

The Botany of Empire  
in the Long Eighteenth Century

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# The Botany of Empire in the Long Eighteenth Century

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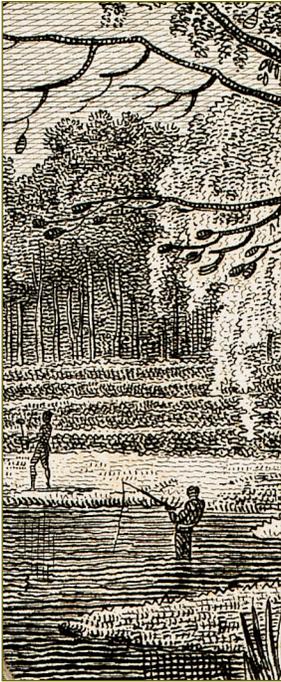
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### On Diplomacy and Botanical Gifts

France, Mysore, and Mauritius in 1788

SARAH EASTERBY-SMITH

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The autumn of 1788 was a busy time for the Jardin du Roi. In July of that year, an ambassadorial mission had arrived in Paris from Seringapatam (now Srirangapatna) in India. After they had paid tribute to their host, Louis XVI, and once they had sampled some of Paris's many delights, the three ambassadors requested on behalf of their ruler, Tipu Sultan of Mysore, that the French furnish them with a choice assortment of gifts. Tipu's desiderata ranged from French armaments to Sèvres porcelains and also included crates containing exemplars of France's flora and a team of gardeners to tend to them. Louis XVI's ministers leaped into action, drawing on their contacts throughout France to obtain the objects and personnel required by their Indian visitors. The resulting correspondence concerning the plants depicts a hectic *va-et-vient* of negotiations and networking that were supposed to be conducted with the utmost secrecy.<sup>1</sup>

The bundle of letters concerning the botanical aspects of this diplomatic exchange is stored not alongside the official government archives from the period but rather in the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle (MNHN) in Paris. The records detail the processes involved in preparing plants for diplomatic exchange, from receipt of the official request issued on August 8, 1788, to the departure of the ships from Brest in November of that year. They then chart the blustery progress of the voyage, which eventually reached India's Coromandel Coast in May 1789, after six months at sea.

These sources offer two contributions to our understanding of the workings of the botany of empire in the late eighteenth century. First, they reveal how plant collecting could be made an object of international diplomacy. Allied by their mutual anglophobia, Louis XVI of France (r. 1774–92) and Tipu Sultan of Mysore (r. 1782–99) sought reciprocal assistance in order to further their own imperial agendas and economic objectives. The British posed a serious military threat to Mysore and were, of course, a longstanding enemy of France. The

arrival of three ambassadors from Mysore in 1788 placed France under an obligation to assist the Indian ruler, but Louis XVI and his ministers also negotiated and manipulated Tipu Sultan's brief in order to serve French interests. Their discussions about obtaining and sending plants as diplomatic gifts are significant less for what they tell us about the science of botany than because they expose the economic motivations that underpinned Franco-Mysorean relations in the 1780s.

Second, the letters offer a very particular perspective on the imperial botany of the 1780s. Largely written by the two gardeners involved in the French mission to Mysore, they provide an unparalleled window onto the interpersonal nature of eighteenth-century colonial botany, as narrated by two interlocutors from notably low positions in the social pecking order. The gardeners' letters expose an Indo-French network composed not only of high-ranking diplomats and government ministers, but also botanists, amateur scholars, and common gardeners. State ambitions conflicted not only with those of Enlightenment science, but also with the personal aspirations of the individuals who comprised this network. Their differing motivations and levels of commitment determined the outcome of such projects. The people who made up these networks, after all, ultimately defined the relationship between botany and empire in the late eighteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

### Science and Statecraft

The Indian subcontinent was a focal point of global imperial and economic competition throughout the eighteenth century. European powers including Britain, Portugal, France, and Holland possessed trading posts at strategic points along India's long coastline, but for most of the period the subcontinent remained largely autonomous, independent of direct European control. The domineering Maratha empire controlled vast portions of India, both directly and via puppet rulers installed in the remaining Mughal dominions, although by the 1780s the Marathas, too, felt the pressure of British expansionism. Only a handful of states, including Mysore, remained completely independent, and by 1791 (as shown in Figure 9.1), the Tipu's enemies

were pressing in on every border. The fortunes of these states, like those of the powers that surrounded them, waxed and waned as a result of the battles, border tussles, and full-scale wars that characterized the subcontinent's colonial history.

Mysore presented powerful and continuing opposition to encroachments from the British throughout the eighteenth century and, thus, was a natural ally for the French. France, which possessed key trading posts at Pondicherry (now Puducherry) and Chandernagore (Chandannagar), sought to strengthen its own position in India and keep the British at bay.<sup>3</sup> The French formed their alliances first with the despotic Haidar Ali (r. 1766–82) and then from 1782 with his even more belligerent son, Tipu Sultan (1750–99), the so-called Tiger of Mysore. "I want," Tipu once exclaimed, "to expel them [the British] from India. I want to be a friend of the French all my life."<sup>4</sup> Although he was ultimately not able to exorcize the British from the whole subcontinent, Tipu Sultan at least fiercely contested their infringements upon his own territory. He finally capitulated in 1799 at the Battle of Seringapatam, following years of near continuous warfare against Britain and the Marathas.

Tipu Sultan is now celebrated as a hero in India, and, given his glowing record of colonial resistance, most historical studies have concentrated on evaluating his position as a ruler and military leader.<sup>5</sup> The historiographical debate about Tipu, and particularly about the 1788 ambassadorial mission,<sup>6</sup>

FIGURE 9.1

Map of the Carnatic and Mysore, June 1792. This map shows the political divisions in India following the Third Mysore War, immediately after the period discussed in this chapter. The red sections indicate areas taken by the British; the blue section shows the "New Country of Nizam Ally." Mysore—the territory of Tipu Sultan—is the beige central area. Seringapatam, nestled on an island in the Cavory River, is close to the center of the map, between two red British areas. Pondicherry is on the coast to the east of Seringapatam. Drawn by M. Armstrong after Robert Home; published by Robert Bowyer (London) and W. Sharp (Madras), 1794. © The British Library Board, WD 3775 (2).

This image has been redacted, to view the image please consult the final published version of this work at <http://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780884024163>

*Drawn by N. Armstrong Nov 11*

has largely been concerned with questions of sovereignty and has examined the degree of autonomy and “legitimacy” that Tipu enjoyed along with his territories.<sup>7</sup> The most recent assessments, however, have convincingly demonstrated that Tipu in no way sought *confirmation* of his position. As Irfan Habib conclusively shows, Tipu Sultan was a formidable potentate who considered his authority to be equal to that of his European peers.<sup>8</sup>

But Tipu Sultan was more than a great military leader. He was also energetically engaged in promoting economic improvement, and he followed European intellectual and political developments very closely. He was deeply curious about the European Enlightenment and, amazingly, even claimed to have founded a Jacobin Club in Seringapatam in 1797.<sup>9</sup> The sultan displayed his intellectual interests by collecting an enormous number of books and other items from across the globe, many of which were subsequently looted by the British at the fall of Seringapatam in 1799.<sup>10</sup>

The exquisite artifacts once assembled in his palace are now dispersed throughout museums and private collections worldwide and furnish a wonderful resource for understanding both the material culture of empire and the history of memory and mythmaking about colonial pasts.<sup>11</sup> Yet material collections can mislead as much as they inform because they only include objects robust enough to withstand the passage of time. Such collections, therefore, rarely include plants.<sup>12</sup> Yet Tipu, like many eighteenth-century European connoisseurs, extended his personal collections into his gardens. Plants were significant to the sultan both as symbols of power and sources of new knowledge.<sup>13</sup>

Tipu’s dual investment in confronting the British and in advancing the Enlightenment in Mysore is very evident in the Hukmnama, the official instructions that the sultan issued to his ambassadors in 1788.<sup>14</sup> He sent the envoys with two clear purposes. As we might expect, one intention was to obtain military support for his plan to eliminate the British from the Indian subcontinent.<sup>15</sup> But Tipu Sultan also aimed to open up new economic opportunities for Mysore through trade and the development of domestic manufacturing, and he requested French help in order to achieve this goal.

The commercial section of the Hukmnama effectively instructed the ambassadors to harness the fruits of Europe’s Enlightenment industry. Since his accession as sultan of Mysore in 1782, Tipu had introduced a series of initiatives that demonstrate his interest in the major industrial and economic developments that were taking place concurrently in Western Europe. These included plans to establish a printing press, to develop both coal mining and sericulture, to launch a trading company on the model of the European East India companies, and to instigate agricultural and landholding reform.<sup>16</sup> Historians have been concerned largely with charting the demise of these projects and examining whether Tipu Sultan’s high aspirations were actually feasible: in the end, Tipu realized very few of his intentions because of the instability of his state.<sup>17</sup> Yet if we resist viewing, with the benefit of hindsight, Mysore’s eighteenth-century economic development as an impossibility, a new perspective on the 1788 mission emerges. Such an alternative view would focus instead on Tipu Sultan’s interest in knowledge transfer, a key concept in histories of science and of industrialization.<sup>18</sup>

Was an industrial revolution a historical possibility for Mysore? As historians of technology such as Joel Mokyr and Liliane Hilaire-Pérez have shown, technological innovation depends on the development and pertinent deployment of skill and expertise. The management of a knowledge economy—in other words, the creation of new knowledge and the facilitation of knowledge transfer—is key to economic expansion.<sup>19</sup> In the Hukmnama, Tipu ordered his three ambassadors to request that Louis XVI fulfill “the requirement of friendship” by sending “craftsmen capable of making new kinds of muskets and . . . cannon-pieces, and besides these, clock-makers, makers of chinaware, glass and mirror-makers and other artisans of [France], ten of every sort.”<sup>20</sup> Crucially, Tipu Sultan not only requested material examples of French manufactures; he also asked for the makers themselves. For Mysore’s ambassadors in 1788, the object of international diplomacy was the knowledge economy associated with European industrialization.<sup>21</sup>

Only the first page of the Hukmnama survives, and this fact inevitably constrains our understanding of Tipu Sultan’s intentions. But the documents

in the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle reveal that his aims embraced the appropriation of French botanical and horticultural expertise, as well as French craft skill: Tipu Sultan also instructed his ambassadors to ask his French “friends” for a collection of plants and a team of gardeners to tend to them. In early August 1788, the ambassadors’ request was conveyed to César Henri de La Luzerne (1737–99), minister of the marine, who then relayed it by letter to André Thouin (1747–1824), the head gardener at the Jardin du Roi. La Luzerne explained: “The ambassadors of Tipu Sultan request . . . seeds of flowers of all species and seeds of flax, hemp, [and] fruit trees characteristic of Europe. . . . They desire in addition artisans [*hommes d’art*], a doctor, an able surgeon, [and] some young gardeners. I intend that you . . . take care of this.”<sup>22</sup> Tipu’s request for both plants and gardeners was made in a similar way to his request (expressed in the Hukmnama) for both clockmakers and clocks: he wanted not only products but also personnel who would travel to Mysore and teach their skills to his own subjects. But plants make rather complicated diplomatic gifts: they are fragile and predisposed to destruction. The journey back to Mysore was particularly grueling, involving a six-month oceanic voyage to Pondicherry followed by an overland journey of approximately three hundred miles.<sup>23</sup> Any specimens that actually arrived intact then had to adapt to the new climate and become naturalized in Seringapatam’s soil. Their survival depended wholly on the vigilance and expertise of the gardeners deployed to tend to them. The transmission of such practical knowledge was essential to eighteenth-century plant transfers and ultimately to economic development.

### Imperial Agendas

In 1788, France was neither in a position to pursue its imperial policies within India nor to accede to all of Tipu Sultan’s requests. It was constrained both financially and by a desire not to appear belligerent toward the British.<sup>24</sup> The “great nation,” therefore, declined to provide military assistance to Tipu Sultan and issued a groveling apology for its premature withdrawal from the Second Anglo-Mysore War in 1783, heaping the blame on the (by then deceased) general Charles-Joseph Patissier de

Bussy, Marquess de Castelnau (1718 or 1720–85). (As governor of Pondicherry and leader of France’s armies east of the Cape of Good Hope, Bussy had meddled unhelpfully in the unsatisfactory peace negotiations between Britain and Mysore.<sup>25</sup>)

However, government attitudes toward assisting the economic development of Mysore were much more promising and, as we will see, became closely linked to French science. Louis XVI and his ministers acceded to the request for collections of artifacts and enlisted a small team of artisans to accompany the objects (although for reasons of economy the requests were scaled down from ten to two people per craft).<sup>26</sup> In agreeing to send along expert personnel, France channeled its own imperial aspirations into the creation of an “informal empire” based on the procurement of knowledge rather than land.<sup>27</sup> The mission to Mysore dangled before French eyes an unrivalled opportunity to collect information and specimens from deep within one of the central arenas of European imperial competition. Even more satisfyingly, such information would be filched from right under the nose of France’s roast beef–munching rival by emissaries working under the protection of one of the subcontinent’s surviving independent rulers.

Tipu Sultan’s horticultural request, thus, introduced the exciting possibility that France might be able to further its own scholarly and imperial aspirations. The French correspondence concerning the mission emphasized the necessity of sending people properly trained in botany (including the two doctors as well as the gardeners), because “they could render essential services” to France by finding “useful Productions . . . that [were] missing” from the Jardin du Roi in Paris and French colonial gardens elsewhere.<sup>28</sup> The sultan’s request arrived at a time when botany, as an imperial collecting project, was receiving increasing attention from the French government. Giving plants as gifts to secure favor or patronage was by no means a new phenomenon; diplomatic channels were also commonly used to circulate seeds, and these connections were further reinforced by ambassadors’ concomitant participation in the Republic of Letters.<sup>29</sup> But the high-profile voyages of discovery that characterized the late eighteenth century had galvanized public interest in plant collecting and represented an apex of

formal state involvement. The impressive botanical dividends of the British expeditions to the South Seas in the 1770s were widely known in France, and plant collecting was explicitly one of the aims of the Comte de Lapérouse's ill-fated expedition to the South Pacific of 1785–88.<sup>30</sup> By 1788, botany had become a major concern for France's ministers, as well as its scholars.<sup>31</sup>

After purposeful botanical expeditions, the next best means of obtaining plants of interest to the French state was through formal exchange agreements with amateurs of botany posted in, or traveling between, France's colonial possessions. The quest for profitable plants, both domestic and exotic, is everywhere in the correspondence between Thouin, La Luzerne, and those of their associates who were mindful of the economic development of France.<sup>32</sup> Tipu Sultan's proposal, thus, could not have come at a better time. Indeed, only a few months previously, in January 1788, Thouin had been busy developing a "project to establish correspondence between the French colonies and the Jardin du Roi" with the enthusiastic support of La Luzerne.<sup>33</sup> And in September of that same year, La Luzerne forwarded to Thouin some seeds he had received from Cayenne, explicitly requesting that Thouin determine "if these substances could become objects of commerce for France."<sup>34</sup>

We do not know exactly what types of plants the travelers to India were asked to look for; indeed, in one letter to the gardeners Thouin encouraged them to simply send him *anything*: "Do not worry about sending us things that we already possess[,] this rarely happens because we are not rich in plants from the climate in which you live."<sup>35</sup> France's priorities in the 1780s were, however, made clear in Thouin's project for colonial correspondence of January 1788. Thouin drafted a questionnaire to be sent out to the administrators of each French colony, asking them to survey and report back about the plants growing around them. The questionnaire categorized plants in order of interest, asking first about "kitchen-garden plants" (such as peas, beans, cucumbers, and melons), then about those that might be used in "commerce" (including expensive foodstuffs and plants with medical properties, such as ginger, vanilla, and pepper). The final two categories posed open questions (without examples of

specific plants) about specimens that could be used in craft production, such as furniture making, and, finally, about plants that were beautiful.<sup>36</sup>

Tipu's desire for gardeners and plants, then, was particularly interesting to the botanists at the Jardin du Roi and the ministers at Versailles because of the opportunity it presented to the French to successfully harvest more such "green gold" in the form of useful and lucrative Indian plants. It is, therefore, significant that Thouin firmly instructed the gardeners who were to embark on the voyage to collect specimens from the Île de France (Mauritius), where the mission was scheduled to stop on its return to Mysore.<sup>37</sup>

### Sending Plants to the Sultan

The realization of international diplomacy depended on the compliance of individuals from across the social hierarchy. In this case, botanists and government agents located further afield did not always appear to acquiesce to official plans, even though they worked within the same state-run enterprise.

In Paris, it was Thouin, the head gardener of the Jardin du Roi, who played a central role in sourcing the plants required by the ambassadors and in selecting and preparing the travelers for their voyage to India. Between August and October 1788, he exchanged a flurry of letters with La Luzerne; with Luzerne's deputy, Pouget; and with Pierre Ruffin, who, as royal translator, accompanied the Indian visitors while they were in France. Thouin then maintained contact with the expedition once it had finally set sail in November, primarily by exchanging letters with the two gardeners who traveled with the mission and who dutifully described its progress to him in idiosyncratically spelled French.

Thouin's response to the ambassadors' requests for plants was not just supportive: it was positively enthusiastic. "I could not be more flattered," he gushed in response to La Luzerne's first request for assistance, "by the confidence which you have had the grace to place in me; the care that I will place in fulfilling every respect of your intentions will be a guarantee of my gratitude."<sup>38</sup> Thouin continued by zealously promising that he

would personally “go into the fields to gather the seeds of flowers, of textile plants and of fruit trees that the Indian ambassadors wish to take.” “This object,” he concluded, “will be easy for me.”<sup>39</sup> Thouin’s animated response related more to the prospective benefit that the mission might bring to the natural sciences, especially botany, than to the wider agenda of international diplomacy. He was not particularly concerned, for example, about the potential ramifications of the diplomatic mission for the balance of powers in India, apart from how this mission would facilitate the collection of plants. La Luzerne, too, was cognizant of the potential scholarly dividends that the voyage might pay, explaining in his initial letter to Thouin: “We could even give preference to [sending] men who have some knowledge of natural history, of Botany, and who would be doubly useful.”<sup>40</sup>

Because they knew that two gardeners would accompany the plant cargo, Thouin and La Luzerne agreed to Tipu’s request for live plants and trees, as well as seeds. This step significantly complicated the preparations for the voyage, which took nearly three months to complete and became substantially more costly to the French government. La Luzerne was even compelled to commission a second ship to accommodate the living cargo and its human attendants because the plants required additional space and water.<sup>41</sup> The head gardener and royal minister worked closely together to fulfill the Indian diplomats’ requests in order to ensure that they could draw the maximum benefit for French science, as well as support the economic agendas of the ruler of Mysore.

Yet fulfilling such requests required compromises on the part of the French. Tipu Sultan asked for beautiful shrubs and flowers for his gardens and orchard trees that would bear tasty fruits for the royal table. Such requests were relatively easy to fulfill. But he also sought plants such as hemp and flax, which were important because of their potential for economic exploitation. Indeed, some of the specimens sent to the sultan had only very recently been discovered and acclimatized to French soils. The sample of “Zealand flax,” for example, that Thouin included in the consignment for Tipu was probably the New Zealand plant *Phormium tenax*, which was first published in European taxonomies in 1775.<sup>42</sup>

Celebrated for its strong, high-quality fibers, which are well suited to rope making, *Phormium tenax* (an entirely different species from European flaxes) had by the early nineteenth century become the subject of a major global trade.<sup>43</sup> Thouin’s gift suggests that in the 1780s France could boast of having sufficient specimens to give some away as gifts.<sup>44</sup> From a French perspective at least, making gifts out of such specimens was symbolically significant: the acclimatization and redistribution of new varieties of “useful” plants represented the cutting edge of French botanical science.

Whereas the inclusion of antipodean flax was not commented upon in the extant correspondence, the ambassadors’ requests for other specimens brought the different French parties—representatives of the various governmental and botanical institutions—directly into conflict with each other. The most controversial plants that Tipu Sultan requested included three spices: nutmeg, cloves, and cinnamon (Figures 9.2 and 9.3). These were highly precious plants that had, throughout most of the eighteenth century, been a Dutch monopoly. France had only taken possession of the “true” varieties in the 1770s and had then begun to establish spice plantations on its colonial islands. All “French” spice trees, like those cultivated in other European colonies, were literally kept under lock and key.<sup>45</sup> Although the French were happy to share newly discovered *Phormium* seeds, Tipu’s request for three such prized specimens raised hackles among the French officials.

In the end, however, the royal ministers acquiesced to Tipu’s request for spices. As Pouget, the intendant (royal director) of naval *classes*, explained to Thouin in August 1788, the Versailles government knew that Tipu desired the specimens in order that he might “establish agricultural cultivations in India”<sup>46</sup> but was nevertheless willing to support this initiative. The extant correspondence does not record Thouin’s initial reaction to this request, but his apparent consent to the controversial gift did not pass uncontested. A few months later, Thouin’s counterpart, Jean-Nicolas Céré (1737–1810), the intendant of the Jardin du Roi on the Île de France,<sup>47</sup> refused to collaborate in carrying out this plan, claiming that he was acting in the interests of the French state.

**FIGURE 9.2**  
Nutmeg. William Curtis,  
*Botanical Magazine* (1827).  
Rare Book Collection,  
Dumbarton Oaks Research  
Library and Collection.





**FIGURE 9.3**  
Clove. William Curtis, *Botanical Magazine* (1827). Rare Book Collection, Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.

The mission arrived at the island in early February 1789, after almost three months at sea. The Indian ambassadors were graciously received, but Céré flatly refused to allow them to take any of the specimens on his watch, stating that he had not received any communication from his superior, La Luzerne, to confirm the latter's consent. Pierre Mulot (b. 1756), one of the two French gardeners, explained rather desperately to Thouin that Céré "said . . . that he would do everything possible to give . . . everything that would give pleasure to the ambassadors, but . . . that . . . he [had] to have a letter from the Comte de la Luzerne . . . [in order to] give the nutmeg tree, cinnamon plant and clove tree but he could not give these three species [without one]."<sup>48</sup> The purported lack of official instructions from Paris meant that the progress of the mission foundered on the Île de France, as Céré and the ambassadors clashed over whether or not to hand over the plants in question.

The uncertainties of communication by sea could mean that Céré may not have received La Luzerne's letter. But numerous other sources could have corroborated the ministerial agreement to the gift, and it seems strange that the expedition itself did not carry a copy of the same instruction from La Luzerne. The French travelers who accompanied the ambassadors all stated that they were aware of the agreement, and Thouin's own letter to Céré had underlined its apparent veracity: "These Gardeners," he explained, "have also the order to take away the Spice trees that you would Kindly procure for them from the Jardin du Roi of the Isle de France and for which the minister [La Luzerne] has written to you."<sup>49</sup> Despite these assurances, Céré refused to budge.

Céré explained to Mulot his concerns about the potential dangers involved in releasing the spice plants, and the gardener reported them to Thouin. The intendant's fears inevitably had little to do with Mysore and were instead focused on the threat posed by British competition. "He said," Mulot wrote, "that if the English came and took these countries [Mysore], the plants would be taken [and] that would do harm to the [French] nation."<sup>50</sup> Céré's reasoning was based on his prediction that Tipu Sultan would not withstand the British for much longer. Indeed, ten years later, these fears

were realized when the East India Company captured Seringapatam, killing Tipu Sultan in action.

Céré ultimately relented, but only after weeks of deliberation. None of the surviving sources describes these negotiations in detail, but all the letters sent to Thouin noted that the discussion was very protracted. By April, the ambassadors had declared that they would not leave the island until Céré handed over the desired plants; worn down by brinkmanship, Céré finally gave in and entrusted two nutmeg and ten clove plants to the care of the gardeners (no mention of cinnamon is made in the correspondence).<sup>51</sup> The European travelers collectively breathed a sigh of relief. "I tell you," wrote R. C. Barrault (the French surgeon on the mission) to Thouin on April 7, "that it is with great difficulty that they [the gardeners] have obtained the Spice trees, despite the repeated requests that the ambassadors made."<sup>52</sup>

The mission continued on its way in April but was soon caught up in "a frightful tempest." Inspecting his cargo after the storm, Mulot sadly informed Thouin: "M. Céré gave us clove trees [but] they are all dead [and] the [storm] killed other European plants[.] I feared that all would be dead before we reached Pondicherry."<sup>53</sup> In a letter written later from Pondicherry to Céré, Mulot reported, with only a slight note of optimism: "The nutmeg trees do not do very well [but] the other plants are doing fine."<sup>54</sup> The gardeners' attentive care of the plants was ultimately thwarted by the hazardous nature of oceanic travel, and the spice specimens may not even have reached Mysore. In spite of his control over the spice plants on the Île de France, Céré, too, was unable to determine their fate once they were at sea.

Teasing out the actual intentions of the individuals involved is difficult due to the absence of substantive archival sources relating to this moment in the episode. La Luzerne and Thouin in Paris had openly appeased their Indian allies by promising them the plants. One can speculate that Céré, working from a distance but within the same state-run scientific enterprise, genuinely disobeyed instructions from Paris by withholding the plants and attempted to double-cross the ambassadors by claiming that he had received no such instructions. Alternatively, it is also possible that Céré may have received, and followed, instructions from Paris to

the letter: if La Luzerne and Thouin never actually intended the spice plants to reach Mysore, they could have made a hollow promise to the ambassadors and their entourage and then privately instructed Céré to attempt to block the execution of the plan once everyone was too far away to reenter formal negotiations.

However, the absence of any communication from La Luzerne appears unlikely. The gifting of spice plants such as nutmeg and cloves was so significantly contrary to French policy in the 1780s that state diplomats in Paris would have ensured that the message reached its proper recipient: botanists and others who corresponded over long distances were very familiar with the problem of losing letters at sea, and it was quite normal to send multiple copies, particularly if their content pertained to an important subject. As mentioned, it is also hard to believe that the expedition itself did not carry a copy of La Luzerne's authorization.

What this dispute does clearly expose is the continuing importance of individual characters and local decision-making processes to diplomacy (in this case, as transacted through botany). Personalities are, indeed, key to all forms of negotiation. However, eighteenth-century colonial botany as a diplomatic tool was further complicated by the interaction of individuals occupying varying positions on the social spectrum, ranging from those at the highest levels of government to people hailing from much humbler backgrounds, who possessed only green-fingered expertise. In Paris, the ambassadors worked with the Comte de La Luzerne, who, as head of the Ministry of the Marine, was in direct communication with the king. On the Île de France the diplomats needed to persuade Céré, a minor noble and a Creole who had been born on the island and raised in France.<sup>55</sup> But as my final section will show, the negotiations also required the compliance of the ship's captain and our two corresponding gardeners. Distance sometimes meant that authority became distributed across the social scale.

## Plants and People

The gardeners' letters to Thouin reveal the workings of power relationships between botanists and government officials. They also demonstrate the extent

to which botanical transfers were contingent on other individuals, too. The botanical and diplomatic success of the voyage to Mysore was, in fact, largely subverted by a third party, Captain Fournier, who presented a formidable obstacle to the two gardeners and threw the whole enterprise into jeopardy. Fournier's role in this project comes to light only because the gardeners, Pierre Mulot and Guillaume Lührman (b. 1759), with whom he interacted, wrote the letters that have survived. These demonstrate the degree to which colonial botany depended on the collaboration of people who were extraneous to, and probably largely unaware of, Enlightenment science and the workings of imperial diplomacy.

Before the departure of the mission, Thouin wrote out an instruction book for the gardeners, which amounted to thirty double-sided pages of closely written script. The manual spelled out the tasks that they were to undertake at each point of their journey.<sup>56</sup> Upon arrival at the Île de France, Thouin wrote, their first duty was to see Céré and give him the letter from Thouin. Once they had completed their second task, which related to obtaining the spice plants, the gardeners' third instruction was to "ask M. Céré kindly to inform them" how best to cultivate the specimens.<sup>57</sup> In his separate letter to Céré, Thouin politely requested that he "give them Advice about the agricultural methods the most appropriate to the Climate of India, so that they can avoid [working by] trial and error, often long and ineffective." He added: "If you have the time to have your observations on this subject put in writing for them you would render them a great Service and [this] would show them the full extent of your Kindness."<sup>58</sup>

Meeting Céré was crucially important for the gardeners because he could share practical knowledge about the new climate in which they now found themselves. Colonial botanists lived and worked in a world very different from the one in which their Parisian counterparts operated, and global plant transfers depended on the exchange of their local knowledge and expertise. But, as Mulot explained to Thouin, he and fellow gardener Lührman actually had very little opportunity to see the intendant of the botanical garden and even less occasion to converse with him. This problem was entirely separate from the diplomatic spice plant debacle: it was the result

of a dispute that had broken out between the two gardeners and Captain Fournier during the voyage.

Relations with this captain had never been easy. At Brest, Mulot had mentioned in a letter to Thouin, “we have had much difficulty [?] in finding [sufficient] space aboard the ships for our trees,” and another of Thouin’s correspondents—the head gardener of the botanic garden at Brest—also observed that the ships were alarmingly overloaded.<sup>60</sup> In a later description of crossing the equator, he hinted at the mounting tensions over the limited space. “We have not planted the seeds,” he admitted, “because the ship is too encumbered[,] the captain and the officers [are] all already very unhappy with having so much clutter on the vessel.”<sup>61</sup> The captain’s hostility toward the gardeners and the botanical cargo was not at all unusual. Plants imposed high demands on ships because of their need for space and water, and botanists regularly clashed with the sailors on whose ships they depended.<sup>62</sup>

By the time the mission had reached the Île de France, where the gardeners expected to remain for about six weeks, relations with Captain Fournier had deteriorated to the extent that he refused to allow Mulot and Luhrman to transfer temporarily the living cargo ashore so that gardeners could rest on the island. As the ship was overrun by vermin, the captain’s unexplained decision effectively made the gardeners prisoners aboard: they were obliged to mount a continuous watch over their plants to prevent them from being eaten by ravenous rats.<sup>63</sup>

Being stuck on board was exasperating not only for personal reasons (Luhrman became terribly ill) but also because the captain’s unwarranted opposition prevented the gardeners from carrying out their orders from Thouin. As Mulot explained, they could not easily meet Céré because he lived too far away on the island. Walking the distance of two *lieues* (nearly 5 mi) to Céré’s home at Pamplémousses (Figure 9.4) would presumably require them to leave the plants for too long, and they were not allowed, according to maritime codes, to invite Céré aboard without the captain’s permission. Captain Fournier, who continued to be inexplicably difficult, forestalled issuing this invitation for as long as possible. “The reason why M. Céré has not come aboard,” explained Mulot with deep frustration, “is that the Captain has neither been

to see him nor written to him. . . . The captain is an extremely haughty man.”<sup>64</sup>

The practical matters of food and nutrition placed further obstacles in the path of Enlightenment botany, and again maritime code meant that provisions were ultimately under the captain’s jurisdiction. While making the arrangements for the voyage to India in October, Thouin had written a letter directly to Pierre Ruffin, the royal translator, in which he urged Ruffin to ensure that the gardeners would “have a little ease on the vessel that will convey them to India, [and] provide them with healthy and sufficient food.”<sup>65</sup> However, Thouin’s instructions had little effect, and the botanical dividends of the voyage suffered as a result. Mulot wrote to complain at their treatment aboard ship and blamed his and Luhrman’s lack of scholarly progress on the oppression that they experienced: “Our voyage has not [made] more curious [observations] because we were unwell throughout the crossing we were fed like common sailors [whereas] the engineers and the two doctors ate at the officers’ table.”<sup>66</sup>

While plants potentially disrupted the maritime status quo because they were fragile and demanding, the people who accompanied them might do so either by becoming incapacitated by ill health, as in the case of the gardeners, or, as my concluding example shows, simply by being unwilling to carry out their orders. Thouin took great care to ensure that his emissaries would undertake their duties, and he deployed a range of methods of social control and discipline with all his correspondents.<sup>67</sup> Here, as elsewhere, Thouin’s instructions and the tone of his correspondence were intended to maximize the potential returns for science that the travelers might bring. Their initial contracts carried attractive promises of the financial bonuses they would receive should the mission be successful, and he periodically reminded them of the other rewards they might gain on their return to France. Replying to a letter from the surgeon Barrault during the otherwise heady month of October 1789, Thouin thanked him for his communication so far and warmly urged him to continue: “This Beautiful Division of the Sciences is nearly entirely new for Europeans.” Acknowledging that the study of botany was “a diversion from [his] ordinary work,” Thouin reassured his correspondent that his efforts

This image has been redacted, to view the image please consult the final published version of this work at <http://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780884024163>

would be rewarded on his return: “Your mother country [*patrie*] will prepare for you an agreeable reception and a distinguished rank in the republic of letters.”<sup>68</sup>

Thouin also ensured further loyalty by acting as a patron to the travelers and their families. Stuck at the port of Brest waiting for the departure of the expedition, the doctor Pierre-Rémy-François Willemet (1762–ca. 1790) first asked Thouin to use his “credit” with the royal minister to arrange introductions “to all the principal people of [the] town.”<sup>69</sup> Just over a week later (and still trapped in Brest by an inconvenient southwesterly wind), Willemet wrote again to Thouin, asking him to obtain permission from Luzerne’s deputy, Pouget, for the expedition’s members to access supplies from the naval stores at Brest. His letter was couched in the language of patronage: “I beg you, sir, to kindly use the friendship that

you have shown us, to remind M. de Pouget, that we must be provided with at Brest, from the Royal warehouses, not only the medicines, but also with paper, cork, and tinplate, and other such things, but that nothing can be given to us because the orders from the minister have not arrived.”<sup>70</sup> Willemet continued by again begging Thouin to “use all your credit, so that we are served promptly,”<sup>71</sup> and Thouin immediately wrote to the relevant officials.<sup>72</sup>

The gardener Lührman also wrote to Thouin from Brest and in a postscript to his letter asked if Thouin might be able to offer employment to a young friend of his. The lad was a gardener trained in Westphalia who evidently wished to follow Lührman’s footsteps to Paris’s Jardin du Roi.<sup>73</sup> The deployment of patronage bonds continued long after the party had left France’s shores. In 1789, for example, Thouin agreed to a request from Barrault

**FIGURE 9.4**

*Vue de l’habitation de M. Céré aux Pamplemousses.* Jacques Gérard Milbert, *Voyage pittoresque à l’Île-de-France, au cap de Bonne-Espérance et à l’Île de Ténériffe* (1812), pl. 28. Bibliothèque nationale de France.

that Thouin obtain a position for Barrault's brother as surgeon on the Île de France.<sup>74</sup>

By enlacing his emissaries within ties of obligation and by offering glittering rewards, Thouin successfully ensured the compliance of the two gardeners and Barrault, one of the doctors. But as the distance increased between the mission and its home country, the second doctor, Willemet, became increasingly truculent and refused to comply with Thouin's specifications regarding regular correspondence. Writing from Paris in November 1789, Thouin began his letter by chastising the young doctor directly for his silence: "Since your departure you have not given us a single sign of life, and if the Gardeners and your friend Monsieur Barrault had not written to us that you were well[,] we should believe you died, it is not good so to leave your friends in anxiety, I ask you to repair this as soon as you can."<sup>75</sup> Thouin initially had high aspirations for the doctor: Willemet had received an excellent education in botany from the Jardin du Roi and apparently had leaped at the chance to join the mission. Thouin's hopes appear to have been dashed, at least in part, when the young man failed to write. But although the doctor was a cause of frustration and anxiety to Thouin, he posed no actual impediment to the mission.<sup>76</sup> As we saw at the start of the section, the one individual over whom Thouin held absolutely no sway was Captain Fournier. Ships' captains, like Fournier, could sabotage imperial and scientific aspirations entirely by laying down their own restrictions on the movements of plants and gardeners. Imperial botany, thus, depended both on recruiting the right personnel and on finding ships and sailors who were sufficiently sympathetic to the high demands made by these fragile specimens and their importunate companions.

## Conclusion

The extant archival evidence leaves ambiguous the reasons why a diplomatic impasse occurred on the Île de France. On the one hand, we might assume that the incident was an example of subterfuge on the part of the French; on the other, we might believe that the proceedings simply broke down as a result of the difficulty of communicating over long distances in the eighteenth century. Either way, the

documents are not sufficiently forthcoming. But what the documentation does give us is a more focused understanding of the workings of what we might call the "colonial machine." From this material, we can draw several important points.

The first is that the evidence from Mysore acts as a significant corrective to assumptions that colonial botany was only practiced by Europeans in the eighteenth century: it was Tipu Sultan and his aspirations for an economic Enlightenment in Mysore that set the entire episode in motion. In this example, the interests of Mysore and France were intertwined in the project of sending knowledgeable gardeners and doctors to India. The collection and naturalization of plants was a central feature of eighteenth-century colonial history and economic development, and such collecting projects operated at the intersection of state aspirations and commercial development for both France and Mysore.

The history of science has focused on how diplomatic networks were used to support botany: diplomats offered an efficient international network through which specimens might be transferred with much more security than along regular channels.<sup>77</sup> But this exchange is also an example of how botanical networks were used to support diplomacy. Plants made valuable gifts and were also potentially very lucrative; as such, they were the objects of diplomatic negotiations in their own right. The diplomatic negotiations in Paris with Tipu's ambassadors were focused on the items to be taken *to* Mysore and, therefore, on sourcing the right individuals to obtain and care for these and to work for the sultan. But the scholars associated with the Jardin du Roi also focused their energies on defining what might travel *back* from Mysore. This reciprocal process involved the inscription of a range of different actors.

The second point is that the cache of letters from the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle exposes the subtleties through which the relationships between metropolitan France and its imperial agents were structured. The evidence complicates in interesting ways our understanding of the meaning of, and relationship between, center and periphery; indeed, it demonstrates the unexpected centrality of places such as the Île de France and Mysore. Both

were integrated within a single diplomatic engagement, and relationships were forged *between* these purportedly “peripheral” places almost as much as they were forged with Paris.

The third point is that the letters also show that the relationships between the Île de France, Mysore, and France itself evolved as a result of the actions of a wide range of actors, each jostling to serve particular agendas. The people who defined the botany of empire in the eighteenth century included those conventionally considered socially “peripheral” to the workings of international diplomacy, such as gardeners and ship captains, just as much as government ministers, ambassadors, and colonial administrators.

Above all, then, the letters discussed here underline the value of viewing imperial relations from the singular perspectives of the people involved, who ranged from functionaries directly serving the colonial administration to individuals unrelated to the aspirations of Enlightenment science. In this chapter, I have tried to highlight the significance of the humble gardener to such international exchanges. Gardeners were, after all, the only people who knew

how to ensure plants’ survival, and the success of a project also depended on the health and well-being of the gardeners—in this case, Mulot and Lührman. Their letters also emphasize that botany and empire depended as much on nonstate actors, including sailors, as on those officially inscribed in colonial projects. Aboard ship, maritime rules, rather than those of the metropole, prevailed. Ships’ captains could sabotage imperial and scientific aspirations by laying down their own laws and restrictions upon gardeners and their precious green cargo. The botany of empire was made as much on the sea as it was on land.

### Acknowledgments

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### Notes

1 “Végétaux envoyés au Sultan Tippoo [sic] Zaib par le Jardin du Roi 1788,” MS 307, Bibliothèque Centrale, Muséum National d’Histoire Naturelle (hereafter MNHN). For more on the ambassadorial mission itself, see Irfan Habib, ed., *State and Diplomacy under Tipu Sultan: Documents and Essays* (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2001); Irfan Habib, ed., *Confronting Colonialism: Resistance and Modernisation under Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan* (London: Anthem Press, 2002); and Victor Tantet, “L’ambassade de Tippou-Sahib à Paris,” *Le revue de Paris* (January–February 1899): 393–420.

2 My approach here forms part of a growing emphasis among historians on investigating the processes and peoples that composed early modern science and empire. See Kapil Raj, “Beyond Postcolonialism . . . and Postpositivism: Circulation and the Global History of Science,” *Isis* 104, no. 2 (2013): 337–47; E. C. Spary, “Of Nutmegs and Botanists: The Colonial Cultivation of Botanical Identity,” in *Colonial Botany: Science, Commerce, and Politics in the Early Modern World*, ed. Londa Schiebinger and Claudia Swan (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 187–203; Daniela Bleichmar, *Visible Empire: Natural History and Visual Culture in the Hispanic Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); and Neil

Safier, *Measuring the New World: Enlightenment Science and South America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

3 Sudipta Das, *Myths and Realities of French Imperialism in India, 1763–1783* (New York: Peter Lang, 1992), ch. 3.

4 Quoted in Habib, *State and Diplomacy under Tipu Sultan*, xix. Tipu made this statement *before* the Second Mysore War (1780–84).

5 See discussion in the introduction to Habib, *State and Diplomacy under Tipu Sultan*.

6 Tipu, in fact, sent two missions to Europe. The first set out in 1786 with the intention of visiting first the Ottoman empire and then France (the ambassadors were also told to continue onward to Britain should they fail to achieve their aims in negotiations with these first two powers). This initial mission reached Basra but was then forced to return to Mysore due to an unfortunate series of events (including a fire aboard ship and a serious outbreak of disease). The second mission sailed directly to France in 1788. For more on this mission, see Habib, *State and Diplomacy under Tipu Sultan*, xi–xv. On the wider diplomatic significance of the Ottoman empire and its relations with France in 1788, see

Thomas E. Kaiser, "From Fiscal Crisis to Revolution: The Court and French Foreign Policy, 1787–1789," in *From Deficit to Deluge: The Origins of the French Revolution*, ed. Thomas E. Kaiser and Dale Van Kley (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 139–64.

7 Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi, "Tipu Sultan's Embassy to Constantinople in 1787," in *Confronting Colonialism: Resistance and Modernisation under Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan*, ed. Irfan Habib (London: Anthem Press, 2002), 69–78; Kate Brittlebank, *Tipu Sultan's Search for Legitimacy: Islam and Kingship in a Hindu Domain* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997); and Habib, *State and Diplomacy under Tipu Sultan*, xi–xii.

8 Habib, *State and Diplomacy under Tipu Sultan*, xi–xii.

9 For the Tipu's claims to Jacobin politics, see Jean Boutier, "Les 'lettres de créances' du corsaire Ripaud: Un 'club jacobin' à Srirangapatnam (Inde), mai-juin 1797," in *Le monde créole: Peuplement, sociétés et condition humaine, XVII<sup>e</sup>–XX<sup>e</sup> siècles; Mélanges offerts à Hubert Gerbeau*, ed. Jacques Weber (Paris: Les Indes Savantes, 2005), 35–47; and Brittlebank, *Tipu Sultan's Search for Legitimacy*, ch. 5. On the Enlightenment, see the brief discussion of Tipu Sultan in Sebastian Conrad, "Enlightenment in Global History: A Historiographical Critique," *American Historical Review* 117, no. 4 (2012): 998–1027, esp. 1013 and fig. 1.

10 For the looting and dispersal of objects, see Maya Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire: Lives, Culture, and Conquest in the East, 1750–1850* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), ch. 6.

11 *Ibid.*; Susan Stronge, *Tipu's Tigers* (London: V&A Publishing, 2009); and Anne Buddle, ed., *The Tiger and the Thistle: Tipu Sultan and the Scots in India, 1760–1800* (Edinburgh: National Gallery of Scotland, 1999).

12 Exceptions to this are, of course, dried specimens preserved in herbaria and those reproduced through botanical art. Modern disciplinary divisions, however, mean that such specimens are invariably stored in separate institutions and are rarely considered in conjunction with records about other elements of a collection, which are preserved elsewhere. An archetypal example of this is the collection of Hans Sloane, which was divided between the British Museum, the Natural History Museum (London), and the British Library. The "Reconstructing Sloane" project is currently renewing the connections between Sloane's collection. See <http://www.nhm.ac.uk/research-curation/science-facilities/cahr/sloane/index.html>, accessed July 21, 2013.

13 To my knowledge, the botanical and horticultural records for eighteenth-century Seringapatam have not survived. The paucity of such sources makes the archive studied here—comprised of letters exchanged between French gardeners and state officials involved in arranging the botanical consignment in 1788 and 1789—particularly interesting.

14 "Statement of Instructions (Hukmnama) addressed to Muhammad Darvesh Khan, Akbar 'Ali Khan, and Muhammad 'Usman," translated by Iqbal Husain and reprinted in Habib, *State and Diplomacy under Tipu Sultan*,

57–58. For translations of some later Hukmnama, issued in 1793 and 1794, see Iftikhar A. Khan, "The Regulations of Tipu Sultan for His State Trading Enterprise," in *Confronting Colonialism: Resistance and Modernisation under Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan*, ed. Irfan Habib (London: Anthem Press, 2002), 148–60.

15 Habib, *State and Diplomacy under Tipu Sultan*, xi–xii, xvi. Tipu Sultan was also fighting against the Marathas, but he believed his armies were capable of dealing with them without Turkish and French assistance.

16 Habib, *State and Diplomacy under Tipu Sultan*, xiv–xviii; Habib, *Confronting Colonialism*, xxviii–xxxv; and B. Sheik Ali, "Developing Agriculture: Land Tenure under Tipu Sultan," in Habib, *Confronting Colonialism*, 161–64.

17 See the contributions to Habib, *Confronting Colonialism*.

18 Christopher Bayly in his book *Empire and Information* argues for the significance of knowledge transfer to imperial expansion, and this is, of course, the backdrop to my analysis here. See Christopher A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780–1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

19 Joel Mokyr, *The Gifts of Athena: Historical Origins of the Knowledge Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); and Liliane Hilaire-Pérez, *L'invention technique au Siècle des Lumières* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2000).

20 "Statement of Instructions (Hukmnama)," 57–58.

21 For a parallel example of the attempted diplomatic use of the industrial revolution knowledge economy, see Maxine Berg, "Britain, Industry, and Perceptions of China: Matthew Boulton, 'Useful Knowledge' and the Macartney Embassy to China, 1792–94," *Journal of Global History* 1 (2006): 269–88.

22 César Henri de La Luzerne, Versailles, to André Thouin, Paris, August 8, 1788, MS 307, MNHN: "Les ambassadeurs de Tippu Sultan demandent... des graines de fleurs de toute espèces des semences de lin, et de chanvre, les arbres fruitiers particuliers à l'europe [*sic*]... Voudriez vous vous charger de preparer [*sic*] cet envoi... Ils desirent [*sic*] de plus des hommes d'art, un medecin [*sic*] un chirurgien habile, des garçons [*sic*] jardiniers. Je vous propose encore de vous occuper de cette recherche."

23 The ambassadors and their entourage eventually departed from Brest on November 14, 1788, and arrived in Pondicherry on May 11, 1789.

24 For more on French foreign policy at this time, see Kaiser, "From Fiscal Crisis to Revolution."

25 Habib, *State and Diplomacy under Tipu Sultan*, xvi; and Habib, *Confronting Colonialism*, 44–45.

26 Habib, *State and Diplomacy under Tipu Sultan*, xiii.

27 See Bayly, *Empire and Information*, for similar strategies among the British.

28 Draft letter from André Thouin to Pouget, October 2, 1788, MS 307, MNHN; and draft letter from André Thouin, Paris, to Jean-Nicolas Céré, Île de France, October 14, 1788, MS 307, MNHN.

- 29 Lucien Bély, *Espions et ambassadeurs au temps de Louis XIV* (Paris: Fayard, 1990), 330–31; and E. C. Spary, *Utopia's Garden: French Natural History from Old Regime to Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 67–68.
- 30 Catherine Gaziello, *L'expédition de Lapérouse, 1785–1788: Replique française aux voyages de Cook* (Paris: CTHS, 1994); and Julia Ferloni, *Lapérouse: Voyage autour du monde* (Paris: Conti, 2005).
- 31 For further development of these connections, see Londa Schiebinger and Claudia Swan, eds., *Colonial Botany: Science, Commerce, and Politics in the Early Modern World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).
- 32 Spary, *Utopia's Garden*, ch. 2; and Yvonne Letouzey, *Le jardin des plantes à la croisée des chemins avec André Thouin, 1747–1824* (Paris: MNHN, 1989).
- 33 “Pièces relatives au Projet d'une correspondance agriculto-Botanique entre les différentes Colonies françaises et le Jardin du Roi ébauchée en Janvier 1788. D'après le Projet de M. le Cte de La Luzerne,” MS 308, MNHN.
- 34 Pouget (on behalf of the Comte de La Luzerne) to André Thouin, September 2, 1788, MS 307, MNHN.
- 35 Draft letter from André Thouin to Pierre Mulet and Guillaume Lührman, November 29, 1789, MS 307, MNHN: “Ne craignez pas de nous envoyer des choses que nous possédons [*sic*] déjà [*sic*] cela arrive rarement parce que nous ne sommes pas riches en plantes du climat que vous habitez.”
- 36 “Questions à faire à l'administration de chaque colonie française des deux Indes. Par A. Thouin,” in “Pièces relatives au Projet d'une correspondance agriculto-Botanique entre les différentes Colonies françaises et le Jardin du Roi ébauchée en Janvier 1788. D'après le Projet de M. le Cte de La Luzerne,” MS 308, MNHN.
- 37 André Thouin, “Instructions pour diriger les Jardiniers dans la Culture des Végétaux en Nature destinés au Nabab Typoo Sultan pendant leur Voyage sur Mer,” fol. 20r, MS 307, MNHN.
- 38 André Thouin, Paris, to César Henri de La Luzerne, Versailles, August 10, 1788, MS 307, MNHN: “Je suis on ne peut plus flatté de la confiance dont vous avez la bonté de m'honorer [*sic*]; les soins que je mettrai à remplir en tout point vos intentions vous seront garents [garent? garantis?] de ma reconnaissance [*sic*].”
- 39 André Thouin, Paris, to César Henri de La Luzerne, Versailles, August 10, 1788, MS 307, MNHN: “Je vais m'occuper sur le champs à rassembler les graines de fleurs, de Plantes Textilles [*sic*] et les arbres fruitiers que desirent [*sic*] emporter avec eux les ambassadeurs Indiens. Cet objet me sera facile.”
- 40 César Henri de La Luzerne, Versailles, to André Thouin, Paris, August 8, 1788, MS 307, MNHN: “On pourroit même préférer des hommes ayant quelques connoissances d'histoire naturelle, de Botanique, et qui seroient doublement utiles.”
- 41 “Note des artistes et ouvriers,” August 26, 1788, MS 307, MNHN.
- 42 [André Thouin], “Etat de ce que contient la Caisse No. 3 Expedié du Jardin du Roi le 3 Octobre 1788,” MS 307, MNHN. The list is written in the vernacular, which unfortunately means we cannot be absolutely certain which botanical species Thouin sent.
- 43 *Phormium tenax* had long been used by Maoris prior to its “discovery” by Europeans. It was first published in European taxonomies by Johann Reinhold and Georg Forster in 1775; see <http://www.theplantlist.org/tpl1.1/record/kew-284248> and <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/1966/flax/page-3>, both accessed February 8, 2014. Joseph Banks was so delighted with *Phormium* that he had himself depicted draped in a cape made from its fibers in Benjamin West's striking portrait of 1771–72, made after Banks's return from the *Endeavour* voyage. See Patricia Fara, “Images of a Man of Science,” *History Today* 48 (October 1998): 42n49. The portrait is in the Usher Gallery, Lincoln, United Kingdom.
- 44 [André Thouin], “Etat de ce que contient la Caisse No. 3 Expedié du Jardin du Roi le 3 Octobre 1788,” MS 307, MNHN.
- 45 Charles Grant, Viscount de Vaux, *The History of Mauritius; or, The Isle of France, and the Neighbouring Islands: From Their First Discovery to the Present Time* (London: Bulmer, Nichol, Wright, and Uphill, 1801), 98; and Spary, “Of Nutmegs and Botanists,” 189–90.
- 46 Pouget [?] to André Thouin [?], August 25, 1789, fols. 1r–1v, MS 307, MNHN: “Ils causeront aussi sur les graines de chanvre et de lin, et les moyens d'établir [*sic*] les cultures dans l'Inde.”
- 47 Now known as the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Botanical Garden.
- 48 Pierre Mulet, Île de France, to André Thouin, March 12, 1789, MS 307, MNHN: “Il nous a dit qui [*sic*] fairoit tous soin possible pour nous donner tous ce qui feroit plaisir aux ambassadeurs mais il nous a di[t] que cy [i.e., si] il avoir une letre [*sic*] du comte de la Luzerne qui [*sic*] doneroit [*sic*] le muscadie & canalier et gyraffier [*sic*] mais qui ne pouvoit pas donner ce trois espece [*sic*].”
- 49 André Thouin, Paris, to Jean-Nicolas Céré, Île de France, October 14, 1788, fol. 1r, MS 307, MNHN: “Ces Jardiniers ont aussi l'ordre de sa charger des arbres à Epicier que vous voudriez Bien leur procurer du Jardin du Roi de l'Isle de France et pour lesquels le ministre vous à écrit.” Note that Céré would conventionally receive orders from La Luzerne, who, as the minister of the marine, was his direct superior, and not from Thouin.
- 50 Pierre Mulet, Île de France, to André Thouin, March 12, 1789, MS 307, MNHN: “Il di[t] que si les englois [*sic*] venoit enprandre ce pays ces plantes aurois prise [*sic*] que cela feroit tort a la nation.”
- 51 Guillaume Lührman and Pierre Mulet, Île de France, to André Thouin, Paris, April 7, 1789, MS 307, MNHN.

52 R. C. Barrault, Île de France, to André Thouin, April 7, 1789, MS 307, MNHN: “Je vous annonce que c’est avec beaucoup de peine qu’ils [les jardiniers] on obtenu les Épiseries [sic], malgré les demandes Réitérées qu’en ont faites les ambassadeurs.”

53 Pierre Mulot to André Thouin, June 4, 1789, fol. 1r, MS 307, MNHN: “Monsieur Ceré nous avoit [sic] donner des gyrofliers . . . il sont tous mort . . . il a peries [sic] des plantes d’Europes aussi je crai [sic] que meut [?] tous . . . [avant?] que nous soyons arivez [sic].”

54 Pierre Mulot, Pondicherry, to Jean-Nicolas Céré, Île de France [received July 21, 1789], fol. 1r, MS 307, MNHN: “Les muscadiers ne sont pas trop bien portent Les autre plantes Se porte[nt] bien.”

55 For more on Céré, see J. P. F. Deleuze, “Notice sur M. de Céré,” *Annales du Muséum d’Histoire Naturelle* 16 (1810): 329–37.

56 André Thouin, “Instructions pour diriger les Jardiniers dans la Culture des Végétaux en Nature destinés au Nabab Typoo Sultan pendant leur Voyage sur Mer,” fol. 20r, MS 307, MNHN.

57 Ibid.

58 Draft letter from André Thouin, Paris, to Jean-Nicolas Céré, Île de France, October 14, 1788, fol. 1r, MS 307, MNHN: “Je vous en aurai la plus sincere [sic] obligation, ainsi que de leur donner des Conseils sur les procedés [sic] d’agriculture les plus propres au Climat de l’Inde afin de leur eviter [sic] des tentatives et des Essais souvent longs et infectueux [sic]. Si vous aviez le tems de leur faire rediger [sic] par escrit [sic] vos observations a ce sujet vous leur rendriez un grand Service et vous mettriez le comble a vos Bontés.”

59 Pierre Mulot, Brest, to André Thouin, Paris, November 9, 1788, fol. 1v, MS 307, MNHN: “Nous avons eut [sic] beaucoup de pe . . . [peine?] pour trouver . . . [assez?] place sur les vaisaux pour nos abre[s].”

60 Laurent, Brest, to André Thouin, Paris, November 15, 1788, fols. 1r, 2v, MS 307, MNHN.

61 Pierre Mulot, Île de France, to André Thouin, Paris, March 12, 1789, fol. 1v, MS 307, MNHN: “Nous n’avons pas ceme [i.e., semé] de grene [i.e., graines] . . . parce que le veceaux [i.e., vaisseaux] trop embarace [i.e., embarrassé?] le capitene [sic] et les officier [sic] . . . [sont] tout [?] deja tres malcontent d’avoir tant d’embara sur les veceaux.”

62 Hilda Grieve, *A Transatlantic Gardening Friendship, 1694–1777* (Essex: Historical Association, 1981), 13, 23. One of the most infamous contemporary examples of such tensions is the mutiny that occurred on the *Bounty* in 1789. The *Bounty*, which was sailing under Captain Bligh from Tahiti to the Caribbean, carried a substantial cargo of live breadfruit plants.

63 Pierre Mulot, Île de France, to André Thouin, Paris, March 12, 1789, fol. 3v, MS 307, MNHN.

64 Pierre Mulot [?], Île de France, to André Thouin, Paris, March 12, 1789, fol. 4r, MS 307, MNHN: “La raison pour quoi que M. Cere n’est pas venu a notre bord ces [sic]

que le Capitene ne l’a pas été voir ni escri, lui qui ne veut pas s [?] ce soumetre [sic] au capitene [sic]. Cela a cause qui n’est pas venu abord. Efetivement [sic] le capitene es[t] un homme etrement [sic] haut.”

65 Draft letter from André Thouin, Paris, to Pierre Ruffin, October 14, 1789, fol. 1r, MS 307, MNHN: “Je vous les recommande tant pour leur faire d’avoir un peu d’aisance sur le vaisseau qui doit les conduire dans l’Inde, leur procurer une nourriture saine et suffisante, que pour leur prouver les moyens de Cultiver et de conserver les végétaux qu’ils transportent avec eux.”

66 Pierre Mulot [?], Île de France, to André Thouin, Paris, March 12, 1789, fol. 4r, MS 307, MNHN: “Notre navigations n’a pas de plus cureuse [?] car notre été mal tout la traverscé [sic] nous avons été nourie comme les matelot . . . les ingenieurs et les deux medecin magoit [magoin? mangaient?] a la tables des officier[s].”

67 For more on methods of imposing discipline and authority within eighteenth-century collecting networks, see Spary, *Utopia’s Garden*, 84–92.

68 André Thouin, Paris, to R. C. Barrault, October 29, 1789, MS 307, MNHN: “Cette Belle Partie des Sciences est presque entierement [sic] neuve pour les Europeens [sic] . . . en faisant diversion a votre travail ordinaire [l’étude de la botanique] vous menagera [sic] dans votre patrie une reception [sic] agréable et un rang distingué dans la republique [sic] des lettres.”

69 Pierre-Rémy-François Willemet, Brest, to André Thouin, October 27, 1788, fol. 2r, MS 307, MNHN: “Si votre crédit auprès du Ministre voulait nous faire recommander à tous les principaux de cette ville, ce seroit un nouveau service que vous nous rendriez.”

70 Pierre-Rémy-François Willemet, Brest, to André Thouin, November 5, 1788, fol. 1v, MS 307, MNHN: “Je vous prie donc, Monsieur, de vouloir bien employer l’amitié que vous nous avez témoignée, à rappeler [sic] à M. de Pouget, qu’on doit nous fournir à Brest, des magasins [sic] du Roi, non seulement des médicamens [sic], mais encore du papier, du liège [sic], et du fer blanc, et autres choses semblables, mais qu’on ne peut rien nous livrer tant que les ordres du ministre ne seront pas arrivés.”

71 Pierre-Rémy-François Willemet, Brest, to André Thouin, November 5, 1788, fol. 1v, MS 307, MNHN: “Je vous prie donc d’employer toute votre crédit, pour nous faire servir avec promptitude.”

72 André Thouin, Paris, to Pouget [?], November 12, 1788, MS 307, MNHN.

73 Pierre Mulot and Guillaume Lührman, Brest, to André Thouin [received October 30, 1788], postscript from Guillaume Lührman, fol. 2r, MS 307, MNHN: “Monsieur jan [sic] Thouin je un gras [grace?] a vous demandé [sic] que je obliés [i.e., oublié?][.] S’il [?] vous vudrie [i.e., voudrez?] avoirre [sic] la bontes de prandre [sic] un garSon jardinier lequel que je deja demande a monsieur jan Thoin [sic] Qui demeure che[z] Monsieur le Marquis d’Conflan. Monsieur M. Zimmerman garson jardinier.”

74 R. C. Barrault, Île de France, to André Thouin, April 7, 1789, fol. 1v, MS 307, MNHN; and André Thouin, Paris, to R. C. Barrault, October 27, 1789, f. 1v, MS 307, MNHN.

75 André Thouin, Paris, to Pierre-Rémy-François Willemet, November 27, 1789, MS 307, MNHN: “Depuis votre départ vous nous avons donné aucun signe de vie et Si les Jardiniers et votre ami M. Barrault ne nous avoient écrit [*sic*] que vous portiez bien nous vous croirions mort, cela n'est pas bien de l'aïsser [*sic*] ainsi vos amis dans l'inquietude [*sic*], réparez au plus tôt je vous prie.”

76 Willemet did apparently correspond with other French botanists. These included Aubin-Louis Millin, who noted in his *éloge* for Willemet that the doctor had sent him a catalog itemizing plants Willemet had collected for him from the Cape of Good Hope. The plants themselves, unfortunately, did not reach France. Aubin-Louis Millin, “Notice sur Rémi Willemet,” *Actes de la Société d'Histoire Naturelle de Paris* 1 (1792): 129.

77 Spary, *Utopia's Garden*, 67–68.