the colonists to begin growing food, not coffee and other exports, during the 1760s.[[93]](#footnote-93)

In 1768, the French again decided to found a settlement on Madagascar, this time at Fort Dauphin, the location of an earlier French colony.[[94]](#footnote-94) After some debate, the company officials decided that a colonial administrator who had experience in India, Comte Dolisie de Maudave (or Modave), would lead it.[[95]](#footnote-95) After remaining in Fort Dauphin for roughly two years, he failed to create a prosperous settlement in the region. Modave and his troops were constantly embroiled in local political disputes and had trouble gaining food supplies.[[96]](#footnote-96) Modave pleaded for greater investment from the French, in terms of soldiers and trading supplies, but was forced to return to Europe from where he continued his pleas through 1770.[[97]](#footnote-97)

In the midst of French failures in Madagascar, British ships continued to visit St. Augustine's Bay.[[98]](#footnote-98) British successes in purchasing supplies in Madagascar can be contrasted with French difficulties on the east coast of the island. A lack of sea support for French troops in India, caused in part by the lack of food in the Mascarenes, damaged French military operations. In 1758, the French navy, under the command of the French admiral D’Ache, sailed from the Indian coast to provision their ships at the Mascarenes. Upon arriving at Île de France, the admiral discovered that the islands were suffering from a “dire shortage of supplies.”[[99]](#footnote-99) He sent most of his fleet to the Cape for supplies and sailed to India with a smaller contingent of sailors and soldiers.[[100]](#footnote-100) The admiral had left French land forces unprotected and, in the absence of naval support, they were forced to retreat.[[101]](#footnote-101) A year later, D’Ache returned to the Mascarenes for supplies but, in January 1760, a cyclone hit the islands and crippled the fleet at anchor there. D’Ache remained in the Mascarenes to protect the islands against British invasion. Without the benefit of naval protection, the French forces in India lost a major battle in 1760 and surrendered their control of major ports in India during the next year.[[102]](#footnote-102)

**The Aftermath**

After the wars ended, the British and French began to take more interest in controlling the southwestern Indian Ocean, including Madagascar. Their wartime experiences convinced governments of the value in dominating trade from Madagascar, as well as the shores along the southwestern Indian Ocean. Both the British and French maintained large contingents of soldiers and sailors in the ocean, even after the war ended.[[103]](#footnote-103) The British fought with the Marathas for the next few decades and these battles required the continued dispatches of British ships into the ocean.[[104]](#footnote-104) The French also continued to send trading ships to Madagascar.[[105]](#footnote-105) The French, however, experienced severe financial difficulties during this period. Attempting to slow the flow of silver to Madagascar, the French government outlawed the slave trade from Madagascar for a few years during the 1770s.[[106]](#footnote-106) Instead, more ships went to East Africa and the west coast of Madagascar, where guns were still used to trade for slaves, particularly after an outbreak of the “petite verolle,” (*vérole* or small pox) in 1771 damaged slave populations. [[107]](#footnote-107)

The French formed another colony on the shores of Madagascar in 1774. The establishment, according to one leader, “appears absolutely necessary to procure for Île de France the help of which it needs.”[[108]](#footnote-108) This last attempt to colonize Madagascar during the eighteenth century failed more disastrously than previous ones. The French hoped that a Hungarian “adventurer,” Benyowsky, would set up a trading establishment in Antongil Bay. Benyowksy adopted the title of “Ampanscabe” [Mpanjaka-be, literally, big king] and attempted to conquer portions of the island. His colony disrupted commerce and antagonized Malagasy communities. He lost many of his men to disease and warfare.[[109]](#footnote-109) He begged the island governors for more men and firearms, but they refused.[[110]](#footnote-110) In an effort to raise more money for the colony, Benyowsky tried to start an export business and sent slave ships from Madagascar to the Cape, but he got into trouble with the Mascarene governors.[[111]](#footnote-111)

When Benyowsky’s colony failed in 1779, the governors agreed to leave a few traders in Foulpointe for organizing annual shipments from the port.[[112]](#footnote-112) In 1792, the French government created a “commissaire civile” to operate at Foulpointe to trade with the chiefs in the surrounding province.[[113]](#footnote-113) There were also a few French traders based at Île Sainte Marie and Fort Dauphin for overseeing trade at these ports.[[114]](#footnote-114) The government at Île de France in 1777 pursued plans for procuring slaves from East Africa and one trader concluded a treaty with the Sultan of Kilwa.[[115]](#footnote-115) Despite these plans, the French government turned again to Madagascar, believing control of the island would make them “the masters of commerce in the Indies.”[[116]](#footnote-116) The prices of food on the islands continued to increase and inhabitants dealt with recurring food shortages and crises as they had difficulty purchasing food in Madagascar.[[117]](#footnote-117)

The British were aware of French difficulties in Madagascar.[[118]](#footnote-118) The real problem was not the execution of French plans, but rather the lack of availability of food from eastern Madagascar. The British and French continued to struggle with each other during the Napoleonic Wars of the early nineteenth century. During these wars, the French attacked British vessels within the Indian Ocean and the British, in turn, blockaded French ports.[[119]](#footnote-119) In 1810, the British sent an expedition to seize Île de France. British control over the island was formalized in the Treaty of Paris in 1814. After this date, the British took advantage of French weaknesses and increased their commercial influence in eastern Madagascar.

The Merina Empire increasingly controlled trade and land on the east coast of the island. The Merina, allied with the British, were the first real rivals to Sakalava dominance over trade in Madagascar. British assisted the Merina against the Sakalava and the French found themselves closely allied with the Sakalava, in a reversal of the relationships of the eighteenth-century. The next chapter continues the story of the Sakalava, during a period of decline. The leaders of the Sakalava Empire turned to the Comoro islands and East Africa in an effort to continue their military and commercial expansion. When the Sakalava began importing slaves into Madagascar, they came under attack by the British, who sought to stabilize trade within the Indian Ocean.

1. Portions of this chapter were presented in a conference paper, Jane Hooper, “*Flux du sang et sauterelles:* How the People and Environment of Madagascar Thwarted French Commercial Expansion” (paper presented at the annual meeting for The Western Society for French History, October 2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Desforges Boucher, 6 March 1760, “COL C/4/12.” [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Magon, journal, 6 October 1757, “COL C/4/10.” [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Desforges Boucher, 6 March 1760, “COL C/4/12.”; find source on this slaves; see also COL C/4/13. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The term Mascarene Islands in this chapter also refers to the French possession of Île de Rodrigues, a small island inhabited by tortoises, introduced dogs and chickens, and a small population of French soldiers and slaves. On the early history of Rodrigues, see “Une note pour l'île Rodrique,” 1692, “COL C/3/11.” [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. On the French navy, see Jonathan R. Dull, *The French Navy and the Seven Years' War* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2005). For the records of the British navy during these wars, see the letters of the admiralty (henceforth ADM) kept in the British National Archives, Kew, especially “ADM 1/160,” “ADM 1/161,” “ADM 1/162,” “ADM 1/163.” [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. In good years, the islands could produce enough food for the colonists and export to warships, but cyclones, locusts, and other environmental problems such as droughts and floods frequently harmed agriculture on the islands. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Several French monopoly companies were formed between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, including the *compagnie d'orient*, dissolved in 1654, the *compagnie royale des indes orientales*, between 1664 and 1668, and the *companie des indes*. Donald C. Wellington, *French East India Companies: A Historical Account and Record of Trade* (Lanham, MD: Hamilton Books, 2006), 9-28. On this narrative of French failures, see Ames, who highlights the disastrous attempt to colonize Madagascar. Glenn Joseph Ames, *Colbert, Mercantilism, and the French Quest for Asian Trade* (DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996). The two-volume history of the French East India Company written by Haudrère focuses on the role of mercantilism in the failures of the company. Philippe Haudrère, *La compagnie française des Indes au XVIIIe siècle*, 2 ed., vol. 1 (Paris: Les Indes savantes, 2005), 13-40. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. See, for instance, Haudrère, *La compagnie française,* 13-40. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. This is because the eighteenth-century sea wars have been described as “struggles of endurance” when banking and credit became crucial to success. See the works done by military historians on the Carnatic wars that put an emphasis on sea power and the importance of supplies: Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987), 76; Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783,* 25 ed.(New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 244-7; Dull, *The French Navy,* 10-35. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Wellington, *French East India Companies,* 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Pier M. Larson, “Colonies Lost: God, Hunger, and Conflict in Anosy (Madagascar) to 1674,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27, no. 2 (2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. For example, a collection focusing on French Indian Ocean commerce examines interactions between French and Indian trade networks: Indrani Ray and Lakshmi Subramanian, *The French East India Company and the Trade of the Indian Ocean: A Collection of Essays* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1999). The same is of course true for studies of the English East India Company that focus on the influence of India on EIC policies: H. V. Bowen, *The Business of Empire: The East India Company and Imperial Britain, 1756-1833* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. For instance, Haudrère, *La compagnie française*, 1: 203; Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power,* 227. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Davelu, “Notes historiques sur l’isle de Bourbon,” n.d., “COL F/3/1.” [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Megan Vaughan, *Creating the Creole Island: Slavery in Eighteenth-Century Mauritius* (Chapel Hill, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Ibid., 35. On importance of supplies from Madagascar, see Ibid., 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Richard Allen, “The Constant Demand of the French: The Mascarene Slave Trade and the Worlds of the Indian Ocean and Atlantic During the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” *Journal of African History* 49, no. (2008): 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Richard Allen, “The Slender, Sweet Thread: Sugar, Capital and Dependendency in Mauritius, 1860 ,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* (1988):153. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. On this topic: Allen, “The Constant Demand”; Edward A. Alpers, *Ivory and slaves: changing pattern of international trade in East Central Africa to the later nineteenth century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975); Nancy Jane Hafkin, “Trade, society, and politics in Northern Mozambique, c. 1753-1913” (PhD diss., Boston University, 1973). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. I agree with the description given by Wright about the creation of dependence of Africans on Western imports and support during this period, but I wish to call attention to how Europeans also grew to depend on Madagascar. Donald R. Wright, *The world and a very small place in Africa* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), 89-90. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. See especially the French complaint in St. Augustine's Bay: Desforges Boucher, letter, 1760, “COL C/4/12.” Food shortages were a product of wars, according to Europeans visitors, who always described the island as exceedingly fertile. Proposal for a French establishment in Madagascar, 1749, “COL C/5A/1.” [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Bellecombe, journal and notes, 10 September to 31 October 1776, “COL C/5A/7.” [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. For instance: complaints about the wars in the Comoro islands: the ship journal of the Walpole, 1786, “IOR/L/MAR/B/293 O”; the ship journal of the Warren, 1749, “IOR/L/MAR/B/571 A”; the ship journal of the Pentheiere, May 1743, “MAR 4 JJ/116.” [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. D’Unienville?, November 1815, essay on Madagascar, “MAD7/15.” [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Archer Jones, *The Art of War in the Western World* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois, 1987), 265. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Dutch East India Company (VOC) records held in *Nationaal Archief* (the Hague) discuss this trade. See, for instance, “Copie missiven... in de baij van St. Augustijn aen de westzijde van Madagascar,” 1632, Surat, “1.04.02 1109”, ff. 127 – 134; “Copie dagregister ... reijse als omtrent den slavenhandel op Madagascar,” 1694, Ceylon, “1.04.02 1544,” ff. 1026 – 1058; “Factuur ... slavenhandel op 't eijland Madagascar,” 1740, Kapp, “1.04.02 2547,” ff. 110 – 113. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. There has not been much work done in the Portuguese archives on the frequency of this cross-channel traffic before the nineteenth century. See Thomas Vernet, “Le Commerce Des Esclaves Sur La Côte Swahili, 1500 - 1750,” *Azania* 38, no. (2003). [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. On this slave trade to EIC colonies (to St. Helena, Fort St. David, and Bencoolen): Letter book, 1718, “IOR/E/3/99,” f. 250; Letter book, 1716, “IOR/E/3/98” f. 429; Letter book, 1733, “IOR/E/3/106,” f. 10-13; the ship journal of the Harrington, 1736, “IOR/L/MAR/B/654 B”; the ship journal of the Hertford, 1734, “IOR/L/MAR/B/656 E-G”; the ship journal of the Prince William, 1738, “IOR/L/MAR/B/324 E”; the ship journal of the Edgebaston, 1740, “IOR/L/MAR/B/622 A”; the ship journal of the Onslow, 1741, “IOR/L/MAR/B/164 C”; the ship journal of the Swift, 1741/2, “IOR/L/M AR/B/616 A”; the ship journal of the Chesterfield, 1748, “IOR/L/MAR/B/507 A”; Letter book, 1749, “IOR/E/3/110,” f. 172; the ship journal of the Delaware, 1752, “IOR/L/MAR/B/322 B”; the ship journal of the Swallow, 1749/50, “IOR/L/MAR/B/385 A”; the ship journal of the Dragon, 1753, “IOR/L/MAR/B/598D”; the ship journal of the Prince Henry, 1761, “IOR/L/MAR/B/325 G”; the ship journal of the Dragon, 1758, “IOR/L/MAR/B/598 E”; the ship journal of the Fly, 1764, “IOR/L/MAR/597 B”; the ship journal of the Diligent, 1761, “IOR/L/MAR/B/320 E”; the ship journal of the Snow Mercury, 1764, “IOR/L/MAR/B/554 C”; the ship journal of the Beckenham, 1764, “IOR/L/MAR/B/561 A”; the ship journal of the Solebay, 1764, “IOR/L/MAR/B/591 A.” [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. On lascars, see Chapter 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. The ship journal of the Houghton, 1748, “IOR/L/MAR/B/438 F.” [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Compare this success to the failures of the Beckenham visiting during the summer months. The ship journal of the Beckenham, 1764, “IOR/L/MAR/B/561 A.” French colonists complained continually of the high mortality rates of Europeans who remained on the island more than a few months. In November of 1768, the French colonial leader in Fort Dauphin reported that out of a hundred Frenchmen, 29 were sick with fevers, after three months on the island. See Modave, journal, 1768, “COL C/5A/2.” [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. On purchasing these goods in the bay, see the ship journal of the Winchelsea, 1743, “IOR/L/MAR/B/4C.” [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. The rival “King John” is mentioned when the lascars fled to his “domains” and hence out of reach for the Sakalava soldiers trying to recover the runaways. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. See for instance the various voyages of the Greenwich: the ship journal of the Greenwich, 1767 and 1769, both in “IOR/L/MAR/488 F, G.” [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Lt Colpoy, report, 1772, “ADM 1/160.” British ships bought cattle and rice on the east coast in 1751 but had trouble getting water and had to return to the Cape of Good Hope. The ship journal of the Ruby, 1751, “ADM 52/696.” [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. The ship journal of the Harrington, 1736, “IOR/L/MAR/B/654 B.” [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Edward Bosawen, letter, 17 October 1748, “ADM 1/160.” [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. See, for instance, the voyages of the Duc D’anjou, 1737, to and from Île de France and Fort Dauphin and Antongil Bay, “MAR 4JJ/74.” [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. P. J. Moree, *A Concise History of Dutch Mauritius, 1598-1710: A Fruitful and Healthy Land* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1998), 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. On the following, Moree, *A Concise History of Dutch Mauritius,* 1-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. On the failure of the colony, see the “Memoir on the current state of isle Dauphine,” 1668, “COL C/5a/1.” [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Orders to take control of “isle Maurice,” 1 March 1716, “MAR B/1/14,” f. 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Proposal for a colony in Madagascar in order to purchase slaves, 1697, “MAR B/3/98,” f. 320. So desperate was the need for slaves that the French openly traded with the pirates of east Madagascar during the early part of the eighteenth century. Desforges Boucher, 30 November 1725, “COL C/3/3-4.” [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. On the development of slave-trading states in East Africa, see Hafkin, “Trade, society, and politics,” 23-26.

    The French imported thousands of slaves from the Indian subcontinent, although the preferred use of these slaves was in the ports or ships. These “lascar” sailors from the northern Indian Ocean worked the ships in the ports of the islands, ferrying provisions to and from visiting ships. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. For this reason, Allen concludes that slave cargoes from Madagascar were “usually substantially smaller than those arriving from eastern Africa”: Allen, “The Constant Demand,” 54. In addition, French traders complained that the eastern ports of Foulpointe, in Antongil Bay, and at Fort Dauphin never supplied many slaves. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. It became common practice for the colonial authorities to send their *particulier* ships (short-haul ships owned by the colonial governments) to eastern Madagascar. The French sent ships occasionally to western Madagascar. See: the instructions to the captain of the Jupiter, 1725, “COL C/2/27”; orders from the council of Île de France, 1744 and 1745, “COL C/2/31”; Diore, letter, 30 March 1728, “COL C/3/5.” They also desired slaves from Senegal. David, letter, 25 October 1749, “COL C/4/6.” [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Many of the colonists believed that the “Madagascar slaves are always much more inclined to desert their master” and flee into the mountains. Alexander Dalrymple, “Geographical collections of Alexander Dalrymple on “Mauritius, Island of Bourbon, Madagascar, and Diego Rayes”, 1756, “Add. 33,765, 1808,” f. 10.

    Marons or maroons also posed a constant problem in the Americas: Richard Price, “Introduction: Maroons and their Communities,” in *Maroon Societies: rebel slave communities in the Americas*, ed. Richard Price, 3 ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 1-30. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Dalrymple, “Geographical collections of Alexander Dalrymple,” f. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Davelu, “Notes historiques sur l’isle de Bourbon,” n.d., “COL F/3/1.” [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Letter, 9 August 1741, “COL C/3/8.” [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. For the use of this term, see Bouver, letter, 6 September 1751, “COL C/3/10.” [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. These are just examples, there were more in subsequent years. See: Davelu, “Notes historiques sur l’isle de Bourbon,” n.d., “COL F/3/1.” [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. See the letter written by Jean Marchand on the ship Vierge de Grace discussing getting slaves from Madagascar to grow manioc, 1733, “COL C/5A/1.” [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. For example, see French orders in 1736, for ships to visit Madagascar for cattle, other livestock, and slaves, “COL C/2/27.” [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Desforges Boucher, letter noting the arrival of the Ruby, 1723, “COL C/3/3-4.” [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Lenoir, letter, 1726, “COL C/4/1.” In 1734, the company decided they needed 600 cows and bulls to be purchased for Île de France: orders given to Bourdonnais, 11 December 1734, “COL C/4/2.” [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. For examples, see the trading expedition of 1755 to Île Sainte Marie: Bouvet, 8 February 1755, “COL C/4/9.” On French failures, see the report of the EIC ship the Harrington in 1736, who observed a French ship which had trouble finding Fort Dauphin, the traders arrived starving and many of their men dead. The ship journal of the Harrington, 1736, “IOR/L/MAR/B/654 B.” [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Memoir, n.d., “COL F/3/1.” In 1737, the crops again failed due to a hurricane and the French sent ships to Madagascar for food and slaves: De la Bourdonnais, letter, 1 December 1737, “COL C/4/2.” [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Deliberations of the Compagnie des Indes, 4 March 1733, “COL C/3/7”; letter, 7 February 1731, “COL F/3/46-48.” [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. For more details on this colony, see Chapter 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Leading to disagreements with Malagasy in Antongil Bay: De la Bourdonnais, letter, 1739, “COL C/4/3.” [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. On the English East India Company, see Holden Furber, *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient, 1600-1800* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976). [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. On the details of the Anglo-Maratha conflict and the French role in these wars, see the following works: Anil Athale, *Struggle for Empire: Anglo-Maratha Wars - 1679-1818* (New Delhi: Reliance Publishing House, 2001); Stewart Gordon, *The Marathas: 1600-1818* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Aniruddha Ray, *Trade, Politics, and Plunder: the Marathas at Cambay, c. AD 1725-1825* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 2006); S. P. Sen, *The French in India: 1763-1816* (New Delhi: Munishiram Manoharlal, 1971). [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Curtis Barnett, letter, 9 October 1744, *Admiralty Letters,* “ADM 1/160,” National Archives, Kew, UK (henceforth ADM). [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. The captains also tried to hire any “lascars, Portuguese, Dutch, or any sort of people we think can be of service to us.” The British may have hired or bought Malagasy from St. Augustine’s Bay to work as sailors or soldiers. Griffin, 23 October 1746, “ADM 1/160.” [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Curtis Barnett, letter, 9 October 1744, “ADM 1/160.” [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Ibid.; the ship journal of the Pearl, 1745, “ADM 51/723.” [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Curtis Barnett, letter, 9 October 1744, “ADM 1/160.” [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Albert, letter, October 1747, “COL C/2/33”; the ship journal of the Anglesea, 1748, “MAR 4 JJ/77”; the ship journal of the Argonaut, Brilland, Lis and Leside, 1736, “MAR 4 JJ/102.” [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. David, December 1747, letter, “COL C/4/5.” Note that this trade occurred after the conclusion of the alliance between the Sakalava and the Betsimisaraka of Foulpointe, who sold slaves to the Sakalava in return for cattle. These cattle therefore may have come from the Sakalava. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. David, 28 February 1749, letter, “COL C/4/6.” [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Described at length in various letters written by David in 1749-50, in Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Ibid. Additionally, the French bought 320 cattle from Fort Dauphin in 1757, in the midst of a drought in southern Madagascar: Magon, 14 December 1757, journal, “COL C/4/10.” [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. For example, see Poivre, letter, 1767, “COL C/4/18.” [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. David, letter, 28 February 1749, “COL C/4/6.” [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Tortoises on the shores of Madagascar also faced increased hunting, especially during the eighteenth century. The consumption of tortoise meat probably forced several species of tortoises into extinction. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Edward Boscawen, letter, 17 October 1748, “ADM 1/160.” See also: the ship journal of the Ruby, 1751, “ADM 52/696.” An expedition to gather intelligence about the islands was discussed by the English in 1761: Cornish, letter, 6 December, 1761, “ADM 1/162.” On the surveillance, see George Pocock, reports on French ships, 1757-9, “ADM 1/161”; Robert Harland, 26 December 1769, “ADM 1/163.” Other valuable information could be obtained from passing Portuguese ships and questioning locals. For instance, see the ship journal of the Haeslingfield, 1739, “IOR/L/MAR/B/642 B.”. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. David, orders, 1750, “COL C/4/6.” See also: Vignol, “project of the establishment in Madagascar,” 1749, in “COL C/5A/1.” [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Probably the sister of Ratsimilahoe, founder of the Betsimisaraka confederation. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. The treaty is copied in 1750, COL C/5a/1. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Detailed by Legentil, memoir, 1761, in *Fonds ministériels, Dépôt fortifications colonial, Sainte Marie de Madagascar*, “XVII/memoires/88,” Centre des Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence, France. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Magon, journal, 6 October 1757, “COL C/4/10.” The community of Foulpointe, a major trading partner for the French, came under attack from their neighbors, the “Betalimenes,” who pillaged the port in 1754. Letter from Île de France, 20 January 1753, “COL C/4/153.” [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Desforges Boucher, 6 March 1760, “COL C/4/12.” [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Desforges Boucher, journal, 31 December 1759, “COL C/4/12.” [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Desforges Boucher, letter, 18 January 1762, “COL C/4/14.” [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. D’Ache, letter to Magon, written off the coast of Madagascar, 31 July 1759, “COL C/4/11.” See also Dull, *The French Navy,* 117-141. David, letter discussing trade in Madagascar, 1750, “COL C/2/35-36”; Brenier, letter, 19 October 1755, “COL C/3/11.” On the piastre trade, see Chapter 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Magon, journal, 12 December 1756, “COL C/4/9.” [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Memoir on the commerce of the Indies, around 1766, “COL C/4/16”; memoir on the financial difficulties on the islands, 1767, “COL C/4/19.” The governors of the Mascarene Islands later came under investigation for their expenditure of large amounts of silver during the last few years of the war. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. See problems getting food in 1761: Desforges Boucher, letter, 1 December 1761, “COL C/4/13.” The visits of French ships to Madagascar are detailed in the ship journals of the Bertin, Valliant, and Compte D’Artois, 1761-2, all in “MAR 4 JJ/80”; the ship journal of the Comte de Provence, 1763, “MAR 4 JJ/81.” On further disruptions at Foulpointe: The ship journals of the Comte d’Argenson, 1765, “MAR 4 JJ/92.” On the trade being ruined: Poivre, letter, 15 January 1768, “COL C/4/22.” [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Poivre, letter, 30 November 1767, “COL C/4/18.” [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. On the Fort Dauphin colony, see chapter 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Dumas, letter, 26 July 1768, “COL C/4/20”; Dumas and Poivre, correspondance about the necessity for a colony in Madagascar, 17 March and 3 June 1768, “COL C/5A/2.” [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Modave's journal from 1768 is copied in “COL C/5a/2.” [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Modave, letter written asking for reinvestment in a Fort Dauphin French colony, 28 August 1770, “COL C/5a/3.” [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Cornish, letter, 19 December 1759, “ADM 1/162”; see also the records of EIC merchant ships visiting Madagascar and successfully obtaining food during this period: the ship journal of the Royal Duke, 1756, “IOR/L/MAR/B/614 A-D”; the ship journal of the London, 1767, “IOR/L/MAR/B/1E.” Despite British successes, the French complained in 1759 they could not get any rice in St. Augustine’s Bay: Desforges Boucher, journal, 28 November 1759, “COL C/4/12.” [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Dull, *The French Navy,* 141. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. This was despite imports of cattle numbering upwards of 500 a year from Madagascar. David, letter, 21 October 1768, “COL C/4/5”; David, letter, 28 February 1749, “COL C/4/6.” D’Ache has been described as “overly cautious.” Dull, *The French Navy*, 141. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Mahan, *The influence of sea power,* 273-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Dull, *The French Navy*, 170-3. The Seven Years’ War essentially ended in the Indian Ocean by 1761. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Examples of French plans for the Indies: Montigny, letter, 30 June 1782, “COL C/2/166-167”; Soulliac, letter, 8 July 1785, “COL C/2/169.” [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. On famine in India: Harland, letter, 9 October 1771, “ADM 1/163.” The admiral describes the people of the bay: “The inhabitants seldom remain long in a place but move about and when they come to a spot where they chose to remain, build themselves small huts with the branches of trees, it cannot therefore in the circumstances, be supposed that the sick had anything more than tents for their reception which were erected for that purpose.” Harland, letter, 9 January 1773, Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. See the French “essay sur le commerce de l'Inde,” 1770?, “COL C/2/107.” [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. On the continuation of the illegal trade, see Desroches, letter, 16 September 1770, “COL C/4/26.” [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Cremont, letter, 3 July 1771, “COL C/3/13”; de Ternay, letter, 23 February 1773, “COL C/4/33.” Food supplies were dwindling in Madagascar and the French suddenly realized that the same cyclones that hit their island, also struck Madagascar. Maillart Dumesle, letter, 17 October 1773, “COL C/4/34.” Ships were dispatched to the Cape but food proved to be too expensive from there as well. Percheron, letter, 7 February 1775, “COL C/5B/1”; Provost de la Croix, letter, 16 March 1775, “MAR B/3/618,” f. 214. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. De Boyner, letter to Benyowsky, 19 March 1773, “M 1031.” On English information about Benyowsky: J. Clavering, report, 18 July 1774, “IOR/H/116,” India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous, British Library, f. 201-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. See Benyowsky's own account of his time in Madagascar in Maurice-Auguste Benyowsky, *Voyages et Memoirs de Maurice-Auguste, Comte de Benyowsky*, 2 vols. (Paris: F. Buisson, 1791), 2: 211-472. See the English report on his progress, or lack thereof: Harland, diary, 1774, “ADM 1/163.” [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. See various correspondences in COL C/5A/5.” [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. On sending voyages to the Cape: Benyowsky to the ministry, letter, 13 May 1776, “COL C/5A/6.” On the slave exports in 1776, see the ship journal of the Étoile describing the arrival of the Belle Arture with slaves at the Cape, 1776, “MAR 4 JJ/144/D.” [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. .” On the 1777 proposal for a French trading chief at Foulpointe to procure rice and cattle, see Darele, proposal, 18 October 1777, “COL C/5A/9.” See “COL C/5A/8,” French Archives Nationales, Paris, 1777; De Sanglier, memoir, 6 December 1786, “COL C/5A/8.” [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. On the trading post in Foulpoint, see the records of Lescallier, commissaire civil, 1782, “MAD7/15.” [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. The Mascarene island colonists still required large supplies of slaves to grow coffee, sugarcane, and indigo, despite recurring problems with drought. See various memoirs, n.d “COL F/3/46-48.” [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. On this plan, see M. Morice, *Projet d'un establissment a la cote orientale d'Afrique, Rhodes House, MS.Afr. 6*, copy found in the Zanzibar National Archives, “BZ 2/1 1777”; for another copy of Morice’s documents on the visit, see G. S. P. Freeman-Grenville, *The French at Kilwa Island; an episode in eighteenth-century East African history* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 63-218. He focuses explicitly on East African trade, as the trade with Madagascar is “well known.” Ibid., 218. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. De le Serre?, memoir on trade in the Indies, 1785?, “COL C/2/113-114.” For a similar view, see the late eighteenth-century document on Madagascar's role in trade, “sous la république” in “MAD150/207.” [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Machant, letter, 26 February 1807, “COL C/3/26.” [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. Colpoy, report of the lieutenant of the Dolphin, 1772, “ADM 1/163.” The French *compagnie des indes*, always in dire financial straits, faced problems of supply, financing, and bankruptcy, in part thanks to British blockading of French ports. On the financial and administrative problems of the compagnie des indes, see Sen, *The French in India,* 37-50. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. Jones, *The Art of War*, 377. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)