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Slavery and Post Slavery in the Indian Ocean World.

Alessandro Stanziani

2. Summary (150-300 words).

Unlike the Atlantic, slavery and slave trade in the Indian Ocean lasted over a very long term – since the 8th century at least down to our days- involved many actors which cannot be resumed to the tensions between the “West and the rest”. Multiple forms of bondage, debt dependence, and slavery persisted and coexisted. This chapter follows the emergence and evolution of slavery and forms of bondage in the Indian Ocean World in pre-colonial, then colonial and post-colonial time. Routes, social origins, labor and other activities, and forms of emancipation will be detailed.

3 Keywords (5-10)

Debt bondage; servitude; caste; legal statute; domestic slavery; women; children; recruitment, abolitionism; indentured labor; runaways.

4 Essay: Slavery and bondage in the IOW (5000-8000 words)

The Indian Ocean World is a vast region running, from Africa to the Far East in its wider interpretation, from Africa to India in a more narrow identification. In the following pages, we will focus mostly on the western Indian Ocean without forgetting to introduce, when necessary, the area extending from Eastern India to China and Japan.

Pre-colonial slave trade and slavery

Slavery was not introduced in the Indian Ocean by the European colonial powers, but it was transformed by them, although in a completely different manner than in the Atlantic. Between 1400 and 1900, 2.5 million slaves were traded by sea along the coast of the Indian Ocean, while about 9 million passed along the trans-Saharan route (3.6 million were exported).¹

Exports of slaves from East Africa rose from 100,000 in the seventeenth century to 400,000 in the eighteenth century and 1,618,000 in the nineteenth century, half of whom were sent

¹ Ralph Austen, “The Nineteenth Century Islamic Slave Trade from East Africa (Swahili and Red Sea Coasts): a Tentative Census,” *Slavery and Abolition*, 9 (1988): 21-44.

overseas and the other half retained on the eastern African coasts.² Well over a million slaves were obtained by the Swahili world alone in the nineteenth century.³

The slave trade in the Indian Ocean involved overland and maritime routes. The main zones of slave exports from Africa to the Indian Ocean were Northeast Africa, East Africa and Southeast Africa. Northeast Africa drew captives from Ethiopia, Somalia and Soudan and exported them to the Red Sea littoral as far as the Persian Gulf, South Asia and eventually Zanzibar. East Africa recruited slaves from the hinterland and extended to the west of Lake Tanganyika; it supplied mainly Zanzibar as well as the Persian Gulf and Southeast Asia. East Central Africa drew upon northern Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe and fed the same markets plus the Comoros, western Madagascar, the Mascarenes and the Seychelles. Southern central Africa, reaching as far as the hinterlands of southern Mozambique and the Zimbabwe plateau, supplied labor to the Cape, western India and the Mascarenes. Madagascar was an early source of slaves for the Cape and one of the principal suppliers for the Mascarenes.

Slavery went far beyond chattel slavery and the plantation economy, which were significant in the Mascarenes and along the Swahili coast, but cannot be taken as representative of the multiple forms of bondage across the IOW over the long term. Debt bondage and other forms of servitude were extremely widespread.⁴ Enslavement for indebtedness was involuntary, whereas most people entered debt bondage voluntarily as a credit-securing strategy. Mortgaging a child, or wife, to raise a loan was common practice in the IOW, with the man often using “adultery” committed by his wife or concubine as a pretext. Slavery also expressed in local forms of bondage, such as developed in Imerina (Madagascar) in the late eighteenth century.

Nevertheless, the greatest supply of slaves and other forms of servile labor in the IOW over the *longue durée* was probably more a result of non-violent, local, even intimate forces. Some people were sold into slavery by their families or larger kinship groups. Some voluntarily entered slavery; for example, certain Filipino girls chose to become concubines of high status Sulu males.⁵ Possibly the majority of people enslaved through non-violent means

² Paul Lovejoy, *Transformations of Slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000): 61-62, 155-158.

³ Richard Allen, “Satisfying the Want for Laboring People: European Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean, 1500-1850”, *Journal of World History*, 21, 1 (2010): 45-73.

⁴ Gwyn Campbell, Alessandro Stanziani, *Debt and Bondage in the Indian Ocean World* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2013).

⁵ James Francis Warren, *The Sulu Zone 1768-1898. The Dynamics of External Trade, Slavery, and Ethnicity in*

in the IOW did so as a result of debt. Traditionally, enslavement was legally enforced for debtors and their relatives in many IOW regions. In Imperial Madagascar, for instance, creditors could through the application of law enslave a debtor, his wife and children.⁶ This was also the customary practice in Thailand and Malaya.⁷

In addition, the punishment for certain crimes was exacted in fines, which often led to indebtedness and subsequent enslavement.⁸ If the debt was paid off, an enslaved debtor could regain non-slave status. In the same vein, in the nineteenth-century Sulu Sultanate, acts of sexual impropriety, notably adultery, were punished by fines so heavy that many of those convicted became so indebted that they entered debt bondage - which could become permanent.⁹ Although those falling into debt were overwhelmingly adult males, the majority of those enslaved as a result of male indebtedness were, generally by choice of the male debtor, women and children. This was because they were often both the most vulnerable members of a household, extended family or community and the most in demand as slaves.

If the debt was paid off, an enslaved debtor could regain non-slave status. Here, slavery needs to be distinguished from debt bondage with which however, it could overlap. Enslavement for indebtedness was involuntary, whereas most people entered debt bondage voluntarily as a credit securing strategy. Mortgaging a child, or wife, to raise a loan was common practice in the IOW from early times, and in was practiced into the twentieth century. A pretext the man often used was “adultery” committed by his wife or concubine. Certainly by the nineteenth century, debt bondage embraced a vast range of people in the IOW, from farmers mortgaging future harvests and potential grooms borrowing a bride price, to small traders living off credit from larger merchants, the ubiquitous rural gambler of Southeast and East Asia and opium addicts in nineteenth-century China.¹⁰ During catastrophes, people often entered debt bondage

the Transformation of a Southeast Asian Maritime State (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1981)

⁶ Gwyn Campbell, *An Economic History of Imperial Madagascar, 1750-1895: The Rise and Fall of an Island Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005):295-296.

⁷ Bruno Lasker, *Human Bondage in Southeast Asia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1950): 147, 150.

⁸ Anthony Reid, ‘Introduction’ in idem ed., *Slavery, Bondage and Dependency in Southeast Asia* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1983):10.

⁹ Warren, *The Sulu Zone*: 216.

¹⁰ Claude Chevalyere, “Acting as Master and Bonservant. Considerations on Status, Identites, and the Nature of ‘Bondservitude’ in Late Ming China”, In Alessandro Stanziani, ed, *Labour, Coercion and Economic Growth*

or slavery in return for subsistence as a survival strategy, either voluntarily, as was the case of many *dvija* caste members in India, or propelled by their kin group.¹¹ They did so whether they lived in regions of relatively low population density, such as Cambodia, Laos and Indonesia, the Middle East and Africa, or of relatively high population density, such as Bengal, Vietnam, Korea, South China and Japan. Moreover, most victims appear to have been pushed into debt bondage as children—in early twentieth century Thailand they were rarely aged over ten years.

Bondspeople could sometimes be exchanged, as could other servile people as part of a marriage dowry or a monastery donation. The servitude to which those in debt bondage were subject was generally taken as paying off interest on the loan they had contracted, to which was added the cost of lodging, feeding and clothing the debtor. Consequently the debt in most cases increased and servitude could become permanent, even hereditary, at which point there was little to distinguish debt bondage from slavery. Indeed, in nineteenth-century Thailand, where up to 50 percent of the population of the central provinces were trapped in debt bondage, if the interest owed by a debt bondsman grew to a level exceeding the original loan, the master deemed him a bad investment and customarily sold the him—albeit on unfavorable terms.¹²

Here, however, a distinction needs to be drawn between Muslim and non-Muslim societies. This is of immense significance in the IOW where, between the seventh and thirteenth centuries Islam spread from its Middle Eastern heartland (*Dar al-Islam*), southwards down the east African littoral, and eastwards through South to Southeast Asia. As, according to the *Sharia*, freeborn people could legally neither be pawned nor enslaved for debt, this generally also held true in practice in the Islamic heartland of the Middle East.¹³ However, the distinction between indebtedness, debt-bondage and slavery was often blurred

in Eurasia, 17th-20th Centuries (Leiden: Brill, 2010): 237-272.

¹¹ Martin A. Klein, “Introduction: Modern European Expansion and Traditional Servitude in Africa and Asia”, in idem ed, *Breaking the Chains. Slavery, Bondage and Emancipation in Modern Africa and Asia* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993):11; Utsa Patnaik and Manjari Dingwaney eds., *Chains of Servitude, bondage and slavery in India* (Hyderabad: Sangam Books, 1985): 25-26.

¹² Lasker, *Human Bondage in Southeast Asia*:151.

¹³ Ehud Toledano, *The Ottoman Slave Trade and its Suppression, 1840-1890* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).

due to generalized and growing indebtedness of people in an increasing connected space across the Indian ocean world, irrespective of either their religious or political affiliations.¹⁴

Pre-colonial slavery in South Asia

War and debt were the two most common sources of enslavement and bondage in pre-colonial India. War captives were mostly outsiders, whereas debt slaves were insiders as their masters tended to be local patrons, chiefs, moneylenders or tax farmers. The presence of slaves in India has been certified since the fourteenth century at least, with the rise of the post-nomadic states, but it probably existed much earlier. Slaves originally came from regions in India, East Africa, Southeast Asia and Central Asia. Slavery was linked to political instability, particularly along the Muslim-Hindu frontier, beginning with the kingdom of Mahmud of Ghazni (1000-1025), then with the Delhi Sultanate (1206-1526) and the Mughal empire (1526-1857). Men captured in raids were redeployed as slave soldiers in the armies of the Sultanates of Delhi and Bijapur. Military slavery was widespread and recruitment reached as far as East Africa. The Habshis in the Deccan were of African origin (Ethiopia, Somalia, Nubian Desert and Tanzania) and were imported from the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries. They were originally slaves – sometimes mercenaries – but they were mostly freed and could rise into the nobility.¹⁵ They were well known as sailors, while Habshi women were commonly found in Indo-Islamic harems. In the Deccan Plateau, the Habshis were no longer distinguished from the Zanjis, the name formerly used to denote the people of the east coast of Africa and Zanzibar.¹⁶ Slave markets were commonplace in many other parts of India. There were 12,000 slaves at the court of Muhammad bin Tughluq and another 180,000 under Firuz Shah Tughluq. In the Bahmani Empire, there were 60,000-70,000 captives from Vijayanagara, mostly women.¹⁷

The Mughals did not use slave soldiers to conquer India and even tried to limit the extent of slavery. In particular, they managed to reduce economic slavery, the rationale being that, unlike slaves, peasants were taxpayers. At the same time, Mughal rulers actively participated in Central Asian trade and slave trading. They deported rebels and revenue defaulters and exchanged them for horses. Domestic slavery also flourished under the Mughals, as it did in

¹⁴ George Hourani, *Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Medieval Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951); Thomas Vernet, “Le commerce des esclaves sur la côte swahili, 1500–1750,” *Azania* 38 (2003) : 69–97.

¹⁵ S. Sadiq Ali, *The African Dispersal in the Deccan* (New Delhi, 1996); André Wink, *Al-Hind. The Making of the Indo-Islamic World* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), vol 3: 146.

¹⁶ Richard Eaton, “The Rise and Fall of Military Slavery in Deccan, 1450-1650”, in Chatterjee and Eaton, *Slavery and South Asian History*: 115-135.

¹⁷ Wink, *Al-Hind*, 3: 164.

the contemporary Rajput and Maratha states. The latter did not use military slaves, but male and female war captives served in state-controlled forts, working in agriculture, preparing gunpowder and breeding horses and elephants.¹⁸ Under the Marathas, debt (to the state and/or other creditors) often resulted in enslavement; sexual immorality was also a cause for enslavement. In general, children of female domestics were considered family property.¹⁹

Debt bondage and other forms of servitude were extremely widespread. When disaster struck, people often entered debt bondage or slavery as a survival strategy in return for subsistence, either voluntarily, as was the case of many *dvija* caste members in India, or driven out by their kin group. Those subject to debt bondage sometimes outnumbered slaves.

The Nawabs (Muslim rulers) of the Carnatic region also acquired most of their slaves from local markets where people sold members of their own families in the hope they might escape starvation.²⁰ In eighteenth-century Maharashtra, famine-induced poverty forced many peasants to sell their children, presumably to more prosperous households.²¹

In Bihar, *kamias* were a kind of servant of landlords, who became unfree laborers and slaves under the British. Forms of bondage were also widely found in Gujarat, especially as a consequence of advances for marriages. A *dubla* (a landless laborer) accepted an advance from a higher caste landowner and became a *hali*, committing himself and his family to work for the master for a whole year. Further advances on grain and reduced periods of activity increased the debt.²²

Hindu as well as Muslim families made use of domestic slaves for both household and agricultural labor. They were locally acquired, through kidnapping, debt bondage or marriage to slaves. Males could accompany their masters in military campaigns, while females provided sexual services. In Rajput households, slave women could also rise to prominence. They were allowed to accumulate property in the form of land, cattle, and slaves, but their position remained unstable.

In Hindu areas, caste origin played a role. To be sure, caste was not the ideal system described

¹⁸ Cases collected, translated and presented in: G.C. Vad, ed, *Selection from the Satara Raja and Peshwas' Diaries*, 9 parts (Pune: Deccan Vernacular Translation Society, 1902-11); Govind Sardesai, ed *Selections from the Peshwa Daftar*, 46 volumes (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1931-35).

¹⁹ Sumit Guha, "Slavery, Society and the State in Western India, 1700-1800", in Chatterjee and Eaton, *Slavery and South Asian History*: 162-186.

²⁰ Sylvia Vatuk, "Bharattee's Death: Domestic Slave-Women in Nineteenth-Century Madras", in Chatterjee and Eaton, *Slavery and South Asian History*: 210-233.

²¹ State Records Department, *Historical Selections From Baroda State Records*, 5 volumes (Baroda: State Press, 1934-6), in particular vol. 3.

²² Jan Breman, *Labor Bondage in West India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

in British reports, which tended to identify slavery with low castes and translate various forms of dependency into European terms (slaves, serfs). In reality, slaves kept their caste identity and masters deliberately identified and publicized their slaves' castes. In fact, there was not only a continuum of conditions between the free and the unfree, but rituals and caste also influenced the process of enslavement and emancipation.²³ The caste system restricted social mobility, but its rigidity should not be exaggerated. The system evolved over time and new castes emerged while other declined. Caste was correlated with occupation, but not exclusively, and the same was true for the relationship between caste and servile status. Lower castes were more likely to be found in certain forms of extreme dependency and bondage, but not necessarily slavery. And in contrast to European accounts and perceptions, slaves did not always come from lower castes.²⁴ Sometimes, in the case of prisoners of war and concubines, for example, caste did not enter into the process of enslavement. Contrary to colonial descriptions and conventional historiographies up to today,²⁵ the caste system was relatively flexible and indeed gradually changed through interaction with the social and economic environment.²⁶ That does not mean it is of no importance for our understanding of Indian slavery: it was certainly a factor, along with many other variables, including economic ones. Yet, while caste identity tended to remain stable across time, slave status did not. Most slaves did not remain locked into slavery for a lifetime. Military slavery was not conceived as a status but as a specific career and origin, and therefore a particular relationship with the master. Slaves were integrated into the households of their masters. In the Maratha kingdom, slaves could inherit land, while others obtained manumission by purchasing a slave to be their substitute at the master's property.²⁷

Slavery under Western expansion

Thus, slavery in the IOW preceded the arrival of the European powers, but the latter profoundly shaped and reinforced it. The Portuguese increased the demand for agricultural labor, but it was essentially the expansion of the plantation economy in the Mascarenes and along the Swahili coast that augmented the slave trade in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. The last third of the eighteenth century onwards was a period during which the slave trade played an important role in the economic history of East Africa. The social

²³ Dick Kooiman, "Conversion from Slavery to Plantation Labor: Christian Mission in South India, nineteenth century", *Social Scientist*, 19, 8/9 (1991): 57-71.

²⁴ Susan Bayly, *Caste, Society, and Politics in India, from the Eighteenth century to the Modern Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

²⁵ Howard Temperley, *British Antislavery, 1833-1870* (London: Longman, 1972).

²⁶ Indrani Chatterjee, *Gender, Slavery, and Law in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999).

²⁷ *Selection from the Satara Raja*, in particular pt. 2, vol. 2.

transformation of Oman into a mercantile state and the expansion of slave-based production starting in around 1700 created a demand for agricultural slaves. Thus the Omanis built up their power in the western Indian Ocean by founding colonies in Zanzibar and Kilwa. Traditional imports of domestic slaves to Arabia added to the increasing slave trade between inland Africa and the Omani plantations along its East Coast.²⁸ The combined population of the Hijazy cities – Mecca, Medina, and their port of Jidda – doubled in the nineteenth century, while Zanzibar’s population grew from 12,000 in 1835 to between 25,000 and 45,000 in 1857.²⁹ In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Europeans exported Indian slaves to their colonies in Southeast Asia, the Mascarene Islands, the Cape and elsewhere. South India saw a lively commerce in slaves, while coastal regions of Bengal (Arakan in particular) were subjected to slave raiding by Europeans and their agents. Slave exports from this area, which numbered only 380 in 1626, rose to 1,046 in 1647 and 1,803 in 1656. During the same period, slave exports from Coromandel jumped from about 2,000 per year in 1622 and 1645 to 8,000-10,000 in 1659-61.³⁰ Between 1670 and the late eighteenth century, a total of 24,000 Indian slaves were exported to the Mascarene Islands.³¹

The French adopted similar practices. In 1766, just before the fall of Pondicherry, the French East India Company had approximately 1,500 French sailors and 2,000 “lascars” (sailors from Southeast Asia, India, Malaysia and China) on site. The latter were enrolled under extremely unfavorable circumstances;³² according to some commentators, the conditions were comparable to slavery, with the lascars subjected to corporal punishments, placed in irons and put to work in situations similar to those found in penal colonies.³³

In many activities, labor supply was a crucial concern for both the British and local powers. In the 1790s, the struggle between the EIC and Mysore, for example, considerably reduced the productive capacity and available labor force in Andhra Pradesh. Indeed, both the British and local powers made use of slaves and forced labor and competed with each other for manpower. European colonial regimes facilitated the growth of indebtedness by imposing

²⁸ Edmond B. Martin, T.C. Ryan, “A Quantitative Assessment of the Arab Slave Trade of East Africa, 1770-1896,” *Kenya Historical Review*, 5, 1 (1977): 71-91.

²⁹ William Ochsenwald, *Religion, Society, and the State in Arabia: the Hijaz under the Ottoman Control* (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 1984).

³⁰ Markus Wink, “The World’s Oldest Trade. Dutch Slavery and Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean in the Seventeenth Century,” *Journal of World History*, 14, 2 (2003): 131-177.

³¹ Richard Allen, “Carrying away the Unfortunate: the Exportation of Slaves from India during the late Eighteenth Century,” in Jacques Weber, ed, *Le monde créole: peuplement, sociétés et condition humaine, XVIe-XXe siècles* (Paris: 2005): 285-298.

³² Archives de la Marine, Lorient, 1P 70 “Rôle général des gens de marine qu’il y a eu à Pondichéry et autres comptoirs (1745-1751)”.

³³ Archives de la Marine, Rochefort, série 2 O, “Maison marine d’arrêt de Rochefort”; Archives de la Marine, Brest, sous-série 2O.

monetary taxes, promoting commercialization and enforcing credit contracts. Thus, the abundance of low caste laborers without land rights did not prevent periodic labor scarcities. In South India five million slaves were employed in rice cultivation.³⁴ British reports noted the trafficking of Nepalese laborers as well as children from Assam to Bengal.³⁵ Famine and child slavery were also reported in Bengal.³⁶

Both the French and the British relied unofficially on Gujarat and Portuguese slave-traders. Gujarat merchants were deeply involved in the slave trade from Mozambique; slaves were imported via the Portuguese enclaves of Goa, Daman and Dui and then re-exported into the hinterland, into the homes of the Hindu or Muslim nobility. These imports accounted for about 200-300 slaves per year between 1770 and 1834.³⁷ However, unlike their Atlantic counterparts, the British and the French could not simply play their ambivalent game concerning slavery without taking local powers into account. This was due to the persistent strength of those powers, but also to the need for slaves in the colonies. As a consequence, Indian powers such as the Marathas in the West, the Nayakas in the South and the Mughals opposed enslavement by Europeans.³⁸ The movements of British officials and occupying armies in the early colonial era widened the demand for this type of forced labor. To meet the demand, some British officials reinvented what they called “tradition.” The status of slavery was distinct from that of forced labor. The Arabic loanword *ghulam* was the common term for male slaves. Several words were used to designate slave women: *dasi*, *batik*, *kunbini*. Some Maratha documents referred to a daughter (*muli*) and a slave-woman (*batik*) interchangeably. Robbery, tax arrears or fines were the main sources of enslavement. Internal boundaries, such as the frontier of the Nizam’s territories, Mysore and the southern Maratha appanages, provided sites for large slave markets.³⁹

In Mauritius, the slave population had already developed under the French rule, rising from 648 in 1721 to 63,281 in 1807. The great majority were imported from Madagascar and the trading post along the Mozambican and Swahili coast.⁴⁰ 160,000 slaves reached Mauritius

³⁴ Francis Buchanan, *A Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar* (London: Cadell and Davies, 1807).

³⁵ BL IOR F/4/369 several files, among which 9221 ; also F/4/1034, n. 28499.

³⁶ BL IOR P/50/60.

³⁷ Pedro Machado, “A forgotten Corner of the Indian Ocean: Gujarati Merchants, Portuguese Indian and the Mozambique Slave Trade, c. 1730-1830”, in Campbell, *The Structure of Slavery*: 17-36.

³⁸ At the turn of the nineteenth century, many documents were compiled: G.C.Vad, editor, *Selection from the Satara Raja and Peshwas Dairies*, 9 parts (Pune: Deccan vernacular Translation Society, 1902-11); also Govind Sardesai, ed, *Selection from the Peshwa Daftar*, 46 vols (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1935).

³⁹ *Selection from the Satara Raja and Peshwasi*.

⁴⁰ Richard Allen, *Slaves, Freedmen and Indentured Laborers in Colonial Mauritius* (New York: Cambridge

and Reunion between 1670 and 1810, 45 percent of whom came from Madagascar, 40 percent from Mozambique and East Africa, 13 percent from India and 2 percent from West Africa.⁴¹

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, about 200,000 slaves were imported to the Reunion Island, mostly from Madagascar and East Africa. Indians were also present: in 1708, the total count of adult slaves was 268, 197 men and 71 women; 20 percent of the men and 36 percent of the women were Indians. A century later, they comprised about 3 percent of 54,000 slaves. In all, about 160,000 slaves are estimated to have been imported to the Mascarene Islands prior to 1810:⁴² 45 percent were from Madagascar, 40 percent from Mozambique and the African coast, 3 percent from India and 2 percent from West Africa. The East India Company controlled this traffic until 1769 and imported 45,000 slaves; then, French merchants took the lead. They established networks with the Omanis as well as with other merchants along the East African coast.⁴³

Maroons were more numerous than in other French colonies. As a percentage of the slave population, they accounted for about 6.6 percent in 1740, 4.7 percent in 1824, and 6.24 percent five years later, whereas in Guadeloupe they seldom made up more than 1.5 percent.⁴⁴ Almost 80 percent of them were Malagasy.

Since the end of the seventeenth century, mixed marriages were extremely common: 67 percent in 1690. The Royal Declaration of 1698 acknowledged children of mixed couples as French if they were baptized. This encouraged the rate of manumission, relatively high on Reunion Island, in particular in the presence of kinship and family relationships between the master and the slave. As a result, unlike the American colonies, in Reunion freed colored people were not counted until 1767 when most *métis* were classified as white. Here, because of the long tradition of mixed marriages, a person's social condition seemed to be more important than the color of his or her skin. Recently Richard Allen and others have corrected these figures upwards. French traders exported 24,000 Indian slaves to Mauritius and Reunion between the seventeenth century and 1830, with 75 percent of those exports occurring between 1770 and 1793.⁴⁵

University Press, 1999): 14.

⁴¹ Jean-Marie Filliot, *La traite des esclaves vers les Mascaraignes au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Orstom 1974): 96.

⁴² Fillot, *La traite*: 54-69. Edward Alpers, "The French slave trade in East Africa 1721-1810," *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 10,37 (1970): 80-124

⁴³ Abdul Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory in Zanzibar* (London: James Currey, Nairobi, Heinemann Kenya, Dar es salaam, Tanzania publishing house, Athens, Ohio University Press, 1987).

⁴⁴ Régent, *La France et ses esclaves* : 163.

⁴⁵ Richard Allen, « Slaves, Convicts, Abolitionism and the Global Origin of post-Emancipation Indentured Labor System », *Slavery and Abolition*, 35, 2 (2014) : 328-348.

Abolitionism

In the French Empire, after 1789, in Reunion Island as well as in the Antilles, clashes intensified between freed colored people and whites. In Mauritius, the freed colored won the right to vote – but not to be elected – in 1790. This was not the case in Reunion Island, where they were radically excluded. After the abolition of slavery in 1794, a backlash developed in Reunion Island when representatives from Paris arrived in 1796 to implement the rule. They failed and the French colonies in the Mascarenes were excluded from the general abolition of slavery. Instead, to prevent an eventual insurrection, local elites in Mauritius proposed a plan to gradually abolish slavery within thirty years. Manumissions increased during these years, but in 1800, the central authorities in Paris suspended them in both Mauritius and Reunion Island. In 1802 in Reunion and the following year in Mauritius, mixed marriages were made extremely difficult and even forbidden (in Mauritius).

France reintroduced slavery in 1802; nevertheless, under pressure from the British ban on the slave trade, certain French slave importations assumed the form of contracts of *engagement*. In this manner, an estimated 45,000 illicit slaves were imported to Reunion Island between 1817 and 1835.⁴⁶ Taking into account official censuses and disguised importations, between 48,900 and 66,400 slaves are believed to have arrived in Reunion between 1811 and 1848. A total of about 300,000 slaves were imported to the Mascarene archipelago between the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century. Unlike the eighteenth century, this time East Africa and Mozambique were the main source of supply (60 percent), with the rest coming from Madagascar (31 percent) and the countries of southern Asia (9 percent). However, Reunion Island and Mauritius were not alone in illicit trafficking of slaves. To prevent the French from circumventing the ban, in 1820 the British signed a treaty with the Merina King offering a subsidy of 20,000 dollars per annum in return for prohibiting the export slave trade. Unfortunately, this treaty boosted the slave trade: the French found new suppliers and imported first slaves and then contract laborers from Comoros, Mozambique and Madagascar. The Merina kingdom itself expanded and increased its imports of slaves.

⁴⁶ Monica Schuler, “The Recruitment of African Indentured Laborers for European Colonies in the Nineteenth Century”, in Pieter Emmer, ed, *Colonialism and Migration: Indentured Labor before and after Slavery* (Dordrecht, Boston, Lancaster: Martinus Nijhoff, 1986):125-161; Hubert Gerbeau, “Quelques aspects de la traite illégale des esclaves à Bourbon au XIXe siècle”, *Mouvements de populations dans l’Océan indien* (Paris: Imprimerie Champion, 1979).

Between 1820 and 1833, the population of Antanarivo rose from 10,000 to 50,000, two-thirds of whom were slaves.⁴⁷

Meanwhile, the migration of millions of Chinese male laborers to IOW centers such as Singapore led to a huge demand for females for sexual purposes that was met by a traffic in mostly involuntary prostitutes notably from impoverished rural communities in Japan and China. Large concentrations of soldiers led to a similar demand. While the intermediaries were often women, frequently ex-prostitutes, who generally hoodwinked parents and girls into thinking that they would be offered a legitimate job in a distant city, European authorities, eager to minimize tension amongst males on work sites and in army camps, often colluded in the trade. In many cases, “advances” were given to the girl’s parents, the capital and interest on which, along with the cost of travel, lodging, clothing, and food, were deducted from the girl’s earnings from male clients-to the extent that she was often permanently in debt.⁴⁸

Since the abolition of the slave trade in 1807, the British became increasingly involved in rescuing fugitives and illegally traded Africans. The Privy Council issued regulations for putting such liberated Africans under the care of others. They were either placed as servants or recruited into Britain’s colonial regiments or the African corps of the British Navy. The anti-slave trade squadrons of Britain, the United States and France diverted an estimated 160,000 Africans from the slave trade between 1810 and 1864. Since these captured Africans could not be returned to their homelands, they were deposited at various convenient islands or coastal stations in the Atlantic, the Caribbean, and the Indian Oceans.

Westerners involved in redeeming slaves frequently passed the cost of redemption on to the “liberated” slave, whom they subsequently considered indebted to them. Consequently, the liberated slave was obliged to work off the cost of the ransom and passage to a place of refuge – in the process often becoming further indebted to the new “master.” In some cases, such procedures were adopted by private traders, such as William Wyndham, who incorporated many ransomed slaves into his own private workforce. Similar practices were used for slaves who escaped to Spanish warships or otherwise sought refuge in Spanish-held ports in the Sulu Archipelago. The practices of British anti-slave trade naval patrols that landed “Prize

⁴⁷ Gwyn Campbell, “Madagascar and the Slave Trade, 1810-1895”, *Journal of African History* 22, 2 (1981): 203-227.

⁴⁸ Maria Jaschok and Suzanne Miers, ‘Women in the Chinese Patriarchal System: Submission, Servitude, Escape and Collusion’ in idem (eds.), *Women and Chinese Patriarchy. Submission, Servitude and Escape* (London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1994):19-20.

Negroes” – African human cargoes aboard captured slaving ships – at British-controlled ports in the western IOW were equally subject to criticism. For example, over 2,000 were landed at Cape Town in the decade 1806-1816. Prize Negroes were treated as “confiscated” property and transferred to the British government. As such they were put at the disposal of local British officials who took some to serve in the military, but allotted most to serve the private manpower needs of prominent local whites as indentured labor.⁴⁹ Prize Negroes granted to Mauritian planters were “leased” back to the government for four days a year to perform public works.⁵⁰

The abolition of slavery in India

In India, the British also translated the debt practices we mentioned earlier – *kamias* in Bihar and *dublas* and *halis* in Gujarat – into their own terms of debt bondage linked to economic transactions. They considered debtors slaves outside the community; in reality, the opposite was true: debt relationships were a way of including people in the local community.⁵¹ The debate therefore centered on whether the debtor had voluntarily entered into servitude or not: in the first case, it was acceptable, while in the second, when violence and lack of free will according to the British legal definition could be proven, it was not. Patronage was turned into an economic relationship.⁵² Advances for marriage, consumption and seeding were the principal means available to patrons to enter peasants into debt bondage. Unlike Bihar, in southern Gujarat, the British authorities did not insist on the need to abolish these extreme forms of debt bondage. Although the British memoranda from 1835-1836 called these relationships hereditary bondage, many other officials described them as voluntary servitude. Indeed the classification of local forms of slavery was crucial. Colonial officials made arbitrary distinctions between agricultural slavery, domestic slavery and prostitution.⁵³ Child slavery was strongly condemned⁵⁴ while domestic slavery was clearly opposed to plantation slavery and considered a form of mild dependency; in turn agricultural slavery was related to the caste system, and thus to religion.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ Nigel Worden, Elizabeth van Heyningen and Vivian Bickford-Smith, *Cape Town. The Making of a City* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2004):109.

⁵⁰ Clare Anderson, *Subaltern Lives: Biographies of Colonialism in the Indian Ocean World, 1790-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

⁵¹ Campbell, Stanziani, *Debt and bondage*.

⁵² Breman, *Labor Bondage*.

⁵³ Harald Fischer-Tiné, Michael Mann, eds, *Colonialism as Civilizing Mission. Cultural Ideology in British India* (London: Wimbledom Company, 2004).

⁵⁴ BL IOR P/50/60.

⁵⁵ British Parliamentary Papers, Slavery in India 1828 (125).

As early as 1812, the question was raised as to whether the prohibition against the slave trade in the Bengal, Madras and Bombay presidencies could be extended to Indian States. In practice, these rules were unevenly enforced, even within British territories.⁵⁶ In fact, a serious debate on slavery in the Indian states did not take place until the early 1830s. The shift came about as a result of increasing evangelical influence in the higher echelons of the EIC and growing pressure from the abolitionist movement in Britain. The British anti-slavery movement claimed it was necessary to expand the abolitionist campaign to India. As before, supporters of local customs and pragmatic colonial elites replied that what existed in India was not real slavery, but merely forms of family dependency and domesticity.⁵⁷ They won the backing of the British planters in India, who insisted their enterprises were fundamentally different from the plantations in the West Indies. Even within the abolitionist movement, many supporters held that bondage in India was different from slavery, either because they genuinely believed it or for tactical reasons, i.e. to put an end to the transatlantic slave trade first. The fact that there was nothing in the subcontinent comparable to the transatlantic slave trade also helped to support this view. In short, the identification of slavery with West Indies plantations, and its opposition to mild slavery on plantations in India, corresponded both to abolitionist beliefs and to EIC interests.⁵⁸ Customs-related interests also played a major role in the debate: the West Indies had won privileged duties through the navigations acts; in the 1820s, those duties came under attack and more favorable duties for East India Company products were advocated by traders and by manufacturers in Britain. This argument encouraged further contrast between harsh slavery in the West Indies and mild slavery in the East Indies. In reaction, West Indies lobbies claimed that slavery had been underestimated in India and was in fact pervasive.⁵⁹ These criticisms were joined to those leveled against the EIC and its economic and political power.

The British sought to encourage the Indian states to adopt antislavery rules. Slave trading was outlawed in Jaipur in 1839 and slave status abolished in 1847. However, in the following years, British officials complained that these acts were rarely enforced. These difficulties reveal the impossibility of assimilating the slave trade and slavery in India to their transatlantic equivalents.⁶⁰ British officials exacerbated the problem: even after the official

⁵⁶ *British Parliamentary Papers*, 1828 (125): 324-7.

⁵⁷ Major, *Abolition of Slavery*.

⁵⁸ Howard Temperley, "The Delegalization of Slavery in British India", *Slavery and Abolition*, 21 (2000): 169-187.

⁵⁹ *British Parliamentary Papers*, 1837-8 (215) 48.

⁶⁰ Indrani Chatterjee, "Abolition by Denial", in Gwyn Campbell (ed), *Abolition and its Aftermath in the Indian Ocean, Africa, and Asia* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), : 150-168.

abolition of slavery in India in 1843, they continued to return runaways to their masters in some areas. Further support came from the Americas, where abolitionists criticized slavery in the South as well as in India and accused Britain of hypocrisy on both sides – in India for tolerating slavery and in the U.S. for financing the slave trade. Local governors and elites espoused quite different views depending on their own definition of slavery. For example, debt bondage was systematically excluded from this category and therefore tolerated.⁶¹ Finally, as in other British dominions, the official abolition of slavery in India was followed by extremely coercive rules regarding vagrants, issued in the name of public order and economic growth as an antidote to poverty.

After emancipation: free vs unfree labor?

In India The abolition of slavery immediately raised the question of which rules were supposed to regulate the labor market. Jobbers found workers, gave them advances and through this system controlled them. Employers could either extend credit and directly control the laborers or leave jobbers in charge of them. Indeed, during much of the nineteenth century, the EIC and after 1858 the British state sought to build infrastructures, notably roads. For this purpose, they made use of compulsory labor, first through local forced recruitment of villagers. However, this proved difficult as local communities and elites resisted recruitment. In the official logic, labor classified as “unpaid” was considered part of the tribute that Hill States were obliged to pay for the protection they received from the colonial government. The British authorities therefore claimed that tribute labor supplied by Hill States was not like *begar*, the presumed customary form of unpaid labor, because the Hill States were expected to give revenue remittances to those working on the roads. While convict labor was predominant in the early decades of the nineteenth century, other forms assumed greater importance later on. On the Western Road in the Madras Presidency, based on a daily average of 1,598 convicts, the total number of convict days peaked at over 40,000 during the rainy month of July. Large numbers of workers from famine-stricken regions were recruited for canal and road building projects in the late nineteenth century. In many areas, public works became synonymous with famine relief. The construction of irrigation works and roads proceeded most rapidly during periods of famine. Starving peasants were paid famine wages to build the public infrastructure that became one of the signs of modern India.⁶² *Begar* on distant roads

⁶¹ Gwyn Campbell, Alessandro Stanziani, eds *Debt and Bondage in the Indian Ocean, eighteenth-21st centuries* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2013).

⁶² On this topic, see Chitra Joshi, “Les travaux publics et la question du travail force en Inde (XIXe-début du

was doubly exacting because workers had no access to subsistence resources from their villages: they had to buy grain at high prices from the market.

In the Indian Ocean as well as in the Atlantic, indentured immigrations did not start with the abolition of slavery, but well before it. Although indentured labor has conventionally been portrayed as a phenomenon that arose in the nineteenth century, it was an old institution in the IOW where it had clear and often overlapping connections to European forms of indentureship and the concept of “servant.”⁶³ There were many intermediaries in India, Mozambique, Madagascar, and West Africa, ranging from local sultans to village chiefs as well as Indian, Arab, and Portuguese middlemen, in addition, of course, to the French and British landowners and traders.⁶⁴ In many cases, contracts were signed by force or fraud; at the same time, many Indians signed up quite voluntarily.⁶⁵ The shortage of African indentured immigrants became more severe with the gradual intrusion of colonial power into Africa and the need for labor. Competition for African indentured emigrants developed not only between the various colonial powers, but also between Europeans and local powers and, ultimately, between colonial elites belonging to different parts of the same empire (conflicts between Indian and Cape Town authorities or between Reunion and Martinique were classic examples). Indeed while Zanzibar, which needed its slaves for clove production, proved of little value as a source of indentured labor, the Sultan’s East African dependencies from Somalia to Mozambique were another matter. British pressures failed to persuade the Sultan to interfere with slave trading. Thus the French bought large contingents of indentured Africans on the coast. At the same time, they needed the cooperation of the Portuguese. Underpaid Portuguese officials in Mozambique ignored the 1836 abolition of slave trading in Portuguese dependencies. Armed caravans led by Portuguese mulatto or Swahili agents moved inland in search of slaves, ivory, rhinoceros horn and malachite, which they sold to French. In the 1850s, Portugal prohibited participation in the French *engagé* traffic, but the governor-general did not take action against it until 1857. And when he did, France reacted violently. The French did not want to be excluded from the Mozambique labor pool, but now they had to face British competitors in Natal. At issue was how far to extend the recruitment

XXe siècle)”, in Alessandro Stanziani ed., *Le travail contraint en Asie et en Europe, XVIIe-XXe siècles* (Paris : Editions MSH, 2010) : 307-326.

⁶³ Alessandro Stanziani, *Seamen, Slaves and Migrants in the Indian Ocean World* (New York: Palgrave, 2014).

⁶⁴ Vijayalakshmi Teelock, *Bitter sugar: sugar and slavery in nineteenth century Mauritius* (Moka: Mahatma Gandhi Institute, 1998).

⁶⁵ Correspondence concerning the Indian immigration to Mauritius in: British Parliamentary Papers, 1840 (331) 37, 1842 (26) 30, 184 (356 and 530) 35, 1846 (691 II) 38. Also TNA CO 167/245, Stanley, 26 July 1843.

frontier into the hinterlands. The scramble for Africa was also an attempt to solve this problem.

Chinese indentured labor partially compensated for the lack of Africans. The rapid growth of Chinese emigration in the nineteenth century was closely related to deteriorating economic and social conditions. Periodic natural disasters, particularly floods and droughts, along with growing political instability drove many to leave home. For example, the Taiping rebellion of 1850-1864 resulted in a large exodus from the lower Yangzi. However, only a small percentage of Chinese migrants went overseas. Massive migration took place from overpopulated southern provinces to the northern frontier.⁶⁶ The vast majority of Chinese migrants came from the southern provinces of Guandong and Fujan. Up to 11 million traveled from China to Singapore and Penang, where more than a third boarded ships bound for the Dutch Indies, Borneo and Burma. Nearly 4 million travelled directly from China to Siam, between 2 and 3 million to French Indochina, over a million directly to the Dutch Indies, less than a million to the Philippines, and half a million to Australia, New Zealand, Hawaii, and other islands in the Pacific and Indian Oceans.⁶⁷ Fewer than three-quarters of a million Chinese migrants signed indentured contracts with European employers. The Chinese financed their voyage with money advanced by families or future employers through a “credit ticket” system. Recruits were delivered to the European firms by Chinese brokers who bypassed Chinese legal prohibitions of indentured emigration. Kidnapping was extremely widespread and conflicts rose between China and major European powers who accused each other of facilitating this trade.

As an integrated local-imperial-global movement, Indian labor thus migrated not only inside India but also to other British colonies in Southeast Asia. Immigrant workers for tea plantations in Ceylon totaled 1.5 million between 1843 and 1938 (8 million according to Adam McKeown), while the number reached 2.6 million for the rice harvest in Burma during the same period (15 million according to McKeown). Between 1844 and 1910, another quarter of a million Indians went to labor in the colonies that became British Malaya. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, total departures from India rose from an average of 300,000 a year to over 425,000, of which the overseas indentured component was less than one-tenth. As a whole, over 29 million Indians moved to Southeast Asia and the Indian

⁶⁶ Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: Norton, 1990): 210.

⁶⁷ Adam McKeown, *Melancholy Order. Asian Migration and the Nationalization of Borders* (New York: NYU Press, 2007).

Ocean between 1840 and 1940. Climatic disasters, political events (the Sepoy rebellion of 1857), and the construction of railroads contributed to these migrations.

Most of the 1.3 million Indian emigrants who ventured overseas were processed through British depots, travelled on British ships, and worked in British colonies. Even those who went to Reunion Island were subject to the terms of agreements between France and Britain. At the end of the eighteenth century, Indian laborers were already a common sight in Southeast Asian ports, Ceylon, and East Africa. As in China, overseas emigration formed part of a much larger movement of people.

Many came from the lower castes and classes, but this was not necessarily the case and middle and upper castes migrated too, as detailed studies on Mauritius and Natal confirm.⁶⁸ However our knowledge of the caste status of overseas migrants is dependent upon the recording of these data by the clerks who prepared the certificates and ships' list. Many of them were unfamiliar with castes' names and tended to simplify them. On the other hand, upper classes tended to disguise their status for several reasons: shame, prohibition from crossing the "black water," and the employers' preference for lower castes supposed to be more productive.⁶⁹

Between the official abolition of slavery in 1834 and 1910, 450,000 indentured servants arrived in Mauritius, mostly from India but also from Madagascar. Two-thirds remained, and as a result, the Indian population grew steadily from 35 percent in 1846 to 66 percent in 1871.⁷⁰ Numerous observers drew attention to the inhuman living conditions of these immigrants.⁷¹ These figures must also be expanded to include other indentured servants from South Asia and Africa: 30,000 in 1851 and twice that number ten years later. Female immigration to Mauritius remained secondary, at least initially, and had to be overseen by the state.⁷² It did not develop rapidly until the mid-nineteenth century, after the abolition of slavery, due to the arrival of new indentured servants who came with their families and the considerable demand for domestic and urban labor as well as more traditional labor on the sugar plantations.

Violence and resistance

⁶⁸ Surendra Bhana, *Indentured Indian Emigrants to Natal, 1860-1902. A Study Based on Ships' List* (New Delhi: Promilla, 1991).

⁶⁹ Marina Carter, *Servants, Sirdars, and Settlers: Indians in Mauritius, 1834-1874* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995).

⁷⁰ Auguste Toussaint, *Histoire de l'île Maurice* (Paris: PUF, 1974).

⁷¹ Colony of Mauritius, annual report, 1854, British Parliamentary Papers 1854, 52 (2050).

⁷² Carter, *Servants, Sirdars, and Settlers*: 3.

In Mauritius island, once they arrived, the immigrants had to cope not only with the coercive attitudes of the planters, but also the hostility of enfranchised former slaves. Some authors think that the slaves were marginalized in Mauritian society,⁷³ while others claim that their status changed to that of small landowners or shopkeepers and they were therefore much better integrated than Indian coolies after the abolition of slavery.⁷⁴ In fact, both scenarios played out; most of the former slaves were of African origin, whereas Indians predominated among indentured immigrants. The two groups sometimes included both ethnic origins: some former slaves were Africans, some were Indians; the *engagés* were usually Indians, but as time went by, African immigration also increased.⁷⁵ Along with ethnic origin, the period of immigration and whether the individual was a former slave were important factors.⁷⁶

In Mauritius, between 1860 and 1870, some 70,000 complaints were filed against immigrants; 80 percent of the cases pertained to unjustified absences or desertion.⁷⁷ For the planters, unjustified absences were a source of even greater apprehension than desertions in the strict sense and generated greater tension with the laborers. From a legal standpoint, any unjustified absence was subject to criminal penalties.⁷⁸ These provisions were strengthened by laws against vagrancy, a phenomenon that increased exponentially between 1850 and 1870.⁷⁹ The laws expressed a combination of concerns about public order – especially the authorities’ determination to know where immigrants were working and residing at all times – and about control over competition from employers seeking to recover other masters’ “runaways.”

Immigrants often complained of ill treatment, wage retention and poor food.⁸⁰ Between 1860 and 1895, non-payment of wages accounted for between 76 percent and 87 percent of complaints, followed by those for insufficient or bad food. There were far fewer denunciations of physical violence, partly due to pressure from the judges and colonial authorities, who emphasized that such occurrences were exceptional, and partly owing to the

⁷³ Sattéeanund Peerthum, “Le système d’apprentissage à Mauritius 1835–1839: plus esclave mais pas encore libre,” in Maestri, *Esclavage* : 285–94; Jocelyne Chan Low, “Aux origines du malaise créole? Les ex-apprentis dans la société mauricienne, 1839–1860,” in Maestri, *Esclavage* : 267–84.

⁷⁴ Allen, *Slaves*.

⁷⁵ MNA RA 1955, 2205.

⁷⁶ MNA RA 862; HA 66.

⁷⁷ MNA RA 1955, Immigration, Police, 2205, Immigration; Colony of Mauritius, *Protector of immigrants*.

⁷⁸ MNA RA 1023, Prisons and law, RA 1459, vagrancy.

⁷⁹ MNA RA 1459.

⁸⁰ British Parliamentary Papers, 1842 (26) 30.

attitudes of the immigrants themselves, who often declared they could put up with physical violence if need be, but not with the loss of their wages.⁸¹

In principle, a laborer became a runaway when he had been absent for more than two weeks. In practice, the time limit was vague; estate owners denounced their desertion well before the limit was up and judges had a hard time distinguishing between absenteeism and vagrancy. According to estimates, in 1845 there were 35,000 cases of Indian desertion (6 percent of the labor force), another 11 percent of absenteeism and 8 percent of illness.⁸² Armed with the new rules adopted during the 1860s, the estate owners increased their complaints, which rose to about 6,000 per year; at the time, between 8 percent and 10 percent of the colony's labor force was described as absent; another 8 percent of laborers were arrested every year as vagrants.⁸³ The indentured laborer became increasingly indebted to the planter. This process started with the necessity, often poorly explained at the time of recruitment, for the laborer to repay the cost of travel to Mauritius.⁸⁴

In Reunion Island, during the 1850s and 1860s, one-third of the indentured immigrants returned home (mostly Indians). This percentage was close to the one in Mauritius, the Caribbean, Surinam, and Jamaica at the time, but it was far from the 70 percent repatriation figure recorded in Thailand, Malaya, and Melanesia. Distance and the cost of transport were only two of the variables affecting repatriation; politics and concrete forms of integration were also important factors.⁸⁵

Conclusion: the end of forced labor and slavery?

Between 1901 and 1915, new forms of recruitment were introduced. Intermediaries were excluded and labor relationships were deregulated. Rising Indian nationalism led to increasing peasant rebellion, in Assam in particular. Official reports took note of the growing unrest, which they often deemed justified by the harsh conditions on the plantation.⁸⁶ Complete bans on slavery in European controlled territories occurred fitfully well into the twentieth century. On the eastern side of the IOW, the French first seriously apply anti-slavery measures in

⁸¹ ANOM FM/ SG REU c380/ d228 ; Gen c149 d1248; MNA RA 1955, 2205.

⁸² ANOM Gen c149 d1248.

⁸³ Colony of Mauritius, Annual Reports, 1860-9, in British Parliamentary Papers.

⁸⁴ British Parliamentary Papers, 1836 (166) 49; 1837-8 (180) 52; 1840 (58) 37; 1847-8 (250) 46; TNA CO 167/201.

⁸⁵ David Northrup, *Indentured Labor in the Age of Imperialism, 1834–1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 129–32.

⁸⁶ BL IOR V/24/1222, 1223.

Indochina in 1897, while the British abolished slavery in Hulsawng valley in eastern Burma only in 1926. Slavery was outlawed in the Netherlands Indies in 1860, but the Dutch then possessed only one quarter of the Indonesian territory that was to pass under their control by 1910 - in much of which they tolerated slavery. In the Middle East, drawn into the British informal empire after the First World War, abolitionist pressure remained muted until the post 1945. Indeed, in the IOW generally, there were few swift and effective abolition measures by European powers.⁸⁷ In 1923 the Geneva based Bureau International pour la Défense des Indigènes sent a petition to the League in which it denounced slavery in Ethiopia, Arabia, Sudan, Tanganyika and the French colonies, while condemning forced labor in South Africa and Mozambique. In 1924 a Temporary Slavery Commission was settled; the final report acknowledged that in the practice the slave trade still persisted in Ethiopia, Aden and possibly China. At the same time, the commission recommended that pawning of a third party should be outlawed everywhere, but self-pledging for a limited period might be allowed. As a consequence, pawnship in Africa was distinguished from peonage in Latin America and the Philippines; the latter was condemned, not the former.

The League of Nations Draft Convention of 1925 directly interested the IOW; in particular, in the Red Sea and the Persian gulf, the British insisted on the necessity to stop and search vessels while the French refused to consider the slave trade at sea as piracy or allow the right to search. In turn, the Portuguese refused to identify forced labor they practices in Mozambique and Angola as a form of slavery. Finally, as the government of India wanted, a signatory could exclude part of its territory from the new obligations. ASI immediately criticized the draft and humanitarian concerns increased doubts by the British government, in particular with reference to Burma and India. Here in some areas slavery was still practiced; this was the case in Naga and Lushai Hills, the Abor Tracts and Assam, not to forget the Baluchi territories, the Chin Hills and Myityina in Burma. Also slave girls from Baluchistan were exported to Sind, while in Bihar and Orissa, the Kamiauti system of agricultural bondage bordered on slavery. The FO supported the principle of non intervention. The same conclusion was reached for South Africa where forced labor for the colonial state was judged legitimate and essentially different from slavery. The convention was ratified in 1926 and it created important problems in maritime control and the abolition of forced labor. The British agreed on the principle of excluding forced labor for private enterprises and local chief while legitimating it for the colonial state. In practice the boundaries between these actors were

⁸⁷ Campbell, 'Servitude and the Changing Face of Demand for Labor.'

difficult to identify, the most common situation being that of several intermediaries, from the chiefs to the state through private companies in the recruitment and exploitation of local labor. Even worse, to meet the British concern about indirect rule, other colonial government agreed on that, they might delegate their authority to recruit forced labor to subordinate authorities. In the Persian Gulf chattel slavery was still extremely widespread in the 1920s and the 1930s. Legal provisions were weak: Bahrain and Kuwait were independent states under British protection, not real protectorates. Qatar and the Trucial states were described by the FO as independently administered tribal principalities. Finally Muscat and Oman were full independent states. Relations were held by the India office which was in charge with the control and suppression of the maritime slave trade. Some were kidnapped locally, but most came across the gulf from Baluchistan to the Batinah coast of Oman where slavery was allowed in accordance with the Muslim law. The British limited to allow manumission certificates to fugitives.

The economic crisis of the 1930 made the things worse. Taxes, tributes, and services demanded to local population reached impossible levels; people were thus conscripted as porters, while their family in the fields increased debt and debt slavery.⁸⁸ In 1935, Italian fascists justified the invasion of the Ethiopia with the necessity to abolish slavery. In practice they did not erase local slavery and enhanced labor services and state forced labor.

Slaves were imported in Saudi Arabia and Yemen from the sea and from the east. A Foreign Office report of 1935 estimated slaves in the gulf at about seventy thousand, of whom forty thousand were in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, the Foreign Office was still cautious in intervening in Saudi internal affairs and, in general, in contesting the Muslim law and practices. Again as in the nineteenth century, local customs were evoked to justify cautious attitudes toward slavery.⁸⁹

The situation was still more complex in the British protectorate of Aden. Reports counted between five and ten thousand slaves; the British sought to reach agreements with local sultans and chiefs; however not all of them accepted and, even so, treaties were not necessarily enforced. The British embarrassment grew bigger for, as many reports proved, slaves were well treated and some of them –military slaves- belonged themselves to the elites.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Suzanne Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century* (Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 2003): 242.

⁸⁹ TNA, FO 371/19969, 14 december 1935.

⁹⁰ TNA, CO 732/78/7980. Reilly to Gore, 1 september 1937.

The Convention signed in 1939 required penal sanctions to be abolished progressively, and immediately only for juveniles and certain offences. Criminal penalties were retained for drunkenness, lack of diligence, lack of duty, desertion, damages to the employer's property, and abusive or insulting language. The convention came into being only in 1948. Egypt and Israel joined the antislavery movement in Britain criticizing this country's affair with Saudi Arabia. The USSR criticized both slavery, oil interest and imperialism. In this context, the powers of the United Nations slavery committee and the official definition of slavery became crucial stakes. The USSR pressured to increase slavery in the declaration of human rights of 1948. The foreign office replied by stating that chattel slavery had disappeared and that other forms of constraint should be carefully qualified. In particular, the British sought to draw attention away from the Aden protectorate and the gulf while focusing on soviet gulag. The USSR counterattacked and qualified the gulag as simple criminal punishment while denouncing colonial forced labor in Africa and Asia. In turn the ILO and the slavery commission of the UN sought to include debt bondage, forced marriage, adoption and serfdom in the general category of slavery. The colonial office insisted that the inclusion of these categories should be gradual in order to be accepted by the involved governments. They feared in particular the gulf, but also Sudan and other African areas.

In this context, maritime patrolling was also a complicate matter, in particular in the Indian Ocean. With the independence of India, the new communist power in China and rising independence movements in south-east Asia and eastern Africa, it was increasingly difficult to Britain to impose maritime controls. Freedom of sea and sovereignty against imperialism was constantly evoked by the USSR as well as by new independent countries.

In the international organizations, peonage, debt bondage, forced marriage and adoption for exploitation entered the definition of slavery. These new items converged in the ILO convention of 1957. At this moment, all the attention was turned to Saudi Arabia and the gulf. While oil acquired increasing importance, Qatar, Bahrein, and Kuwait abolished slavery. The Trucial states and Saudi Arabia resisted. In Oman, Britain struggled to keep puppet sheiks in power, and slavery with them. It was only with the final abdication of Bin Taimur in 1970 and the end of the British protectorate that slavery was abolished. The international opinion and the antislavery movement thus turned to Saudi Arabia. At this moment, slavery became an issue in Saudi Arabia itself; mostly slaves were freed in 1962-3. In this same year, slavery was abolished in Yemen as well.

5 Discussion of the literature (500-1000 words)

Conventional approaches often adopted the Atlantic paradigm in the study of slavery in the IOW. During last decades, a burgeoning historiography has been produced on slavery in the Indian Ocean World (IOW), stressing the specificity of its forms of slavery.⁹¹ Debates focused on the quantification of this process: unlike the transatlantic slave trade, in the Indian ocean, slavery included many different cases which were not (and are not) qualified as slavery and scholars must decide themselves which cases had to be included into their figures. Richard Allen was among those who mostly pushed along this way by including illicit slave trade and also estimating hidden imports of slave using local censuses.⁹² The problem lies in the possibility of testing these inferences empirically, and they are indeed quite limited. This same problem becomes even much more serious for pre-colonial times and for the slave trade which was not under the European control: in all those cases, we have scanty quantitative evidence about slaves in that or another port city or area in the Indian ocean. British surveillance on the seas, their repression against illicit slave trade gave rise to many discussions, in the nineteenth century as today on the fact of knowing whether all passengers in saying, French, Omani, Portuguese vessels in the Indian Ocean where disguised slaves. British authorities answered positively, while other authorities (French, Portuguese, Omani) spoke of undue interference and arbitrary qualification of migrating people as slaves. The same discussions are still made nowadays among scholars.

Moreover, figures on the slave trade must be completed by those on local forms of slavery, such as debt bondage, which did not enter any statistics, and can be only partially be identified through detailed local archives, as studied in Campbell and Stanziani.⁹³ Starting from this, discussions concerned the translation of local sources, included vernacular

⁹¹ Just some references: William Gervase Clarence-Smith ed *The Economics of the Indian Ocean Slave Trade* (London: Frank Cass 1989); Abdul Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory* (London: J. Currey, 1987); Richard Allen, *Slaves Freedmen and Indentured Laborers in Colonial Mauritius* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Edward Alpers, Gwyn Campbell, and Michael Salman, eds., *Slavery and Resistance in Africa and Asia* (London: Routledge, 2005); Gwyn Campbell, ed., *Abolition and Its Aftermath in Indian Ocean Africa and Asia* (London: Routledge, 2005). James Francis Warren, *The Sulu Zone, 1768–1898: The Dynamics of External Trade, Slavery, and Ethnicity in the Transformation of a Southeast Asian Maritime State*, 2nd ed. (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1981; repr., Singapore: National University of Singapore, 2007); Richard Allen, *European Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean, 1500-1850* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2015). Marina Carter, *Servants, Sirdars, Settlers* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995).

⁹² On this point: Allen, *European Slave Trade*.

⁹³ Campbell, Stanziani, eds, *Debt and bondage*.

languages, into western categories of slave and slavery. These discussions were particularly relevant in the case of India where vernacular sources on slavery are particularly numerous.

Some scholars close to post-colonial and subaltern studies approaches pointed out that the colonial sources had used European categories – vassal, owner, concubine –, which gave a false idea of Indian practices regarding labor and dependency. New approaches were developed, based on the lexical and semantic analysis of slavery in India, following the recovery of vernacular sources from the Mughal dynasty and the principalities in the Indian peninsula.⁹⁴ These authors stressed the continuum of forms of dependency in India as well as the fact that Indian slavery and bondage could not be separated from caste, religion, household and military affairs.⁹⁵ However, by stressing the specificity of Indian categories, which precluded any reduction to Western notions, these authors ended up partially reproducing some of the very same colonial attitudes, particularly those of the “Orientalists” among the British elites and administrators.⁹⁶ This conclusion did not fail to raise questions among those who thought slavery could not be limited exclusively to chattel slavery and that, consequently, extreme forms of dependency, including slavery, were indeed present in India and the IOW. From there, a related historiography set out to determine how the European expansion affected the forms of dependency in India. Some historians underline the major break caused by the formal abolition of slavery,⁹⁷ whereas others emphasize the persistence of forms of bondage and disguised slavery.⁹⁸ Attempts to advance an intermediate position on the ground of judicial and estate archives have been recently made.⁹⁹

A recent development sought to shift the North-South tensions on South-South connections on slavery: Africans slaves and indentured immigrants to India and Indians slaves and indentured immigrants in Africa made the object of increasing number of works.¹⁰⁰ Mostly

⁹⁴ Indrani Chatterjee and Richard Eaton, eds, *Slavery and South Asian History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006); Dharma Kumar, “Colonialism, Bondage, and Caste in British India”, in Martin Klein, ed, *Breaking the Chains. Slavery, Bondage, and Emancipation in Modern Africa and Asia* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993): 112-130; Gyan Prakash, *Bonded histories. Genealogies of Labor Servitude in Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

⁹⁵ As stated by David Turley, *Slavery* (Malden, Mass. and Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).

⁹⁶ Martin Moir, Douglas Peers, Lynn Zastoupil, eds, *J.S. Mill Encounter with India* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

⁹⁷ Drescher, *Abolitions*.

⁹⁸ Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labor Overseas, 1830–1920* (London: Hansib, 1974).

⁹⁹ Alessandro Stanziani, *Labor in the Fringes of Empire. Voice, Exit and the Law* (New York: Palgrave, 2018).

¹⁰⁰ Sugata Bose, *A Hundred Horizon. The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006); John Hawley, ed, *India in Africa. Africa in India* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008); Shihan de S Jayasuriya, Richard Pankhurst, eds, *The African Diaspora in the Indian Ocean* (Trenton and Asmara: Africa World Press, 2003). Thomas Metcalf, *Imperial Connections* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2006).

important, scholars not only in France, Portugal, the Netherland or Germany,¹⁰¹ but also in Mauritius, India, Ceylon, Japan, South east Asia¹⁰² brought important contribution to these debates, not only in English but also in their national historiographies which should definitively be brought back in the global conversation on these topics. In short, attempts of censuses of the slave trade in the Indian Ocean are highly welcome, but they should be made not just in a scholarly competition with the Atlantic, but by mobilizing multiple languages, local sources and a strong reflexive analyses of categories of slaves and/or bonded people.

6 Primary Sources (500-750 words)

Most information on slavery in the IOW are based on reports made by colonial power, the East India Company (EIC) and the British Parliament (both available at Kew and at the Indian Library at the British Library, but also in the archives in Delhi and Mumbai). The same is true for the VOC and the Dutch Institution, Portuguese and Spanish sources, all available at the colonial branches of the national archives. No doubt these sources reveal the views of the main European officials on the subject. At the same time, these sources also reveal much on the multiple approaches colonial officers and other colonial actors had; this is all the more true in areas where multiple colonial were present –which is the normal case in the Indian ocean world-, to which one has to add missionaries archives providing different (from official records) orientations and testimonies.

Also, archives of estates and plantations and judicial archives testify to the mediation of

¹⁰¹ Edmond Maestri, ed, *Esclavage et abolition dans l'Océan Indien, 1723–1860* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2002) ; Jean-Marie, Fillot *La traite des esclaves vers les Mascareignes au XVIIIe siècle* (The Slave Trade to the Mascarene Islands, 18th century) (Paris : Orstom, 1974), Henri Médard, Marie-Laure Derat, Thomas Vernet, Marie-Pierre Ballarin eds, *Traites et esclavages en Afrique orientale et dans l'océan Indien* (Paris : Karthala 2013) ; Ulbe Bosma, *The Sugar Plantation in India and Indonesia: Industrial Production, 1770-2010* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) ; Ulbe Bosma, *Indiëgangsters. Verhalen van Nederlanders die naar Indië trokken* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2010); Rudy Bauss, “The Portuguese Slave Trade from Mozambique to Portuguese India and Macau and Comments on Time, 1750-1850: New Evidence from the Archives”, *Camões Center Quarterly*, 6-7, nos. 1-2 (1997): 27. José Capela, *O tráfico de escravos nos portos de Moçambique, 1773-1904* (Porto: Edições Afrontamento, 2002). Luís António Covane. *As relações económicas entre Moçambique e a África do Sul : 1850-1964 : acordos e regulamentos principais* (Maputo, Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique 1989).

¹⁰² Vijayalakshmi Teelock, *Bitter sugar: sugar and slavery in nineteenth century Mauritius* (Moka: Mahatma Gandhi Institute, 1998). Vijayalakshmi Teelock, Anwar Janoo, Geoffrey Summers, Marc Serge Rivière, and Sooryakanti Nirsimloo-Gayan, eds, *Angaje': The Early Years. Explorations into the History, Society and Culture of Indentured Immigrants and Their Descendants in Mauritius* (Port Louis: Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund, 2012); Surendra Bhana, *Indentured Indian Emigrants to Natal, 1860-1902. A Study Based on Ships' List* (New Delhi: Promilla, 1991). Hideaki Suzuki, *Slave Traders Profiteers in the West Indian Ocean* (New York: Palgrave, 2016); Ota Atsushi, *Changes of Regime and Social Dynamics in West Java: Society, State and the Outer World of Banten, 1750-1830* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

scribes, middlemen and judges due to the slow acquisition of literacy during the period under study. At the same time, the richness of the documents and their significant number demonstrate that the conventional opposition between the literate elites and “the others” was already on the wane in the nineteenth century, judging by, among the others, the works by Pier Larson and Clare Anderson.¹⁰³ These sources stand as unique testimonials and examples of an important form of self-expression. The correspondence between estate owners, shipbuilders, captains, concession companies and institutions offers enlightening perspectives: these sources reveal, for example, how hard it was for these “hegemonic” actors to coordinate their actions due to lack of information as well as divergent interests.

Testaments and successions are also important sources for such investigations. For example, in Mauritius, from 1875, vacant estates were put under the administration of a curator named by the colonial state. The curator provided details for each worker, including name, declared profession, place of birth, last place of residence, type and duration of contract, wages, debts and his or her accounting balance with the estate. This huge mass of data has yet to be analyzed in order to compare worker contracts, wages and debts on estates of different sizes and degrees of capital investment. Through these documents, we can grasp how estate owners, planters and concession companies evaluated their workforce, kept track of their expenses, recorded breaches of contract and translated them into days of labor and/or monetary penalties, gave laborers permission to engage in commerce or to marry, etc. The plantation archives reveal the conflicts that arose among estate owners, their complicated relationships with colonial authorities and the fact that planters were focused solely on extracting as much extra labor as possible from their workforce with little concern about medium-term productivity or profitability. Violence and abuse were an integral part of this world. Runaways, days and hours of absence and illness, and penalties expressed in monetary terms or days of labor indicate resistance on the part of laborers and the planters’ dogged determination to regulate and control the production process.

Very important sources for all the mentioned empires are the outnumbered bilingual edition of vernacular sources (Marathi and English, Javanese and Dutch, Javanese and Portuguese etc). Further collections were issued during the first half of the twentieth century, in particular in India, by local scholars aiming at presenting vernacular sources as against colonial

¹⁰³ Pier Larson, *Oceans of Letters. Language and Creolization in an Indian Ocean Diaspora* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). Clare Anderson, *Subaltern Lives: Biographies of Colonialism in the Indian Ocean World, 1790-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

documents.¹⁰⁴ These volumes have been widely used by historians at all time, even if not always they made justice to these sources. Paradoxically, many subaltern and post-colonial studies criticized orientalism while making use of these sources presented as “original ones”. All these collections are available at the national libraries of the mentioned former empires. Finally, during last decades, oral archives and testimonies of indentured immigrants have been increasingly collected and exploited, in particular in Mauritius.¹⁰⁵

7 Link to digital materials

Increasing digitalized archives are available on slavery and post slavery in the Indian Ocean World, in particular in Mauritius, Kew, and to a given extent Delhi. Link to all these archives is at: <https://www.genealogie.mu/index.php/en/expertise-en-gb/research/online-archives>

On indentured immigration, mostly in Mauritius, but not only, it is worth looking at the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site: <http://www.aapravasighat.org/indenture.htm>

Also valuable are digital colonial documents in India:

<http://www.chaf.lib.latrobe.edu.au/dcd/default.htm>

And Mauritius Truth & Justice Commission, 2011, “Report of the Truth and Justice Commission”, http://www.gov.mu/portal/goc/pmo/file/TJC_Voll.pdf¹⁰⁶

8 further readings (10-25)

¹⁰⁴ Among the others: Govind Sardesai, ed *Selections from the Peshwa Daftar*, 46 volumes (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1931-35). G.C.Vad, ed, *Selection from the Satara Raja and Peshwas' Diaries* (Pune: Deccan Vernacular Translation Society, 1902-11), 9 parts.

¹⁰⁵ In Mauritius, the Mahatma Gandhi Institute launched a vast project of oral history on the indentured immigrants; also: Mauritius Marathi Cultural Centre Trust, *A Study of Marathi Settlements in Mauritius. Oral History and Anthropological Perspectives*. Mauritius, 2012. Marina Carter, *Voices from Indenture. Experiences of Indian Migrants in the British Empire* (London: Leicester University press, 1996); detailed information and several chapters in the collection: Teelock, and others, *Angajé*; Archana Kumar and Ramnarayan Tiwari, “Reconstructing History through Oral Tradition: A Case Study of Indian Indentured Migrants”, *Indian Diaspora* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), doi https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004288065_003.

¹⁰⁶ A usual guide: Michael Ready, *Ocean of Suffering: Trans-Indian Ocean Slave Trade Database, 1654 to 1860* (Amazon Digital Services, 2015).

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