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The Swedish Slave Trade Efforts at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century: Case Studies in Nordic Transimperial History

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ABSTRACT

The relatively minor imprint Sweden had on the transatlantic slave trade has been seen as one of the consequences of Sweden being a ‘failed empire’. This conception is misleading. By utilising a transimperial perspective on new research findings, the article shows that there was no lack of ambition among Swedish entrepreneurs in the context of the slave trade. The relative lack of Swedish slaving voyages rather had to do with specific circumstances such as Sweden’s late entrance into the status of a colonial power, as well as patriotic politics in the wake of king Gustav III’s death in 1792. By examining a range of case studies, specifically slaving voyages organised both from the Baltic and from Sweden’s colony Saint-Barthélemy in the Caribbean, the historical record is clear that from the end of the eighteenth century onwards, there was an active Swedish engagement in the slave trade. Moreover, it was made possible by transimperial contacts and allowances. Reviewing this evidence, the article argues that all Swedish slaving voyages were complex and decentralised undertakings which were organised in spite of the lack of Swedish state policy, often with some form of foreign involvement, whether it consisted of mercantile networks, capital or knowledge.

KEYWORDS

Slave trade; Swedish colonial history; empire; transimperial history

Introduction

Why did Sweden not become a more prominent slave-trading power? The two periods in which Swedish mercantile efforts in the slave trade culminated coincide with Swedish ownership of the West African outpost of Cabo Corso (1650–1663) and the Caribbean island of Saint Barthélemy (1784–1878). Other Swedish colonial bids were the subject of diplomatic discussions throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These were never met

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with any success. The relative absence of Swedish ships and entrepreneurs within the slave trade was, however, not due to a lack of ambition. There is a tendency to characterise Sweden as a 'failed empire', owing to its limited expansionist successes after its brief stint as a great power in the seventeenth century, resulting in some dominion over the southern Baltic shore. A transimperial perspective would, however, describe such an empire as marginalised; seemingly side-lined and on the losing end of history, although still engaged in a variety of colonial and imperialist practices. Sweden's place within and amongst empires is key to understanding its involvement in the slave trade.

Transimperial history takes the inclusion of two or more imperial players and their perspectives as a point of departure.¹ The case of Sweden in the slave trade represents a special example. Left without an independent imperial trade network of its own – save for a small Caribbean colony – Sweden was forced to navigate between imperial spaces, depending on its own neutrality or the needs of other imperial powers, tenuous as these conditions could be. In the context of the slave trade, Swedish merchants needed access to special knowledge and equipment not readily available domestically, as well as access to markets in West Africa and in the Caribbean.

The classic study of Cabo Corso is still György Nováky's examination of the Swedish Africa Company,² but its history will be excluded here with a view to contextualising the question squarely within a later, crucial period for Swedish overseas trade and expansion. What will be attempted here is to explain, helped in part by new archival discoveries, what modes of Swedish slave trade efforts succeeded and what modes did not. Two Swedish slaving voyages organised in and sailing from the Baltic in the 1790s, the only known instances of their kind, will be contrasted against the better-known slave trade under Swedish colours in the Caribbean. One of these two voyages recently came to light through the SweCarCol digitisation project.³

Some distinction can be made between the Baltic-based voyages and the Caribbean trade. In the Caribbean, the Swedes' primary role in the slave trade was that of facilitators, granting access to Swedish burghership and its associated advantages such as neutrality in times of war. This strategy was an adopted one, based on more than a century of established free trade practices in Danish St. Thomas and Dutch St. Eustatius and Curaçao. In 1786, the newly established port town of Gustavia received free port rights, a recognition of the colony's limited utility in terms of natural resources and agricultural possibilities. During the reign of Gustav III, Swedish economic policy was reformed in several ways. The king and his economic advisors sought recourse to new ideas to expand ailing state finances. Colonial ambitions were a part of this reasoning, paired with piecemeal liberal reforms. These included the introduction of limited religious freedoms as well as experimental free trade legislation.⁴

The Baltic expeditions, by contrast, were independent Swedish undertakings, but also carried the hallmarks of multinational cooperation. By treating these

voyages as case studies – and contrasting them with the Swedish branch of the slave trade in the Caribbean – I argue that all Swedish slaving voyages were necessarily complex and transimperial endeavours, regardless of mode or origin. Not only in the prosaic sense that they traversed the boundaries of several empires, but also because they relied heavily on the access to a global repository of shared knowledge, capital and privileges, the ‘imperial cloud’.⁵ Swedes entered and engaged in the colonial world and in different ways – through mercantile and consular networks, as well as through the invitation of foreign merchant capital into their free port colony in the Caribbean. The provenance of different slaving expeditions can explain the nature and limitations of Nordic agency in an activity as transimperial as the slave trade. Based on the networks involved, the composition of crews, and the itineraries of the voyages undertaken, inferences can be made about Swedish engagement and proficiency in the slave trade. The political and economic setting in Sweden of the late eighteenth century must also be taken into account. Sweden’s marginal involvement in the slave trade has been explained by a strong domestic support for abolitionism, which might explain the absence of further Swedish slaving voyages from the Baltic, but it does not account for the long-lived Swedish participation in the slave trade well into the nineteenth century.⁶ The Slave Voyages database contains at least 27 Swedish-flagged voyages between 1794 and 1810. There are nearly a hundred additional known examples, the last ones recorded from the 1830s.⁷ Access to transimperial markets and their ancillary benefits – knowledge and capital – must be gauged along Swedish state policy as well as popular opposition against the slave trade in order to understand the development of Swedish involvement in the slave trade around the turn of the eighteenth century.

New Swedish Prospects in the Slave Trade in Revolutionary Times

The Swedish acquisition of the small, formerly French, island of Saint Barthélemy in 1784 can be summed up as the culmination of long and largely fruitless diplomatic wranglings by Gustav III’s regime. Nevertheless, Sweden now had a foothold in the Caribbean, a pivotal achievement consistent with the ambitions of the king and his economic advisors. The acquisition itself was predicated on good Franco-Swedish relations. The goals and ambitions behind this agreement, framed as mutually beneficial for both powers, were an explicit part of the negotiations. An oft-stated argument held that a neutral Swedish colony in the midst of the Lesser Antilles could only be beneficial to French interests in the Caribbean.⁸ If the French opened their colonial ports to Swedish ships, they would have a suitable substitute for the Dutch, Danish, and New England merchants supplying their colonies in times of conflict and great need. Although primarily an argument from the Swedish legation, this seemed to be what some figures at the French court had in mind. In a letter from Vergennes to the French minister Pons in Stockholm after the conclusion of the matter, the matter was laid bare:

[His Majesty] believes that the island of S:t Barthélemy would be a very useful depot for his Navy and colonies during times of war, and he did not think the price [S:t Barthélemy] was too high for the certainty of naval provisions at a time when they were as indispensable to the [Caribbean] islands as they were difficult to obtain.⁹

While not explicitly mentioned in these discussions, the slave trade was always an integral part of Swedish colonial planning. The only way to profit from the barren island was to rent it out as a marketplace for all nations. Early assessments held that interloping in the form of a transit trade between exclusive imperial economies was absolutely central to the Swedish colonial project. The transit trade via Swedish territory was also recognised by the French court as the reason why they had agreed to secede the island to Sweden in the first place. When the Swedish West India Company (SWIC) was founded in 1786, great expectations were attached to its potential to open up this branch of overseas trade for the Swedish mercantile class. The impetus behind the establishment of the SWIC was the development of the Swedish colony. More generally, Swedish slave exports to the wider Caribbean market were seen as a lucrative enterprise in its own right. The company came close to commissioning a voyage from the Baltic to West Africa in 1788. In December of 1787 the company directors drew up a contract with Danish captain Søren Møller for a slaving voyage. But when Møller arrived in Stockholm in June of 1788 to supervise the loading of the ship he was soon met with news of the Swedish war with Russia. The voyage was called off, on account of what must be seen as sensible grounds. The company ship *Enigheten*, which had carried the expedition tasked with taking possession of Saint Barthélemy, was captured and brought to Copenhagen as a prize in August 1788. The first and only slaving voyage under company auspices was, simply put, thwarted by Gustav III's own foreign policy.¹⁰

But the idea of further slaving voyages was not abandoned quite yet, even if the cancelled voyage marked a kind of milestone for the directors of the company. An assortment of rifles intended for the African trade was sent by the company to Saint Barthélemy a couple of years later. In a letter to the merchant house of Röhl and Hansen dated 15 October 1791, the directors revealed the original intent behind the rifles, but surmised that 'there are no advantageous prospects left within this uncertain enterprise'.¹¹ Judging by subsequent events, this statement did not constitute a definitive consensus among the directors.

Fäderneslandet Survives the Middle Passage

Even if the Swedish West India Company failed – or was disinclined to make a prolonged effort – in the transatlantic slave trade, there were other attempts. Thus far, only two Swedish-flagged slaving voyages originating in the Baltic have been found in the historical record. They were the voyages of *Fäderneslandet* ('The Fatherland', 1794) from Stockholm and *Sweriges Wapen* ('Sweden's Arms', 1796) from Gothenburg. Our knowledge of both voyages is the result

of quite recent chance archival finds. *Sweriges Wapen* was the subject of a 2012 book by Anne Agardh,¹² who reconstructed the voyage of the ship and its captain Abraham Brink from documents found in the UK National Archives. *Fäderneslandet* was recently uncovered as a result of digitisation efforts surrounding the old Swedish administrative archives of Saint Barthélemy.¹³

The voyages, albeit independently organised, show considerable similarities: the background of the captains, time period, the effort to exploit Swedish wartime neutrality during the French Revolutionary Wars, their relative successes and failures, as well as their reliance on foreign expertise and transimperial liaisons. We know of *Fäderneslandet* and its true mission because the ship's captain, Petter Fahlgren, perished in the Swedish colony after a brief illness, possibly typhoid fever, in June 1795. The Swedish West India Company agents on Saint Barthélemy mentioned the ship in their correspondence with Stockholm, but did not disclose the fact that the ship had arrived with over 200 slaves from West Africa. Since one of the owners of the ship was a company director, they did not have to expound on such details, but the silence in this regard is nevertheless interesting. Silence might suggest the need for discretion, but silence in the records is notoriously difficult to interpret.

The dearth of documentation nevertheless follows a contemporary pattern when it came to colonial affairs. After an initial surge of publications about Saint Barthélemy after its acquisition, very little news regarding the colony reached Sweden. A brief period of press freedom followed in the wake of the assassination of the king in 1792, but censorship was reinstated in 1794. Notably, large areas of political and foreign reporting were prohibited, including news about the French and United States constitutions.¹⁴ The lean years of Swedish news continued unabated until 1809. Nevertheless, the Swedish reading public was reasonably well aware of colonial realities and the issue of abolition generally enjoyed a considerable degree of popular support.¹⁵

The company's prior decision not to engage in the slave trade is significant in this context, itself likely a consequence of Swedish contemporary popular opinion, buttressed by the regime change after the death of Gustav III. The caretaker regime of baron Gustaf Adolf Reuterholm during Gustav IV Adolf's time as a minor, between 1792 and 1796, was diametrically opposed to the prior Gustavian system, including its preoccupation with colonial affairs. Gustav III's Secretary of State and personal representative on the SWIC board of directors, count Eric Ruuth, was sidelined after the death of the king and sent abroad as Governor-General of Swedish Pomerania. Count Ruuth had been a key advisor in all manner of colonial projects during Gustav III's rule.¹⁶

Fäderneslandet's owners were the Rejmers Brothers; Lars Rejmers Petterson, a director of the Swedish West India Company and Anders Rejmers, a merchant and hat maker. The captain, Fahlgren, had previously been employed

mainly in the Mediterranean salt trade before embarking on a voyage from Stockholm in October 1793, sailing to Lisbon, West Africa, Saint Barthélemy and back again to Stockholm.¹⁷

On 5 February 1794, Fahlgren signed a charter-party in Lisbon with the Portuguese merchant Manoel Pereira Viana de Lima, which detailed an agreement to conduct a slaving voyage to West Africa and subsequently to 'Spanish America' where the slaves were to be sold. The agreement was drafted and signed in the home of the Swedish consul Johan Albert Kantzow. Viana de Lima would supply the ship with a suitable cargo as well as a supercargo who would be in charge of conducting the trade on the Coast. The slightly damaged charter-party does not specify to what extent, if any, the Rejmers' share in the actual slave cargo would be; it only contains the freight rate. The charter-party contains some telling details, for instance that the captain would not receive the same reward in the event the ship would be captured or lost due to a declaration of war against Sweden. Any negotiations between Rejmers and Viana Lima prior to the charter-party are not known. An expedition of this kind, where a Swedish ship and crew broke with its regular pattern of trade between the Mediterranean and the Baltic, was surely prepared for in advance. This could not have been an instance of Swedish tramp shipping, where Fahlgren had happened upon a chance deal while delivering a cargo of timber to Lisbon. The detail about the captain's reward also suggests, implicitly, that this was a planned speculation on Swedish wartime neutrality.¹⁸

Aside from the charter-party, a few letters, lists and sales contracts, the main source that survives is captain Fahlgren's sea protest, written up by the judge and notary public in Saint Barthélemy before the captain perished. It is severely damaged and there are gaps in continuity which cannot be resolved. Still, it provides the contours of a perilous voyage that managed to cross the Atlantic with a human cargo. The protest itself primarily details adverse events that nearly ended the voyage. It was the captain's legal means of showing that he had tried his best to fulfil his obligations. The ship was visited many times by foreign privateers and naval ships, both British and French. A squadron of the French Republican fleet visited the ship while it was moored outside Porto Novo in December 1794. It was the same squadron which had attacked and razed much of the Freetown colony in Sierra Leone. The encounter showed that Swedish neutrality was not a guarantee to clear all obstacles. The French crewmen seized 112 slaves, but it is unclear why. The abolition of slavery in France had been decreed on 4 February the same year. The slaves were perhaps viewed as lawful prize or simply taken as *cultivateurs*, the new term for field labourers of the colonies.¹⁹ At any rate, the 112 slaves did not constitute the whole cargo, and *Fäderneslandet* could continue its voyage eastwards.²⁰

The ship's supercargo was a Frenchman named Renaud. Prior to this voyage, he had been a slave trader stationed on Gambia Island near the mouth of the Sierra Leone River. He seems to have had a strained relationship with his Swedish captain. Fahlgren, without explicitly criticising him as such, gives a picture of a self-willed and arbitrary merchant. Renaud, as supercargoes on the Coast tended to do, frequently left the ship in a small canoe to conduct his business on shore. The captain was left on board, seemingly flustered by waiting for days on end, watching his crewmen fall ill one by one. The suffering of the crew was mentioned several times in the protest, but the condition of the ship's human captives is not mentioned except in the case of large losses such as the one that followed the encounter with the French fleet. Fahlgren's inexperience in the trade arguably comes across in the protest's geographical descriptions. Localities were named 'the English castle' and 'the Dutch castle' instead of Cape Coast or Elmina.²¹

The situation finally came to a head in Porto Novo in December 1794. Despite attempts to signal Renaud, who had been on shore for a long time, the captain received no reply. Fahlgren decided to continue to Lagos, apparently because the situation onboard had begun to deteriorate. Renaud managed to send a message to the ship, but Fahlgren did not return for him. Instead, *Fäderneslandet* left for the Caribbean in late February 1795, and limped into Saint Barthélemy on 5 May, in violation of the charter-party. The ship arrived in appalling condition, but surviving sales contracts tally at least 239 resold slaves on the island. Even the equipment – notably the iron shackles (*barres de justice*) used to constrict the slaves – was sold. The ship managed to return to Stockholm when?. Under the command of a different captain, *Fäderneslandet* was seized by French privateers and condemned in Alicante in 1797.

While nearly disastrous, the voyage had carried over 200 slaves to be resold and transported to other islands in the Caribbean archipelago.²² It is not known whether the Rejmers Brothers pursued any further expeditions within the slave trade, but this does not appear to have been the case. Whether profitable or not, the fate of *Fäderneslandet* had once again showed that the slave trade was an enterprise containing considerable risk, especially for a Swedish crew inexperienced in the slave trade. Had it not been for the Lissabon consignators, the voyage might never have taken place. The enterprise itself faced many obstacles apart from the practical requirements of slaving. The Swedish West India Company's history underscores that at any rate, there was no unanimous support for these types of ventures among the directors. Public support for abolitionism cannot be discarded as a discouraging factor. Still, both the will and capacity to surmount these obstacles were clearly present in some quarters, and the example of *Fäderneslandet* underscores how the Swedish slave trade from the Baltic could have developed through transimperial networks.

Sweriges Wapen, a Voyage from Gothenburg to Surinam

A short time after *Fäderneslandet* had returned to Stockholm, a slightly different voyage was organised in Gothenburg. Like the aforementioned example, the voyage of *Sweriges Wapen* aimed to capitalise on Swedish wartime neutrality. The Dutch-Swedish merchant house of Fåhraeus and Laurin had until 1795 been based in Amsterdam. Johannes Fåhraeus and Johan Joachim Laurin conducted their business primarily in cooperation with the Dutch West Indian Company (WIC), supplying the colony of Surinam with slaves and other merchandise. The WIC had gone out of business in 1795 as a direct consequence of the war. Having benefited from a politics of neutrality for decades, the Dutch mercantile community could no longer trade neutrally under the auspices of an impartial confederate state. The Batavian Republic, proclaimed the same year, was a French client state²³ Fåhraeus moved from Amsterdam to Gothenburg already in 1795 and applied for the rights and privileges of town burghership. When his application was successful, the owners of the merchant house could continue their business as Swedish ship-owners. It is apparent in their instructions to the captain of *Sweriges Wapen* that Fåhraeus and Laurin had taken great care to supply the ship with documents to dispel any doubts that the ship was bona fide Swedish property, and therefore neutral.²⁴

The captain was Abraham Brink, as Swede both similar to and different from Fahlgren. He too had been schooled on the Mediterranean as a merchant mariner, primarily in the salt trade. A Swedish maritime career path from the Mediterranean world to the Atlantic slave trade could have been relatively straightforward. Joachim Östlund has unearthed at least seven Swedish ships that participated in the Trans-Saharan slave trade between 1743 and 1759. Östlund has also shown that the Swedish consulates in North Africa were mindful of the possibilities inherent in the slave trade.²⁵ Brink's most important distinction from Fahlgren was that he had considerable experience in the slave trade prior to sailing under the Swedish flag with Fåhraeus and Laurin's ship. His earliest known voyage in the trade was as second mate onboard the French ship *Le Duc d'Orleans* (1791), rising through to the ranks until he became captain of *La Nouvelle Societé* (1794) and *D'Elmina Pacquet* (1794–1795).²⁶ With *La Nouvelle Societé*, which called at Cap François among other French Caribbean ports, he had witnessed the unfolding events of the early revolution in Saint-Domingue. Owing to the uncertainty within French service and, ultimately, the French abolition of slavery, Brink took employment elsewhere and happened upon Fåhraeus and Laurin in Amsterdam. *D'Elmina Pacquet* was the last slave ship that the firm dispatched to Surinam before they moved to Gothenburg.²⁷

While *Sweriges Wapen*, its captain and crew were Swedish, Fåhraeus and Laurin still operated within known and trusted transimperial networks. The ship was outfitted and loaded in Amsterdam. This underscores the fact that

the enterprise itself was embedded in a Dutch trade network, and merely used Swedish shipowner rights as institutional cover. It was also unlikely that the owners would have found the required fittings and equipment for the slave trade in Gothenburg. At any rate, it was cheaper and more expedient to use existing suppliers in their old base of operations on the European mainland. The ship left Texel on 11 February 1796. Brink carried the responsibility of conducting the trade on the coast himself. Fåhraeus' and Laurin's judgment to move under a Swedish flag of convenience initially paid off: When *Sweriges Wapen* was stopped by a British warship on the coast, its commander inspected its documents and reached the conclusion that the ship was Swedish and thus neutral property. Brink and his crew were allowed to continue on their journey.²⁸

Trading commenced on 22 March 1796 and continued for more than half a year. *Sweriges Wapen* left for the South American coast on 29 November 1796. When the crew sighted Cape Orange and Cayenne in French Guyana, the cargo held 163 adult slaves as well as a half dozen small children. *Sweriges Wapen* was a brigantine, a slightly smaller vessel than *Fäderneslandet*. Brink's instructions for the sale of the slaves contain signs that the owners were wary of the difficulties of reaching a safe harbour in the Americas or the Caribbean. He was instructed to carefully scout out the surroundings of Surinam before attempting to enter the port. These fears were not unfounded. Shortly after anchoring outside the coast of Surinam, the ship was captured by two British privateers, the *Cecile* and the *Dolphin*. *Sweriges Wapen* did not carry any arms or ammunition apart from what was required to control the human captives onboard the vessel. This was also part of the owners' strategy of neutrality. The privateer captains, however, were not interested in scrutinising the ship's documents. The privateers hailed from Grenada, and had been instructed to bring all suspected prizes into the colony for adjudication.²⁹

The ship was carried into Grenada and the crew brought before the Vice Admiralty Court in Saint George, only to be condemned as good prize after a lengthy process. Despite the fact that Fåhraeus and Laurin had gone to great lengths to ensure that *Sweriges Wapen* would be considered neutral, the Grenadian Vice Admiralty Court found, after a protracted and dubious process, that there were enough indicators of involvement with hostile foreign powers for the court to condemn the vessel and its cargo. Before the verdict, Brink had gained permission to sell off the slaves at auction – many had already fallen ill or died. The ship became one of many Swedish and other neutral ships that fell into British hands during the war.³⁰

The fact that Swedish naturalisation and neutrality during the wars was not a reliable strategy highlights why more examples like *Sweriges Wapen* are not known. 'Private cupidity', in the words of contemporary English lawyers, was the driving force of the privateering that augmented English naval superiority. As evidenced by the hundreds of cases brought before different Admiralty

courts during the French Revolutionary Wars, Swedish ships became part of a long-standing tension between the rights of neutral states and the right of belligerents to conduct maritime warfare.³¹ Fåhraeus and Laurin also comprise a special case in that they, as Swedish immigrants operating in a Dutch commercial network, were highly privileged and mobile. Swedish naturalisation in one of the major port towns at the end of the eighteenth century was not trivial, and was subject to intense opposition among Swedish merchants. The propensity of foreign merchants to naturalise in Gothenburg or Stockholm during times of international conflict was a known phenomenon, as common as the propensity to leave once hostilities had ceased, withdrawing ships and wealth from the Swedish kingdom in the process.³² That was very much the case with Fåhraeus and Laurin, as they merely used Swedish colours as institutional cover for Dutch commerce for a brief period of time. Already before the end of the war, their business in Gothenburg had ceased and moved back to Amsterdam.³³

Swedish Flags of Convenience in the Caribbean

The Swedish colony of Saint Barthélemy was by design highly accessible to foreign merchant wealth. The colony had no guilds, no religious restrictions such as those in Sweden proper, and taxation was kept to a minimum. Taxation was also restricted in a practical sense because of a disagreement between the Swedish colonial council and the colony's inhabitants. The Swedish administration had limited means of protecting the island's shipping, which in the minds of the merchant elite meant that the Swedish state had no right to exert certain taxes. Crucially, the free port institution offered foreign settlers of means to essentially buy the right to Swedish subjecthood. The fees for naturalisation were gradated in a telling way. A considerable fee was required for Swedish naturalisation *and* the right to own vessels flying the Swedish flag. Potential settlers wishing merely to become Swedish subjects without this particular right, such as members of ship crews, paid less.³⁴

Naturalised Swedish subjects in Saint Barthélemy, then, had the right of bypassing an important hurdle in order to become a Swedish ship-owner – the guild system. Even Fåhraeus and Laurin had to apply for the right to trade in Gothenburg. Foreign merchants naturalising and gaining burghership rights in Swedish port towns were of course not uncommon, but they had to be accepted into the merchant guild first, which was never a certainty. Due to this discrepancy, it is not surprising that sea-registers (or passports for ships) issued on Saint Barthélemy inherently had some limitations. These Swedish-flagged ships could not depart for European ports. All ports in the Caribbean, in South and North America, as well as Africa, were however open destinations. This was also a recognition of the precarious situation Sweden was in as a small colonial power. As the tacit approval of the French court had exemplified, a small degree of interloping was tolerated, even encouraged. But Swedish

transatlantic shipping remained the domain of ships from Sweden proper. These ships also carried royal protection from Algerian privateers, owing to an existing treaties and tributes between Sweden and the Barbary states.³⁵

While saddled with such limitations, the free port institution of Saint Barthélemy nevertheless created circumstances in which a small-scale transit trade flourished, especially with the onset of the French Revolutionary War. The organisation and composition of the trade, its primary agents and their national affiliation was highly complex. It was not always the case that the slave trade affiliated with the Swedish colony was always sailing under Swedish colours. Swedish-flagged ships were in fact in the minority if this trade is taken as a whole. Out of a known total of 115 slave ships with any connection to Saint Barthélemy, only 42 can be confirmed or imputed to have been flying the Swedish flag. Also, this was not by far a homogenous group. Many ships had several sets of documents (Swedish and foreign ones) which could be used to their advantage depending on the situation. The aim was often to conceal the national origin of the vessel if caught by privateers. The Swedish flag, then, became a flag of convenience, bought and sold for certain purposes. In the Caribbean, there was a distinct demand for neutral shipping in the slave trade and beyond.³⁶

Foreign-flagged slave traders also took advantage of certain freedoms the Swedish colony had to offer. Naturalised merchants based at Saint Barthélemy did not exclusively conduct their business under Swedish colours. Quite frequently it made sense to dispatch some voyages under other flags, in some cases they happened to be working in partnership with other merchants abroad or in other colonies. Saint Barthélemy, by virtue of being a neutral free port for most of the wars between 1793 and 1815, also drew some foreign slave traffic wary of navigating the troubled, heavily patrolled waters of the Caribbean. Slaves found ready buyers in the Swedish colony, and slave cargoes could be further parcelled out and exported to nearby colonies.³⁷

Saint Barthélemy was also notorious for smuggling and privateering activities. Due to its dependence upon French colonies and their markets, Saint Barthélemy was used, along with other free ports, as a base or proxy port for French privateering activities at the early stages of the Revolutionary War. This general state of affairs continued well beyond the Napoleonic Wars, and was particularly prevalent during the South American independence movements from 1809 onwards. This activity often overlapped with the increasingly illegal and covert nature of the transatlantic slave trade towards the middle of the nineteenth century. Saint Barthélemy, although ailing economically after the end of the war in 1815, still found purchase among slave traders in need of cover for clandestine activities. 'Clandestine' should be understood precisely, though. These circumstances were well understood and considered to be an open secret. British diplomatic efforts during the reign of Karl XIV Johan hinted that the slave trade at Saint Barthélemy was an open secret. Saint-

Barthélemy had become a crown colony in 1812, and was in practice governed by the king and his foreign minister af Wetterstedt. While officially denied, Karl XIV Johan and his advisors understood that the once profitable colony was now dead weight for Swedish finances in peacetime. Correspondence between Stockholm and the colony reveals a royal attitude that condoned the practice, albeit with a high degree of discretion. The most important consideration was to steer clear of conflict with the great powers.³⁸ For this reason alone, foreign slave trading through Saint Barthélemy should be understood as a part of Swedish transimperial experience, something that benefitted Sweden, although indirectly. The king had a good grasp of the tension between imperial authority and colonial autonomy, and thus understood the adverse effects of the metropole reining in colonial magistrates too tightly. Like many other similar ports in the Caribbean, much of the informal trade through Saint Barthélemy transgressed imperial law in various ways.³⁹ The slave trade was no exception to this state of affairs.

Established Swedish Slave Merchants in the Caribbean

There is one special case within the context of Swedish slave trade through Saint Barthélemy that requires attention, because it pertains to Swedish mercantile careers in the slave trade in the context of Swedish colonialism: the Swedish firm of Röhl and Hansen. Jacob Eliasson Röhl and Fredrik Adolf Hansen were second cousins, part of a family of royal bakers and merchants in Stockholm. They became associated with the early establishment of the Swedish West India Company. Having some experience with the trade to the East Indies, Röhl drafted a memorial about the future prospects of the new colony in the Caribbean. He was frank about the limitations of the small island, but conceded that it was well situated within the regional shipping networks of the Lesser Antilles and that it had a decent harbour for a future free port. The prospects were good enough for Röhl and Hansen to move to the colony and establish a new merchant firm. Röhl was also a supporter of a charter of exclusive privileges for a Swedish West India Company, arguing that individual Swedish firms did not have enough capital and regional connections to succeed by themselves. Four years after the company was created in 1786, Röhl was also appointed as company agent.⁴⁰

As company agent, Röhl (and by extension his associate Hansen) had a mixed record. Röhl and Hansen established inter-island trading contacts primarily with the French colonies, which deteriorated during the early years of French revolutionary unrest. Röhl and Hansen were pointed out by Swedish colonial officials as the reason why the trade was in a poor way. Reasons varied, but a common denominator was the pairs' lack of affinity with the French revolutionary authorities. Commercial contacts with nearby French colonies were vital, whether they were republican or not. During the regional

unrest of the 1790s, Röhl and Hansen also turned their attention to the slave trade. They argued that the bloodshed and loss of life in the French colonies constituted a new and unprecedented opportunity for Swedish commerce. The French slave populations had suffered considerably, which created demand for new imports. The price of new slaves was on the rise, too, creating further incentives to attempt the establishment of a regular Swedish transatlantic slave trade.⁴¹

For some years, Röhl and Hansen unsuccessfully lobbied the SWIC for a renewed attempt after the aborted slaving voyage in 1788. The company's attitude is evident in replies to a passport application that Röhl and Hansen issued to the Swedish court in 1792. The application was for their Swedish ship *Zombie*, purchased in Dutch St. Eustatius and supplied with a cargo for the West African coast. They had hired an English captain named Richard Rogers and a mainly foreign crew. The *Zombie* sailed in late July of 1792, while the application for Swedish privileges and passports arrived in Stockholm on 19 December 1792. By that time, the *Zombie* had already set anchor outside of the Sierra Leone River. Both the voyage and the passport application were a disaster for Röhl and Hansen. After a period of mutinies and other troubles, the ship finally ran aground in the vicinity of Cape Coast Castle. In their attempts to redeem some of their losses via insurance, Röhl and Hansen blamed the captain for the misfortunes of their venture.⁴²

What is of primary interest here, however, is how the application was received in Stockholm. The Swedish Board of Commerce, which had the responsibility of delivering a suggestion for the outcome of the application, heard several parties for advice. The chief ones were the directors of the SWIC as well as the Stockholm Merchant Guild (*Grosshandelssocieteten i Stockholm*). Both dismissed the application, being of the opinion that Röhl and Hansen ought not to be allowed to conduct such a venture with special ship-owning privileges. A chief argument was that Röhl was a commercial agent, akin to any consul in Swedish service. Consuls were as a rule prohibited to own their own (Swedish) ships. But another matter completely was that the application was also dismissed on abolitionist terms. The Stockholm Merchant Guild was most explicit in this regard:

That the petitioners have in their mind, to establish a traffic on the Southern Coasts of Africa, should be seen as a laudable enterprise, as per the petitioners' account that this trade has never been a successful one for Swedish ship-owners, but as a matter of fact this trade is composed of nothing else than the purchase of the Indigenous or Negroes, the transport and sale of the same to American colonists, and as this trade has been deemed as inhumane by Swedish ship-owners, it has become detested also by the more enlightened part of the English Nation and the matter of its continuation been put into question by the English parliament, furthermore making it impossible for Swedish merchants to be convinced of seeking advantage in a branch of trade, with which the conscience of polished, one does not want to say

Christian people, cannot be reconciled. Therefore, we have very much doubted that the petitioners want to be associated with a trade, that now, more than in times of old, has been deemed unworthy.⁴³

The statement of the SWIC board of directors basically repeated the above argument but in a much more abbreviated style. The application process lasted for more than a year, ending in its rejection in May 1794. Interestingly, the SWIC directors sent their response in November 1793, at around the same time that Captain Petter Fahlgren sailed through Öresund with *Fäderneslandet*. The language of the rejection, seemingly veering towards an abolitionist national conscience against slavery and the slave trade, should be viewed critically. While the apparent humanitarianism should not be discarded outright, it probably did not amount to anything more radical than what circulated in British and Danish discussions at the time. The Danish decision to abolish the slave trade within ten years was made on 16 March 1792. Gustav III was shot on the same day, and died nearly two weeks later. The practical outcomes of the Danish abolitionist decision were not predetermined. Over time, the decision met with practical resistance, primarily from an aggrieved merchant and planter class in the Caribbean.⁴⁴

Save for the Swedish West India Company, there was no such opinion of any significance in Sweden. At best, the Company directors were divided about the question of the slave trade. The caretaker regime of Gustaf Adolf Reuterholm was not anti-colonial per se, but it took issue with matters of excess consumption and luxury, of which colonial goods were a part. Coffee consumption was banned in Sweden in 1794, to the chagrin of Company directors. The Reuterholm years in the wake of Gustav III's death were difficult for colonial trade, but this was less due to abolitionism than a patriotic politics of frugality.⁴⁵ One can situate Swedes as part of the British abolitionist debate almost from the very start of its organisation in 1787. Carl Bernhard Wadström is the most salient example, having contributed, along with Anders Sparrman, to the abolitionist cause by testifying before the British Board of Trade and the House of Commons. Like their contemporary abolitionists however, they were interested in reforming the trade and the lot of colonial labourers rather than abolishing colonial work regimes altogether.⁴⁶ The Swedish rejection of a passport for a slave ship had come at an interesting crossroads in the British debate. Two abolition bills against the slave trade had been introduced in Parliament, in 1791 and 1792, and the second very nearly passed. The House of Lords, however, resorted to delaying tactics and the war with France suspended further consideration of these bills for an indefinite time. Such reform efforts also gained an unfavourable air of Jacobinism as the war progressed, further frustrating abolitionist efforts. There was, however, a prevailing sense that abolition would come to pass sooner or later, a condition which partly explained the Danish decision to abolish the trade in 1792 after an interim period.⁴⁷

There were other sides to the passport question in Sweden as well. Tellingly, there was one dissenting voice among the replies to the Board of Commerce's inquiry, but it was anonymous. It stated that Röhl and Hansen ought to be able to receive their petitioned privileges and carry on with their trade. It is quite possible that this dissenter was Lars Rejmers. In any case, the coinciding voyages of *Fäderneslandet* and the *Zombie* are hardly insignificant. The humanitarian rhetoric in these above statements was quite possibly a genuine expression of contemporary Enlightenment sentiments. Swedish newspapers and public culture were at the time very well acquainted with abolitionist views. But it is also possible that the rejections were the result of a perceived conflict of interests rather than moral considerations. The Stockholm ship-owners saw Röhl as unwanted competition in his dual capacity as company agent and private merchant, which is evident from their argumentation. The board of the directors of the SWIC merely echoed these concerns, but they may have had independent reasons for holding Röhl in line. His value to them was primarily as servant of the company, not as an enterprising merchant with a great deal of personal autonomy.

Whatever the exact reasons, Rejmers and his brother dispatched another slaving voyage during the time that Röhl and Hansen's application was pending. While the voyages of *Fäderneslandet* and the *Zombie* can hardly be seen as successes, they did not completely discourage future attempts. Röhl and Hansen, indeed, built a career on the slave trade. The overall picture is fragmented and somewhat convoluted, but Röhl and Hansen can be tied to a dozen or more slave ships in the historical record. The reason for this obfuscated view is the dearth of regular and reliable colonial maritime records, as well as the complicated and transimperial nature of the trade. Slaving voyages often become known incidentally during other research or in roundabout ways. One case is the US-flagged ship *Farnham*, which seems to have docked at Saint Barthélemy with 319 slaves in February of 1808. We know this because Röhl and Hansen applied for an extension of payment for the customs charges, being the consignees of the said ship. No other mention of the ship has been found in the Swedish colonial archive. The slaves onboard the *Farnham* were reshipped to an unnamed British colony.⁴⁸

Demonstrably, Röhl and Hansen did not always trade under Swedish colours, but rather were consignees and co-operators with other colonial ventures. After 1795, Röhl made his way back to Stockholm and never returned to the Caribbean. Röhl operated as a partner in Stockholm, supplying ships with passports and other necessary documents. Meanwhile, Hansen married a rich heiress of the Benners family on nearby Dutch St. Eustatius, inheriting sugar plantations which simultaneously made him the largest Swedish slave owner known to history. Few Swedish traders during the Swedish colonial era in the Caribbean succeeded in maintaining a mercantile foothold for very long. But the ones who did were often able to integrate into existing local networks by

way of marriage. Hansen lived in the Caribbean for 59 years until his death. He became the subject of an unflattering epitaph by one of the last government physicians on Saint Barthélemy, Axel Theodor Goës, in 1882. Hansen had died in 1844 at 88 years. Surveying the abandoned fields of his St. Eustatius plantations, Goës observed that 'his [Hansen's] as well his wife's riches, extricated from the sweat and the suffering of the black African, have long since vanished, so that not a cent thereof remains for their lawful heirs'.⁴⁹ His partner Röhlhad already died in 1822 and left his family in straitened circumstances. Despite their ultimate economic failures of Hansen and Röhlhad, they were highly mobile transimperial actors who carried out what must have been a mostly lucrative slave trade for at least three decades.⁵⁰

Conclusion

It is possible that a few unknown slaving voyages under Swedish colours from the Baltic are still obscured or hidden within the historical record. Still, the dearth of ships in this branch of trade must reasonably mean that very few attempts were ultimately made. The circumstances and details surrounding *Fäderneslandet* and *Sweriges Wapen* also gives some evidence as to why this was the case. Swedish neutrality on its own was not enough to provide a decisive advantage during a period of continuous maritime depredation and violence. While there was a conspicuous interest in the slave trade, willing entrepreneurs in Baltic port towns faced a number of institutional and political obstacles. While transimperial actors such as Fåhraues and Laurin were common interlocutors during times of war, there were few examples of their kind. Foreign merchants faced a high degree of scrutiny by Swedish merchant elites who were, as a rule, stringently protectionist in matters of naturalisation, justifying it as a patriotic concern. The marginal value of Swedish neutrality did not furnish more incentives to base the trade in Gothenburg or Stockholm.

The *Zombie*, *Fäderneslandet* and *Sweriges Wapen* were all organised during a tumultuous time, seen both from an international as well as a domestically Swedish perspective. Even with limited success, Gustav III and his advisors distinguished themselves as proponents of an ambitious colonial policy. The 'imperial cloud', the imperial reservoir of knowledge, also contained conflicting notions such as abolitionism. While not anticolonial, abolitionist opinion opposed the horrors of the Middle Passage. It is evident that abolitionist ideas and sentiments had an overarching impact in late Gustavian Sweden, visible in newspaper debates and public culture. The case of the *Zombie* also shows that the mercantile community was not immune to this influence, at least not when it came to the use of moral language. Still, opinions among merchant elites were divided and there were demonstrably at least a few willing entrepreneurs who claimed their right to participate in the trade. What should be investigated further is the impact of Gustav III's death on colonial

policy overall. It should be remembered that the initial abolitionist successes in the British parliament were also tempered by the onset of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. In Sweden, however, the ambitious colonial designs of Gustav III and his advisors, modestly achieved through Saint Barthélemy, were forgotten or discarded by an interim government that was opposed to the late king's colonial policies. Reuterholm's caretaker regime in 1792–1796 was a low-water mark for colonial ambitions after an initial flurry of royal propaganda for imperial expansion. Swedish access to transimperial markets can thus be said to have been tempered as much by internal as external factors.

It was therefore quite natural that the multinational slave trade through the Swedish colony of Saint Barthélemy continued to exist well into the nineteenth century. In Saint Barthélemy, colonial designs and ventures persisted in spite of the relative absence of state policy in such matters. The free port of Gustavia offered an outlet for the slave trade for Swedish merchants, whether born in the Nordic region or naturalised in the Caribbean. Such a concentration of capital and knowledge about colonial trade was scarcely possible anywhere else in the Swedish kingdom. The slave trade was highly decentralised and transimperial in nature, choosing national affiliation after convenience. Saint Barthélemy was unique for Sweden but nothing novel in the transimperial reality of the Caribbean. The free port mediated participation both to foreign merchants in Swedish institutions, as well as to Swedish actors in a wider colonial mercantile world. It is unsurprising that the most successful Swedish entrepreneurs in the slave trade, such as Röhl and Hansen, were the most integrated into this world, through marriage, networks and perhaps most of all, a continued willingness to participate in the spread of slave labour.

Notes

1. Hedinger and Heé, "Transimperial History," 440, 443.
2. Nováky, *Handelskompanier och kompanihandel*.
3. The Swedish Caribbean Colonialism 1784–1878 (SweCarCol) is a digitisation and research project funded by the Swedish Research Council (VR2018-06064), part of the research programme Digitisation and Accessibility of Cultural Heritage (DIGARV).
4. Essén, *Johan Liljencrantz som handelspolitiker*, 45–50, 96–97.
5. Kamssek and Kreienbaum, "An Imperial Cloud?"
6. This was an argument first put forward in Ingegerd Hildebrand's thesis about the Swedish West India Company and its management of the colony, and has since been reproduced elsewhere. Hildebrand, *Den svenska kolonin*. See for instance the English summary, 320, 322.
7. The total of 27 voyages combines the examples from the transatlantic as well as the intra-American database; Further examples are found in Wilson, "Commerce in Disguise," Appendix IX, 281–86. There exists an older survey of Swedish slave trade in Ekman, "Sweden, the Slave Trade and Slavery."

8. Hildebrand, *Den svenska kolonin*, 39–41; Cf. Heckscher, *Sveriges ekonomiska historia*, 666–67. For a modern short summary, see Schnakenbourg, “Sweden and the Atlantic.”
9. Vergennes to Pons, 4 July 1784, in Hildebrand, *Den svenska kolonin*, 29.
10. SWIC Directors to Röhl and Hansen, 15 Oct 1791, *Handel och sjöfart*, vol. 158, Swedish National Archives (SNA); Wilson, “Commerce in Disguise,” 166, 169, 171–72.
11. SWIC directors to Röhl and Hansen, 15 Oct 1791, *Handel och sjöfart*, vol. 158, SNA; Wilson, “Commerce in Disguise,” 146; Hildebrand, *Den svenska kolonin*, 187–88.
12. Agardh, *Brink*.
13. The full reference to the material is Fonds Suédois de Saint-Barthélemy (FSB), Successions (S), vol. 301, 34v–45r, 46–55v, Archives nationales d’outre-mer (ANOM).
14. Elovsson, *Amerika i svensk litteratur*, 139–54.
15. Thomasson, “Knowledge, Silence, and Denial,” 42–45; Thomasson, “Moors in the Caribbean,” 2–3, 6–10.
16. See especially Hildebrand, *Den svenska kolonin*, 252–53, 285; cf. Olovsson, “Kolonialintresset i Sverige,” 207–11; Odhner, *Sveriges politiska historia*, 492–94.
17. Johanson, “Reimers”; Kommerskollegium, C II b, *Diary of Sea Registers*, C II c, *Diary of Free Letters 1793*; *Stockholms sjömanshus D I a, Mönstringsrullor 1793*, SNA.
18. FSB, S, vol. 301, 45v, ANOM; See also Müller, “Sweden’s Neutral Trade.”
19. See, for example, Dubois, “‘The Price of Liberty.’”
20. FSB, S, vol. 301, 51r, 49r, 50r; Letters of the French Commanders, dated 19 frimaire l’an 3 (9 Dec 1794) and 21 frimaire l’an 3 (11 Dec 1794), FSB, S, vol. 301, s. 52r–54v.
21. FSB, S, vol. 301, 48r; Whyte, *Zachary Macaulay*, 41; Booth, *Zachary Macaulay*, 39, 45.
22. Sales contract dated 6 May 1795, FSB, S, vol. 301, 43v, 44v; Petter Fahlgren’s death is recorded in the newspaper *Inrikes tidningar*, 30 Oct, 10 and 24 Nov 1795; Additional details about *Fäderneslandet* in Kommerskollegium, C II b, *Sjöpassdiarier 1796, 1800, 1802, 1803*; C II c, *Fribrevsdiarier 1796, 1800, 1802, 1803*.
23. Enthoven, “Neutrality.”
24. Agardh, *Brink*, 48–49, 68–69.
25. Östlund, *Saltets pris*, 226–42.
26. *Le Duc d’Orleans* is possibly identical to the entry ID 379 in The Atlantic Slave Trade Database (TSTD) (www.slavevoyages.org), likewise with *La Nouvelle Societé* (TSTD ID 31411) and *D’Elmina Pacquet* (TSTD ID 35370.). All TSTD entries accessed 12 April 2022. It should also be noted that *d’Elmina Paquet* is recorded as having been registered as Swedish. This is probably incorrect, as there is no entry for *d’Elmina Pacquet* in the Swedish passport diaries. See entry ID 335370 in TSTD.
27. Agardh, *Brink*, 154–57.
28. *Ibid.*, 67–68, 78, 88–89.
29. *Ibid.*, 145–48; For an overview of British Vice Admiralty Courts and how they functioned, see Craton, “Role of the Caribbean Vice Admiralty Courts.”
30. Agardh, *Brink*, 162–63.
31. Wahlström, *Sverige och England*, 46–80.
32. Börjeson, *Stockholm segelsjöfart*, 266–67.
33. Grondelle and Vermij, “Van immigrant tot rijke Koopman,” 220–37.
34. Pålsson, *Our Side of the Water*, 56–57, 65–66; Wilson, *Commerce in Disguise*, 71, 92–95.
35. Müller, *Consuls, Corsairs and Commerce*, 144–53; Wilson, *Commerce in Disguise*, 148–49.

36. Müller, “Swedish Merchant Shipping”; Malmborg, *Neutrality and State-Building*, 75–79; Green-Pedersen, “Colonial Trade under the Danish Flag”; Klein, “Cuban Slave Trade.”
37. Wilson, *Commerce in Disguise*, 166–69, 171–72.
38. See, for example, af Wetterstedt to Norderling, 12 Jan 1822 and 18 Nov 1823, FSB 258, ANOM.
39. Mulich, *In a Sea of Empires*, 34–42.
40. Hjalmar Jacob Eliasson Röhl, “Wördsamt Memorial,” 14 Jan 1786, F 16:20, Vitterhetsakdamiens handskriftssamling, Antikvarisk-topografiska arkivet hos Riksantikvarieämbetet, Stocholm; “Constitutional för Jacob E. Röhl at wara Wästindiska Compagniets Agent i Wästindien,” 12 March 1790, SBS, vol. 23, SNA; Wilson, *Commerce in Disguise*, 78–79.
41. Wilson, *Commerce in Disguise*, 78–79; Röhl and Hansen to the Swedish Board of Commerce, 21 June 1791, SBS, vol. 1A, SNA; Röhl and Hansen to SWIC Board of directors, 18 Feb 14 March 1791, 23 July 1792, Handel och sjöfart, vol. 168, SNA.
42. Röhl and Hansen’s sea protest for the *Zombie*, 2 July 1795, Archives Departementales de la Guadeloupe (ADG) 2L: Actes notariels 1795 (Saint-Barthélemy), vol. 198; cf. Wilson, *Commerce in Disguise*, 148.
43. Deputerade för grosshandels societetens i Stockholm memorial, 29 July 1793, in Komerskollegi skrivelse till Kongl Majt, 19 Nov 1793, RA. The full quote in Swedish: “At sökandena hafwer i sigt, at uprätta sjöfarten på Africas Södra Kuster, torde wara blott ett förebärande som will synas så mycket behageligare, som efter deras utsago skall denna handel icke welat lyckas för Swenska rederierna, men som handelen på dessa Kuster wil icke annat säga än de inföddas eller Negrernas upköpande, transporterande och försäljande til Americanske Colonisterne och denna handel har så som omenskelig icke welat anstå Swenska Rederierne, för hwilcken handel i sednare tider den uplystare delen af Engelska Nationen fattat yttersta afsky och låtit dess widare fortsättande ställas hos ängelska parlamentet i fråga, så hafwa de swenske handlande icke kunnat öfwertala sig, at söka fördel i en handelsgren, som med polerade, man wil ej säga Christna människors skyldighet mot medmänniskor icke kan förenas, hafwa således swårt at tro det sökanderne skola wilja befatta sig med en rörelse, som nu, men än i förra tiden, anses för owärdig.”
44. Røge, “Why the Danes Got There First,” 588; cf. Green-Pedersen, “Colonial Trade under the Danish Flag,” 97–99, 109–11.
45. Hildebrand, *Den svenska kolonin*, 252–53, 285.
46. Rönnbäck, “Enlightenment, Scientific Exploration and Abolitionism,” 3–9; See especially Coleman, *Romantic Colonization*, 5–6, 101.
47. Røge, “Why the Danes Got There First,” 585–89.
48. Council Minutes of Saint Barthélemy, 24 Feb 1808, PJ 154, FSB, ANOM; Possibly identical to TSTD ID 25513 (www.slavevoyages.org), accessed 19 April 2022; Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the Slave Trade*, 525. None of these sources indicate the *Farnham*’s ultimate destination. It is only known that 319 slaves were reshipped from Saint Barthélemy. It seems that the destination has been imputed during data-entry into the TSTD.
49. Goës, “Minnen från vår förra besittning,” 157.
50. The last formal trace of Röhl and Hansen’s slave trade in administrative records is the brig *Rebecca* from 1810, known via a customs application dated 28 Dec 1810 in FSB 160, ANOM. But there were reports, originating from British Nevis in 1815, that the firm had carried on the slave trade to British colonies in secret. See CO 239/2, The National Archives (TNA).

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