FEEDING GLOBALIZATION

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# ONE

## Feasts and Violence

MORE THAN EIGHT HUNDRED European and American ships arrived at the island of Madagascar during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The men on board these vessels immediately sought fresh provisions from the coastal rulers who greeted them on the shores of the island. One such vessel was the Cape slaving ship, the *Brack*, which first arrived and anchored in St. Augustin Bay (alternatively, Saint Augustine's Bay) on July 26, 1741. O. L. Hemmy, the first *commies* (trade commissioner) on board, was responsible for securing slaves for the Dutch colony in southern Africa, but his first concern was finding food and water for the crew. Fortunately for Hemmy, although the shoreline appeared dry and barren, people approached the ship with oranges, chicken, and fish for sale. A leader identified as Prince William greeted the Dutch and agreed to supply them with cattle. Despite this warm welcome, Hemmy was told that he had to visit King Baba to the north if he wished to purchase more valuable commodities, namely rice and slaves.[1]

Hemmy and his companions were escorted by royal representatives to the nearby port of Toliara (Tulear, Tuléar). Hundreds of armed men surrounded the beach. King Baba was seated on a small bench, with an *asseegaye* (spear) to one side and a particularly handsome "English"

gun on the other. The king was dressed in fine cloth and wearing an opulent necklace made of gold, silver, and glass beads. As Hemmy approached, the king immediately demanded to see a formal letter of introduction from the Cape Colony governor. One of the king's trusted advisers, Captain James, read and translated the letter for the king.[2] The king requested a bottle of arrack, a type of strong alcohol, which was quickly drained, as was a second bottle. Momentarily satisfied, King Baba invited the commies to dine and promised to kill a bull, as was his custom to celebrate the arrival of traders.[3]

Hemmy was led to the king's palace, where he sat beside low wooden planks and was invited to eat. The meal featured pieces of cooked meat with skin and hair still attached, complemented with dishes of cooked potatoes and rice stewed in milk.[4] As the king and commies began eating, the king also asked James and Jan, his other adviser, to join in the feasting. The king told the Dutchman that if the meat was not to his liking, he could have it prepared in the "English way." Hemmy replied that it was very good, as he was quite hungry, and he explained that he hoped they could "live as brothers."[5] During the meal, bottle after bottle of arrack was consumed by the participants after the king rejected a bottle of Cape red wine as "not healthy with such sweetness." In the king's estimation, arrack was the most suitable for a powerful ruler and Hemmy had no choice but to supply it in vast quantities. After the king had eaten his fill, the Dutch soldiers received the leftovers.[6]

As they were concluding their feast, King Baba announced to Hemmy that "I am a great king. I have people and livestock, greens, rice, and land in abundance. Come now with your ship and stay two or three months. I will give you slaves and all the things you may wish for."[7] The king's speech marked the end of formalities and the start of trading negotiations. His comments also served as a reminder that this scene of peaceful feasting took place during a period of intense violence, when many on the island were restricted from receiving even a bite of food from the feasts. Instead, these islanders were at risk of being enslaved and sold to foreign slavers. Between 1500 and 1800, an estimated 292,000 people from Madagascar were transported to slave markets on the Indian Ocean; a third of these were shipped to European forts and plantations that encircled the ocean's littoral. A further sixteen thousand traveled to the Americas where they would be sold, if they survived the extremely long journey, along with more than six

million other Africans forcibly transported to the Americas.[8] The violence in and around Madagascar was on a scale typically associated with the transatlantic slave trade from western Africa. While persons taken from Madagascar formed a relatively small part of the magnitude crossing both the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, this traffic transformed Madagascar itself. Connecting populations on the island to the growing global demand for coerced labor, it introduced immense upheaval.[9]

Despite the central importance of the slave trade to the history of Madagascar, out of the more than eight hundred voyages to the island, only about a third of the English, French, and Dutch vessels that stopped there between 1600 and 1800 carried traders in search of slaves. The others loaded valuable supplies of food, wood, and water during their stays on the island.[10] The island's coastal ports and communities began to specialize in a bustling export trade in rice and cattle, with slaves sold to Europeans when food supplies were less abundant. The sale of captives became an alternative route for acquiring European imports. Following the intensification of food production on the island by the middle of the eighteenth century, slaves were relatively scarce and also expensive, being priced in silver coins that Europeans found challenging to procure.

Provisions, however, were still easy to obtain from coastal rulers. Without fresh supplies of food from Madagascar, European vessels would have struggled to carry silver to Asia and spices back to Europe. Colonists in the Mascarene Islands and in southern Africa relied upon frequent imports from the large island, as their colonies were located on lands of strategic importance but only marginal fertility. Rice from Madagascar filled the stomachs of the Europeans who supervised the labor of East African and Malagasy slaves working in plantations in Mauritius. English sailors eagerly consumed fresh beef from cattle originally purchased in Madagascar en route to India. Oranges and lemons from Madagascar revived soldiers suffering from scurvy following long months at sea. Pirates, including the famous Captain Kidd, spent time on the shores of Madagascar hoping to benefit from trading with prosperous island communities.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, these disparate groups arrived at the shores of Madagascar in search of fresh food and alliances. They "lived as brothers" with coastal rulers after sharing bowls overflowing with cooked beef and rice. That some of this food had been produced using slave labor or obtained through warfare

scarcely concerned the Dutch or other visitors. The provisioning trade brought Madagascar to the center of global trading networks that intersected in the southwestern Indian Ocean. The resulting global connections enabled the islanders to sustain contacts with New York pirates and South African slavers, among others. Throughout, food served as a ritual marker of culture and status, imbued with social meaning going well beyond simple consumption. This was, after all, a world where only certain types of alcohol were deemed suitable for royalty. Only rulers and captains, those who participated in the ritual feasts, regularly consumed beef and white rice, while others were lucky if they received the leftovers.[11]

## FEEDING RULERS

For people in Madagascar, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries ushered in dramatic political transformations, thanks in part to this provisioning trade. These two hundred years were a period of intense change for groups throughout Eurasia and along the Indian Ocean littoral.[12] The sudden appearance of Portuguese carracks in the bays of Madagascar during the sixteenth century likely did not initially shock the people of the island. Similar to coastal communities in Africa or Asia, many in northern Madagascar already participated in the long-distance trade networks that crossed the ocean.[13] A hundred years later, as more foreign sailors and soldiers had spilled onto their shores, the islanders found themselves fueling the oceanic explorations of not just Portuguese sailors, but also Dutch, French, and British. Their growing need for provisions spurred the expansion of food production within Madagascar and unleashed a ripple of changes on the island.

Madagascar has frequently fallen between the cracks in a historiography built upon an area studies framework, being neither a part per se of continental Africa nor completely within the Indian Ocean monsoonal wind patterns that had shaped premodern trade in the ocean.[14] The history of communities within Madagascar does not lend itself easily to comparisons with those along the shores of the Indian subcontinent, the Arabian Peninsula, or even nearby East Africa. In these locations, European influence was significantly blunted by a long history of oceanic trade connections. Much of Madagascar, by contrast, had been more removed from long-distance commerce and strong,

externally focused political systems were only present in the north of the island before 1600. Yet, in spite of their distance from the African continent, the people of Madagascar have long lived at the crossroads of influences from both Asia and Africa. Movements of traders, slaves, and migrants ensured that the islanders were never completely isolated from other populations living along the shores of the Indian Ocean with whom they shared not only ancestry, but also vocabulary, farming techniques, and religious beliefs. These connections tended to be attenuated by the large distances between the island and major trading hubs throughout the ocean and were found most strongly in northern Madagascar.[15]

Between 1600 and 1800, rather than being a very minor player in the incipient world system, the island was a part of transoceanic trade networks that tied together various regions of the world. Throughout these centuries, the people of Madagascar enabled global commerce between the Atlantic and Indian Oceans and, as such, their story is as much a global one as one restricted to the Indian Ocean.[16] Yet Madagascar only remained a central provisioning location for a relatively brief period, with European visits in search of food peaking in the mid-eighteenth century. By the nineteenth century and with the advent of the steamship, fewer merchants tended to call at Madagascar for provisions as they crossed the oceans.[17]

Despite the short-lived role of the island as an important node in transoceanic trade, these years of exchanges would have far-reaching ramifications for both the islanders and Europeans who encountered one another across the feasting table. The sudden presence of kings wielding firearms in Madagascar's ports was the clearest innovation. As elsewhere in Africa, these individuals seemed to gain power as a consequence of the slave trade. Scholars from J. E. Inikori to Warren Whatley have repeatedly emphasized the negative impact of the transatlantic slave trade on African societies and noted an increase in political instability and economic impoverishment during the era of the slave trade. The transatlantic slave trade produced "a series of unfortunate transformations" in Africa, in the words of Patrick Manning.[18]

More recently, some historians have presented a more nuanced version of this history. By identifying the traffic in slaves as part of broader economic transformations within the continent, they suggest that while the slave trade was disruptive, it did not completely sever trading connections between African communities, nor did the trade completely

destroy opportunities for economic advancement for some Africans. Some of this literature focuses on understanding the transition to "legitimate" (non-slave) commerce, frequently in agriculture, following abolition, but a number of historical studies have been published recently that examine the florescence of other production, also agricultural, in the midst of the transatlantic slave trade. Despite these efforts to consider the slave trade in a broader context, most historians would still agree that it is impossible to write about African communities on the shores of the Atlantic without examining the role the transatlantic slave trade played in their histories.[19]

The history of Madagascar reveals even more powerfully that the traffic in slaves was not the only factor contributing to violent political transformations within Africa. Guns were purchased not only with slaves but also with bags of rice on the shores of Madagascar. In 1600, individuals sold cattle for iron wire or colored beads in St. Augustin Bay. Scarcely a century later in the same location, a ruler known as Prince Will dictated the exact weight of gunpowder he would accept for a strong bull. State rulers also engaged in frequent battles with their neighbors, which contributed to a brief period of large-scale slaving from the island and the intensified use of unfree labor within the island itself. Leaders in Madagascar sought to defend and expand their political authority; as in Dahomey, this was a "period marked by war, political instability, and economic turbulence."[20] However, unlike West Africans, the islanders engaged in warfare to obtain and protect food supplies, as well as to acquire captives.

Until the early seventeenth century, much of the island's trade was overseen by merchants in the north of Madagascar who wore robes of imported cloth and spoke some Kiswahili. In their harbors, East India ships anchored beside East African vessels, as the captains of both sought to purchase captives from coastal rulers. The merchants of Madagascar, emboldened by this competition for their exports, demanded fine Asian cloth and silver from passing European merchants but did not rely on this trade as a base for their continued political power.[21] This picture would change dramatically by the close of the century. Although the political changes that came to the island following the arrival of Europeans were felt first and most strongly in the south, not the north, even this part of the island was eventually enveloped by waves of warfare emanating from elsewhere on the island.

The history of provisioning from Madagascar thus brings together two seemingly disparate pasts and processes, of African societies negatively impacted by the slave trade and communities along the Indian Ocean engaging with European merchants from a position of strength. Direct engagement with global commercial networks contributed to turmoil throughout Madagascar by providing new opportunities for some, but not all, on the island.[22] The provisioning trade from Madagascar predated, complemented, and contributed to the large-scale export of slaves, yet the rise of this trade was in some senses a historical accident. That the island became a center of provisioning was due as much to the island's geographical advantages and the unique demands of European maritime trade as to the availability of food on the island's shores.

## PROVISIONING INDIAN OCEAN COMMERCE

This perspective on trade from Madagascar is at odds with that presented in some publications examining early modern global commerce. The maps and accompanying narratives in these publications suggest that trade from Africa was primarily in captives (from West Africa to the Americas) and, from Asia, in pepper and silk intended for elite European consumption.[23] In both cases, the distraction posed by the horrific sale of humans on one hand, and that of luxury goods on the other, has led us away from studying the more routine and short-distance exchanges that supported global commerce. By focusing on higher-value goods, entire parts of the world, including Madagascar, disappear from maps of commerce that also ignore the complex trade routes that existed within regions and between the land and sea.[24] In fact, frequent short-haul trips by vessels carrying woods, foodstuffs, and simple cloth underpinned exchanges in the Indian Ocean for centuries prior to the arrival of European ships. These premodern exchanges, according to Michael N. Pearson, had a much longer history and proved more stable over the *longue durée* than more expensive exports of luxury items. The circulation of necessities by land and sea also shaped trade routes within the ocean well before the arrival of Europeans in 1498, although such trades have proved difficult to trace and have attracted only limited attention from scholars.[25]

The continued emphasis on luxury goods is apparent in publications on European oceanic explorations after the fifteenth and sixteenth

centuries.[26] In his *Histoire de l'océan Indien*, Auguste Toussaint describes how spices fueled European competition, but gives no consideration to how men on board the vessels transporting these commodities were fed.[27] In his lengthy histories of the Indian Ocean, K. N. Chaudhuri likewise restricts food to discussions about regional patterns of consumption among coastal populations.[28] In spite of these omissions, alongside the trade in silks and spices were indispensable exports of food that forced regular contact between Europeans and a diverse number of communities around the world. Spices, after all, were nutritionally "superfluous," according to one popular history.[29]

The focus on spices and silks can lead historians to exclude the participation of groups such as the people of Madagascar who engaged frequently in trade, but rarely provided Europeans with expensive exports.[30] In recent years, scholars such as Judith Carney have focused on the role that African agricultural labor played in the expanding global economy.[31] The food production and exports from Indian Ocean societies likewise reveal the contributions of a more diverse group of people in fueling resource-intensive global commerce during the early modern period. It is unsurprising that the few scholars of Indian Ocean history who do mention provisioning primarily focus on coastal East African communities.[32]

Access to food supplies motivated Europeans to explore the Atlantic and determined the conduct of their trade in the ports of West Africa and the Indian Ocean.[33] Trade between Europe and Asia was even more resource intensive than that within the Atlantic, particularly in terms of the materials required to build, maintain, fuel, and sustain the crews of merchant fleets on extremely long voyages. Building upon experiences trading in northwestern Africa and the Mediterranean, European merchants at first tried to carry necessities from Europe, and only occasionally purchase additional supplies during their time in the Indian Ocean.[34] This strategy quickly proved unfeasible. Europeans realized that they needed to find reliable sources for obtaining additional provisions before arriving at their destinations in India and the Middle East, especially as the risk of sudden, unforeseen challenges ran high on lengthy voyages. Storms could place stores of food in danger and delay voyages, with deadly consequences. Leaky barrels ruined meat and bread; spoiled food led to the under-nourishment of crew members, which further imperiled the success of a voyage. With the existence of

such serious dangers, finding and maintaining access to reliable sources of food became paramount.

In a competitive environment where the speed with which merchants delivered nutmeg and silks to Europe determined the profit from their trading missions, securing rapid local access to the right types of food was crucial. Unlike Indian Ocean merchants, European traders did not arrive during one season and wait for a change in the monsoon winds to depart again. European arrivals in the ocean were less predictable and required much larger supplies of provisions than vessels working within the Indian Ocean. European traders also focused on acquiring certain food items to supplement stores of hard biscuit and dried meat, either because they kept well on long transoceanic voyages or due to beliefs about their medicinal powers. Ships required rice, legumes, tubers (including manioc, widely used to feed slaves by the late eighteenth century), fruit to prevent and treat scurvy, and, above all else, fresh or salted beef, believed at the time to be capable of curing numerous diseases and conditions.[35] Rice was particularly valued for its portability and was perceived in multiple cultural contexts as suitable for elite consumption.[36] Europeans shipped rice from India, Indonesia, and Madagascar to their settlements throughout the entire Indian Ocean.[37] Scholars have tended to understand the transformation of certain food items into commodities, goods with identifiable values and produced for export, as a development of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[38] Yet certain desirable food staples such as rice reached this status much earlier in provisioning locations such as Madagascar. In this case, the markets were not in distant Europe but instead within European ships themselves.

Europeans, unlike other traders circulating through the Indian Ocean, needed to acquire these items quickly, and in extremely large quantities, to avoid long waits and an increase in the mortality rate on board their vessels while at anchor. Given these constraints, Europeans learned to frequent certain ports and develop preferential trading relationships with the communities, including those within Madagascar, that had adjusted to their demands. Not all parts of the ocean's shores were as welcoming to European traders. Many port cities in the Indian Ocean lay beside regions poor in natural resources where food needed to be transported from far in the interior to the coast or imported from overseas.[39] John Richards and Edmund Burke III have noted that increased food production during the early modern period had a negative

impact on the environment. This was likely the case for many locations along the ocean's littoral where food had to be brought from increasingly distant hinterlands, making supplies of food more limited and expensive for Europeans.[40]

Even within Madagascar, food had to be transported from the interior of the island to the coasts. Tracing the movement of food highlights lines of connection, as well as differentiation, between hinterland and littoral societies. The transportation of goods to the coast relied upon either coordinated independent traders or state-controlled commerce. As rice was harvested in the interiors of Africa and Asia and shipped to shores, it changed hands dozens of times and moved through diverse landscapes of power. Without examining the exports of mundane provisions alongside those of luxuries and slaves, it would be impossible to trace the deep roots of globalizing trade in the lands surrounding the Indian Ocean. By looking at the movement of food within Madagascar in particular, it becomes clear that almost the entire island, including its highly productive interior, was responsible for provisioning European voyages.

European trading companies also developed settler colonies that would serve as centers for growing or accumulating the necessary provisions, an action that further increased the impact of human populations in previously unpopulated areas or regions of low population density. Many of these colonies, whether in Southeast Asia, Africa, or on offshore African islands, required vast supplies of food and labor to be regularly imported from neighboring Indian Ocean communities.[41] Europeans in these locations encountered similar challenges as other groups living along the ocean's littoral and struggled to grow sufficient supplies of food in only marginally fertile soil.[42] Their unremitting efforts to spur on agriculture in spite of these challenges reveal the heightened value of food during an era of globalizing commerce and the need for stable locations for refueling vessels throughout the ocean.

## FEEDING COMPETITION

An examination of the provisioning trade from Madagascar provides new insights into the history of European trade in the Indian Ocean by calling attention to how these practical concerns shaped European activities. Historians have been aware of the rivalries, divisions, and competition between European trading groups in the Indian Ocean

starting with publications by scholars including C. R. Boxer and Holden Furber.[43] Yet Portuguese, Dutch, English, and French merchants shared one characteristic that few historians note: frequent purchases of food from Madagascar to support their commerce in the ocean. Even if they did not stop at Madagascar, many European sailors consumed food produced in Madagascar at some point during their voyages within the Indian Ocean.[44] For this reason, access to provisions from Madagascar helped determine the success of various merchant groups within the Indian Ocean; as such, European groups as well as African and Asian ones competed for access to the trade of the island.

Beginning in the sixteenth century, the Portuguese Estado da Índia made many attempts, but few inroads, at creating a trading monopoly in the Indian Ocean. In Madagascar as well, despite early efforts to set up commercial and missionary outposts on the island, the Portuguese were unsuccessful at securing a foothold. Representatives of the Portuguese crown, Portuguese traders, and Mozambican colonists all briefly tried to obtain spices and slaves from Madagascar during the sixteenth century but were eventually drawn to more profitable parts of the ocean in pursuit of commodities. Portuguese attempts at converting the islanders were likewise abandoned by the early seventeenth century. Following these failures, the Portuguese settled on Mozambique continued to engage in trade with groups living within the southwestern Indian Ocean region, including with those in Madagascar who had large supplies of rice and cattle for sale. Portuguese (or Portuguese-sponsored) vessels continued to arrive in Madagascar's ports in search of provisions well into the nineteenth century.[45]

A major shift occurred during the first half of the seventeenth century, on the shores of Madagascar as well as throughout the Indian Ocean, as other European trading groups arrived to compete with the Portuguese. Between roughly 1590 and 1650, European rivalries for access to the spice trade meant groups such as the Dutch and English fixated on spices and little else. Their efforts led to the creation of monopoly trading companies such as the English East India Company (EIC) in 1601 and the Dutch East India Company (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie, or VOC) in 1602. The French followed shortly thereafter with their own series of trading companies in the ocean, most noteworthy being the Compagnie des indes orientales, which went through several iterations throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[46]

Initially lacking strong provisioning centers in the southwestern Indian Ocean, all three European groups were drawn to Madagascar.

The Dutch were interested in using food and slaves from Madagascar to support their ventures in Indonesia and along the Red Sea. Dutch visits to the island predated the founding of the VOC, with the first ships sailing from the Netherlands to Madagascar in 1695. Once VOC voyages into the Indian Ocean began, their settler colonies in Batavia (Jakarta), Mauritius, and the Cape all imported rice and enslaved laborers from Madagascar. EIC captains were first drawn to the southwestern coast of Madagascar, distant from parts of the island visited by the Portuguese and Dutch. For two centuries, several EIC ships visited the west coast of the island annually on their way to EIC posts in India and Indonesia. Searching for a strong base to support their commerce in Asia and the Middle East, the French settled on the nearby Mascarene Islands by the late seventeenth century, abandoning attempts to live on Madagascar itself. Even once they set up homes and ports in the islands of Mauritius (Île de France) and Réunion (Île Bourbon), the French imported hundreds of slaves, cattle, and bags of rice annually from the larger island to their west.

Between 1600 and 1800, the English, Dutch, and French all tried to create colonies and permanent trading posts on Madagascar but made few intentional and successful incursions inland, as the islanders fought firmly against European settlement. The French alone sponsored at least four failed settlements on the island during the eighteenth century. French persistence reveals the central importance of Madagascar to European plans for expansion in the ocean, but also the severe shortcomings in their perceptions of the reality of life on Madagascar's shores. Even as these colonies failed, European captains repeatedly turned their ships to the island when they needed laborers or food.

In Madagascar, as elsewhere in the Indian Ocean, local and intra-ocean trade remained vibrant throughout this entire precolonial period, in spite of the sudden rise of military states on the island's shores.[47] European merchants discovered that they faced strong competition not only from other Europeans and Americans on the shores of Madagascar but also from non-European groups operating throughout the ocean. European, African, and Asian merchants interacted, cooperated, and clashed, as Europeans attempted to insert themselves into centuries-old patterns of exchange. Operating from a position of strength, islanders, usually under strong oversight by their rulers, could afford to strike tough bargains. In

Madagascar, Europeans consistently dealt with trading partners who were aware of the Europeans' need for food and took advantage of their desperation whenever possible.[48] In light of this competition, European weakness in terms of dominating commerce in the ocean, as highlighted by Sanjay Subrahmanyam and Sugata Bose, was apparent on the shores of Madagascar.[49] Even on this relatively distant island of seemingly limited value, Europeans struggled to maintain their access to trade, a reminder that European economic and political expansion was checked by other thriving exchange networks within and around the ocean's littoral.

As the end of the eighteenth century approached, a period that many historians of the Indian Ocean identify as ushering in a major shift of power in favor of European (especially British) imperialism, European trading companies came increasingly into conflict with non-European states and empires. Most of the historical scholarship dealing with this shift focuses on the Indian subcontinent, but even from the perspective of Madagascar, a shift in engagement was clearly occurring.[50] Although formal European annexation was still more than a century in the future for the islanders, new colonial ventures by Europeans in Asia had a lasting impact on the provisioning trade from Madagascar. Battles between the British and French in the northern Indian Ocean attracted European vessels into the ocean in larger numbers. These fleets of warships relied upon Madagascar for food to feed their sailors and soldiers with increasing frequency. During a single visit, the British might buy hundreds of bags of rice from the northwest coast of the island, while the French shipped hundreds, or even thousands, of live cattle from the opposite coast of Madagascar to the Mascarene Islands. By the close of the eighteenth century, after years of repeated and growing demands for food, the imports provided by the provisioning trade had led to not just an expansion of military state control on Madagascar, but greater economic connections within the island and perhaps the increased use of enslaved laborers to produce food for consumption and export to meeting this rising demand for provisions.

## EUROPEAN SHIP RECORDS AS SOURCES

This book uses the vantage point of the shores of Madagascar to examine the impact of global trade on Indian Ocean communities during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This history is revealed through

a careful reading of records left by the European and American traders, missionaries, and colonists who visited the shores of Madagascar. *Feeding Globalization* relies heavily on almost three hundred ship records similar to the journal left by the commies of the *Brack*.[51] European ship logs from such vessels provide detailed daily commentary, as seen in the many recent publications that focus on single slaving voyages in the Atlantic or Indian Oceans.[52] The records kept on board vessels in the Atlantic such as the *Diligent* reveal the experience of slave loading, the brutality of the Middle Passage, and the cruel calculations involved in the sale of Africans in the Americas. Such revelations reach beyond the experience of a single slaving voyage and speak to the uneven connections forged between Europeans, Africans, and Americans during this globalizing era.[53] The complex calculus involved in the slave trade, as Stephanie Smallwood points out in her study of the trade from the Gold Coast, enables historians to uncover both how Europeans attempted to create commodities from human bodies and the ways in which Africans resisted this development.[54]

Ship records do not simply illuminate the inner workings of the slave trade, but also provide context for understanding the evolution of trade within Africa, as is clear in the records of both slaving and merchant vessels. In these sources, European observations include, out of necessity, reference to major political, economic, and social changes in the ports they visited, whether they halted in search of slaves or provisions. The observations were preserved by trading companies and colonial governments seeking to amass knowledge about far-flung locations.[55] These ship records are even more valuable for understanding historical developments within Madagascar than elsewhere in Africa, as we have fewer details about political and economic shifts on the island prior to the nineteenth century. The close relationship forged between merchant and creole populations, enabled by the presence of resident Europeans on the Atlantic coast of many West African regions, was entirely absent from most of Madagascar until the late eighteenth century.[56] Instead, the brief interactions described in ship logs provide some of the most in-depth written sources available for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, especially given the almost complete lack of Malagasy written sources and recorded traditions for this period.

Many historical studies of pre-nineteenth-century Madagascar rely on an influential compilation of sources entitled *Collection des ouvrages*

*anciens concernant Madagascar* (*COACM*).[57] The editors of this collection translated a variety of documents, including some ship journals and logs, from Portuguese, English, and Dutch into French during the early twentieth century. The sources fill nine volumes and most are now available for free online. The collection, as some historians have suggested, is far from comprehensive and not always accurate, and every attempt has been made to consult the original sources for this book.[58] EIC records, for instance, are almost entirely absent from *COACM*, as are many VOC sources. When they are present, the editors provide highly abridged versions and historians have challenged the translations provided in the volumes. The very detailed logs and journals kept by VOC merchants have garnered attention in recent years, thanks to the efforts of James Armstrong and R. J. Barendse. Their publications further reveal the shortcomings of the *COACM* collection.[59] French documents are also poorly represented in *COACM*, particularly colonial records from the Mascarenes.

In order to understand the role that the people of Madagascar played in feeding globalization, this book draws upon these colonial sources, in addition to English, French, and Dutch ship logs.[60] Regrettably, Portuguese archival holdings have not been consulted for this book, although publications by Edward Alpers and Thomas Vernet reveal that there is much to be done in those archives.[61] The records kept by the European trading companies that were consulted provide detailed descriptions of the men, women, and children who approached the newcomers on the shores of Madagascar. When looked at individually, the records of a ship's brief visit to a port or ports in Madagascar make few apparent contributions to our understanding of the history of the island. Usually only a few pages long, such accounts might note the purchase of a certain number of cattle and barrels of rice, in return for guns or coins. After a stay lasting a few weeks, a European ship would continue to sail toward harbors in the northern Indian Ocean, where the captain could engage in trade for more valuable items. European would-be merchants would not only examine the details of a single earlier voyage, but make their navigational decisions based on a history of regular successful visits to the island. An examination of multiple ship records, for instance, reveals how the negotiations that occurred on the coast of Madagascar between rulers and captains became more reliable and regimented by the middle of the eighteenth century, thanks to this accumulated

knowledge of places and people. Ship logs regularly demonstrate that assumptions were made about the goods available in a particular region and the control certain island merchants and leaders exercised over the export trade. Such beliefs became self-fulfilling prophecies, as officers sought out certain titled rulers, identified on the basis of earlier trade, to fulfill their provisioning and slaving needs.

These sources also demonstrate the challenges that European captains and officers faced over this entire period, not just in acquiring goods, but also in maintaining order on board their vessels. Life at sea enabled captains and officers to dominate the movements of their subordinates, but, once ashore, sailors were "notoriously free," in the words of Michael Fisher, and were able to evade control to a much greater extent.[62] Incidents of sailor disobedience, desertion, and disputes on the shore punctuated otherwise peaceful voyages and occurred on almost half of the recorded eighteenth-century EIC visits to Madagascar. The frequency of this resistance suggests that European leaders struggled to control their subordinates. Access to fresh food on the island could mean life or death for both sailors and slaves. Indeed, many acts of resistance were rooted, at least in part, in struggles for adequate food supplies.[63] The words of the merchants that visited the island thus illustrate the fears of Europeans as much as they provide insights into developments within Madagascar. This anxiety over provisioning only disappeared during the nineteenth century, after European states had developed firmer colonial holdings throughout the Indian Ocean and Europeans traveled in faster seagoing vessels.

Despite opportunities for scholars to trace the shifting relationships between European traders and coastal rulers through these documents, the use of such sources can encourage us to overstate the impact of Europeans upon the island's history, society, and culture. The provisioning trade presented new opportunities for many in Madagascar, allowing for the creation of new coastal trading enclaves as well as providing new idioms of power and leadership to the islanders. In spite of this fact, the most important (in terms of both quantity and frequency) and longest-running exports from the island were probably via the northwest ports of the island to the Comoros, East Africa, and the northern Indian Ocean. Europeans knew little of these exchanges or how the networks had become intertwined in complex ways with their own by the nineteenth century.

The information found in ship logs is also limited by the nature of European visits to Madagascar. Europeans rarely had time to learn much of island cultural practices or their language during their stays. Most strikingly, European references to locations visited on the shores of the island were frequently confused and it is sometimes hard even to discern which parts of Madagascar they visited and with whom they traded.[64] The other major shortcoming of these sources is clear from the outset: the writers had only limited knowledge of the goings-on in the interior of the island. With their stays almost entirely limited to the beaches and direct shoreline, captains and trading officials knew little about (and demonstrated an overall lack of interest in) events occurring in the interior. This coastal focus limits our understanding of the sources of slaves for sale, the origins of rice sold in ports, and the expansion of highland states far into the interior during the eighteenth century. Europeans provide relatively reliable information about prices and items purchased, but their grasp of political dynamics on the island was limited and tinged by their own understandings of states and leadership.

It is also worth noting that the unevenness of the sources, with some of the writers limiting their discussion of trade to a few sentences or pages, prevents reliable numerical analysis, such as about the exact amounts of food available for purchase in any given year or even the precise price given for each slave purchased. Moreover, records are not available for all voyages; the figures displayed in this book are based on the records I was able to consult or uncover, but there were certainly many more stops at Madagascar by ships in search of slaves and food. Not all voyages left a record of their travels. For instance, ship journals are unavailable for almost a hundred of the 211 EIC voyages that are listed as halting in Madagascar in the online catalog of the British Library.[65] While we know the itineraries for many of these voyages, most of the daily details have been lost.

Despite the challenges presented by the use of European ship records, these sources provide valuable, if limited, glimpses into the opportunities presented by this rapidly globalizing world to coastal leaders and rulers. When examined in combination with the findings of archeologists and later recorded Malagasy traditions, these sources allow us to reach the conclusion that the provisioning export trade shaped political and economic developments on the island for more than two centuries. The sources also provide a potent reminder that European

merchants relied on the assistance of local communities within Madagascar to complete transoceanic voyages that contributed to significant transformations back in Europe.

## CHAPTERS

*Feeding Globalization* recounts the history of this global feasting table by starting with the first European arrivals on the island. The second chapter uses European letters, ship logs, and published accounts to uncover the optimism that visitors felt upon first encountering Madagascar. Perceptions of a verdant and relatively unpopulated island encouraged the Portuguese, Dutch, French, and English to repeatedly send merchant vessels. Their experiences also led to efforts to colonize Madagascar, but European desires for unfettered access to the resources of the island were never fulfilled. Local leaders quickly forestalled all attempts to take control by refusing to provide European colonizers with adequate food and support. European optimism during this early period, however, did contribute to the island becoming a provisioning stop for merchant fleets entering the Indian Ocean.

European sources only hint at the massive political transformations occurring on the island throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Two expansive military states formed during this period and began to take control of the export trade. Relying upon a variety of sources, including oral traditions, the next two chapters chart the rise of the Sakalava on the west coast and the Betsimisaraka to the east. The leaders of these states used violence to wrest control of coastal exchanges from other groups and to develop supply routes that stretched across the entire island. The less coordinated Betsimisaraka state had a harder time securing supplies of food and slaves for export than the Sakalava leaders who dominated the export trade from the entire west coast of Madagascar throughout the eighteenth century.

Following the rise of these two states, visits by European vessels to Madagascar became more regular and reliable, as described in chapter 5. This increased regularity was facilitated by the development of secure relationships between rulers and the Europeans who frequented the island. These alliances were cemented through elaborate rituals that included feasts and gift exchanges, with these rituals effectively eliminating other coastal people from participating in exchanges. In the explosion

of documentation that accompanied their visits, European officers revealed that they were in fear during their stays on the island due to a lack of control over sailors on shore and on ship. Their fears manifested themselves in both a desire for the quick loading of provisions as well as a growing dependence on rulers to help them maintain control over subordinates on the beaches of Madagascar.

Chapter 6 describes how European struggles for dominance within the Indian Ocean during the mid-eighteenth century culminated in the battles of the Seven Years' War. The outbreak of war led to the French and British forging closer relationships with coastal rulers as their ships halted frequently in the ports of Madagascar for provisions. The French in particular invested a great deal of energy and resources in attempting to colonize the island repeatedly during the second half of the eighteenth century. As a result, by the start of the nineteenth century both the French and British were interested in a more permanent trading presence in Madagascar.

Competition for food and labor increased sharply within the region by the late eighteenth century, as described in chapter 7, and resulted in several important shifts in the use and sale of slave labor from the island. The rising demand from Europeans, particularly the French, for slaves from Madagascar coincided with a marked decline in the availability of enslaved laborers from the shores of the island. Slaves became scarcer and more expensive. The transformation of the slave trade, in terms of prices and availability, only makes sense in the context of the expanding provisioning trade, as coastal rulers were retaining slaves to work in a productive capacity on the island, and selling them, along with food, in return for silver coins. By the close of the century, communities within Madagascar even began to import enslaved laborers from East Africa to augment this work force.

Chapter 8 reveals how coastal populations responded to the heightened demand for laborers by turning beyond the island's shores to acquire slaves. Between roughly 1790 and 1820, hundreds of islanders left the eastern and western coasts of Madagascar annually in fleets of canoes, paddling toward the nearby Comoro Islands and East Africa. These armed men launched attacks on coastal populations, kidnapping large portions of the Comoro Islands population and forcing East Africans to flee into the interior of the continent. According to Comorians remembering the chaos decades later, all those who could fight were

killed and those who could not fight were captured and enslaved by the soldiers. These exceptionally large and coordinated attacks, which unsettled communities throughout the region, can only be understood in the context of the competition introduced by the provisioning trade to Madagascar as well as the Comoros.

The slaving raids on the Comoro Islands and in coastal East Africa at the turn of the nineteenth century were the culmination of pressures introduced by global trade. The pressures that accompanied the arrival of global commerce by the nineteenth century, while distinct from those placed by the demand for slaves or luxury exports from Atlantic Africa or Southeast Asia, were very real. European merchants originally entered the Indian Ocean in search of lucrative trading opportunities. The pepper and cloves they returned with fetched astronomical prices back in Europe, at least initially. To make these multiyear journeys, Dutch merchants found themselves bartering with merchants in Madagascar for a few bags of rice. The English used glass beads to buy live cattle on the island to sustain their voyages to the Arabian Peninsula. The French staved off famine with food staples from Madagascar. The provisioning of European vessels did not just shape island societies but also European successes and failures.

Throughout this period of violence and negotiation, the feasting table provided a moment of repose for European and coastal elites. The feast also serves as a metaphor for understanding the important, if tenuous, relationship formed between those who came to the beaches of Madagascar in search of trading partners. Access to the table was a mark of status and power for Europeans and islanders alike. The coercion involved in the growing and sale of the food was beneath the notice of those who ate plentiful amounts of beef stew and rice at the feast, but it provided a constant threat to the continued success of this celebratory moment.