The final journey for slaves from Cartagena to Lima was characterised by numerous variations in their diet and living conditions. The foods fed to slaves differed markedly on different stretches of the journey reflecting local environmental conditions, traditional agricultural practices, as well as the availability of labour, the demand for provisions and the spread of European and African crops and livestock. While these affected the price of foods and hence those that were fed to slaves, slave traders did not always select the cheapest foods available since inadequate diets would lead to poor health, increase mortality and reduce profits. On the journey from Cartagena in 1633 the cost of maintenance for one slave, which included food, clothing, lodging and medical treatment from the time of purchase in Cartagena to arrival in Lima, was calculated at about 17 pesos 4 reals.¹ (Table 6.1). This was about one-third of the total cost of transhipment, which averaged between 50 and 60 pesos per slave; transport and taxes accounted for the rest. About this time slaves were being purchased in Cartagena for an average of between 270 and 310 pesos and could be sold in Lima for between 580 or 600 pesos. Since a good profit could be made on each slave, it was in the slave traders’ interest to maintain the health of slaves and not economise excessively on expenditure on food. Slave traders therefore continued to purchase foods, such as pork and chickens that they regarded as healthier, even though they were more expensive, and also to provide them with foods in a form with which they were familiar. To put these changes in context and explore the conditions experienced by slaves more generally, the analysis will follow their journey through Panama to the coast of Peru and finally to Lima.

¹ AGNL SO CO Ca 18 doc 197 p. 715 Upper Guinea accounts 1613–1618; AGNL SO CO ca. 20 doc 201 Money owed by Juan de la Cueva for the purchase and upkeep of slaves 1633; AGNL SO CO ca. 20 doc 201 Slaves purchased (August–December, 1629). See also: AGNL SO CO Ca 18 doc 197 p. 210 expenses generated by 4–5 slaves belonging to Antonio Rodriguez de Acosta (1622) and p. 214 Expenses generated by 4 slaves belonging to Diego de Ovalle [1623].
The journey from Cartagena to Portobello on the Caribbean coast of Panama took nine to ten days. Due to its vulnerability to pirate attack and its reputation for being unhealthy, Portobello was only occupied for brief periods of the year when the Spanish fleets arrived to exchange European manufactures for Peruvian silver. The fair generally lasted fifteen days and was held in late July and early

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3 There are numerous accounts of the unhealthiness of Portobello from the time it was founded. See for example, AGI Panamá 32 N26 La ciudad de San Phelipe de Puertobelo 1603, Panamá 32 N175 Tesorero Baltasar Pérez Bernal 4 Nov. 1603, Panamá 45 N49 Alcalde Mayor, Don Bernardo de Vargas 3 Jun. 1603, Panamá 64B N4 doc 1 Información de los méritos. Don Gonzalo Mendina Lisón 1629.