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# Being a Slave : Histories and Legacies of European Slavery in the Indian Ocean

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# Being a Slave

## *Histories and Legacies of European Slavery in the Indian Ocean*



EDITED BY ALICIA SCHRIKKER
AND NIRA WICKRAMASINGHE

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BEING A SLAVE

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# BEING A SLAVE

## Histories and Legacies of European Slavery in the Indian Ocean

*Edited by*

*Alicia Schrikker*
*and*
*Nira Wickramasinghe*

LEIDEN UNIVERSITY PRESS

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*Private Conversations with World Historians, 1996-2016*. (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2017). Her most recent publications deal with socio-legal history, slavery, historic disaster and colonial mentality in the Indian Ocean.

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PREFACE

# Looking at Indian Ocean Multiple Forms of Slavery

*Françoise Vergès*

*Our skin re-traumatises the sea*
*They mock us*
*For not being able to throw ourselves into something that was instrumental in trying to execute our extinction.*
*For you, the ocean is for surf boards, boats and tans*
*And all the cool stuff you do under there in your bathing suits and goggles*
*But we, we have come to be baptised here*
*We have come to stir the other world here*
*We have come to cleanse ourselves here*
*We have come to connect our living to the dead here*
*Our respect for water is what you have termed fear*
*The audacity to trade and murder us over water*
*Then mock us for being scared of it*
*The audacity to arrive by water and invade us*

Koleka Putuma, "Water," 2016[1]

In this poem South African poetess Koleka Putuma beautifully captures the strong emotions that black peoples attach to the sea. From the sea came the slavers, the colonizers, the soldiers, the merchants and the missionaries, and most did not have it in mind to engage in peaceful encounters. And though the routes and roads of enslavement are not exclusively maritime, the sea has been associated with exile and deportation in the hold of a ship, and the ship with despair, with stench and with death. However, whereas Paul Gilroy could speak of *the* Black Atlantic,[2] the "broad geographical space spanning mutliple locations of the Indian Ocean world" and the existence of varying degrees of bondage "from eastern Africa to the Philippines" requires a strong

multi-directional and multi-layered approach. Hence the astute and insightful choice of the co-editors, Alicia Schrikker and Nira Wickramasinghe, for "a variety of disciplinary approaches".

Growing up on Réunion Island, once a French slave colony and now an overseas department, I never heard of slavery at school. I learned about slavery at home and while listening to *maloya*, the music, performance, oral poetry and ritual to the ancestors created by the descendants of slaves from Madagascar and Mozambique, enriched by sounds of the Indian indentured workforce. In Mauritius, the "sister island", which had also been a French slave colony, the history of the slave trade and slavery was long ignored and the very existence of Afro-Mauritians denied. In both former colonies, the white elites downplayed the existence of bonded labour which built their wealth and racism played its role in undermining the importance of slavery in the making of Creole societies. Slavery is not yet an important topic in schools and universities around the Indian Ocean. Movements for a reappropriation of that history came from the anti-colonial and anti-racist front in the 1970s and 1980s. Since then, memorials have been built around the Indian Ocean, and publications, exhibitions, documentaries, conferences, novels, songs and poems have brought to light the history and memories of enslavement. The archaeology of slavery in this region of the world, which is in its infancy, will certainly reveal more and there are archives still to be looked at. A lot remains to be uncovered. The vast Indian Ocean, which carries the memories of enslaved and indentured workers, still has much to say about the lives and afterlives of slaves.

This is why *Being a Slave. Histories and Legacies of European Slavery in the Indian Ocean* is an important volume. The variety of its authors, topics and approaches contributes to a rare intra-disciplinary conversation on enslavement in the Indian Ocean.

## Notes

1. Koleka Putuma, "Water" *Pen South Africa*, last modified 15 June 2016, https://pensouthafrica.co.za/water-by-koleka-putuma.
2. Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic. Modernity and the Black Consciousness* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).

INTRODUCTION

# Enslaved in the Indian Ocean, 1700–1850[1]

*Alicia Schrikker and Nira Wickramasinghe*

Slaves were central to the East India Companies established by various European powers throughout the Indian Ocean world.[2] However, slavery and colonies have been relegated to the margins in the national histories of European states, even if memories of slavery have become a part of public discourse in former slaving empires such as France and the Netherlands. This edited volume brings into dialogue the histories of enslaved people and the legacies of slavery that unfold in a broad geographical space spanning mutliple locations of the Indian Ocean world. To paint such a wide spatial and temporal canvas a variety of disciplinary approaches seem necessary as well as productive. Historians, literary scholars and post-colonial scholars can indeed ask different questions regarding the experience of being enslaved and freed, and search for answers by following their own scholarly protocols. They engage differently with source material while the language and conceptual apparatus they use belongs to specific disciplinary traditions. This variety in approaches to the lives of enslaved peoples and their reverberations in the present are, we hope to show, a richness rather than a weakness. Such intra-disciplinary conversations, still rare among slavery scholars of the Indian Ocean, are commonplace in the broader field of colonial studies.

Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, Françoise Vergès, Gloria Wekker, Kristin Ross and many others have stressed the importance of reading colony and empire within the same frame as a "transcultural global process"[3] in order to understand the making of post-colonial identities both in Europe and the Global South.[4] Indian Ocean slavery offers a fascinating terrain for dissecting the connections between the past and the present and the past in the present. While near comprehensive works have been produced that focus on the volume and value of the slave trade in the Indian Ocean world, single volumes that bring together the lives and experiences of slaves in different locales of the Indian Ocean world are rare. Such works when they exist tend to focus on a single location. Yet there is much to gain in looking at the

slave experience in multiple local contexts as it emerged or was transformed through its interaction with European trading companies.

This book has two connected threads. First it examines the lives of enslaved adults and children in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries who were forcibly shipped by Europeans across the Indian Ocean—from Makassar to Colombo, from Kochi to Cape Town. Second it answers the question: what difference to their lives and futures did abolition bring? Most of the chapters in this volume were first presented at the "Being a Slave: Indian Ocean Slavery in Local Context" workshop organised in Leiden in 2017.[5] The workshop and this volume were born of a recognition of the need to inflect the direction of Indian Ocean slavery studies by drawing from the rich Atlantic slavery literature using a variety of disciplinary approaches. The workshop presented an opportunity for scholars interested in enslavement to reflect on their own discipline, methods and modes of narrativizing, as well as to consider the limits of their sources and the questions that could be asked of those sources.

There was no attempt to offer a comprehensive view since for practical reasons our scope was limited, but our purpose was to initiate new lines of thought between fields that have often been hermetically closed to each other. Our geographical coverage too was not complete. We would have liked to engage, for instance, with a well established literature in French on the slave experience in Réunion, Pondicherry, Chandernagore and other French settlements in the Indian Ocean world. The pathbreaking work of Prosper Eve on slave bodies on the island of Bourbon, now Réunion, awaits translation from the French.[6] Instead the workshop benefited from the momentum that the study of Indian Ocean slavery currently has in Dutch academia. The volume therefore gravitates towards locations in the Indian Ocean that have had a Dutch history, such as Ceylon, Cochin, Batavia, Cape Town and Mauritius. In many of these places the history of colonialism is layered, having been in Portuguese or Dutch hands prior to being claimed by the French or the British, and this matters for the way in which cultures of slavery were shaped. When thinking about the legacy of slavery we need to realize that in places like Ceylon, Cape Town, Cochin and Mauritius slave-societies as they developed in Dutch enclaves of the Indian Ocean had an afterlife under British and French colonialism. Furthermore, the contributions by Wagenaar and Tieken remind us that life trajectories of the enslaved encompassed multiple locations across the Indian Ocean. Our focus on the lives of the enslaved allows us to ask questions about the mobility, identity and emotions

Indian Ocean slaves experienced rather than place the Dutch, French and British colonials at the centre. It is their archives that we are after, less so their specific colonial histories.

The literature on the histories of the European Companies tends to do the opposite. If enslaved persons appear at all in the literature, it is only in passing, described as part of the context in which Europeans operated, rather than as subjects of study themselves. This point is best illustrated by the fascinating biography of Joan Gideon Loten, a high-ranking official in the Dutch East India Company (VOC) in the mid-eighteenth century. This 600-page biography sheds light on the everyday presence of the enslaved in and around the Company. In it we encounter enslaved persons in many capacities: in Makassar (South Sulawesi) we come across men and women forced into slavery by Loten's Dutch colleagues, who were actively involved in violent slave raiding and trading in the region; in Colombo we encounter a slave orchestra in the private household of Loten's daughter; and in Utrecht we meet Sittie, who was a young girl when she was given to Loten as a diplomatic "gift" by the ruler of Bone. She accompanied him during his years in office across the ocean, from Makassar to Batavia, and then to Colombo, finally settling with his family in Utrecht, where she outlived him despite suffering from the cold climate.[7]

This remarkable biography of Loten is based on an extremely rich set of sources; the author, Lex Raat, takes us through the private and official life of an individual in the eighteenth century, who became known for his natural history collection and activities as Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society. Loten's biography would not be the most obvious source for scholars interested in the history of enslaved people in the Indian Ocean world, as nothing in the title suggests that it contains those histories. In this aspect, it is consistent with histories of European trading companies and settlements in Asia as a whole, where slaves do feature but are seldom the focus. The histories of enslaved individuals are so inextricably bound up with the histories of those companies that one often fails to see them, but once we begin to notice and search for them we find them mentioned throughout literary and archival sources—in cargo lists and business transactions; last wills, legal cases, and government ordinances; governors' reports; and private papers such as those of Joan Gideon Loten.

## The historical setting of Indian Ocean slavery

When we talk about slaves in this contribution we refer in particular to chattels, persons owned by a master who could be bought or sold like other commodities and were often shipped across the ocean. We are fully aware that this definition is limited, especially within the context of Indian Ocean societies where the slaves came from, where slavery is generally understood as being at one extreme end of a broad spectrum of bondage.

While it is impossible to do justice to the many specific regional studies that have been carried out in the past, the work of historians such as Anthony Reid, Gwyn Campbell and Indrani Chatterjee helps us understand in general terms the place of slavery in Indian Ocean societies.[8] First, it is important to point out that from eastern Africa to the Philippines most people lived in varying degrees of bondage. The concept of personal freedom as we envisage it today was virtually absent and, instead, a person's position in society was determined by the social relationships and forms of bondage that were cultivated or imposed. Alessandro Stanziani has shown that until the end of the nineteenth century free labour was globally more the exception than the rule globally, and Western approaches to labour rights were much more repressive than earlier believed.[9] In South Asia, caste was one of the factors that determined hierarchies of bondage and a person's social position in society. Caste relations carried intrinsic obligations, services and social protection. In eastern Indonesia individuals belonging to so-called slave communities lived mostly as free persons, according to early nineteenth-century observers. The position of these slaves in society resembled that of corvée workers who had to labour in the fields of the elites at certain intervals.[10] Reid, Campbell and Chatterjee make the point that slavery as a Western concept does not do much to help us understand the hierarchies of unfreedom in Indian Ocean societies, and they prefer to speak about "degrees of bondage". They argue that bonded individuals in principle remained part of the social environment in which they were born, and that social customs prevented them from being simply bought and sold at a market. In this respect, the authors maintain, enslavement in European enclaves—what could be termed colonial slavery—differed significantly from local forms of bondage.[11]

This is not to say that the European slave trade was a new phenomenon unrelated to more direct and situational forms of slavery in the region. It is likely that the consistent and high colonial demand reinforced certain slaving practices in the region, changing the structure of slavery in the process. It is

generally understood that personal enslavement could be caused by crisis, be it climatic, financial or violent. Traditionally, famine, debt and conflict were the main precursors to enslavement. Parents would sell their children in times of famine; individuals might offer themselves or, more often, their wives and daughters as security for a debt; or captivity could be the result of outright warfare.[12] A crisis may have increased the vulnerability of non-elite groups to enslavement, but it is probable that such crises were at times deliberately orchestrated. Sanjay Subrahmanyam has masterfully analysed how, in seventeenth-century Arakan (Myanmar), Portuguese and Dutch traders benefited from and enhanced regional conflict and food crises, which enabled them to gain slaves at low prices and profit from the rice trade.[13] The work of Jim Warren shows that outright slave raiding in Eastern Indonesia and the Sulu Archipelago became a general feature of the political economy of the Sultanate of Sulu during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the Indonesian archipelago, coastal societies became particularly vulnerable to slave raiding and kidnapping when global markets for slaves in China and in the Mascarene Islands expanded. In other areas such as Jaffna in Sri Lanka, low-caste people were framed by the Dutch as slaves and then treated as such, thereby directly influencing the local social structure to satisfy the need for labour.[14] Such processes of commodification of bonded persons were brought about by European trade in other regions as well, for example, through contracts with local rulers, as was the case in Bali and Timor.[15]

Indian Ocean slavery studies is a relatively young field. It has traditionally been caught between regional labour studies and historical studies of European trade and colonialism. The former tend to focus on particular structures in the political economy of local societies that sustained forms of bondage and slavery, while the latter tend to downplay the stakes of the European commercial companies in slavery and the slave trade, and generally frame slavery in the Indian Ocean region as "mild", echoing colonial phrasing. More recently, historians have begun quantitatively studying the place of the European slave trade within European trade, and in the process have revealed a much larger than expected presence of enslaved people in the urban space of European port cities. These new studies show how Europeans created new political economies of slavery within their expanding enclaves in the Indian Ocean. Furthermore, there is general consensus that the expansion of capitalism and the growth of global markets led to the expansion of slavery in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In diverse regions of the Indian Ocean, therefore, we find a plurality of cultures of slavery that

overlapped, intersected and coincided, and were connected by expanding shipping networks. Ulbe Bosma recently argued that "the lines between debt and captive slavery and between customary and commodified slavery were much more blurred than colonial civil servants – followed by scholarly literature – have suggested".[16]

Enslavement, in the sense of large-scale commodification of humans, came about through the interaction of Europeans and Indian Ocean society, and this book aims to look at that phenomenon from the perspective of enslaved individuals. What did it mean for people to be caught in this Indian Ocean web of slavery? It is not our aim to present a comprehensive analysis of local–European interactions, or suggest that the experiences of slavery reported in this book were universal. The stories in these chapters move between Mauritius and Madagascar, Jakarta and Kochi, Colombo and Cape Town, and explore the experience of being enslaved and life after slavery in these diverse locations. Furthermore, the book includes accounts of cultural memories of slavery, which reveal the commonalities in experiences of slavery across the Indian Ocean, and its long-lasting effects.

After being bought or caught, enslaved individuals were transported to slave markets in the various Indian Ocean port cities, from where they were transhipped to new places that were alien to them in culture and geography. By this process enslaved people from the Indian Ocean could end up in the Middle East, the Americas, China or Europe, though most remained within the Indian Ocean realm.[17] Analyses of the trade circuits of the different European companies by historians Richard Allen, Markus Vink, Linda Mbeki and Matthias van Rossum show major shifts in the origins and destinations of the enslaved over time. In the seventeenth century, for example, South Asia was an important source of slaves for the Dutch as they built up Batavia (now Jakarta), but in the eighteenth century these enslaved people were partly replaced by those from the Indonesian archipelago. Some slaves from the Indonesian archipelago were also taken to Colombo and the Cape. The Dutch sanctioned slavery through legislation and registration, and benefitted from the trade through customs. In all Dutch territories, slavery provided cheap and secure labour in parallel to local forms of forced labour. It is assumed that most of the slaves under the Dutch were traded privately by VOC employees.

Richard Allen estimates that up to around 90,000 people were traded by the VOC across the Indian Ocean between 1600 and 1800, Van Rossum and Mbeki suggest that this number will be much higher when private trade

is taken into account.[18] Furthermore, much less is known about the size of the slave trade to and from Dutch territories in Indonesia in the nineteenth century. Ulbe Bosma's recent book gives an estimate of the numbers involved in nineteenth-century slavery in Island Southeast Asia which include captive and commercially traded slaves and debt slaves. They range, according to him, between 701,500 and 970,500.[19] In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the French accounted for the largest share of the slave trade, with the Mascarene Islands as its epicentre. There, the eighteenth-century plantation economy created a high demand for labour, which was satisfied by importing slaves from Madagascar and India and, to a lesser extent, from the Swahili Coast and Southeast Asia. Allen estimates that this trade resulted in the transport of up to 380,000 people across the Indian Ocean.[20]

Records indicate that the British were tapping the same sources, but that their volume of trade in enslaved humans was much smaller. The abolition of the slave trade by Britain in 1807 and of slavery in 1833 led to the early suppression of the trade among British traders in the Indian Ocean. The Slavery Abolition Act of 1833 was an Act by the Parliament of the United Kingdom abolishing slavery throughout the British Empire (with the exceptions of "the Territories in the Possession of the East India Company", Ceylon, now Sri Lanka, and Saint Helena). The exceptions were abolished in 1843 and 1844. Subsequently additional articles prohibited certain officers of The Honourable East India Company from being involved in the purchase of slaves, but they did not actually abolish slavery in India. It was the provisions of the Indian Penal Code 1860 which effectively abolished slavery in India by making the enslavement of human beings a criminal offence. But, as Indrani Chatterjee has insightfully illustrated, those who were freed through abolition became instant targets for recruitment as indentured labourers or soldiers in order to satisfy the relentless labour demand throughout the empire.[21] The ambivalent and unfinished nature of abolition comes to light in a number of the contributions featured in this multidisciplinary volume, notably those by Yvette Christiansë and Pamela Scully. The collaboration of historians, anthropologists and literary scholars is particularly productive in shedding light on the long-lasting cultural legacies of slavery, abolition and indenture in the region.

## Seeing slaves

While this book is attentive to the particular experiences of the enslaved person caught in the web of Indian Ocean slavery, its authors are deeply aware that the archive produced by the colonial state does not highlight the perspectives of the enslaved. *Seeing* the slave in colonial documentation entails forcing the archive to break silences,[22] a process which has inherent difficulties. How archives are constituted in territories under colonial rule, the forms they take, and the foray into the "grids of intelligibility" that produces the evidencial paradigms mentioned by Carlo Ginsburg have been central to the discussion of the archive as "the supreme technology of the late nineteenth century imperial state".[23] Sources do not exist just to be mined for content. This approach warrants caution when exploring the textual material available to reconstruct the lives of enslaved people in the Indian Ocean world. The paucity of sources first needs to be underlined.

In contrast to the rich scholarship on the Atlantic slave trade, the Indian Ocean world lacks slave narratives or freedom tales that have triggered the imaginations of historians and directed them to a more personal and intimate approach to the history of slavery. The genre of literature now known as "slave narratives" or "freedom narratives", which recounts the lives of African slaves in North America and the Carribean—such as the canonical writings of Harriet Tubman, Harriet Jacobs, Frederick Douglass and Olaudah Equiano—is invaluable for bringing to life the story of capture, enslavement, transportation, and finally emancipation from the perspective of the enslaved.[24] Many of these texts were inspired by the Calvinist genre of captivity narrative, and were edited by prominent abolitionists for use in their anti-slavery campaigns.[25] These narratives were written in an autobiographical and sociological style for a primarily white and female readership, and were constrained by the demands placed upon them by their main sponsor and consumer, the abolitionist movement, which wanted texts written in a style that sounded "truthful and believable".[26]

By contrast, the texts wrenched from colonial archives—petitions, testimonies of slaves and letters about them—do not suffer from this need to show a visible sign of reason or a shared humanity. Instead, they come to us mediated, incomplete and drawing on different types of conventions and tropes. They were not produced in order to prove slaves' humanity and personhood, but they stage them at the centre of events where their own claim for recognition comes to the fore. Though personal accounts such as

slave diaries, autobiographies, letters and stories are missing, there is an alternative kind of narrative preserved in the form of judicial records. Legal cases have become a mainstay of cultural history despite being mediated and translated; as such, the historian often performs the role of a detective in order to reconstruct events recorded partially or those subjected to the vagaries of memory.[27]

Many of the authors of this volume were inspired by the work of scholars who have focused on the enslaved or bonded individual as a lens to understanding a social system. Our understanding of the individual lives of subaltern people in the nineteenth-century Indian Ocean world has been considerably enriched by Meghan Vaughn's portraits of enslaved individuals in Mauritius, Marina Carter's exploration of the experiences of indentured workers, and, more recently, Clare Anderson's life writing approach.[28] The ably researched works of Kerry Ward, Ronit Ricci and Michael Laffan have recently traced the movement of Southeast Asian exiles and convicts between Batavia, Java, the Cape Colony and Sri Lanka.[29] The rich historiography on slavery in the Cape of Good Hope has yielded fascinating stories of enslaved people whose lives appeared in the VOC archives at moments of crisis or conflict, when it was necessary for them to be recorded.[30] As Nigel Worden reminds us, "slaves survived in the paper archive by default rather than by design".[31] Sue Peabody's more recent master–slave narrative of Madeleine—sold into slavery in the 1760s in Chandernagor—and her son Furcy in the late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries meticulously explores what it meant to be a slave, and then free, in the Mascarenes Islands. Furcy was born a slave but became the head of a bourgeois household and a slave owner himself.[32] Exceptional stories such as his and that of Malik Ambar, the Abyssinian slave who became the de facto ruler of the Ahmednagar Sultanate in the Deccan, or that of Untung Suropati recounted in the Javanese epic *Babad Tanah Jawi* are uncommon tales that should not eclipse the stories of those who never won or whose lives ended tragically.[33] The essays in this book focus on the biographies of ordinary enslaved people rather than the heroes, and show methodological affinities with the bottom-up approach of microhistory.[34]

This volume is unique in its treatment of enslavement in the Indian Ocean world insofar as it combines history, literary analysis and a post-colonial articulation of ideas in order to reconstruct untold narratives of the past, and better understand hauntings in the present. As Guno Jones' contribution to this volume shows, the story does not end with abolition. Rebecca Scott,

Thomas Holt and Frederick Cooper urge historians to go "beyond slavery" in order to observe continuities in labour regimes in post-slavery societies.[35] Much can be learned from scholarly work on the Atlantic slave trade. Saidiya Hartman's revisionary history of the legacy of slavery in antebellum America warns against making absolute distinctions between the categories of "slavery" and "freedom", and suggests that the liberal notions of free will, rights,and responsibility are feeble instruments of social transformation.[36] Insofar as it is not limited to a single approach, the book creates imaginative narratives of the mobility, social interaction, violence and resistance that shaped the lives of the enslaved. The multidisciplinary approach further helps us to take a longer-term view of the process of enslavement—an approach that considers other forms of unfreedom and seeks to understand the cultural legacies of slavery and its hauntings in the present. This allows us to consider the history of enslavement as erasure, absence and forgetting.[37]

## Narrating through the archive: mobility, emotions, identities

The first part of this volume focuses on the eighteenth-century Dutch and French Indian Ocean and uses different techniques to bring to life the enslaved individuals whose stories are captured in the VOC and French archives. A focus on experiences of individual slaves allows the authors to raise questions about mobility, emotions and identification aspects that were relevant to their lives and those of their children, rather than to those of their masters. The first chapter by Marina Carter probes issues of ethnicity and identity in the colonial Indian Ocean world, focusing in particular on Indian slaves in Mauritius. The slave diaspora from the Indian subcontinent has received much less attention than the diaspora of slaves of African origin, another example of what Richard Allen calls the "tyranny of the Atlantic". The paucity of the archive, writes Carter, is compounded by its ambiguity. Toponyms such as "of Malabar" or "of Bengal" often refer to the last port of call, not the person's origin, and the French term *Indien* referred to a person from China or Southeast Asia as well. Being categorized in such generic ways formed an essential aspect of slavery and led to a conflation of identities. The contribution by Christiansë in the second part of the volume picks up on this theme when she argues that being registered formed an essential experience that those who were enslaved and indentured shared. Carter interrogates the stereotype that, although few in number, slaves who were identified

as Indians constituted an "elite among the servile". They crossed cultural, ethnic, religious and racial boundaries, and brought local knowledge, sexual labour and domestic expertise into their relationships with Europeans. Sue Peabody's story of Furcy epitomizes the trajectory of this group, when shedding his slave ancestry as he merged into Creoleness.

Kerry Ward and Ronit Ricci draw our attention to the way in which the Dutch labour and legal regime created new and enduring ties between South and Southeast Asia, and Southern Africa. The enslaved people who were shipped across the ocean found themselves in the company of exiles and convicts. Sri Lanka and the Cape were major destinations for convicts, while Batavia and Colombo served as the most important ports of departure. Herman Tieken's contribution, which tells the story of the Ceylonese Chettiyar Nicolaas Ondaatje at the Cape, demonstrates the entanglement of the lives of exiled convicts and slaves. Tieken reconstructs Ondaatje's familiarity with slavery through an analysis of the letters he received from family and friends in Galle, Colombo, which were retrieved from the Dutch notarial archives in Cape Town. The letters themselves, mainly written in Tamil, provide a unique perspective on the VOC world from its fringes, a world permeated with slavery. Though technically a convict, he was allowed to move freely, but this also meant that he had to earn his own keep. In this he did not succeed in Cape Town and had soon to move on to the outlying districts, making a living as a home teacher, a notoriously low-paid job. For simple things such as clothes – and areca nuts – he remained dependent on his family in Ceylon. Ondaatje's exile was a constant topic of deliberation within the family. From the very beginning Ondaatje tried to make some money by selling an occasional slave, which he ordered from his contacts in Ceylon. Apparently, his own sad existence as an exile did not prevent him from making others suffer the same fate. This, he argues, could be explained by the intimate presence of enslaved children in the Ondaatje family household, who are made visible in the letters through the discussion of the fate of the two former slaves, Flora and Hannibal. Tieken's contribution highlights the variation in slave experiences and social contexts in which slaves and slave-owners moved, and illustrates the necessity of understanding the very diverse trajectories through slavery which Carter highlighted.

The contributions by the historians Alexander Geelen, Bram van den Hout, Merve Tosun and Matthias van Rossum, Kate Ekama and Lodewijk Wagenaar direct our focus to enslaved individuals themselves, as actors in the Dutch Indian Ocean. At the core of each of these chapters is the interaction

between enslaved people and the local criminal courts of the VOC, and the subsequent production of legal files and registers through which fragments of the lives of enslaved individuals are pieced together. Involvement in theft, violence and escape is the main cause of these men and women appearing in the records, but the records also inform us about the circumstances under which these acts were committed, the accomplices involved, and the locations where plans were made. The culture of legality brought by the Dutch resulted in a very active system of justice and policing in the various port cities under Dutch rule.[38] Minutes of the proceedings of the criminal courts of Cape Town and Batavia were even sent to the Netherlands, and while they were probably never read at the time, they now provide historians with invaluable information about the social and cultural history of the enslaved. Social historians such as Eric Jones, Bondan Kanumoyoso, and Henk Niemeijer have already shown how such sources can be employed to more broadly reconstruct social life in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Batavia.[39] In the 1980s and 1990s, historians of the Cape such as Nigel Worden and Robert Ross paved the way by using such records imaginatively to analyse slave life and resistance at the Cape. The work of Geelen et al. and Ekama has been inspired by this rich tradition of scholarship.

Since the court records that provide us with shards of evidence of slave life come to us mediated through institutional conventions and the writings of clerks and translators, to what extent can they be used to write historical narratives from the perspective of the enslaved? Geelen et al., Ekama and Wagenaar each recognize this problem, and deal with it in different ways. In their chapter on mobility and work, Geelen et al. seek a solution in quantity and comparison: by creating a database of all court cases involving slaves in Cochin and Batavia, and by comparing work locations and types of activities of the enslaved, they manage to draw a broader picture of the spatial mobility of slaves and the actual work in which they were engaged in both towns. In both places, trust, skills and control turn out to be defining factors in shaping mobility, meaning that mobility and work were defined not so much by location as by talent and social relations—conditions that presumably differed from person to person. Yet in all cases the enslaved remained subject to strong mechanisms of social control exerted by the Company.

Social relations are central to Ekama's contribution on slave life in Colombo. Through a number of compelling examples, she shows that social relations were forged across lines of freedom and unfreedom. Her masterful analysis of the case of the copper bowl theft shows how the tavern and the

area around the church formed important meeting places for the underclass of Colombo, including the enslaved. The case clearly shows that the social relations forged by the enslaved crossed social and ethnic barriers when opportunity arose—the enslaved Amber worked with the Javanese convict Troena de Wangso, and Andries, a man labelled as Sinhalese. Ekama's method differs from that of Geelen et al. in that she combines an analysis of the actors who feature in legal cases with an analysis of other records from the town administration, such as wills, manumission deeds and colonial ordinances. Read together, these records provide insight into the diversity in social relations that were forged by, or forced onto, the enslaved, and paint a rich picture of the intimate relations among the enslaved and beyond enslavement.

The marriage in Colombo's slave lodge (*materiaalhuis*) between Apollo and Diana—both Malay-speaking and of Southeast Asian origin—suggests that their shared language and background might have given them some sense of security in their vulnerable situation. Most intimate relations will have been of a less voluntary nature, and coercion and opportunity must have played a role. Ekama discusses this last point by focusing on relationships between slave women and European men: one that led to manumission and marriage, and another that resulted, surprisingly, in the prosecution of a soldier accused of rape. Being enslaved in Colombo did not mean that the horizons of enslaved people were limited to that town, and often the slaves had come from far away. Escapes from the town to the rural areas of the island occurred. A Sufi amulet from Java helped Deidami endure the trauma of slavery, until desperation led her to kill her mistress in Colombo. In other cases slaves had the strength to imagine themselves, against the odds, as legal persons with the right to prosecute others in the VOC's Indian Ocean legal web. Yet only a few enslaved individuals managed to use the legal system—which had been responsible for defining them exclusively as slaves—to their advantage. The story of Cruz, the central figure in Geelen et al., also reminds us that even if enslaved people were unable to define their place of origin, it was clear that they longed for such a place when overwhelmed with misery. The contribution by Anne Marieke van der Wal in the second part of the volume picks up on this theme as she discusses the ways in which slaves in Cape Town passed this longing for a home across the ocean down through many generations into the present, by means of particular songs.

While Ekama's perceptive reading of the court records, wills and manumission deeds provides insight into the world in which the enslaved

acted, prayed and dreamed, Wagenaar takes his analysis one step further by wondering whether it is possible to understand the emotions of slavery. Inspired by the work of Clare Anderson, Sue Peabody, Saidiya Hartman and Yvette Christiansë, Lodewijk Wagenaar seeks out the liminal areas between historical research and literature. He traces the story of a woman in her late twenties called Boenga van Johor, who was sold at the slave market in Batavia and later sentenced to work in chains in the Cape after she had tried to break her chains and escape from captivity. Wagenaar goes to great length to reconstruct her forced journey from Batavia via Ceylon, where she is shipwrecked, to the Cape, where she eventually disappears from the records. He questions how historians can do justice to the life and experiences of this woman. He argues that the legal files that inform us of her actions and fate do little to help us understand how she would have felt, an issue that is brought up by Ekama as well when she discusses the question of consent in sexual relations. In the case of Boenga, Wagenaar argues, we rely on our imagination to get a sense of her desperation, loneliness and determination; but how far can historians stretch this? By raising these questions and letting his "informed imagination", as he calls it, play a role in his academic work as a historian Wagenaar actively responds to our call for an interdisciplinary approach to the history of the enslaved. Perhaps it is at the intersection of history and literature that we can best grasp the experience of being enslaved. It might be for this reason that slave descendants often find the histories of their ancestors better and more carefully represented through novels, poetry and songs than through historical reconstruction.

## Legacies, memories, absences

What difference did freedom make? The first three chapters in this section provide us with some insight into the transformations that came about with abolition. Yvette Christiansë evokes the emergence of new relations of production on the plantations. The forms of labour discipline that followed the abolition of slavery, the indenture system in particular, aimed at creating a sober and industrious free wage labour. There were however uncanny family resemblances with slavery. Recent research projects have attempted to show these continuities by situating indentured labour migration within a broader narrative of labour mobility in the Indian Ocean region in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[40] Christiansë's chapter follows this

path and is a masterful and poetic rendering of the end of slavery in the nineteenth century in the Indian Ocean world. She elucidates the processes that shaped the transformation of slavery into indenture "via the shadow form of apprenticeship" in the vast space called the Indian Ocean world. She interrogates the processes of dissimulation that present unfreedom as liberation. Importantly, the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act of 1807 led to international and maritime patrolling of the seas by admiralty fleets, and the establishing of vice admiralty courts in various ports which adjudicated on the seized vessels.

There were ways, however, for slavers to circumvent these strictures—old Indian Ocean trade routes became the means for slavers to avoid seizure off the west coast of Africa. Those rescued from slavers—who were then referred to as "liberated Africans"—were placed in apprenticeships in places with which they had no connection. They were sent to locations such as Durban, Mauritius, Seychelles, Aden and Bombay by authorities which assumed the role of "guardian" over these individuals. But the number of people placed in these apprenticeships after the abolition of slavery fell short of planters' needs for labour, at which point South and Southeast Asian "coolies" came to be considered an inexpensive solution. Christiansë examines the bureaucratic strategies used to support legislation and helps us to understand the centrality of the register for controlling slaves, liberated Africans and indentured labour and the continuities between these technologies of surveillance.

The next chapter by Pamela Scully (reprinted from her 1997 book *Liberating the Family? Gender and British Slave Emancipation in the Rural Western Cape, South Africa, 1823-1853*)[41] addresses the post-abolition world of formerly enslaved people in Cape colony where gender relations assumed a patriarchal structure promoted by the colonial state and former slave owners, often with the acquiescence of the freed men. Freedom, she contends, brought a new form of domination for freed women in male headed households. Later writings that mitigate her argument fail in their efforts to refute it. Mason for instance, argues that the creation of a family structure that had not been allowed under slavery and the ability to work in the household constituted a major source of satisfaction for freed women.[42]

The abolition of slavery in 1838 in the Cape Colony led to the British crown colony society becoming contested terrain for freed people, missionaries, former slave owners and the state. In the 1840s, thousands of emancipated slaves moved to the missions in the Western Cape, which they perceived as lands of opportunity. Scully examines in detail six cases of

infanticide in rural missions. Through these cases she illustrates the rituals of rule and power connected with a "humanitarian" colonial legal system, in tension with the "morality" displayed by missionaries in mission stations and courts. After 1838, freed women had to negotiate a world where race, gender and sexuality were a battleground between the colonial state and the missionaries. The death sentences of two of the six women convicted by juries were commuted by the chief justice. Colonial officials used the cases to illustrate "the immorality of the crime of infanticide, the wrongheadedness of the missionaries, and the beneficence of British justice".[43] Scully's text, twenty years later, still remains path-breaking in pointing out the gendered nature of the newly acquired freedom.

Freedom could bring to a freed man a new sense of worth and selfhood, sentiments that one can imagine but that are seldom expressed in writing. Paul Bijl's chapter is based on a unique nineteenth-century document written in Dutch by a formerly enslaved man called R.H. Wange van Balie from Indonesia, who was taken from Indonesia to Delft in the Netherlands and then emancipated. Bijl reads this unique memoir of a formerly enslaved Indonesian man as an "act of equality" in which Van Balie considers himself socially equal to his white Dutch readers, and capable of moral autonomy and empathy. In many ways, the Netherlands stood out as a place where there was hardly any interest in the plight of slaves, and only rarely was anti-slavery rhetoric heard in the Dutch public sphere. A few well known personalities such as Betje Wolff had expressed opposition to the slave trade and slavery in the late eighteenth century, but these isolated voices failed to spawn an abolitionist organization until the 1840s, when informal circles and liberal clubs emerged in Utrecht and Amsterdam.[44] On the whole, Dutch abolitionism was small scale, cautious and late, as compared to the British and American movements.[45] W.R. van Hoëvell's 1854 book, *Slaves and Free Men under Dutch Law*, the most-read abolitionist publication in the Netherlands, failed to claim political or social equality for slaves and continued to conceive of black people as less "developed" than white people.[46] Contrary to these texts, Van Balie's memoir reveals that emancipation meant for former slaves a vindication of equality and moral autonomy.

The memory and legacy of slavery in today's world are discussed in the last three chapters of this volume, showing us that slavery's past haunts the present. Remembering slavery can be traumatic for those whose ancestors were associated with it either as enslaved or as the enslavers. This trauma can manifest itself in the refusal of states and individuals to remember—the

white innocence described by Wekker—or in forms of memorializing based on compassion rather than responsibility. Expressing moral outrage or compassion can be problematic insofar as its emphasis on suffering entails a self-congratulatory "humanist" image of oneself.[47] The chapters by Anne Marieke van der Wal and Sarah Longair reflect on various modes of remembering Indian Ocean slavery in Cape Town and Zanzibar, while Guno Jones' chapter addresses the silence about and erasure of Indian Ocean slavery in post-colonial Netherlands.

Anne Marieke van der Wal's analysis of "sea shanties" from Cape Town shows the central place that the Indian Ocean occupies in the cultural memory of the Cape Coloured community, the descendants of Indian Ocean slaves. She draws on the work of Baderoon and Hofmeyr on the "Brown Indian Ocean", in response to studies of the Black Atlantic.[48] Van der Wal's cultural and historical reading of songs sung by members of this community shows how they represent a longing for the East while at the same time supporting, through their rhythms, the hard labour of enslaved and free fishermen, and their families on the shore. The origin of these songs brings us back on board VOC ships, where slaves familiarized themselves with Dutch sailors' songs and were forced to sing and dance on the deck at particular regulated moments during the day. In one such song young men are encouraged to sign up as sailors so that they can return to "their fatherland", which in the case of enslaved individuals means the East. Van der Wal brings together the work of Baderoon and Mustakeem by pointing out the duality of the sea's symbolic power as "being both a barrier and a memento of loss, as well as a symbol of freedom".[49] Songs such as these are direct expressions of cultural memory, even if written down at some point by Afrikaner folklorists, and precisely because they are transmitted orally and remain very visible (or audible) today they have a different relationship with the colonial archives.

The archival gaps that make it so difficult to locate and transmit the historical everyday experience of slavery in the Indian Ocean are mirrored by the gaps that one finds in museum collections in the region. In British collections in places like Zanzibar, as much as in the large urban centres, Sarah Longair shows how objects of punishment and confinement are the most prominent artefacts of the Indian Ocean slave experience, paralleling evidence in the legal archives. British collecting practice was particularly skewed towards a particular type of object. Gaps in the material record have only recently begun to be filled by new archaeological projects at sites of enslavement. Longair's chapter attempts to recreate the world of slavery from

material remnants in British museums. While doing so, she reflects on the logic governing the process of collecting in East Africa and the Indian Ocean world. The yoke (*gorée*) brought back to Britain and displayed in the David Livingston Centre tells us the predictable story of virtuous abolitionists, but underlying it is an invisible story of enslaved African women who destroyed similar objects of confinement. In some instances, the absent object speaks as powerfully as the displayed object, something Françoise Vergès has intimated in her concept of a museum without objects.[50] In understanding what being a slave felt like materialities can be revealing.

Modern states with past connections to the slave trade have ambivalent approaches to slavery in the present. French national commemorations, it has been argued, forget slavery while remembering its abolition.[51] The history of slavery is thus reduced to its abolition. Guno Jones examines the strange absence of Asian—especially Indonesian—slavery in Dutch knowledge production and public memory, in contrast to the state involvement in commemorating slavery and its abolition in the West Indies for at least the last twenty years. Michel-Rolph Trouillot, in his classic *Silencing the Past*, shows that silence is not an absence of words, but rather a "discursive silence" or non-presence of slavery through the use of certain philosophical or emotional registers of speech to describe it. In Mauritius and Sri Lanka, too, the Asian slave has disappeared from popular consciousness, with "slave" today connoting only Africans. Nigel Worden points to a similar phenomenon in Cape Town where there is a "neglect of the African and (to a lesser extent) South Asian elements of Cape Town's slave heritage", and where the dominant perception is one of a slave heritage that is Muslim and Southeast Asian.[52] Guno Jones inserts the invisibility of Asian slavery into a deeper reflection on the Dutch inability to recognize the violence of its colonial past, and the Dutch historiographical tradition of separating the history of the metropole from the history of the colonies. The resurgence of discourse on Atlantic slavery in the public sphere is, he argues, related to a vibrant identity politics among members of the Caribbean Dutch communities. This has led to a movement that connects the past and the present, pointing to cultural traces of slavery and its afterlife in everyday Dutch culture. This dissonant voice has until now eluded Asian slavery, creating a bifurcation in the public memory of slavery. Jones points to the need to bring this "absent memory" back into view.

## Conclusion

This volume is a patchwork of approaches to Indian Ocean slavery, but each contribution in its own way brings the enslaved person to the fore as a human being navigating larger structures and acting within the constraints of her situation. It includes research from scholarly traditions that are rarely in dialogue, including Sanskrit and Tamil literature, museum studies, history, cultural studies and post-colonial studies. Although each contribution varies in its approach to source material and in writing style, the editors have not attempted to mould them into a template. The result is a diverse set of chapters that are in conversation—and sometimes in tension—with each other, which represents creative new readings of the histories and legacies of slavery and abolition in the Indian Ocean. The careful literary analysis of one text by Paul Bijl might help historians to recognize scripted forms expressed in the archive, while Yvette Christiansë's poetic approach to the colonial register as instrument of surveillance could stimulate a further cultural reading of such bureaucratic heritage. The colonial archive, the traditional domain of historians, may not answer all our questions about emotions, identity or mobility, as Wagenaar shows, yet it proves to be surprisingly rich in detail at the individual level, if you know your way through its veins.

Women and men like Boenga, Deidami, Amber and Cruz each communicate to us different aspects of life in enslavement. They react to their situations dramatically through escape and rage, but they also move about in taverns, markets and the church, where they meet others—enslaved and free—and make plans or dream of a home across the sea. We may not always know how they became slaves—were they kidnapped, sold by their fathers or mothers, or born into slavery? But we do know that their experiences of being enslaved have been transmitted over generations and shaped culture. The book resists ideas of victimhood and does not aim to foster compassion, a sentiment that, according to Balkenhol, has colonial roots. Instead it calls for more scholarly reflexivity and appeals to public responsibility and political engagement. This book is important not only for what it reveals of the little-known history of enslavement in the Indian Ocean world, but because the colonial past still informs and haunts how we feel and behave in the multicultural realities of Britain, France and the Netherlands today.

## Notes

1. We thank the co-authors of this volume, the two peer reviewers, and series editor Tsolin Nalbantian, for their valuable comments and suggestions on an earlier version of this introduction. Harkirat Singh and Doreen van den Boogaart were indispensible in assisting us with research and practical matters during the workshop in Leiden in 2017, out of which this volume took shape. Pouwel van Schooten has done a wonderful job in helping us to edit the volume in its final stage.
2. For a useful discussion on what constitutes slavery see, inter alia, the classic works of Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2018; Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff, *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives*. Madison WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977. For a comprehensive bibliography see Joseph Calder Miller, *Slavery: A Worldwide Bibliography, 1900–1982*. White Plains NY: Kraus International, 1985.
3. Stuart Hall, "When Was the 'Post-Colonial'?: Thinking at the Limit," in *The Postcolonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons*, edited by Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti, 247. London: Routledge, 1996.
4. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*. Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2009; Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture*. Cambridge MA and London: MIT Press, 1998; Françoise Vergès, "Les Troubles de la Memoire: Traite Negrière, Esclavage et *É*criture de l'Histoire," *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 45, no. 179/180 (2005): 1143-1178; Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race*. Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2016.
5. For an impression of this workshop see Doreen van den Boogaart and Harkirat Singh, "Being a Slave: Indian Ocean Slavery in Local Context," *The IIAS newsletter* 78 (2017): https://www.iias.asia/the-newsletter/article/being-slave-indian-ocean-slavery-local-context
6. Prosper Eve, *Le corps des esclaves de l'île Bourbon. Histoire d'une reconquête*, Paris, Presse de l'université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2013.
7. L. Raat, *The Life of Governor Joan Gideon Loten (1710-1789): A Personal History of a Dutch Virtuoso*. Hilversum: Verloren, 2010.
8. Gwyn Campbell, *The Structure of Slavery in Indian Ocean Africa and Asia*. London: Frank Cass, 2004; Anthony Reid and Jennifer Brewster, *Slavery, Bondage, and Dependency in Southeast Asia*.

St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1983; Indrani Chatterjee and Richard Eaton (eds.), *Slavery and South Asian History*. Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 2006.

9. Alessandro Stanziani, *Bondage: Labor and Rights in Eurasia from the Sixteenth to the Early Twentieth Centuries*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2014.
10. Take, for example, van Delden's description of slavery in A.J. van Delden, "De Sangir-Eilanden in 1825," *Indisch Magazijn* 1(4-6): 356-383; 1 (7–9) 1-32 (1844).
11. That is not to say that the Europeans were the only traders in slaves. Within these territories under European rule Chinese, Buginese, Gujarati and other slave traffickers were accommodated.
12. These causes recur in much of the above-mentioned literature: Gwyn Campbell, *The Structure of Slavery*; Reid and Brewster, *Slavery, Bondage, and Dependency*; Chatterjee and Eaton (eds.), *Slavery and South Asian History*.
13. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Slaves and Tyrants: Dutch Tribulations in Seventeenth-Century Mrauk-U," *Journal of Early Modern History* 1, no. 3 (1997): 201.
14. Nira Wickramasinghe and Alicia Schrikker, "The Ambivalence of Freedom: Slaves in Jaffna (Sri Lanka) in the 17th–19th Centuries," *Journal of Asian Studies,* 78, no 3, (2019): 497-519.
15. Hans Hägerdal, "The Slaves of Timor: Life and Death on the Fringes of Early Colonial Society," *Itinerario* 32, no. 2 (2010): 19-44; Helen Creese, *Bali in the Early Nineteenth Century: The Ethnographic Accounts of Pierre Dubois*. Leiden: Brill, 2016.
16. Ulbe Bosma, *The Making of a Periphery. How Island Southeast Asia Became a Mass Exporter of Labor,* 55. New York: Columbia Unversity Press, 2018.
17. Tatiana Seijas, "The Portuguese Slave Trade to Spanish Manila: 1580–1640," *Itinerario* 32, no. 1 (2008): 19-38; Tatiana Seijas, *Asian Slaves in Colonial Mexico: From Chinos to Indians*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014; Dienke Hondius, Nancy Jouwe, Jennifer Tosch, and Dineke Stam, *Dutch New York Histories: Connecting African, Native American and Slavery Heritage*. Volendam: LM Publishers, 2017.
18. Linda Mbeki and Matthias van Rossum, "Private Slave Trade in the Dutch Indian Ocean World: A Study into the Networks and Backgrounds of the Slavers and the Enslaved in South Asia and South Africa," *Slavery & Abolition* 38, no. 1 (2017): 95-116.
19. Ulbe Bosma, *The Making of a Periphery,* 55-58.
20. Allen, *European Slave Trading*; Linda Mbeki and Matthias van Rossum, "Private Slave Trade in the Dutch Indian Ocean World: A Study into the Networks and Backgrounds of the Slavers and the Enslaved in South Asia and South Africa,"

*Slavery & Abolition* 38, no. 1 (2017): 95; Markus Vink, "'The World's Oldest Trade': Dutch Slavery and Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean," *Journal of World History* 14, no. 2 (2003): 131-177.

21. Indrani Chatterjee, "British Abolitionism from the Vantage of Pre-Colonial South Asian Regimes," in *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*, ed. D. Eltis, S. Engerman, S. Drescher, and D. Richardson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 441-465.
22. Marina Carter and Nira Wickramasinghe, "Forcing the Archive: Involuntary Migrants 'of Ceylon' in the Indian Ocean World of the 18–19th Centuries," *South Asian History and Culture* 9, no. 2 (2018): 194-206.
23. Ann Laura Stoler, "Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance," *Archival Science* 2, no. 1–2 (2002): 87-109.
24. Paul E. Lovejoy, "'Freedom Narratives' of Transatlantic Slavery," *Slavery & Abolition* 32, no. 1 (March 2011): 91-107.
25. See, for instance, Vincent Carrera, *Equiano the African: Biography of a Self-Made Man*. Athens GA: University of Georgia Press, 2005.
26. Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters. Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.
27. For an example of legal records creatively used to recreate the lives of enslaved women in India see Sylvia Vatuk, "Bharattee's Death: Domestic Slave-Women in Nineteenth-Century Madras," in *Slavery and South Asian History*, edited by Indrani Chatterjee and Richard M. Eaton, 210-233. (Bloomington IN: University Press, 2006.
28. Meghan Vaughn, *Creating the Creole Island*. Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2005; Marina Carter, *Voices from Indenture: Experiences of Indian Migrants in the British Empire*. London: Leicester University Press, 1996; Clare Anderson, *Subaltern Lives. Biographies of Colonialism in the Indian Ocean World, 1790–1920*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012; see also Anand A. Yang, "Indian Convict Workers in Southeast Asia in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries," *Journal of World History* 24, no. 2 (2003): 179-208.
29. Kerry Ward, *Networks of Empire: Forced Migration in the Dutch East India Company*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008; Ronit Ricci, Anand A. Yang and Kieko Matteson (eds.), *Exile in Colonial Asia: Kings, Convicts, Commemoration*. Honolulu HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2016; Michael Laffan, "From Javanese Court to African Grave: How Noriman Became Tuan Skapie, 1717–1806," *Journal of Indian Ocean World Studies* 1 (2017): 38-59.
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*Resistance in South Africa*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983); Nigel Worden, *Slavery in Dutch South Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, African Studies Series 44, 1985; Robert C.H. Shell, *Children of Bondage: A Social History of the Slave Society at the Cape of Good Hope, 1652–1838*. Hanover and London: Wesleyan University Press, 1994; Sirtjo Koolhof and Robert Ross, "Upas, September and the Bugis at the Cape of Good Hope: The Context of a Slave's Letter," *Archipel* 70 (2005): 281-308; Pamela Scully, *Liberating the Family? Gender and British Slave Emancipation in the Rural Western Cape, South Africa, 1823–1853*. Portsmouth NH: Heinemann, 1997.

31. Nigel Worden, "Cape Slaves in the Paper Empire of the VOC," *Kronos* 40, no. 1 (2014): 27.
32. Sue Peabody, *Madeleine's Children: Family, Freedom, Secrets, and Lies in France's Indian Ocean Colonies*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
33. Omar H. Ali, *Malik Ambar. Power and Slavery Across the Indian Ocean*. New York, Oxford University Press, 2016.
34. See Carlo Ginzburg, "Microhistory. Two or three things that I know about it," *Critical Inquiry* 20, no. 1 (Autumn 1993): 10-35.
35. Frederick Cooper, Thomas C. Holt and Rebecca J. Scott, *Beyond Slavery: Explorations of Race, Labor, and Citizenship in Postemancipation Societies*. Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000.
36. Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
37. This section draws from the forthcoming book, Nira Wickramasinghe, *Slave in a Palanquin. Colonial Servitude and Resistance in Sri Lanka*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2020.
38. Alicia Schrikker and Dries Lyna, "Threads of the Legal Web. Dutch Law and Everyday Colonialism in Eighteenth-Century Asia," in *The Uses of Justice in Global Perspective 1600–1900*, edited by Manon Van der Heijden, Griet Vermeesch and Jaco Zuijderduijn, 42-56. London: Routledge, 2019.
39. Eric Jones, *Wives, Slaves, and Concubines: A History of the Female Underclass in Dutch Asia*. DeKalb IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010; Henk Niemeijer, *Batavia: Een Koloniale Samenleving in de Zeventiende Eeuw*. Amsterdam: Balans, 2005; Bondan Kanumoyoso, "Beyond the City Wall: Society and Economic Development in the Ommelanden of Batavia, 1684–1740" (PhD thesis, Leiden University, 2011).
40. See, for instance, the University of Edinburgh AHRC Project, "Becoming 'Coolies': Rethinking the Origins of the Indian Ocean Labour Diaspora, 1772–1920," Arts and Humanities Research Council. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, March 2015–

August 2017; and "Legacy of Slavery and Indentured Labour. Linking the Past with the Future" (presentation, Conference on Slavery, Indentured Labour, Migration, Diaspora and Identity Formation, Paramaribo, Suriname, 19–23 June 2018).

41. Scully, *Liberating the Family*.
42. John Edwin Mason, *Social Death and Resurrection. Slavery and Emancipation in South Africa*. Charlottesville VA and London: University of Virginia Press, 2003.
43. See Pamela Scully' chapter in this volume
44. Maartje Janse, "'Holland as a Little England'? British Anti-Slavery Missionaries and Continental Abolitionist Movements in the Mid Nineteenth Century," *Past and Present* 229, no. 1 (November 2015): 123-160, 135.The standard text on debates about Dutch abolitionism is Gert Oostindie (ed.), *Fifty Years Later: Antislavery, Capitalism and Modernity in the Dutch Orbit*. Leiden: KITLV, 1995.
45. Janse, "'Holland as a Little England'?". Janse argues that there were more protests than generally assumed.
46. W.R. van Hoëvell, *Slaven en Vrijen Onder de Nederlandsche Wet*. Zaltbommel: Joh. Noman en Zoon, 1855, cited in Paul Bijl, chapter seven in this volume.
47. Markus Balkenhol, "Silence and the Politics of Compassion. Commemorating Slavery in the Netherlands," *Social Anthropology*, 24, no. 3 (2016): 278.
48. Gabeba Baderoon, "The African Oceans—Tracing the Sea as Memory of Slavery in South African Literature and Culture," *Research in African Literatures* 40, no. 4 (Winter 2009): 91, 93; Isabel Hofmeyr, "The Black Atlantic Meets the Indian Ocean: Forging New Paradigms of Transnationalism for the Global South—Literary and Cultural Perspectives," *Social Dynamics* 33, no. 2 (2007): 13.
49. Gabeba Baderoon, "The African Oceans"; Sowande' M. Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea: Terror, Sex, and Sickness in the Middle Passage*. Chicago IL: University of Illinois Press, 2016.
50. Françoise Vergès, "A Museum without Objects," in *The Postcolonial Museum. The Arts of Memory and the Pressures of History,* 25-38, edited by Iain Chambers, Alessandra De Angelis, Celeste Ianniciello and Mariangela Orabona, London: Routhledge, 2014.
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PART I

# Mobility, Emotions, Identities

1

# Slavery, Ethnicity, and Identity in the Indian Ocean Colonial World

## A Case Study of "Indian" Slaves on Mauritius

*Marina Carter*

Slaves brought from India were among the first permanent inhabitants of Mauritius – then known as the Isle of France – after the French took control of the island in the early eighteenth century, but, a minority in servility for the most part without indigenous names, they merged into creoleness and are all but forgotten today, their descendants for the most part ignorant of their Indian slave forebears. This can at least partly be attributed to the fact that slaves originating from the Indian subcontinent were a marginal group virtually everywhere they were transported.[1] They have consequently received much less attention than the numerically more important diaspora of slaves of African origin, although works discussing the Dutch Indian Ocean slave trade have identified three interlocking circuits: "Greater South Africa", South Asia and Southeast Asia.[2] Direct slave importations from the French settlements in India, notably Pondicherry, to Mauritius have been recorded from the 1720s, but many arrived "silently", individually, humans shipped through unrecorded transactions or rarely uncovered deceptions. Some came as spoils of war: captured lascars or sepoys sold on into slavery. Others were victims of scarcity: when famine stalked the subcontinent it was quickly echoed in the Isle of France civil status registers in pages littered with the death records of un-named newly arrived Bengalis or Telugus. The paucity of the slave archive is compounded by its ambiguity: in eighteenth-century French-language records the term "indien" could serve to represent people arriving from China and Southeast Asia as easily as those deriving from the subcontinent of India. This chapter reflects on the difficulties of recovering the history of slaves whose ethnicities are historically questionable and continue to be questioned and whose lived experiences have yet to be fully retrieved

from archival holdings so as definitively to puncture the facile stereotyping of contemporary travel accounts.

## Enslaved Indians in the Indian Ocean world

Reviewing the literature on slavery in the Indian Ocean Linda Mbeki and Matthias van Rossum concluded that while a significant body of work has excavated the lives of Asian slaves at the Cape, "for other regions, the scale of such scholarship is more modest".[3] And even the South African historiography remains flawed, as indicated by Loren Kruger's lament about the "almost wilful ignorance of the fact that the majority of the first-generation slaves brought by the Dutch to the seventeenth-century Cape Colony were from Bengal and Madras rather than from Malaya as is still commonly supposed".[4] Yet, as Anthony Reid had pointed out decades earlier, Asia provides "important evidence of European colonists taking over and interacting with an existing Asian system of slavery, rather than imposing their own system in a vacuum as in the New World". For example, he contends that the "phenomenon of slaves buying and owning other slaves" appeared to have been exported to the Cape from Southeast Asia and uses this and other examples to show why Indian Ocean slavery offers important countervailing narratives to the more commonly referenced Atlantic model.[5] Chatterjee and Eaton provide some clues to this conundrum when they highlight – in reference to India – the complexity of slavery in the region, being "very much a process" whereby "vast numbers of people" move "through various kinds of slavery with a range of different outcomes", the only common denominator being "the slaves'" condition of total dependency on some powerful person or institution. A further complication, they note, is that historical accounts of slavery in South Asia "must be painstakingly reconstructed from records that are typically fragmentary, opaque, and tainted by the politics of the day".[6] Nair's study of slavery in only one region of India – Kerala – underscores this complexity. Alongside what are described as "hereditary slave castes" including Pariahs, Pulayas and Kuravas, Nair asserts that criminals and even women "found to have engaged in inter-caste sexual activity" were liable to be sold as slaves. In addition, a "third class" of slaves is enumerated: those who sold themselves or their children "during times of intense scarcity".[7] Sinnapah Arasaratnam has noted that the South Asian slave trade was fuelled by a combination of food crises and political instability.[8]

Unravelling the trajectories of slave exportation in the colonial Indian Ocean world is equally challenging. Secondary sources detailing the activities of East India trading companies in often bulky or multi-volume tomes can be surprisingly meagre when the commodity in question is slaves.[9] Auguste Toussaint's study of the voluminous correspondence of the French merchant Jean Baptiste Pipon explains away the few allusions to slave trading on the ground that this constituted but "a minor operation" in his multifarious commercial ventures.[10] Allen notes that evidence of the British East India Company's involvement in trading slaves is scarce after 1772, while Dutch records indicate that Indian slaves are frequently a small element of "mixed cargoes" shipped from one settlement to another.[11] The difficulty of tracking slave movements across Portuguese, Dutch, French and British colonial empires, settlements and within the minutiae of bureaucratic recording systems is compounded by the diversity of nations involved in the trade. Pedro Machado details Indian, and especially Gujarati, merchant links with Portuguese, French and Brazilian slavers from the mid-eighteenth century onwards, while Mbeki and Rossum describe networks of Chinese and Bugis slave-traders in Southeast Asia.[12] The linguistic and geographical challenges of tackling such diverse sources can well be imagined and go some way towards explaining the problematic of reconstituting patterns and routes of the trade in Indian slaves in the region.

## The trade in Indians to Dutch and French Mauritius

VOC archives at the Cape indicate that the Dutch brought slaves and convicts from India to their embryonic settlement on Mauritius, but we know little about them other than their names and participation in occasional sanguinary events, such as the arson attack on the Dutch fort at Vieux Grand Port in which Antoni of Malabar and Esperance from Bengal were key participants.[13] Foreign, particularly British, ships visiting the island indicate that some private slave trading also took place involving captives from "the East". In 1701, for example, Diodati, the Dutch Governor of Mauritius, complained of the problems caused by the purchase of individuals who subsequently claimed to be free, adding "it would help if the freemen were forbidden to buy slaves from the English, who generally kidnap them in the East. Among them are many who are really not slaves, and after being sold here are unwilling to work in the forests, thus greatly inconveniencing the Company and freemen."[14] The

difficulties of dealing with runaway "slaves" as well as unruly pirate visitors and marauding rats led the Dutch to abandon Mauritius in 1710.

The French, already established on the neighbouring island of Bourbon [present day Réunion], claimed the island for France soon afterwards, renaming it the Isle of France, and settled there from 1721.[15] The presence of Indian slaves on Bourbon has been recorded from the late seventeenth century, and the 1704 census there listed 45 Indians out of a total slave population numbering 311.[16] Indians may well have been amongst the earliest arrivals from Bourbon on the Isle of France, and direct slave importations from the French settlements in India, notably Pondicherry [Puduchery, Andhra Pradesh] and Chandernagore in Bengal have been recorded there from the 1720s. Between 1728 and 1735 it is estimated that 269 slaves were landed on the island from India.[17] However, these human cargoes were relatively insignificant in relation to the lucrative commodities trade with India, which was itself circumscribed by the vagaries of weather and war. Ships tended to stop at the Isle of France on the return voyage from India between March and June when cyclones were least likely.[18] It was during the last quarter of the eighteenth century, however, that the Indian slave trade to the Mascarenes attained its zenith. French East India Company rule of the islands ended in 1767, and a free trade in slaves followed. Richard Allen estimates that 15,000 to 18,000 Indian slaves arrived on Mauritius and Réunion between 1770 and 1810.[19]

Scarcity and hunger did much of the work of would-be slave exporters from India to the French Mascarene islands. In 1785 the British representative in Dacca alerted his counterpart at Fort William [Kolkata] to the mass transportation of starving children:

> The long continued distress this district has laboured under from a general scarcity of grain, and the failure of crops in consequence of the late deluge, has reduced its inhabitants to the lowest pitch of misery and distress; the poor and the lowest class of people, to secure to themselves a subsistence, are reduced to a sale of their children, and many hundreds have been purchased ... and immediately dispatched for Calcutta and its environs, they are, for the most part, landed in the foreign settlements, from whence, I am given to understand, they are embarked in vessels to different parts ...[20]

Wider Anglo-French conflicts and the knowledge that their bitter rivals were profiting from the sale of "British subjects" was a key factor in developing

indignation in India about this "infamous traffic". The purchase of 130 children by a Frenchman, Reiny, at the French enclave of Chandernagore and their subsequent shipment to Mauritius was a catalyst for Lord Cornwallis' denunciation of the practice of "purchasing and collecting native children in a clandestine manner, and exporting them for sale to the French islands" in a despatch to the Court of Directors dated 2 August 1789.[21] The British prohibition of the slave trade was echoed by the French in Chandernagore but abolition on paper did not prevent shipments in practice.[22] The tensions which developed between these two nations over slave trafficking and the subsequent correspondence that these incidents generated are a useful source of evidence for historians.

In 1791, for example, the *Stisam Low* was stopped and searched en route from Calcutta to Pondicherry, and twenty girls and eight boys were disembarked. The boys were aged between 4 and 12 and originated from Danah, Chinsurah, Chandernagore, Calcutta and Serampore. Several were alleged to have been kidnapped directly from their homes. Fourteen-year-old Mirham's case was typical – she had been stolen from the house of her parents by Moondhee Mahjee and sold to a Mr Sampson in Calcutta who left her in Serampore from where she was then sold on to Petit Jaun of Chandernagore who, finally, sold her to Monsieur Jourdan who shipped her, with the intention of sending her to the Mascarenes. Petit Jaun was described as "a well-known character in the line of obtaining and conveying away many helpless children from this country".[23]

In Andhra Pradesh, the kidnapping of two young men in their twenties, who had gone to the French settlement of Yanam to deliver cloth and were then instructed by one Rajah Gopaul to deliver some produce to the riverside where he forced them into a boat, was prevented only when they were able to pass a message to their relatives through local boatmen who arrived on board with a delivery of ballast.[24] Correspondence between the French commandant at Yanam and local British officials indicates how prevarication was a useful tool of the former – on receiving a report of 65 slaves being confined within his jurisdiction he failed to act – whilst ostensibly awaiting orders from his superior officer at Pondicherry – during which time the slaves were "dispersed". In another case, the French commandant claimed that he had been unable to prevent the departure of a slave trader for the Isle of France, but pointed out that English vessels had also just left for the same destination, also with a quantity of slaves! At the Dutch settlement of Jaggernautporam, through which some of the ships transited, the local chief observed wryly

that the English prohibition on slave trading would be more effective if they provided "the natives all over the country with victuals, for the obtaining of which a number of natives choose slavery rather than a certain death; and indeed, I cannot see that their choice is much to be blamed".[25]

## Identity, ownership and status issues

Classifying the ethnic status of Indian slaves is particularly problematic in the Dutch and French Indian Ocean colonial world. Dutch slave toponyms like *Esperance van Bengalen* are "often more likely an indication of the place of purchase or transhipment as opposed to geographic origins", since the source of slave journeys is frequently unknown and contact with Europeans generally begins only when a specific city or port or settlement is reached.[26] Similarly, instances have been recorded in the French Mauritian archives of ethnic designations for slaves such as "indien" or "malais" being used interchangeably, while the toponym 'malabar' is equally problematic. Applied frequently to slaves originating from the Coromandel coast and other parts of South India, it was occasionally also used more widely, for slaves from any part of the subcontinent.[27] The records of slave traders are even more vague. The correspondence of French merchant Jean Baptiste Pipon is a case in point. A transaction involving three slaves describes them as handsome and aged between 12 and 18, and infers that they were purchased in India, although this is not made explicit. In two other examples he advises a prospective buyer of the arrival of nine slaves coming from Bengal and acknowledges receipt of a female slave who arrived from Pondicherry in 1791 without furnishing any further details.[28]

French civil status records offer occasional glimpses of the Indian birthplaces of slaves, but most were given new names on arrival in Mauritius and we therefore have few traces of their ethnic origins. Durba Ghosh has noted how naming practices can be used to chart racial and gendered topographies, remarking how the process of renaming Indian women domestic servants and concubines in white households "had the consequence of detaching women from their own communities by erasing a crucial sign of their origins" particularly in the South Asian context where surnames often serve to locate people by region, religion and caste.[29] In the Mauritian context, non-Christian slave names occasionally survive because a significant proportion of slave owners were co-religionists and from ethnically similar

groups. In 1775 Moutou, a free Malabar, reported the death of his 80-year-old Malabar slave Rama, for example. Of course, the meaning of "malabar", as noted above, was itself problematic. In 1809 the death of Pierre Louis Maga, a "malabar", is recorded; however it is then specified that the 47- year-old fisherman was born in Bengal.[30]

The introduction of slave registers in the early nineteenth century forced many French owners to create "surnames" for slaves who had hitherto possessed only a forename. Some of the new names, such as Jean Bengali, Silvain Talinga and Nancy Patna, may allude to a known regional or ethnic identity. Other given surnames point to a possible caste or religious identity i.e. Hector Bramine, Adesh Musulman and Lafleur Lascar, but whether these names are fanciful rhetorical flourishes of registrants or accurate identifiers cannot, for the most part, be verified.[31]

Unlike new world slave systems, a significant proportion of slave owners and purchasers in the French and Dutch Indian Ocean settlements were non-European and frequently of similar ethnic status to their slaves.[32] The presence of a free coloured Indian middle class on the Isle of France certainly served as an avenue of social mobility for some slaves, who were freed by their owners for the purposes of marriage with a free co-religionist and who were then in turn more likely be in a financial position to purchase family members, thereby effectively freeing them from subordination to other owners.[33] Runaway slaves had opportunities to find safe refuge amongst free communities of Indians in the port capital of entrepot settlements, while those who had been kidnapped as slaves were sometimes able to obtain character witnesses from amongst their free compatriots and thereby gain their liberty. In 1785 several Indians testified before the police in Port Louis calling for the liberation of Odia Padam who had been kidnapped by Jean de Silvas, for instance.[34]

On the other hand, plenty of examples can be found to demonstrate that owners were perfectly capable of wanton cruelty towards slaves presumed to be of their own ethnic group. Sinetamy, a free Indian at the Isle of France, was described as a "very hard character" in a local police report discussing the suicide of one of his slaves, which they attributed to his harsh treatment, without however having necessary proof to arrest him. On another occasion, it was reported that his Indian slave Arnacelon was found badly wounded with his arms bound.[35] Slaves were a capital asset, and whereas ties of family and conjugality could serve to mitigate and circumscribe conditions and terms of slavery, a shared ethnic identity was no guarantor of good treatment or empathy in transactions between owner and owned.

That said, powerful stereotypes were engendered about the diverse ethnic groups enslaved in the Dutch and French Indian Ocean settlements, and it is likely that these tropes played a role in determining the employment and status of some slaves. At the Cape "Bengali women had a reputation as skilled needlewomen while Malays were reputed to be excellent craftsmen" while in Mauritius the "docility" of Indian slaves and their "better qualifications" for domestic service are frequently remarked on by contemporaries.[36] French naturalist and artist Jacques Milbert, who spent several years on the Isle of France, most clearly expresses the tendency of white settlers and visitors to hierarchize Indian Ocean slaves according to ethnocentric perceptions in his descriptions of enslaved Indians as "the most attractive and well formed" as well as cleaner, more faithful and more sober than slaves of other ethnic groups. His depiction of the naked, breast-feeding Indian slave mistress of a French planter as equal to a sculpture by Phydias is especially noteworthy in this genre.[37] Punishments, equally, were meted out according to ethnic type in the opinion of one owner: "the Slaves are descended from different stocks, and the mode of punishment adapted to act on one race, is not applicable to all the castes [...]. This sense of honor prevails, especially in those of Indian origin: Degradation from the rank of commander is their punishment."[38]

## A gendered elite in servility?

How far did these tropes impact upon the lived experiences of slaves? Linda Mbeki and Matthias van Rossum contend that stereotypes were important in the trade and employment of slaves. They could be reflected, for instance, in the price that slaves fetched, or in the type of labour that they were assigned to do." They acknowledge, however, that the extent to which stereotypical preferences could be acted upon was determined by availability: "the effects of these stereotypes would become less marked as the supply of Asian slaves to the Cape dwindled towards the end of the VOC period."[39] Closer investigation of the occupational status of slaves of all ethnic groups does not however bear out the favoured status of Indian slaves ascribed to them by contemporaries at the Isle of France such as Milbert. During the eighteenth century, the island was a port and entrepot-based economy, and the high proportion of slaves engaged as artisans, domestics, market-sellers and similar occupations reflects this. Such slaves were not confined to the homes of their owners; on the contrary many were required to undertake work which necessitated them

travelling to, and sometimes even residing in, other spaces. As discussed in chapter 3 by Geelen et al. in this volume, "a range of formal and informal social controls" nevertheless continued to dominate the lives of such slaves.

Towards the close of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth, Mauritius, conquered by the British in 1810, evolved into a plantation society. Accordingly, Indian slaves, alongside their African and Malagasy counterparts, were increasingly employed in agricultural occupations, particularly in sugar cane labour. By 1817, the commonest employment of Indian and African slaves alike was that of "pioche", i.e. field hand. After the abolition of the slave trade, the proportion of Indian slaves declined; by 1830 there were only an estimated 3,500 Indian slaves in Mauritius out of a total slave population of 68,000, and following abolition in 1834 the Indian ex slave population vanished from popular consciousness in the wake of the much larger immigration from the subcontinent of indentured labour.[40]

Reid's study of slavery in Southeast Asia led him to the conclusion that "opportunities for upward mobility and an easier life appear to have been far greater for bonded women than men".[41] Female slaves were probably imported and purchased for the express purpose of serving as concubines in male-dominated early settler societies such as the Cape and Mauritius. Many bore children from these relationships; some were freed by their owners and inherited property from them. Kate Ekama's chapter in this collection discusses evidence from the Ceylon VOC archives of sexual relationships between women slaves and their owners, and how, despite legal impediments to intimacy, this became a route to manumission and inheritance for themselves and their children. She eloquently portrays the difficulties for the historian of establishing the nature of such relationships, concluding that "consent cannot be read in these stories with any kind of clarity."

In a few cases, Indian women became the legal spouses of white male settlers despite the fact that marriages between population groups categorized as white, coloured or slave were proscribed for most of the eighteenth century in Mauritius. In 1771 Pierre Dufour, an ex-soldier born in Brittany, France, married Marie Christine, his former slave, described as a "Bengaly negress"; during the Revolutionary years such marriages became increasingly common as long-term relationships were formalized when laws prohibiting intermarriage were relaxed. It is also evident that the large free Indian community (skilled contract workers such as masons and carpenters, and a few traders) provided a route to freedom for some Indian women slaves, who were purchased and liberated for

purposes of marriage. Marie, the Bengali slave of a European merchant, was expressly given up by her owner and confided to Félicien Jérôme, a free Indian from Karaikal, in order for her to contract marriage with the latter. When Josephine Franchine of Madras married Jean Louis Basile of Pondicherry, they formalized a relationship which had lasted more than eleven years, during which time she was freed by him and bore him six children. Certainly the presence of the large, initially predominantly male and Indian "free coloured" community helps to explain the fact that Indian female slaves in the Isle of France were more likely, statistically speaking, to be manumitted than female slaves of African origin.[42] Of 199 female slaves emancipated between 1784 and 1803, 126 or 63 per cent according to Tegally were Indians, while Allen has noted the wealth acquired by such freed Indian women.[43] Were Indian female slaves in Mauritius, in these respects, therefore, an elite in servility?

It is in fact challenging to find unequivocal patterns demarcating Indian slaves from other ethnic groups in terms of spouse selection. Free African and Malagasy men also purchased, bore children with, and occasionally liberated women slaves of all ethnic groups, including Indians. For example, in 1778 Paul, a free Malagasy, married his Bengali slave, Suzanne, and legitimized their two children. Albert, a Mozambican employed as a postman, also married a Bengali slave. Marriages between Indian or Malay male and African female slaves are similarly on record albeit in smaller numbers. Intermarriages between slaves of every ethnic group were in fact common, and although one might point to unions between slaves of a similar ethnicity or religion as being indicative of a certain element of "choice", the rapidity of creolization renders such characterizations increasingly specious. Thus, while we can identify first-generation slaves Uzirmahmod and Koki, both from Calcutta, as a Muslim married couple in the records, their son was named Hector and married Sophie, a native of "Coringhee". Given that the Lettres Patentes of 1723 required slaves to be instructed in the Catholic religion and baptized, the widespread adoption of Christian forenames makes it practically impossible to discover whether they or their island-born baptized offspring continue to identify with the religious and cultural traditions of forebears.[44]

Secondly, how we can define and describe relationships which begin in the violence of slavery and are characterized by long periods of presumably enforced concubinage is a difficult question. As E.G. Jordan argues,

women slaves were arguably disadvantaged due to the greater likeliness of their being confined to the household in the role of domestic servants and intimately abused. Physical mobility enabled slaves to create "zones of personal autonomy" and permitted interactions with others, and while slave men's work frequently took them into the streets, "the everyday experiences of their female counterparts were far more circumscribed. Isolated within their masters' homes, slave women were subject to close supervision and endless workdays, as well as physical and sexual abuse." Using the case study of Cape Town Jordan notes that the "domestic work assigned to most slave women limited not only their physical mobility but their economic opportunities as well", pointing out that even women who were "rented out" did not necessarily benefit from the arrangements. Washerwomen were an exception, because they carried out their work almost as a "public performance" and hence became "fixtures on the landscape".[45]

Durba Ghosh tackles the problematic from a rather different perspective, making the important point that "conjugal relationships offered some native women room to maneuver strategically, fashioning selves that could be both socially and politically advantageous given their circumstances on the margins of colonial society". Her research on women in household slavery in India demonstrates effectively how "native men and women negotiated the structures of colonial labor extraction in very different ways".[46] Of course, the sexual dynamic in unequal power relationships between white men and black enslaved women sometimes led to sanguinary acts of vengeance and mutilation wrought on the latter and which were endlessly recycled in salacious contemporary travel and anti-slavery accounts.[47] Less well publicized were the dangers inherent in lending Indian female slaves out to young sailors and soldiers to act as temporary concubines – who could be removed on the whim of the owner – when real passions were unleashed. In 1798, a French sailor slit the throat of a Bengali slave, Rosalie, and then committed suicide by shooting himself in the mouth. The circumstances of the case remain unelucidated in the archive but indicate a crime of passion and despair.[48] As Ghosh pertinently concludes in her study of sex and the family in colonial India, "[n]ative women were often the silent, unnamed other that enabled the elaboration of various types of hierarchies and social anxieties ... the agency and subjectivity of native women was overridden, but only partially so".[49]

## Conclusion

Whilst no historian of subaltern labour in the Mascarenes can be unaware of the presence of an Asian slave minority, it is surprising to note how little textual space and analysis has been allotted to this group in recent studies of eighteenth-century Isle of France society and of Indian Ocean bonded labour.[50] The erosion of their identity and interrogation of their ethnicity continue today when images of African slaves are superimposed over their stories. Remarkably, even in the very rare cases where a slave of Indian origin is the principal subject of study, the ethnic identity is appropriated or suppressed and an African physiognomy is assumed. A case in point is the recent publication of the Furcy affair by French journalist Mohammed Aïssaoui.[51] Furcy was born on Réunion island to an Indian slave woman – subsequently freed by bequest – and a French father, according to his own testimony. Furcy's long struggle to be declared "free" led to his being exiled to Mauritius from where he launched further bids for freedom. Eventually his case was heard in France where it raised a series of questions about identity and slavery and became a *cause célèbre*. The depiction of Furcy on the book's cover and reproduced in subsequent media coverage in Réunion prompts further reflections on representations of slaves of diverse ethnic backgrounds and how studies of Indian Ocean slavery might be used to counteract, or at the very least to nuance, the currently dominant Atlantic model.

If, as Christiansë notes in this volume, the photographs of nineteenth-century Indian and African migrants "suffer from a lack of narrative", we may argue that the pictorial representations of eighteenth-century Indian slaves too has suffered from an oversimplified narrative, one which is unable or unwilling to confront and unwrap the ethnic complexities of Indian Ocean slavery. In the absence of a competent, wide-ranging historical study of the Indian slave trade in the Indian Ocean, creative writers have fortunately stepped up. As Paul White has noted, the representation of migrancy in imaginative literature has become an effective tool for exploring the multiple worlds in which migrants lived and which required negotiation and constant self-re-fashioning.[52] Whereas historical studies of Indian Ocean slavery choose to accord very little space to South Asian slaves, writers like Amitav Ghosh, Rayda Jacob and Ishtiyaq Shukri offer revealing imagined trajectories of Indian slaves across the colonial Indian Ocean world in their novels.[53] European travel accounts depicted Indian slaves as aesthetically more pleasing, tractable and intelligent than "African" slaves – an elite among

the servile. The free coloured community, itself comprising many "Indians", was more likely to manumit and marry them, thereby securing the social mobility and economic prosperity of a sizeable number. The slaves born in India themselves rarely speak directly to us, but civil status records show significant levels of intermarriage with slaves of every other ethnic group. In fact, to paraphrase Ghosh, "there are no easy ways to understand their subjectivity or to categorize their agency. [They] brought local knowledges, sexual labor, domestic expertise and linguistic abilities into their relationships with European traders, explorers and colonial officials. In less obvious ways, they also crossed various boundaries – cultural, ethnic, religious, racial – when they entered into these domestic arrangements." Albeit on the margins of historical narratives, Indian slaves "proved to be critical to the colonial enterprise in the contact zone between Britons and the peoples they encountered."[54]

## Notes

1. Richard B. Allen, "Carrying away the Unfortunate: the Exportation of Slaves from India during the late Eighteenth Century" in *Le monde créole: Peuplement, sociétés et condition humaine, XVII^e-XX^e siècles*, edited by J. Weber. Paris: Les Indes Savantes, 2005; M. Carter, "Slavery and Unfree Labour in the Indian Ocean," *History Compass*, 4, no. 4 (2006), 800-813. For statistics comparing the size of the Indian population vis-a-vis other slave ethnic groups see J-M. Filliot, *La traite des esclaves vers les Mascareignes au XVIIIe siècle*. Paris: CHEAIM, 1974.
2. Markus Vink, "'The World's Oldest Trade': Dutch Slavery and Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean in the Seventeenth Century," *Journal of World History* 14, no. 2 (June 2003): 131-177.
3. Linda Mbeki and Matthias van Rossum, "Private Slave Trade in the Dutch Indian Ocean World: A Study into the Networks and Backgrounds of the Slavers and the Enslaved in South Asia and South Africa," *Slavery & Abolition*, 38, no. 1 (2017): 95-116.
4. Loren Kruger, "Black Atlantics, White Indians and Jews: Locations, Locutions and Syncretic Identities in the Fiction of Achmat Dangor and Others," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 100, no. 1 (2001): 111-143.
5. Anthony Reid and Jennifer Brewster (eds.), *Slavery, Bondage and Dependency in Southeast Asia*, 14-17. New York: St Martin's Press, 1983.
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7. Adoor K.K.R. Nair, *Slavery in Kerala*, 24-25. Delhi: Mittal, 1986.
8. Sinappah Arasaratnam, "Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean in the Seventeenth Century," in *Mariners, Merchants and Oceans: Studies in Maritime History*, edited by K.S. Mathew, 195-208. New Delhi: Manohar, 1995.
9. See, for example, Philipe Haudrère, *La compagnie française des Indes aux XVIIIe siècle*. Paris: Les Indes Savantes, 1989, and Louis Dermigny, *Cargaisons indiennes*, 2 vols. Paris: SEVPEN, 1959-60.
10. Auguste Toussaint, *Le Mirage des Iles Le négoce français aux Mascareignes au XVIIIe siècle*, 94. Aix en Provence: Edisud, 1977.
11. Richard. B. Allen, *European Slave Trading in the Indian Ocean, 1500-1850*, 35-36. Athens OH: Ohio University Press, 2014.
12. Pedro Machado, *Ocean of Trade South Asian Merchants, Africa and the Indian Ocean c. 1750-1850*, 41. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014; Mbeki and Rossum, "Private Slave Trade," 97-98.
13. Perry Moree, *A Concise History of Dutch Mauritius, 1598-1710*. London: Kegan Paul, 1998.
14. Patrick Joseph Barnwell, "Extracts from Logs of Ships Visiting Mauritius 1697-1707," in *La Revue Retrospective de l'Ile Maurice*, 3, no. 3 (May 1952): 144.
15. The name Mauritius was given to the island by the Dutch, and after the British conquest in 1810 this name was reverted to.
16. One of the earliest references to slavery on the Mascarenes relates the sale of a 12-year-old boy from India in 1687: Hubert Gerbeau, "Des minorités mal connues: esclaves indiens et malais des Mascareignes au XIXe siècle," in *Migrations, minorités et échanges en Océan Indien, XIXe-XXe siècle*, Aix-en-Provence: IHPOM, 1979: 160-242.
17. Allen, "Carrying Away the Unfortunate," 288.
18. Marina Carter, "Indian Slaves in Mauritius (1729-1834)," *The Indian Historical Review* 15, no. 2 (1989): 233-247.
19. Richard B. Allen, "The Mascarene Slave Trade and Labour Migration in the Indian Ocean during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Slavery and Abolition* 24, no. 2, (2003): 41.
20. IOLR Bengal Revenue Consultations, 50/60, 9 September 1785, Day to Cooper, 2 March 1785.
21. Lord Cornwallis to Court of Directors, 2 August 1789, *Parliamentary Papers* 1828 Slavery in India: Correspondence of Court of Directors and the Governments in India (125).
22. The formal abolition of the slave trade decreed by the French Governor of Chandernagore was published in the *Calcutta Gazette* of 17 September 1789. The

Joint Commissioners appointed to inspect conditions in the province of Malabar in 1792-3 after the fall of Tipu banned natives of Malabar from being exported as slaves, but Governor John recognized that the proximity of the Dutch port of Cochin and of French Mahé made preventing slaves being sold overseas difficult. Nair, Adoor K.K.R. Nair, *Slavery in Kerala*, 49-50. Delhi: Mittal, 1986.

23. IOR/P/165/53 Bengal Foreign Consultations, 20 April and 17 June 1791.
24. IOR/P/253/6 Fort St George Military & Political Consultations, 2 March 1792.
25. Sadlier et al., Masulipatam to Chief at Jaggernautporam, 16 January1792, in *Parliamentary Papers* 1828 Slavery in India: Correspondence of Court of Directors and the Governments in India (125).
26. Mbeki & Rossum, "Private Slave Trade," 107-108.
27. The use of the term "malabar" to designate a person from the Indian subcontinent may date from earlier Portuguese explorations of the Malabar and Coromandel coasts and their failure to distinguish between the inhabitants of these regions: see Jacques-Gérard Milbert, *Voyage Pittoresque à l'Ile de France, au Cap du Bonne Esperance et l'Ile de Teneriffe,* 169. Paris: Nepveu, 1812, and Pierre Sonnerat, *Voyage aux Indes orientales et à la Chine fait par ordre du Roi, depuis 1774 jusqu'en 1781,* 2 vols., 1: 59-60. Paris: Private Publication,1782. Doojenraduth Napal, *Les Indiens à l'Ile de France*. Mauritius: Private Publication, 1965.
28. Toussaint, *Le Mirage des Iles*, 94.
29. Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India: The Making of Empire,* 19, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
30. These entries are taken from the Isle of France civil status registers held at the Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer, Aix en Provence, France.
31. The slave registers are held at the UK National Archives in Kew, Surrey and can be found in the Treasury T71 series.
32. See Mbeki & Rossum, "Private Slave Trade,"105 for data on the Cape, and Carter, "Indian Slaves" (1989) for slave ownership data in Mauritius.
33. See Carter, "Slavery and Unfree Labour."
34. Sadasivam Reddi, "Aspects of Indian Culture in Ile de France between 1803 and 1810," in *History, Memory and Identity*, edited by Vijayalakshmi Teelock and Edward A. Alpers, 35. Mauritius: Nelson Mandela Centre, 2001.
35. The slave was sent for medical treatment and the cost was charged to Sinetamy. These cases are described by M. Jumeer, "Les Affranchis et les Indiens Libres à l'Ile de France au xviiième siècle 1721-1803," 277-80. University of Poitiers thesis, 1984.
36. Mbeki & Rossum, "Private Slave Trade," 98; Charles Grant, *The History of Mauritius or the Isle of France,* 470. London: Private Publication, 1801; Auguste

Billiard, *Voyage aux Colonies Orientales ou lettres écrites des Iles de France et de Bourbon pendant les Années 1817-1820,* 44. Paris: Ladvocat, 1822.

37. Milbert, *Voyage Pittoresque*, 170-172.
38. Charles Telfair, *Some Account of the State of Slavery at Mauritius, since the British Occupation in 1810,* 160. Port-Louis: Vallet and Asselin, 1830.
39. Mbeki & Rossum, "Private Slave Trade," 98.
40. See Carter, "Indian Slaves," for a detailed examination of the occupations of slaves of various ethnic groups.
41. Reid and Brewster, *Slavery, Bondage*, 25.
42. Around 6,000 free "malabars" were brought to Mauritius as skilled contract workers in the course of the eighteenth century see Amédée Nagapen, "Les Indiens à l'Ile de France: Acculturation ou Deculturation?," in *Historical and Cultural Relations between France and India, XVIIth-XXth Centuries*, 2 vols, 26. Réunion: Université de la Réunion, 1987.
43. S. Tegally, "Social Mobility among Indians in Mauritius," BA thesis, University of Mauritius, 1996, 20; Richard B. Allen, "Lives of Neither Luxury nor Misery: Indians and Free Colored Marginality on the Ile de France, 1728–1810," *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer* 78 (1991): 337-358.
44. Nagapen, "Les Indiens," 25-49.
45. Elizabeth Grzymala, "It All Comes Out In the Wash Engendering Archaeological Interpretations of Slavery," in *Women and Slavery Africa, the Indian Ocean World, and the Medieval North Atlantic*, edited by Gwyn Campbell et al., 335-58. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2007.
46. Ghosh, *Sex and the Family*, 23-24.
47. In the case of Mauritius, the brutal mutilation and murder of a young woman slave by Madame Nayl is a case in point. See *Representation of the State of Government Slaves and Apprentices in the Mauritius; with observations. By A Resident, who has never possessed either land or slaves in the Colony.* London: James Ridgway, 1830.
48. Claude Wanquet, "Violences individuelles et violence institutionnalisée: le régime servile d'Ille de France à la fin du XVIIIe siècle à la lumière des dossiers de procédure Criminelle " in *Esclavage et Abolitions dans l'Océan Indien (1723-1860). Systèmes esclavagistes et abolitions dans les colonies de l'Océan Indien*, edited by Edmond Maestri, 207. Réunion: L'Harmattan, 2000.
49. Ghosh, *Sex and the Family*, 251.
50. See, for example, Megan Vaughan, *Creating the Creole Island: Slavery in Eighteenth-Century Mauritius*. Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2005, and Alessandro Stanziani, *Sailors, Slaves, and Immigrants Bondage in the Indian Ocean World, 1750-1914*. New York: Palgrave, 2014.

51. Mohammed Aïssaoui, *L'Affaire de l'Esclave Furcy*. Paris: Gallimard, 2010.
52. Paul White, "Geography, Literature and Migration," in *Writing Across Worlds. Literature and Migration*, edited by Russell King, John Connell and Paul White, 6. New York: Routledge, 1995.
53. Gaurav Desai, "Asian African Literatures: Genealogies in the Making," *Research in African Literatures* 42, no. 3 (Fall 2011): V-XXI.
54. Ghosh, *Sex and the Family*, 256.

2

# Small-Scale Slave Trade Between Ceylon and the Cape of Good Hope

## From 1728 to 1737[1]

*Herman Tieken*

This contribution is a reconstruction of the small-scale private trade in slaves between Cape Town and Colombo conducted by a Ceylonese Chettiyar,[2] Nicolaas Jurgen Ondaatje, who had been forced to live in Cape Town as a convict. The chapter is based on a unique set of private letters written in Tamil found in the notarial archives in Cape Town. It addresses the thin line between convict life and slave life and focuses on why and how Ondaatje came to trade in slaves, and the problems his family had with the transition from local bondage to European slavery, or their reluctance to send slaves from their household to a strange country they associated with exile. The Tamil letters provide us with a Chettiyar perspective on the world of the enslaved within the VOC realm and in that sense differs from the contributions by Carter, Geelen, Ekama and Wagenaar in this volume, who work from records produced by Dutch and French bureaucracies. But like those contributions it deals with themes such as mobility, autonomy and intimacy that touched the personal lives of those living in bondage, convicts and slaves alike.

Nicolaas Jurgen Ondaatje from Colombo, Ceylon, was simply in the wrong place at the wrong time.[3] Proficient in Dutch, Sinhala and Portuguese besides his native tongue of Tamil, he had been engaged by the Dutch minister Joan Bernhard Noordbeek in Galle, Ceylon, as a "bookkeeper" who would serve as interpreter and middleman. In 1727, when his employer was found guilty of a crime that has remained unspecified and was as a result evicted from office, Nicolaas shared his patron's fate. He was exiled to the Cape of Good Hope for a period of ten years. The crimes that Nicolaas and Noordbeek were accused of have remained a mystery as the relevant court documents have been lost, but it can be speculated that they had aroused the suspicion

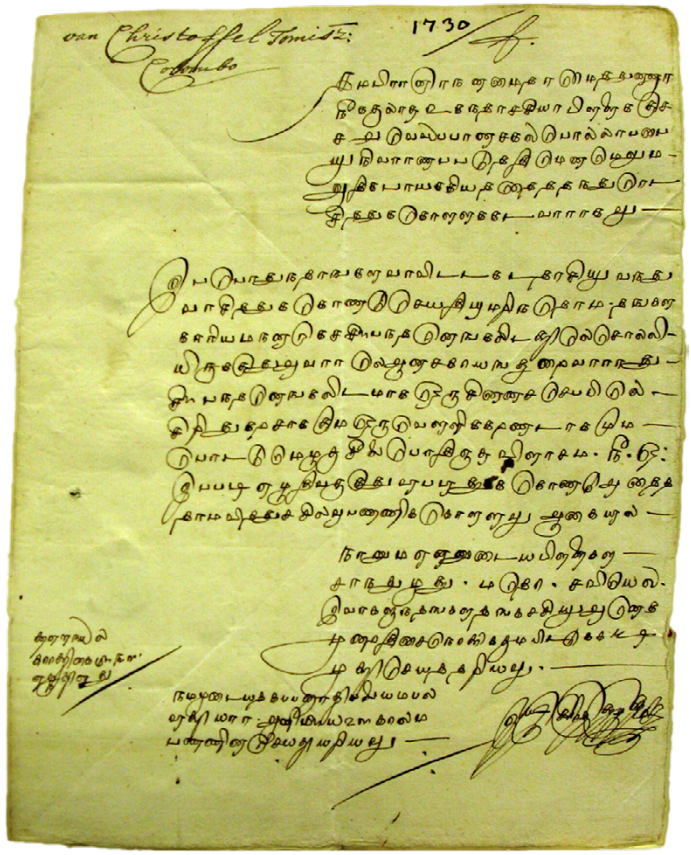


Figure 2.1. A letter dated 3 November 1730 from Nicolaas Ondaatje's brother-in-law Christoffel Tomisz. From Colombo.
Source: Western Cape Archives and Records Service, Cape Town, SA.

of the paranoid governor, Petrus Vuyst (1726–1729).[4] In Noordbeek's case the implementation of the sentence was postponed and, in the end, the conviction was quashed altogether. Nicolaas's sentence, however, was carried out immediately. He arrived at the Cape on 14 February 1728, which we can be certain of as his name was entered into a ledger.[5] Next to this entry the word "*overleden*" (passed away) is found. From other papers related to Nicolaas we know that he died quite unexpectedly between the end of July and the end of August 1737, when his period of exile was about to end.

During the decade between Nicolaas's arrival at the Cape in 1728 and his death in 1737 he maintained contact with his home country through letters.




Figure 2.2. The cover letter dated 12 January 1737 from Ondaatje's brother-in-law. Source: Western Cape Archives and Records Service, Cape Town, SA.

His own letters are lost, but those he received from Ceylon—70 in all—have survived. Disciplined bookkeeper that he was, Nicolaas kept the incoming letters in a file which, after his death, passed to the Orphan Chamber in Cape Town and is now part of the collection of the Western Cape Archives and Records Service. Apart from a few in Dutch and one in Sinhala, the incoming letters are in Tamil. These letters make a unique contribution to knowledge about the experience of being an exile. They bring to life the voices of his family and highlight their sense of loss and their difficulty in coping with the banishment of a close family member to the other end of the world, and reveal how they tried to grapple with these difficult circumstances. From their words it is also possible, if only in part, to reconstruct the life of their exiled son and brother. In contrast, in other sources from approximately the same period and the same part of the world, accounts of exiles' experiences far from home have often been distorted by a third voice, a poet's voice, as well as literary conventions, which require a somewhat different approach. Ronit Ricci and Sri Margana have done an excellent job reconstructing the

lives, experiences and perceptions of Javanese royalty in exile, based on babads or Javanese historical chronicles. Others, like Jean Taylor and Kerry Ward, have used inventories made by the Orphan Chamber in Cape Town of the possessions of individuals who died without making a will and the petitions of exiles or their families submitted to the local governors.[6] So far, no source comparable to the Ondaatje letters has been found.

The letters addressed to Nicolaas, by members of the Ondaatje family and by friends, rarely feature extensive outbursts of grief. Instead, they recount news of marriages and births, illnesses and deaths, jobs and promotions. Understandably, many pages are taken up by news and practical matters. They also describe parcels sent to Nicolaas mainly containing clothes and pieces of cloth, and in one case sliced areca nuts and a nut slicer—items that a South Asian could not do without! The parcel also contained seeds, particularly of citrus trees and coffee plants. The coffee seeds were accompanied by detailed instructions on the type of soil in which they should be planted: "soil like we have in the area behind the fort here in Colombo" (Letter 59). The writers also gratefully acknowledge the receipt of barrels of salted cabbage and red wine that Nicolaas had sent, and describe how, in line with his instructions, these delicacies had been distributed among his family and friends. It is clear that these goods were meant to make life more comfortable rather than being objects of trade. In one parcel, however, Nicolaas's elder brother Willem had placed a small piece of paper between the clothes which reads, "I have written down the prices of the goods in this box. I do not ask you to pay me these amounts. I merely mention the prices so that you know them in case you want to sell any of these items" (Letter 10). After the cabbage and wine were distributed among family and friends, what was left was sold and the profit was used to pay for the clothes sent to Nicolaas. The letters often end with long lists of family members and acquaintances who wished to be remembered to Nicolaas. These letters thus give an intimate picture of an urban elite from Colombo and Galle, which functioned as a close-knit network maintained through marriage and mutual support, and whose main ambition was to be employed by the Dutch East India Company. This chapter will read these letters for insights into enslavement in the Cape of Good Hope and for the complex relations between slaves, convicts and other forced migrants and exiles.

As we do not have the letters written by Nicolaas, for information about his life at the Cape we must draw on passages from the letters he received, in which the correspondents respond to issues raised by Nicolaas about his

own circumstances. There are also other papers available at the Cape which provide more direct evidence, among them papers concerning the winding up of Nicolaas's estate from the Orphan Chamber. Furthermore, there are personal papers which Nicolaas seems to have kept in the same file as the letters, such as an IOU related to the purchase of a slave, an IOU for money he borrowed less than a month before his death, and a *memorie boek* in which he kept track of money borrowed and lent, and wrote down the names of the pupils he taught.

Although technically a convict, Nicolaas was allowed to move about freely.[7] He had the mobility but not the official status of a *vrijswart*—a freed slave or "Free Black".[8] For example, he was never listed on the census as other *vrijswarten* were, nor did he appear on Governor de la Fontaine's 1731 list of free inhabitants, which included "*vrijswarten, of ex-bandieten*". Nevertheless, he was termed a vrijswart in all his probate documents (e.g., MOOC10/4.154).[9]

Nicolaas earned his keep, first as a medical doctor and a trader, and subsequently (from 1733 onwards) as a home teacher in Drakenstein, teaching Dutch to the children of the Fouché, Faurie, Haarhof, Radijn, Malherbe and de Jager families. Nicholaas's choice of profession as a teacher may well have been inspired by Jan Smiesing, a teacher in the Slave Lodge in Cape Town, whom he appears to have known. Nicolaas lent money to a man named Jan Joosten, who was married to a first cousin of Smiesing, and he was well acquainted with a certain Christiaan Wijnands, who was married to another of Smiesing's cousins.[10] It is not unlikely that the Tamil medical recipes found in Jan Smiesing's notebook, now in the Cape Archives, came from Nicolaas Ondaatje.[11] We know that Nicolaas received from his family in Ceylon two books containing medical recipes, along with roots and pills to prepare medicines with, and elaborate advice on how to administer them (Letters 2 and 10).

These same two books were found in the inventory drawn up by the Orphan Chamber of Nicolaas's estate after his death in August 1737. Nicolaas had no direct heirs. While in the letters there is talk of a son—his brother Philip tells him not to be so embarrassed about the fact that he had one—this son was probably not officially acknowledged (Letter 43). Apart from these two books, the estate consisted of only some pieces of clothing, some buttons and earrings, and some boxes with odds and ends (*rommeling*). Given that Nicolaas was a home teacher living with his employer, his estate did not include any furniture or slaves; therefore, it is all the more curious to note that during his ten years at the Cape Nicolaas seems to have owned slaves.

As a Free Black or exile, he was permitted to own slaves. He bought his first slave at the Cape itself. In later years, he asked his family to buy them for him in Ceylon and send them to the Cape. In what follows I examine passages from two letters concerning these transactions. They make interesting reading—the first one because of the reservation expressed by the correspondent about sending slaves to such a faraway, unknown country; the second because it includes a report of a near-shipwreck in Colombo harbour. In the correspondence there is one more passage about slaves being moved from Ceylon to the Cape, but Nicolaas was not directly involved in this instance. In a letter dated 1732, one of the correspondents asked Nicolaas to find out what had happened to a slave woman who had been taken with him by Governor Simonsz in 1708 when he sailed from Ceylon to Holland via the Cape. She had been sold by Simonsz at the Cape to a Free Burgher and was manumitted a year later. Nicolaas managed to trace her, and she became an important contact for the correspondent in setting up a small-scale wine trading business between the Cape and Ceylon.

As mentioned, Nicolaas bought his first slave at the Cape. Among his papers is a document that records a payment of 60 *rijksdaalder*s (Rds) for a slave called Anthonij van Bengalen:

> Bekenne Ik onderget: voor reek: van Dirk
> Wesbergh soldaat in dienst der E.comp: thans bij mijn
> oúders in leeningh, ontfangen te hebben úijt handen
> van nicolaas o[n]datje van Colombo sitti[12]
> een somma van sestigh rijxd[rs]
> sprúijtende weegens koop en transport van seekere
> jongen genaamt anthonij van bengalen
> Door den voornoemde dirk wesbergh aan den voor
> noemde nicolaas ondatje van Colombo deúgdelijk verkogt
> in demneere derhalven bijdeesen genoemde Nicolaas
> ondatje van Colombo voor namaninge onder verbant als
> na regten
>
> Kabo de goede hoop adij 4 Jùlij 1729
> N. Brommer[13]

There were no ships from Ceylon or India to the Cape during this period, but there were several ships from Batavia. It is therefore not clear whether

Anthonij van Bengalen (who, going by his toponym, probably came from India) was a recent arrival—it is not unlikely that he had already been in the Cape for several years before being bought by Nicolaas. It is also unclear what happened to him. However, a year later, in 1730, Nicolaas asked his family to buy him two male slaves. He asked for the slaves to be purchased in Ceylon as he believed they were much cheaper there, as indicated in a letter from late 1731 in which his elder brother Philip felt the need to warn him that since he had left Ceylon the price of slaves had gone up considerably. It also becomes clear that Philip was not very happy with Nicolaas's request (Letter 29):

> Last year you asked us to buy two good slaves, male slaves, and send them to you. If you haven't changed your mind since then, you need not do anything, dear brother. But you should know that while at that time (when you were sent into exile) a slave cost ten *real*s, now you won't get one for less than thirty or forty *real*s, if at all. If that is no problem, there is no need to write to us. However, while we do keep slaves in our homes here, that does not mean that we have no hesitations sending them thither. I want you to know that [if I do not commit myself] it is because of that.[14]

Philip clearly did not understand how Nicolaas in his present situation could even think of transporting slaves from their own familiar Ceylon to the Cape at the other end of the world. On the other hand, the circumspect way in which Philip raised his objections made it easy for Nicolaas to maintain his request. However, we have no evidence that Nicolaas did persist, insisting that his brother act against his conscience. In any case, in subsequent letters Philip remained the same faithful and helpful brother. However, when in 1736 Nicolaas again needed slaves, he did not ask his brother but turned to Domingos Dias, a teacher at a school attached to Wolvendaal Church in Colombo, who, after learning that Nicolaas had become a teacher as well, had begun a correspondence with him. Due to circumstances that he elaborately describes in his letter, Domingos Dias failed to get the boy on board the ship in time (Letter 65):

> In your letter you asked me to look for a servant. I did find one. After I had agreed to pay 37 *real*s for him I made an advance payment of one *pagoda*. I asked Señor Lopes, the Foreigner, to speak to the captain of a Mocha ship which was about to depart, who next agreed to take the

> boy on board. It was also agreed that the full sum would be paid to the owner of the boy only after the boy had been taken on board, for in the meantime he might run away and abscond. However, the night before the day we were to bring the boy on board, the ship, called "De Boot", was thrown on the beach by a strong north-east wind. But because it was a strong new ship, it did not break. For seven or eight days the employees of the Company in Colombo, Chettiyars, Paravars [fishermen], Moormen [moslims], Karaiyars [fishermen, maritime traders] and many others all worked closely together and with a great effort and by the Lord's mercy succeeded in getting the ship afloat again. It was saved without any damage. As the Mocha ship was moving into the direction of Galbokka, making water and tugging at its anchors, moving this way and that, the storm subsided into a gentle breeze. That was how it was saved. However, its *boot* and *schuitje* had broken down on the rocks on the beach. Five sailors, who had been in them, drowned. The whole of Colombo grieved as one man. However, the very next day, after the wind had subsided and before I had been able to bring the boy on board as agreed, the captain of the Mocha ship had raised the sails and left.

It is unclear why *De Boot* was called a "Mocha ship" here, as there is no evidence that it ever went to Mocha in Yemen. *De Boot* arrived in Ceylon on 11 November 1736, straight from Middelburg in the province of Zeeland in Holland, which it had left on 3 January of that year. From Ceylon it sailed for home via Batavia and the Cape. The ship reached the Cape in July 1738, where it remained from 31 July to 12 August 1738. It is fortunate that the boy was not on board, for he would have arrived in Cape Town almost a year after Nicolaas's death.

Why did Nicolaas need slaves? He may have been buying slaves for his friends in the Slave Lodge (the large building where Company slaves were housed), as Lodge slaves scheduled for manumission had to provide a slave in exchange.[15] (It is a mystery how these exchange slaves were obtained by people who were themselves lodge slaves.) On the other hand, he may have initially bought slaves for himself. During the first year, or years, of his exile, Nicolaas lived in Cape Town where he rented a house for himself, much to the dismay of his mother who told him not to waste his money on such luxuries; in her opinion, a single room should do. Furthermore, his family had given him some money to tide him over the initial part of his exile. During his stay in Cape Town, Nicolaas mixed with Christian Free Blacks,

befriending Jan Joosten, as well as Christiaan Wijnands and Jan Smiesing.[16] He was confident that he would be able to make a decent living in Cape Town, one that would allow him to afford a slave, who may have been the abovementioned Anthonij van Bengalen, bought in 1729. Gradually, however, his life as an exile may have grown more difficult. At the same time, he would not have failed to notice the difference in slave prices between the Cape and Ceylon, which remained considerable even after prices in Ceylon had risen. Here was an opportunity for him to make some money—using his status as Free Black, which allowed him to own slaves, he could import them from Ceylon ostensibly for himself, but in actual practice sell them. It is unclear, however, whether Nicolaas made any profits from this enterprise. For one thing, it is not certain whether his brother Philip sent the two slaves that Nicolaas had asked for. It is also highly unlikely that, when asked again, he would have been prepared to send a second batch of slaves after the first one in 1731. Furthermore, ships' captains clearly had other priorities than to fulfill a promise to transport a frightened young slave to the Cape.

The slave trade between South and Southeast Asia and the Cape was well organized, albeit illegal. High-ranking naval officers and repatriating officials transported individual slaves to the Cape and sold them in Cape Town.[17] In a postscript to his letter from 1732, the school teacher Domingos Dias asked Nicolaas to find out what had happened to a pair of slaves who had been taken to the Cape almost 25 years earlier by Governor Cornelis Joannes Simonsz (1703–1707), where he was to review the state of the colony on behalf of the Council of the Indies (Letter 33):[18]

> When Governor Señor Simonsz was on his way to Holland he sold his servant, named Hannibal, our godson, and his wife, a Bengali woman, named Flora, to a Free Burgher at the Cape. Later, after the Free Burgher had died, the Señor (i.e. Simonsz), on leaving for Holland, set them free. Afterwards, Hannibal died. After that, that woman Flora married someone else. If I remember well his name was Frans. Flora is a Bengali and very short. Could you find out and let me know if she is still alive. For, when Hannibal was still alive, he sent me a barrel of cabbage. I still have the 10 *reals* with me which I made out of selling the cabbage. Having found out where she lives I could send those ten *reals* to her. Or you could give them directly to her. In that case, you give her the money and ask her to sign a receipt. Send this letter with her signature to your mother here and I will give the money in cash to your mother.

Nicolaas did find Flora; however, her second husband was not called Frans but Karel Jansz van Bombay. Contact between godfather and godchild was re-established, and in all his subsequent letters Domingos Dias asked Nicolaas to order one or two barrels of wine for him from Flora's husband, Karel, and mentioned how much money was to be paid out to her. Unfortunately, the story, which almost sounds like a fairy tale, does not reveal the grounds on which Simonsz had managed to accomplish the manumission of the two slaves whom he had sold—the same Simonsz, moreover, in 1708 was the first to restrict the ability of Capetonians to manumit their slaves. To prevent slave-owners from leaving old slaves to the care of the Church's poor fund, they had to guarantee that the slaves would be able to take care of themselves for the first ten years after attaining their freedom.

The 70 letters provide us with a fractured picture of the social complexity of the settlement and the interactions that took place between "lower-ranking Company employees, sailors, soldiers, servants, convicts and exiles".[19]

As stated previously, in their letters the correspondents kept their grief over Nicolaas's absence to themselves, except for, not unexpectedly, his mother Juliana Rodrigo. In her very first letter, which she dictated to her son-in-law Christoffel Tomisz and signed with a cross, she expressed the hope that her son would be present at her funeral and would throw a handful of earth on her grave (Letter 4). In a letter sent in 1734, Philip writes, "Our mother still loves you so much; she is dying to see you. Of all her sons she is thinking only of you and cannot stop crying. Whatever we say to console her, she does not hear it" (Letter 43). The others—the men—stick to general, hackneyed phrases, saying that they miss him and look forward to the day he will return.[20] However, Nicolaas's exile worried them greatly. To the very end they continued making plans to shorten Nicolaas's exile. In the initial letters, they suggested that Nicolaas travel to the Netherlands and, if that were not possible, to Batavia, to argue his case before the authorities there. However, they had clearly overestimated Nicolaas's prospects, though it cannot be ruled out that in his first letters Nicolaas himself painted far too positive a picture. After that, the family decided to approach the governor of Colombo with the aim of appealing to him to reduce Nicolaas's sentence and to permit him to return well before the end of his term. At the end of 1733, however, the appointment of the new governor, Diederik van Domburg, was postponed to allow him to go to Batavia to clear his name of accusations of corruption. The following year, the family learned that a similar request made by the family of an exiled Muslim was refused as the governor had not had the power

to alter Council of Justice decisions since 1732. (It is notable that although several members of the Ondaatje family were employed by the Company as interpreters, translators and tax collectors, they were apparently unaware of the change in the Company's administrative rules.) After that, the family stopped trying to shorten the period of Nicholaas's exile. The family's efforts were instead directed towards ensuring that Nicolaas would be allowed to return after he had finished his term, as permission to return needed to come from both the governor of the Cape and the governor's counterpart in Colombo. The family had a copy made of the original verdict which was sent to Nicolaas and which could be shown by him to the authorities at the Cape to prove that he had indeed completed his term. They also wanted to send Nicolaas through their networks a gold chain, with which he would be able pay for his journey back home, but, unfortunately, the goldsmith was unable to finish the chain in time.

Time and again the correspondents mention these plans. It is clear that Nicolaas's exile was a topic fervently discussed at every family meeting—meetings which included his mother Juliana. Family members also requested the help of acquaintances and their contacts in the administration of the Company, such as Nicolaas's brother Philip's employer, Arnoud de Lopes, head of the Accounts Office; Daniel van den Hengel, who had recently been appointed fiscal (prosecutor) at the Cape; and Wetzelius, an influential minister of the Dutch Reformed Church in Colombo where the Ondaatjes were members. Though there is no evidence that Nicolaas's exile had had a negative influence on the family's career prospects, it is clear that within the family it was a constant source of worry and anxiety. As we do not have the letters written by Nicolaas, we do not know to what extent he fed these worries. In any case, his career at the Cape was not a success, and his move from Cape Town to the outlying districts may have been a sort of exile within an exile. Letters from him, however—whatever was in them—brought at least some measure of comfort, as becomes clear from the family's response when, in 1734, they complain of not having received any news from their son and brother in the Cape. As for Nicolaas, his family's suggestion that he go to the Netherlands or Batavia must have made it clear to him that they had no idea of his situation and that he was more than ever left to his own devices. The reports of their failure to approach the governor and to send Nicolaas the money he needed for the return journey will only have deepened his feelings of desolation.

We have no direct accounts of what Nicolaas thought of his existence as an exile. And the indirect evidence is ambiguous, allowing for different and

sometimes opposite interpretations. Nicolaas's attempts to procure slaves from Ceylon may suggest that he believed that transportation from one part of the world to another was not so painful an experience as to make him want to spare others. The family was of the opinion that he should. However, it is also possible, and much more likely, that he was so desperate for money that he could not afford such sentiments. There is indeed some evidence that in the last days of his life Nicolaas had lost complete control over his affairs. A month before his death he borrowed the large sum of 22 Rds, an amount that is not mentioned in the inventory of Nicolaas's possessions that was drawn up by the Orphan Chamber after his death. This suggests that it had been spent that very month, probably on bribes paid as part of his efforts to see the governor. We do not know if Nicolaas succeeded in handing the copy of his verdict over to the governor nor, if he had indeed managed to do so, what the governor's reaction was. All we know is that he died suddenly. A month before his death, he had still been in perfectly good health, as is made evident by the firm hand with which he had signed the IOU for the 22 Rds.[21] Was his death accidental, or was it related to the denial of permission to leave? On this aspect the archive is silent. The Ondaatje letters remain a fascinating source for understanding the means by which the subaltern—both convicts and slaves—managed to stay in contact with their homes while forging new ties and creating new networks while in exile. Commodity trade and slave purchases are indeed practices that historians would rarely associate with forced migrants.

## Notes

1. Large parts of this chapter were drawn from my article, "Letters Dealing With the Slave Trade From Ceylon. The Ondaatje Correspondence, 1728 to 1737," *Quarterly Bulletin of the National Library of South Africa* 67, no. 3 (2013): 113-122. The Ondaatje Letters were edited and translated by me in *Between Colombo and the Cape. Letters in Tamil, Dutch and Sinhala, Sent to Nicolaas Ondaatje from Ceylon, Exile at the Cape of Good Hope (1728-1737)*, Dutch Sources on South Asia c. 1600–1825. Delhi: Manohar, 2015.
2. The Chettiyars are a merchant caste originating in the coastal area of South India, in present-day Kerala and Tamil Nadu. In the nineteenth century, many of their members progressed from being simple salt dealers into international traders and bankers. The Chettiars in eighteenth-century Colombo were mainly servants of the Dutch East India Company.

3. The name is also spelled as "Ondatje". Ondaatje is the Dutch version of Tamil Ukantacci or Ontacci (pronounced "Ughandacci" and "Ondacci" respectively).
4. The direct cause of Noordbeek's conviction seems to have been a letter from the commander of Galle, Johannes Jenner, complaining that the minister had postponed the celebration of Holy Communion for one week without his permission. A month before, however, Jenner had written that Noordbeek did have permission for the postponement (*Generale Missiven van Gouverneur-Generaal en Raden aan Heren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie,* Deel 8, 1725–1729, GS 193: 187). It is unlikely that Jenner made this U-turn without having assured himself that Governor Vuyst would not prosecute him for perjury. It may well have been Vuyst who had urged Jenner to write the second letter condemning Noordbeek. After Noordbeek's subsequent rehabilitation, Nicolaas's family expected Nicolaas also to soon be rehabilitated, which suggests that the cases against Noordbeek and Nicolaas were closely related.
5. WCARS, *Annotatie boeck der personen soo van Batavia en Ceijlon alhier aangeland 1722–57.* A photograph of the relevant page from the *Annotatie boeck* can be found in Herman Tieken, *Between Colombo and the Cape*, 4.
6. In the book edited by Ronit Ricci, *Exile in Colonial Asia: Kings, Convicts, Commemoration*. Honolulu HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2016, two examples of such literary sources on the lives of exiles are dealt with. The exiles in question belong to Javanese royalty and the sources are *babad*s, or Javanese historical chronicles. See Ronit Ricci's own contribution, "From Java to Jaffna: Exile and Return in Dutch Asia in the 18th Century" (94–116), and the chapter by Sri Margana, "Caught between Empires: *Babad Mangkudiningratan* and the Exile of Sultan Hamengkubuwana II of Yogyakarta, 1813–1826" (139–64). Other written sources on exiles' lives dealt with in the same publication are the inventories made by the Orphan Chamber in Cape Town of the possessions of individuals who died without making a will (see Jean Gelman Taylor's chapter, "Belongings and Belonging: Indonesian Histories in Inventories from the Cape of Good Hope" (165–92), and the petitions of exiles or their families submitted to the local governors.
7. Most *bandieten* were confined to specific areas.
8. See, for instance, Wayne Dooling, *Slavery, Emancipation and Colonial Rule in South Africa*. Athens OH: Ohio University Press, 2007.
9. Photographs and transcriptions of the relevant documents can be found in Herman Tieken, *Between Colombo and the Cape,* 39–43.
10. See Robert Shell and Archie Dick, "Jan Smiesing, Slave Lodge Schoolmaster and Healer, 1697–1734," in *Cape Town. Between East and* West, edited by Nigel Worden, 128-152. Johannesburg, Hilversum: Jacana, Verloren, 2012).

11. Archie Dick, "The Notebook of Johannes Smiesing (1697–1734), Writing and Reading Master in the Cape Slave Lodge," *Quarterly Bulletin of the National Library of South Africa* 64, no. 4 (2010): 159-174.
12. *Sitti* is *chetti(yar)*, the name of the community or subcaste Nicolaas belonged to.
13. A summary: "I, undersigned, acknowledge to have received on behalf of Dirk Wesbergh, soldier in the service of the Company but now as *knecht* living at my parents('s farm), from Nicolaas Ondaatje from Colombo, Chettiyar, the sum of sixty *rijksdaalder*s for the sale and transport of a boy (slave) called Anthonij van Bengalen." N. Brommer is Nicolaas Brommert, son of Jan Brommert and Anna van Schalkwijk, who had joined the Company in 1725 as an assistant and had become a Free Burgher in 1730 (see *Resolutions of the Council of Policy of Cape of Good Hope*, C. 100, 40–42, dated 27 August 1736, endnote 6).
14. With this I retract my translation of this elliptical sentence given in *Between Colombo and the Cape*, 124.
15. See James Armstrong and Nigel Worden, "The Slaves, 1652–1834," in *The Shaping of South African Society 1652–1840*, edited by Richards Elphick and Herman Gilliomee, 2nd edn, 109-183. Cape Town: Longman, 1989.
16. Another Christian Free Black acquaintance of Nicolaas's was Jacobus Hendriksz, from whom he borrowed the sum of 5 Rds.
17. Nigel Worden, *Slavery in Dutch South Africa*, 41-51. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985; Robert Shell, *Children of Bondage: A Social History of the Slave Society at the Cape of Good Hope, 1652–1838*, 76. Johannesburg:Witwatersrand University Press, 1994.
18. Cornelis Joannes Simonsz was Governor of Ceylon from 11 May 1703 to 22 November 1707. Prior to this appointment, Simonsz was Independent Fiscal at the Cape between 1690 and 1694. On his return to Europe in 1708, the Governor-General and Council of the Indies instructed him to act as commissioner to review "the situation at the Cape". See Kerry Ward, *Networks of Empire: Forced Migration in the Dutch East India Company*, 168, fn. 113. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
19. Nigel Worden, "New Approaches to VOC History in South Africa," *South African Historical Journal* 59, no. 1 (2007): 10.
20. An interesting variant is found in a letter from Simon de Mel. He produced the only literary embellishment in the entire corpus, when he compared Nicolaas's family to a "parched crop deprived of the sight of rain clouds" (Letter 70).
21. For a photograph and transcription of the IOU see Herman Tieken, *Between Colombo and the Cape*, 36.

# 3

# Between Markets and Chains

## An Exploration of the Experiences, Mobility and Control of Enslaved Persons in Eighteenth-Century South-West India

*Alexander Geelen, Bram van den Hout, Merve Tosun and Matthias van Rossum*

On a Sunday towards the end of 1746, three men's lives intersected in a *schaggerije* (tavern) at Pagodinho—they belonged to an enslaved man, a christian *pandij* and a christian *mocqua*.[1] The enslaved man, Cruz, had been put to work in the tavern some two months earlier by his master, the Christian *mocqua*, Pedro Gomez. Records indicate that Pedro may have been the owner of the tavern or was closely involved in running it, as there is mention of him visiting the tavern "very early in the morning as usual".[2] According to Cruz's later declaration before the court, Pedro Gomez's wife, Dominga, had forbidden Cruz from serving alcohol to her husband. And so Cruz had refused to serve Pedro a drink when he demanded one that Sunday. Cruz stated that Pedro then "threatened to sell him to one of the sailors" as soon as he got the chance.[3] Pedro confirmed this threat in his interrogation.[4]

The Christian pandij, Anthonij from Tutucorijn, aged twenty and residing at Pagodinho, noticed that Cruz was aggrieved when he walked into the tavern. In his interrogation before the court, Cruz declared that Anthonij, seeing him "being very sad, and crying bitterly ... asked for the reasons of his sadness". After Cruz had "revealed that his *senhor* [master] wanted to sell him to the *scheepsvrienden* [sailors]", Anthonij suggested that Cruz come with him and that he would help him reach his homeland. Cruz answered that "he did not know where his homeland was himself". He agreed to leave with Anthonij, however, after Anthonij had reassured him that "he would know where it was".[5]

## Introduction: slavery, mobility and control

An enslaved man working in a tavern with the help of an apparent stranger fled from his master because he was afraid of being sold off to sailors—Cruz's case is interesting as it challenges dominant perspectives on Asian systems of slavery and bondage on a number of levels.[6] Scholars have argued that slavery in Asia was mostly a local phenomenon that manifested itself as debt and urban slavery, motivated by factors such as status and "conspicuous consumption".[7] In the case of South and Southeast Asia the focus has also been on forms of bondage that tied enslaved people to the land or a landlord, and in which they were like "bondsmen", *corvée* workers or serfs. This was accompanied by the idea that slavery in Asia was "milder". It has, for example, been argued that "Indian slavery was less bland than the virulent form which it had assumed in the civilisations of the West and that the slaves were less in number".[8] Such characterizations were extended to European contexts, even leading to references to "the 'cosy' intimacy of pure household slavery" in Batavia in the first half of the eighteenth century.[9]

In recent years, there has been increased interest in the history of slavery in the Indian Ocean and Indonesian Archipelago worlds.[10] In the last decade, attention has shifted to the role of long-distance connections, and to slavery in Asia as a "dynamic part of a continuously adapting, globally connected and increasingly capitalist economic system".[11] These changing perspectives are supported by new evidence of the importance of the trade in enslaved people.[12] Rethinking slavery in Asia, scholars stress that land- and debt-based bondage was not the only form of slavery. It has been established that different regions in Southeast Asia were characterized by a "pattern of having both milder and harsher forms of slavery".[13] Similarly, for the Indian Ocean world, it is recognized that "forms of status obligation, bondage, and temporary slavery (for debt, etc.) coexisted with forms of hereditary slavery similar to that in North America".[14] This leads us to re-examine the characteristics and everyday functioning of systems of slavery in the Indian Ocean and Indonesian Archipelago worlds.[15]

Using historical evidence from court records, this chapter studies the working and living conditions of the enslaved and the regulation and control of their mobility. This chapter thus aims to contribute to this volume's mission of *seeing* slaves in their everyday lives in order to improve our understanding of what slavery meant, especially from the perspective of enslaved individuals. The current chapter was inspired by our earlier

investigations into everyday life dynamics of the motley crews of slaves, convicts, sailors, soldiers and runaways under the Dutch East India Company,[16] and our investigations into the dynamics of slavery, enslavement and escape by examining cases of slave flight.[17] Through this research, we aim to shed light on the everyday characteristics of slavery as a *status* (as a relation of belonging through bonds or property rights) and a *labour relation* (through coerced forms of labour mobilization). In this chapter, we compare the VOC settlement in Cochin on the Malabar Coast with that of the VOC metropole of Batavia on the island of Java—parts of the VOC empire that were highly connected, not least by the large (private) slave trade between the settlements. The legal/institutional arrangements underpinning systems of social control and slavery in both places were shaped by the Company in similar ways, but they operated quite differently depending on the locality. It is, therefore, interesting to compare different locations such as Batavia and Cochin with regard to the everyday functioning of slave work and mobility.

For this study the chapter relies on the court records of the *Raad van Justitie* (Court of Justice) regarding these Company settlements, as well as on additional sources such as ordinances and reports. The court records available from this part of the VOC empire are crucial sources for two reasons. First, the Courts of Justice instituted throughout the empire were the highest forums of imperial and locally situated systems of social and political control, tying together the many lines and structures of social order created by local administrations, city guards and urban and rural policing forces. Second, the court records produced by the Courts of Justice contain historical information on many underlying processes and actors who would otherwise have left no historical trace. Court records are rich historical sources for the study of everyday-level dynamics. The records are unique in terms of the degree to which they preserve the voices of historical subjects, ranging from soldiers to slaves and from *kaffers* to female pedlars. In these court records, slaves appear almost everywhere, often in the background, but just as often as witnesses, accused or victims. And, perhaps equally important, enslaved people appear with a voice, talking not only about the evidence which is at the core of the case, but also providing details that paint a picture of everyday backgrounds and situations. The individuals we encounter in the Dutch courtrooms are continuously trying to formulate and describe not only the "exceptional", but in contrast also the "normal". The abundance of court record material for the Dutch East and West Indies empires and their richness thus provides important opportunities for studying (albeit mediated) accounts of enslaved

individuals.[18] Our reading of this type of record resembles Ekama's in this volume. And although judicial sources of course tend to be fragmentary—as court cases tend to focus on specific incidents and practices targeted by legal and political authorities—and the transmission of specific historical information is distorted by legal procedures and translation, these specific challenges can largely be addressed by contextualizing the information through close reading and comparative analysis.[19]

The availability of such sources for Dutch overseas settlements in Asia (and the Atlantic) provides unexplored opportunities for historical research on a range of important themes, forming the basis for several new research projects on slavery and the regulation of diversity.[20] The use of these sources, however, is largely hindered by two problems: i) the difficult and time-consuming nature of access, and ii) the difficulty of assessing the value of findings based on only one case or a small number of cases. Indexing court cases opens up the possibility of studying these histories through what could be called global subaltern (social) history, as it opens up access to everyday micro-level interactions and social structures, and allows for analysing them from below through the systematic comparison of information from such historical sources that provides access to the everyday or micro level.[21] The indexes not only provide access, but they also allow researchers to assess the relevance of particular court cases to their study by conducting targeted searches on particular topics, persons or locations. This has led to a research project dedicated to, amongst other things, indexing the criminal court records of the Court of Justice of Cochin, resulting in the creation of a comprehensive database. This effort is currently expanded for the wider Dutch empire in Asia and the Atlantic, extending the court record indexing from Batavia to Elmina and Paramaribo (including for material dealt with by Ekama and Wagenaar).[22]

Based on an index of these digitized, but otherwise un-inventoried, records of the Court of Justice of Cochin, we were able to select multiple relevant court cases in which slavery and mobility intersect. This index includes 285 criminal court cases and provided some 30 cases involving enslaved people from which we selected four examples that deal specifically with slavery and (illegal) mobility for more detailed analysis in this chapter. For Batavia we were able to draw upon criminal court cases recorded in secondary literature. We have benefited most from Matthias van Rossum's *Kleurrijke Tragiek* in which criminal court cases were similarly selected from an index of Batavian court records. This index contains data for 1,654 criminal court cases, of which some 300 involve enslaved people. Court cases

from Eric Jones' *Wives, Slaves, and Concubines* have also been included in our analysis of the workplaces and mobility of enslaved people in the Batavian context. Batavia can be considered an important comparative case, not only because of its size and extensive history of slavery—with roughly one-third of the population consisting of enslaved people—but also because Batavia, as the headquarters of the VOC in Asia, strongly influenced the regulation of slavery and social and labour relations elsewhere in the Company's empire.[23] The court records to a large degree reflect the interests, fears and prosecution policies of the Company, but for our purposes they also provide clear and detailed background information on enslaved persons and their working conditions and mobility.

## Batavia

Batavia was the centre of the Dutch empire in Asia. It was characterized by "pseudo-European" planning and construction, which drew from styles prevalent in the Republic. The city's social composition changed towards the end of the seventeenth century, when bamboo houses were banned and brick constructions were made mandatory. *Mardijkers*, for example, were pushed to the suburbs outside the city walls because of the high rents being charged for stone houses.[24] Segregation in Batavia, however, was enforced not only for such indirect pecuniary reasons. The VOC actively pursued segregation by regulating the appearance of the city, as evidenced by the fact that in the second half of the seventeenth century Javanese were banned from living within the walled city—they were concentrated in ethnic quarters in the environs (*Ommelanden*) of Batavia.[25]

Even though Batavia grew into a settlement with a large free European population, enslaved people of various origins were brought to the city in increasingly large numbers. Between 1688 and 1779, the number of enslaved people in Batavia almost doubled from 26,000 to 40,000. These slaves were traded by Europeans and Asians alike, in various settings. People would gather at slave markets set up in and around Batavia to sell and/or buy slaves, and the town hall also held auctions where the slaves of deceased Company personnel were sold.[26]

In contrast to the prevailing image of Asian domestic slavery, the house was certainly not the only, nor the dominant, backdrop to slavery in this region. Slave labour was exploited by the Company, Company officials and

European and Asian inhabitants alike in various ways and settings. Slaves were deployed at the roadstead of Batavia where they loaded and unloaded large VOC vessels; they were put to work in artisans' workshops where they assisted VOC craftsmen with carrying and loading goods; those working at Batavia Castle were responsible for carrying water, equipment and weaponry. These were only some of the duties imposed on slaves working for the VOC, some of whom were rented out by private owners to the Company for fixed periods of time. Most slaves were owned by Company officials and private individuals, rather than by the Company itself. These individuals would hire their slaves out for profit (often to the VOC) or employ them in settings ranging from tailoring shops to brickworks. In these cases households and workplaces often overlapped.[27]

Strict surveillance of the mobility of slaves was crucial to reducing the chances of escape. Both in domestic and market situations, formal and informal control mechanisms dominated the lives and work of slaves. Those working in and around the house were disciplined using surveillance, small rewards and severe punishments. These methods aimed simultaneously to achieve order and ensure the safety of the slave owners who lived in close proximity to the slaves they commanded. Fear seeped through slave–master relationships—slaves feared arbitrary punishment, while masters were wary of retribution from their slaves or their escape. The elaborate surveillance system established by the VOC benefited slave owners to a certain extent. The gates of the walled city were guarded by Company soldiers during the day, and kaffers and city guards at night.[28]

The 1759 criminal case against Ontong van Palembang reveals that, after staying out for too long one day, he was captured by Moorish guards at "the Chinese campong" under suspicion of absconding. He explained that he had received permission from his master's housewife to leave the house to wash himself, and that he had stayed out until dark. Two days later, Ontong was delivered to his owner, Lieutenant Alting, to receive his punishment. In his interrogation, Ontong declared that he dreaded this encounter with Alting, and his fears were not unfounded as, on Alting's order, he was severely beaten by other slaves. Ontong tried to break free from their grip and succeeded in grabbing a kitchen knife, but he failed to take his own life. He was still severely injured when he was brought to court to defend himself against the serious charge of attempted suicide.[29]

The surveillance of guards at ports and gates was, by definition, limited to the public sphere, so informal control was often more decisive in tracing

runaway slaves. Neighbours played a crucial role in informal social control, as revealed by several court cases revolving round runaway slaves in the Batavian Ommelanden, as mentioned in Eric Jones' *Wives, Slaves, and Concubines* (2010). One such case reveals how Christina, an enslaved woman, hid in the house of her fiancé, a goldsmith named Brandt, for eighteen months. The neighbours were the first to notice that something was different in the way Brandt entered and left his house. At some point he had arranged for his house to be joined to that of his brother, and he would always leave through the front door of his brother's house, which he would also conspicuously make sure to lock properly. Acting on the neighbours' suspicions, Christina's owner, Sara, went to some lengths to retrieve her slave, sending her niece to find and bring Christina back. Furthermore, even *attempts* to abscond could be foiled by neighbours and bystanders. Danie van Sumboewa, for example, had to confess to having plans of escape when the discovery of the dead body of her accomplice by a neighbourhood child led the investigators of the case to her.[30] The VOC encouraged this mechanism further by establishing bounties for the capture of runaway Company slaves.[31]

## VOC on the Malabar coast—a Pagodinho tavern

The South West Indian city of Cochin and its surrounding areas, situated on the Malabar coast, provide an interesting comparative environment. The physical presence of the VOC on the Malabar coast consisted of a series of forts and posts, while the small city of Cochin (conquered in 1663) was the main settlement. The region was characterized by a complex political landscape in which multiple sovereigns ruled over stretches of land with relatively well-defined borders that delineated the authority of the Company and other rulers. The VOC had a number of treaties with local rulers which included clauses that regulated the extradition of subjects prosecuted for offences within the jurisdiction of the Company (often after a trial before the Court of Justice). Geographically, the Malabar coast featured many waterways (backwaters and rivers) connecting villages and cities. Trade and shipping connected the region to the Indian Ocean world and parts of the VOC empire, but links also stretched to the mountainous hinterland, the Sahyadris (or Western Ghats). The Malabar region, therefore, was a site where different social, political and economic systems interacted.

The court records of the case featuring Cruz, the enslaved man working in a tavern in Pagodinho, shed light on how this environment affected mobility and control under slavery in everyday circumstances. First of all, Pedro seemed to own, or was at least closely involved in the running of, the tavern Cruz worked at, as he went by "very early in the morning as usual". However, Cruz was responsible for the daily running of the tavern, including closing the tavern and opening its doors for business again in the morning. Pedro had been taken aback when he was greeted by the closed doors and windows of the tavern when he arrived the next morning, because Cruz had already left Pagodinho by then.[32] Just before Pedro left the tavern on Sunday evening, he had noticed Anthonij and Cruz talking, and proceeded to ask Cruz "whether he still did not want to go home, upon which mentioned *jongen* [Cruz] replied: who will keep you company here then ...".

The remainder of their conversation is unfortunately untraceable due to material damage; however, this passage does reveal, first of all, that Cruz was not constantly supervised. After Cruz declined Pedro's offer Pedro left the tavern alone, leaving Cruz behind with Anthonij. Pedro certainly did seem concerned that Anthonij and Cruz had been talking for some time. Trying to steer Cruz away from Anthonij, he suggested that it was late, and asked Cruz whether he wanted to go home.[33] We do not know whether Cruz lived with, or in close proximity to, his masters Pedro and Dominga, but we do know that Pedro did not check whether Cruz had left the tavern for his house the previous night. It was only when he reached the closed tavern the next morning and was informed by some children from the neighbourhood that they had seen Cruz and Anthonij talking near the water tank the previous night that Pedro realized that Cruz had not just left the tavern—he had left town.[34] Cruz was eventually recognized by Pedro's relatives near "the land of Travancore", and they urged him to return to his owner, which Cruz apparently did.[35]

Cruz's relative mobility was, of course, not self-evident, and not without any control. In fact, it was the threat his master had uttered that Sunday, that he would sell him to some sailors, that had prompted Cruz to run away. Even though Cruz had some degree of mobility as an enslaved man, the grasp his master had on Cruz's life and his ability to drastically change the direction it might take was very real and threatening. At the same time the case reveals Cruz's fears of being sold and Pedro's anxiety about the long conversation between Cruz and Anthonij. The case also clearly demonstrates the roles of neighbours and acquaintances in social control.

## Households and military guards

Similar dynamics can be discerned from the 1713 case of Maria and her European owner, the soldier Cornelisz Fredericksz. After a devastating house fire, Fredericksz had threatened—in a similar fashion to Pedro—to sell her "on board" a ship.[36] The prospect of being transported far away from the familiar domestic environment may have frightened the 19-year-old Maria, and she talked to another slave in the household, a 25-year-old who was also called Maria but went by the name Maij, who convinced Maria to run away with her. The two girls met Joan, a 50-year-old *chego* man, who agreed to help them escape. Maria stole a few items and "slave baubles"[37] from Fredericksz' house and the trio ran away, heading towards the Kingdom of Porca. What followed was a week-long flight during which the trio hired several boats, walked long distances and stayed at several houses. During their travels Maria sold some of the goods she had stolen to finance their flight, and Joan was bitten on the leg by a dog at one of the houses in which they spent a night. Not far from their destination, near the settlement of Allepee, the three were arrested by two *christen lascorijns*. Their flight had been reported by Cornelisz, and because the runaways were expected to go to the nearby Kingdom of Porca the *pachter* (farmer) of St. Andries, Elias Jansz,[38] was informed, and he had sent the soldiers to look for and intercept the runaways.

The story of the flight indicates that in the company of Joan the runaway slave girls could move around relatively openly. Joan hired boats multiple times, and the trio travelled by road during the day and slept in houses at night, with Joan selling the stolen goods along the way. Although their capture might have been a consequence of their travelling in the open, it is interesting that there are no references to being questioned or stopped by the people they encountered. The trio seem to have been able to pass quite unnoticed, apparently without raising much concern, nor was it considered out of the ordinary. Informal social control, therefore, did not hinder their attempt at escape, perhaps because no one knew them well enough to identify them in the places where they travelled, or perhaps because the 50-year-old chego was taken to be the owner of the two younger, enslaved women. Formal control mechanisms did, however, turn out to be effective, in that policing was set in motion following the slaves' escape—after a week at large, the three were caught when recognized by soldiers who were actively looking for them.


2de Blad
SITUATIE KAART
VAN
COCHIM;
A. De Punt Overyssel
B. De Punt Stroomberg
C. De Komenandeurs punt
D. De Punt Gelderland
E. Holland
F. Zeeland
G. Utrecht
H. Vriesland
I. Groningen.
K. De tenaille Galeen.
L. Wagenhamer en Smeeswindel.
M. De Rever poort
N. De nieuwpoort
O. De Ravelin buiten de nieuwpoort.
P. De Ravelin voor de Sortie.
Q. De Bedachte Weg
R. De kruit magazyns
S. De kruit meelen.
T. De Baanpoort
U. De Equipassie Werf
V. t Pakhuis
W. De Dispence.
X. De Beem.
Y. t Sekretarye.
Z. De Kerk.
a. De Companies thuin.
b. De Bazaar d'mardt genaamt Pagodische
c. De Kanarees Bazaar genaamt t Sellai
d. De Bazaar van Mattanserie.
e. De Roomsche Kerk
f. Het Pallets van den Koning van Kochim.
g. De Brig van Mattanserie.
h. Galwetty of 8 Compagnies Schepsimakerwerf
i. De weg na Tilcotti
k. De thuin van de weduwe Beets
l. t Pakhuis van alita setti
m. twee Offerboomen.
DE RIVIER
WAIPIN,




Figure 3.1. This map of Cochin shows the location of the quite large forge (L) and the bay gate through which Filander and Vrijgezel escaped (T). Source: National Archives of the Netherlands, Catalogus Leupe.

## Market transgressions

An interesting example of some of the dynamics of mobility and control can be found in a case dealing with interactions in a marketplace. Sometime in early April 1681, a 14-year-old chego named Anthonij, slave of the *toepas* Emmanuel Pereira, walked through the *Cannarijn* Bazaar just outside the city of Cochin. He was sent there by his master to sell a number of *woronge*.[39] While there, he was approached and greeted by Pedro, who acted as if the two were good friends even though Anthonij had never met him. (Pedro, a Moor, had himself been a slave but had run away several years before.) Pedro asked Anthonij if he wanted to go back to his homeland (Calicoilan), but Anthonij replied that he did not. Pedro persisted, asking him if he wanted to go to Calicot instead. Anthonij was more interested in going there, and he told Pedro that though he was interested he could not go with him just yet.

The two agreed that Pedro would bring his boat to the house of Anthonij's master the following Friday. The week progressed, but on Friday Pedro and his boat were nowhere to be seen. Finally, on Sunday Pedro moored his ship near Pereira's house and Anthonij climbed aboard. Just as Pedro was about to sail away, Anthonij jumped back ashore and told the Moor that he had forgotten some belongings in the house. He went into the house but, much to Pedro's surprise, instead of the boy himself returning, Pereira came running out with weapons drawn, yelling "A thief! A thief!".[40] Two nearby *toepas* men heard Pereira and rushed to help while Pedro tried to sail quickly away, but the three jumped into a nearby boat and caught up with him. Pedro drew his sword and shield but was quickly overwhelmed by his three pursuers. A quick blow hit his shield, another hit him on the arm, and the last blow made him throw his weapon overboard and surrender. This sudden and dramatic turn of events was the result of a special plan that Pereira and Anthonij had concocted. Pereira had told Anthonij sometime before that if anyone ever tried to tempt him to run away, he should agree to go and immediately tell Pereira, in order to capture that person as a slave thief, an offence prosecuted and often severely punished by Company authorities.[41]

Anthonij had a relatively high degree of mobility, in terms of both movement and agency. His owner trusted him to go to the bazaar by himself to engage in economic transactions, possibly in the name of his master. When Pereira planned to capture slave thieves or mediators who tried to help slaves escape, Anthonij was trusted to help carry out such plans.

## Private punishment and the Company

"Is this not all your fault?" These words were uttered by the slave Filander as he plunged his knife into the side of his supervisor, the Christian Diogo Anthonij.[42] Filander had felt betrayed by Anthonij and, in his anger and desperation, decided to attack his supervisor in the smithy where he worked. The events leading up to this 1752 stabbing had started three months earlier, in Cochin. Filander explained in his confession to the secretary of the Court of Justice that he and his fellow slave Vrijgezel had decided to run away together from the smithy. The two slaves were forced to flee together because they were tied together by an iron chain. How exactly their escape unfolded is not entirely clear from Filander's confession, except that they simply left through the Baaijpoort (bay gate) at around 7 o'clock in the evening. They visited a blacksmith in Paroe (modern day Parur), a town very close to Cranganore (modern day Kodungallur), just north of Cochin. The Malabarian blacksmith there was willing to help release the two slaves from their chains.[43] From Paroe the two slaves made their way to Tallicheriij (modern day Thalassery), which lay about 200 kilometres to the north, outside VOC jurisdiction.

Filander and Vrijgezel's taste of freedom was cut short when their supervisor Anthonij set out to find them. Diogo Anthonij of Illawada had been sent by the boss of the forge, Hans Casper Thiel, to find the two slaves and bring them back. Anthonij, with seemingly little effort, found the men in Tallicherij and tried to convince them to return with him to the forge, promising that they would not be punished. Filander agreed but warned Anthonij that "... he'd better not lie, because if the confessant should be punished, he would find Anthonij and seek revenge".[44] After three months, however, Filander found out that he was to receive a beating for his escape. True to his word, Filander sought revenge and lured Anthonij out of the forge by telling him that "the boss is calling you".[45] Filander attacked Anthonij with a knife which he had hidden in his hand. Anthonij fell into a ditch and managed to escape without any serious injuries, after which Filander was arrested and tried by the court. For the attack on his overseer Filander was sentenced to "... be bound to a pole and beaten with a stick, after which he will be chained to serve on the Company's common works for three years without pay."[46]

The court case describing the events above mainly focussed on Filander's stabbing of Anthonij, and most of the information, therefore, concerns that situation. Filander was relatively young—21 years old—and a member of the *chego* caste. The *chegos* were a lower caste and commonly worked as slaves in

VOC-ruled Cochin. From the court records it is clear that Filander was owned by Nicolaas Bowijn, a *koopman* (merchant) and *fiscaal* (fiscal, or public prosecutor), and thus one of the top VOC officials in Cochin. Although Filander was owned by this koopman, he worked in the Company forge, implying that Nicolaas had either rented Filander out to the Company or, more likely, had sent Filander to the smithy as a form of punishment.

Under what conditions were Filander and Vrijgezel slaves? How did these conditions impact on their mobility? From the court case it becomes clear that Filander and Vrijgezel were chained together, yet they were able to simply walk through the Baaijpoort. This begs the question of how mobility was regulated in the forge where they worked. Another court case provides further insight into how the *smitswinkel* (forge) operated and how the mobility of slaves and *kettinggangers* (those chained together in a chain gang) was regulated.

In 1750, the toepas Joseph Queljo of Chakengattij was tried before the Court of Justice. He had been accused of carelessness and dereliction of duty. At 11 o'clock on 19 July 1749, the gatekeeper of the smithy, Domingo, decided to go home for lunch. Joseph Queljo was ordered to take Domingo's place until 1 o'clock in the afternoon. Unfortunately for him, Domingo returned from his long lunch only at around 5 o'clock. After his shift was over, Joseph took it upon himself to count the prisoners and slaves working in the forge. "As usual he counted the slaves and reported to his supervisor Hans Casper Thiel that they had found 63 of them. To which the supervisor answered that there should have been 64."[47] Since the chainganger had been lost during Queljo's shift, he was sent to find the missing person but he was unable to find him. During Queljo's interrogation, he was asked several times if he was sure that he had not let one of the chaingangers through the gate, but he denied having done so. To the question why he had not counted the chaingangers at the start of his shift, he answered: "... I did not think that on exactly this day a chainganger would go missing."[48]

The case against Queljo reveals much about the place and context in which Filander and Vrijgezel were slaves. The forge in Cochin was a relatively large undertaking, and three years before Filander and Vrijgezel's court case took place, there were at least 63 people employed there. It should be noted that two categories of people were working in the smithy—*kettinggangers* and "unchained slaves". Kettinggangers were free people or slaves who were convicted of a crime and had been sentenced to work in chains on the VOC's public works projects; the slaves who worked at the forge were leased from

their owners and were not chained. It was unusual for slaves to be chained except at the moment of their capture or during transport.[49] They therefore worked in conditions that were to an extent the same as those of convicts, whether as chained convicts themselves or as workers rented out by their owners. This case can thus reveal as much about the control exerted over the mobility of slaves as about the control of the mobility of convicts.

Filander and Vrijgezel were described in the court case as slaves, but they were also chained together. This indicates that they belonged to the kettingganger category. How did they end up in the forge? One obvious answer is that the two slaves had been convicted of crimes, which routinely happened. A slave could, for example, be chained for the crime of trying to injure, defame or insult their owner, or even for walking the streets after sundown.[50] Chaining slaves could also serve as a disciplinary method. Although, formally, the owners of slaves were not allowed to chain or lock up their slaves, they could transfer them to the Company, which was allowed to force slaves to work in chains for its public works.[51] The threat of being given to the Company and forced to work for their *gemeene werken* (public works) could, therefore, be used as a mechanism of control, similar to threats of reselling, export or physical violence. It is likely that this happened to Filander. He was owned by Nicolaas Bowijn, the public prosecutor of Cochin, who could easily have transferred him as a final disciplinary measure, forcing him to work in chains alongside convicts.

The mobility of the workers in the forge was highly restricted. It was surrounded by walls, and those who came in and went out were checked at the gates. Furthermore, the slaves and prisoners were all chained together, obviously greatly hampering their mobility. Queljo's mistake reveals that the prisoners were supposed to be counted at the beginning and end of each day to ensure that all workers were present. Yet, Queljo's case also reveals that workers were allowed to pass through these gates if they were given permission. This could explain how Vrijgezel and Filander were able to leave the smithy. They probably simply received permission. They may have got as far as they did because it was believed that their chains would sufficiently hamper their freedom of movement. Filander and Vrijgezel were, however, able to get rid of their chains and travel a long way north to Tallicherij.

The control of mobility in the smithy, therefore, seems somewhat contradictory at a glance—the mobility of the prisoners working there was heavily impeded by chains, gates and walls, but under specific circumstances they were able to simply walk through the gates. The Company or hired slaves

working in the forge were not chained during their work or at night, but were subject to some of the same measures of control. They had to pass through the gates, and they were counted at the start and end of each day. It can be concluded that the forge was a highly restrictive environment—Filander, Vrijgezel and the escapee in Queljo's case were exceptions to the rule. Only because Filander and Vrijgezel were able to unchain themselves did they manage to get as far as they did (and even then, they were still apprehended). The smithy at Cochin was meant to keep prisoners and slaves in. The fact that so many were in chains while they worked meant that the work environment was tough and that the Company was keen to restrict the workers' mobility. Those people who did escape this specific environment were further restricted by other instruments of control—they were captured and tried by the Company.

The court cases above have shown that the control mechanisms used to curtail the mobility of the kettinggangers in the forge were highly restrictive. To what extent these mechanisms were specifically applied to the unchained slaves working there is unfortunately unclear. The fact that the slaves were not chained implies a higher level of mobility; yet, the case records also show that they were always under threat of being chained, which served as a way to discipline them and remind them of what could happen if they did not obey their masters. Just as the chains were meant to impede Filander and Vrijgezel's mobility, the threat of chains was meant to impede the mobility of the unchained slaves working not only in the forge, but in all of Cochin.

## Conclusion

The material and social conditions in which slaves lived were shaped most importantly by the relations between slave and master, and these, in turn, were highly influenced by trust, skill, and control. Some of the slaves encountered in this study had responsibilities that entailed a degree of mobility, like Maria, who felt compelled to escape as a response to the threat that she might have to leave the household environment that was familiar to her. Comparing the court cases reveals different approaches to exerting control over slaves, and how similar acts could have very different meanings. Some slaves were permitted to walk around, talk to and even trade with people in their masters' absence. Anthonij sold goods to strangers and had been sent to the bazaar unsupervized. In other environments the relative mobility of slaves seems to have been connected to workplace situations and their socially controlled

surroundings (such as Cruz running a tavern and being able to move at least between the tavern and his residence), or to (perceived) relations of belonging, such as in instances where enslaved runaways travelled under the (apparent) supervision of people who were, or appeared to be, free. This comparative study shows how, both in a busy metropole surrounded by intensive agricultural production (Batavia) as well as in a smaller Company settlement in the midst of a highly diverse and politically fragmented environment (Cochin), the interaction of formal and informal systems of control strongly influenced the dynamics of slavery.

Although the lives and work of the slaves who were part of European, Eurasian and Asian households were characterized by specific degrees of mobility, this mobility was not only relative and dependent upon the context (type of work and level of trust), but it was also clearly delineated and ultimately limited. Slaves needed permission from their masters to leave the premises, and they were identifiable and watched in the environments in which they normally operated. Away from this environment, informal control may have dwindled, but formal control became more marked, especially in the form of guards and military patrols. The interaction between the informal and formal is important and should be further explored. The cases presented here seem to indicate that in the absence of informal authorization (written notes provided by the master stating the purpose and destination of slaves, or bystanders who can testify to, or confirm, the legitimacy of the actions or movements of slaves), the apparatus and actors of formal control seem to have operated on the basis of distrust and suspicion, aiming to severely limit the opportunities of enslaved and otherwise bonded people and their mobility outside their informally controlled environments.

A crucial observation with regard to the functioning of informal control and its sometimes "hard" (rather than "mild") characteristics is the slave masters' recurring threat to their enslaved that they will send them away, and particularly sell them to (sailors of) ships, implying long-distance transport. This threat of being sold (and especially of being sent far away) functioned as a method of asserting dominance over enslaved women or men through fear. Interactions and behaviours in what appeared sometimes to be a relatively open and "softer" situation must, therefore, have been engrained with, and influenced by, the always-looming limitations and threats of the underlying relations of ownership, hierarchy and control. Recurrent physical punishment and verbal threats were the reason for many of the incidents of everyday resistance and more violent outbursts that we encounter in the court records.

The cases remind us of the complexities of slavery relations. Easy dichotomies of "benign", "Asian", "household" or "urban" versus "European", "Atlantic" or "plantation" slavery, in this respect, are as much as revealing. It is time to move beyond such stereotypes in order to comprehend the dynamics of different kinds of coercive relations in more refined ways. The use of hitherto unexplored records of the Court of Justice of Cochin can provide detailed and new perspectives on the dynamics of slavery. Although these court cases give only fragmented and temporary insights into the world of the enslaved, they contain an untapped wealth of information on a range of different aspects of slavery, enslavement and its contestation.

## Notes

1. NL–HaNa, *Nederlandse bezittingen India: Digitale duplicaten Chennai*, 1.11.06.11, inv. no. 440, ff. 1–39. Case ID Database CR-440–6. The Mocquas, Pandijs and Chegos were castes native to the Malabar coast.
2. NL–HaNa, 1.11.06.11, 440, f. 20; 37. Original: "dat nu omtrent 2 maanden geleeden hij relatant door sijn senhor hier boven gem: [Pedro] in de schaggerije op Pagodinho is geplaatst geworden, om den drank te verkoopen"; "en des anderen daags smorgens heel vroeg na gewoonte na de schaggerije gegaan zijnde, heeft den deposant de deuren en vensters gesloten, en daar niemand gevonden".
3. NL–HaNa, 1.11.06.11, 440, f. 21. Unfortunately, we cannot read the complete passage due to damage, but the context provides a clear understanding of what Cruz's statement should say: "[Pedro] gedreijgt heeft [hem aan de] schepelingen te verkoopen [...]".
4. NL–HaNa, 1.11.06.11, 440, f. 37. Extracted from Pedro's interrogation: "4: Of den deposant daer over dien jongen niet gedreijgt heeft hem per eerste gelegentheid aan de schepelingen te zullen verkoopen; antw: Ja."
5. NL–HaNa, 1.11.06.11, 440, f. 20. Extracted from Cruz's statement:

   > [...] den relatant zeer bedroefd zijnde, en bitter wenende is ondertusschen den gev: in de schaggerije gekomen, hem relatant na d'oorsaak van zijn droefheid vragende die den relatant aan den gev: g'openbaart hebbende namentlijk dat zijn senhor hem aan de scheepsvrienden wilde verkoopen heeft den gev: hem relatant gevraagt of hij met hem wilde mede gaan, en dat hij hem na zijn land zoude brengen, op welke vraag den relatatant hem gev: antwoordende, dat hij zelvs nieten wist waar zijn land was, heeft den gev: tegens den relatant gesegt zulx wel te weeten [...].

6. A. Reid and J. Brewster (eds.), *Slavery, Bondage and Dependency in Southeast Asia*. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1983; J.F. Warren, *The Sulu Zone: The Dynamics of External Trade, Slavery, and Ethnicity in the Transformation of a Southeast Asian Maritime State*. Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1981; G.J. Knaap, "Slavery and the Dutch in Southeast Asia," in *Fifty Years Later*, edited by G. Oostindie, 193-206. Leiden: KITLV Press, 1995.
7. G. Campbell, "Slavery in the Indian Ocean World," in *The Routledge History of Slavery*, edited by G. Heuman, and T. Burnard, 52-63, 61. New York: Routledge, 2011; P. Boomgaard, "Human Capital, Slavery and Low Rates of Economic and Population Growth in Indonesia, 1600–1910," *Slavery & Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies* 24, no. 2 (2003): 83--96; Reid, *Slavery*, 7-14.
8. Adoor K.K. Ramachandran Nair, *Slavery in Kerala,* 5. Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1986.
9. As Jones states in relation to slavery in Batavia, "plantations radiated outward from late eighteenth-century Batavia". See: E. Jones, *Wives, Slaves and Concubines. A History of the Female Underclass in Dutch Asia,* 144. Dekalb IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010.
10. J.J. Ewald, "Crossers of the Sea: Slaves, Freedmen, and Other Migrants in the Northwestern Indian Ocean, c. 1750–1914," *The American Historical Review* 105, no 1 (2000): 69-91; M. Vink, "'The World's Oldest Trade': Dutch Slavery and Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean," *Journal of World History* 14, no. 2 (2003): 131-177; I. Chatterjee and R. Eaton (eds.), *Slavery and South Asian History*. Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 2006; A. Stanziani, *Bondage: Labor and Rights in Eurasia from the Sixteenth to the Early Twentieth Centuries*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2014; R.B. Allen, *European Slave Trading in the Indian Ocean, 1500–1850*. Athens OH: Athens, Ohio University Press 2015; M. van Rossum, *Kleurrijke tragiek. De geschiedenis van slavernij in Azië onder de VOC*. Hilversum: Verloren, 2015.
11. M. Mann, *Sahibs, Sklaven und Soldaten. Geschichte des Menschenhandels rund um den Indischen Ozean* Darmstad: WBG, 2012. Freely translated from: "dynamischer Bestandteil eines sich permanent verändernden, in globalen Bezügen vernetzenden und zunehmend kapitalistisch ausgerichteten Wirtschaftsystems".
12. R.B. Allen, "Satisfying the Want for Labouring People: European Slave Trading in the Indian Ocean, 1500–1850," *Journal of World History* 21, no. 1 (2010): 45-73; L. Mbeki and M. van Rossum, "Private Slave Trade in the Dutch Indian Ocean World: A Study Into the Networks and Backgrounds of the Slavers and the Enslaved in South Asia and South Africa," *Slavery & Abolition* 38, no. 1 (2017): 95-116.

13. H. Hägerdal, *Lords of the Land, Lords of the Sea. Conflict and Adaptation in Early Colonial Timor, 1600–1800* Leiden: KITLV Press, 2012.
14. Stanziani, *Bondage*.
15. For this point see Matthias van Rossum, "Connecting Global Slavery and Local Bondage—Rethinking Slavery in Early Modern Asia," Opening Lecture, "Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean and Indonesian Archipelago Worlds (16th to 19th Century): New Research, Results and Comparisons" (*International Institute of Social History*, Amsterdam, 9–10 November 2016); and Extended Paper for the International Workshop, "Enslavement in the Indian Ocean World" (Linnaeus University, Kalmar, 8–9 September 2017), submitted "Global Slavery, Local Bondage? Rethinking Slaveries as (Im)Mobilizing Regimes from the Case of the Dutch Indian Ocean and Indonesian Archipelago Worlds", *Journal of World History* (accepted, forthcoming 2020).
16. Marcus Rediker, Titas Chakraborty and Matthias van Rossum, *A Global History of Runaways: Workers, Mobility, and Capitalism 1600-1850*. Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2019); M. van Rossum and Jeannette Kamp, *Desertion in the Early Modern World: A Comparative History*. London: Bloomsbury, 2016); M. van Rossum, *Werkers van de wereld. Globalisering, arbeid en interculturele ontmoetingen tussen Aziatische en Europese zeelieden in dienst van de VOC, 1600–1800*. Hilversum: Verloren, 2014.
17. Alexander Geelen, Bram van den Hout, Merve Tosun, Mike de Windt and Matthias van Rossum, "On the Run: Runaway Slaves and Their Social Networks in Eighteenth Century Cochin," *Journal of Social History* (forthcoming 2020); Van Rossum, *Kleurrijke tragiek*.
18. As explored in the Resilient Diversity project.
19. A. Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009; C. Anderson, *Subaltern Lives. Biographies of Colonialism in the Indian Ocean World, 1790–1920*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. For VOC sources see Van Rossum, *Werkers van de wereld*, 16–19.
20. This research is related to the following projects: Matthias van Rossum, *Between Local Debts and Global Markets: Explaining Slavery in South and Southeast Asia, 1600–1800*, International Institute of Social History, NWO Veni Grant, 2016–2019; and Cátia Antunes, Ulbe Bosma, Karwan Fatah-Black and Matthias van Rossum, *Resilient Diversity: The Governance of Racial and Religious Plurality in the Dutch Empire, 1600–1800*, Leiden University and International Institute of Social History, NWO Vrije Competitie Grant, 2017–2022.
21. Van Rossum, *Werkers van de wereld*, 16-35.

22. The database created by Matthias van Rossum, Alexander Geelen, Bram van den Hout and Merve Tosun, *VOC Court Records Cochin, 1681–1792*. Amsterdam: International Institute of Social History, 2018, is part of van Rossum's *Between Local Debts* project, and will be made publicly available at its conclusion. Building on the indexing in Van Rossum, *Werkers van de wereld* for Batavia and the Cochin database, in 2017 we expanded this work and started indexing the court records created and located in other former VOC settlements, extending from Batavia to Elmina and Paramaribo. This indexing mission is part of the *Resilient Diversity* project by Antunes, Bosma, Fatah-Black and Van Rossum.
23. See the different contributions to the "Amok in Batavia. Over Amok in Nederlands-Indische rechtszaken" special issue, *Acta Historica* 3, no. 4 (2014). Also, see Van Rossum, *Kleurrijke Tragiek*.
24. Remco Raben, *Batavia and Colombo. The Ethnic and Spatial Order of Two Colonial Cities 1600–1800* (PhD diss., Leiden University, 1996): 10–20.
25. Remco Raben, "Round About Batavia. Ethnicity and Authority in the Ommelanden, 1650–1800," in *Jakarta-Batavia. Socio-Cultural Essays. Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde 187*, edited by Kees Grijns and Peter J.M. Nas, 95. Leiden: KITLV Press, 2000.
26. Van Rossum, *Kleurrijke tragiek*, 22, 27.
27. Ibid., 49–60.
28. Remco Raben, *Batavia and Colombo*, 213; D.F. Lach and E.J. van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe, Volume III: A Century of Advance, Book 3 Southeast Asia*, 1316. Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993.
29. Van Rossum, *Kleurrijke tragiek*, 67–68.
30. Jones, *Wives, Slaves and Concubines*, 104–25.
31. J.A. van der Chijs, *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakaatboek*, VII, 5. Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1885–1900.
32. NL–HaNa, 1.11.06.11, 440, f. 20; 32. Original: "dat nu omtrent 2 maanden geleeden hij relatant door sijn senhor hier boven gem: [Pedro] in de schaggerije op Pagodinho is geplaatst geworden, om den drank te verkoopen"; "en des anderen daags smorgens heel vroeg na gewoonte na de schaggerije gegaan zijnde, heeft den deposant de deuren en vensters gesloten, en daar niemand gevonden".
33. NL–HaNa, 1.11.06.11, 440, ff. 31–32. Extracted from Pedro's statement:

    > [...] dat nu omtrent 4 maanden geleeden den gev: in dezen bij hem deposant op voorsch: Pagodinho in de schaggerije, alwaar des deposants slave jongen mede was, gekomen is, en een soopje tager g'eischt hebbende, met gem: lijfeigen van den deposant is gaan zitten praten, 't gunt

den deposant merkende, vroeg aan zijn slaav, vermits het reets laat was, of hij nog niet na huis wilde gaan, waarop gem: jongen den deposant antwoordende: wie zal u hier dan geselschap [houden] [...] daarmede den deposant uit de schaggerije des avonds om 9 uuren na zijn woom gegaan is, latende den gev: en voorm: zijn jongen daar ter plaatse.

34. NL–HaNa, 1.11.06.11, 440, f. 32.
35. NL–HaNa, 1.11.06.11, 440, f. 33. Extracted from Pedro's statement: "[...] deposerende wijders dat voortsch: zijn deposants jongen in't lan van Trevancoor door eenige bekenden van hem deposant ontwaart geworden zijnde, deselve gem: slave jongen geraaden hebben weder na zijn senhor te gaan [...]".
36. NL–HaNa, 1.11.06.11, 77, Scan 18. Case ID CR-77–1. "...slavinne Maria (alias Maij) hem confessant heft versogt haer te willen vervoeren, en elders near toe te brengen, also men haer gedreijgt hadde aanboort te verkoopen...".
37. NL–HaNa, 1.11.06.11, 77, Scan 2. Case ID CR-77–1. Original: "...te begeven naer 't land van den koning van Porca. Alvorens denselven, uijt zijne woninge, beroovende van het volgende, naementlijk: 1: bijl, zonder steel. 3: copere beckens. Paerthij grove tafel-piringen, en eenige slaven plunderagie."
38. NL–HaNa, 1.11.06.11, 77, Scan 2. Case ID CR-77–1. Original: "... door de uitgesondene van gem: Elias Jansz: omtrent Allepee ontmoet en opgevat".
39. NL–HaNa, 1.11.06.11, 66, Scan 75. Case ID CR-66–11. Original: "...door sijn monsieur voormelt na de baser Cannarijn buijten dese stadt is gesonden met eenige woronge, om deselve aldaer te verkopen." Possibly market stals, derived from barung or warong. See "VOC Glossarium", http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl.
40. NL–HaNa, 1.11.06.11, 66, Scan 67. Case ID CR-66–11. Original: "Een dief, een dief!"
41. NL–HaNa, 1.11.06.11, 66, Scan 75. Case ID CR-66–11. Original: "Sijn monsieur geseijt had wanneer hem ijmant wilde verleijden dat hij deertoe soude consenteren, en sulx bekent maecke om den dieff te vatte."
42. NL–HaNa, 1.11.06.11, 538, f.169. Original: "Is dat niet allemaal jou schuld?"
43. NL–HaNa, 1.11.06.11, 538, f.172.
44. NL–HaNa, 1.11.06.11, 538, f.171. Original: "[...] Dat hij hem met gene leugens voorkomen soude, want als hij confesst: straffe soude moeten ondergaen, wilde hij sulx aan hem Anthonij de ene of andere tijd soeken te wreeken."
45. NL–HaNa, 1.11.06.11, 538, f.169. Original: "Den baas roept jou."
46. NL–HaNa, 1.11.06.11, 538 f. 179. Original: "[...] Aan een paal gebonden met rottings geslagen sijnde voor den tijd van drie achter een volgende jaren in

de ktting gebonden te werden omme geduurende die tijd aan compagnies gemeens werken voor de kost te arbeiden sonder loon."

47. NL–HaNa, 1.11.06.11, 485 f. 185. Original: "Als wanneer naar gewoonte de slaven en ketting gevangenen gestelt en 63: stux bevonden hebbende, hij sulx aan voorsz: Hans Thiel gerapporteert heeft, waarop denselven te antw: gevende dat er dat er 64: diende te zijn."
48. NL–HaNa, 1.11.06.11, 485, f. 194. Original: "[...] ik heb niet gedagt dat juist op dien dag een ketting ganger soude absent bevonden werden."
49. NL–HaNa, 1.04.02, 9408 f. 24. This court case from 1744 concerning the slave revolt on the ship *Delfland* reveals that, except in the case of punishment for a crime, no person was meant to be chained.
50. J.A. van der Chijs, *Nederlands Indisch Plakaatboek 1602–1811,* VI, 282-289. Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1889.
51. Matthias van Rossum, "The Dutch East India Company in Asia, 1595–1811," in *A Global History of Convicts and Penal Colonies*, edited by Clare Anderson, 157-183. London: Bloomsbury, 2018.

# 4

# Connected Lives

## Experiences of Slavery in VOC Colombo[1]

*Kate Ekama*

During the eighteenth century, Dutch Colombo—port town and urban centre—supported a diverse population which included enslaved individuals from regions around the Indian Ocean. Far from being isolated individuals, the enslaved population of Colombo formed bonds of various kinds with fellow enslaved and free people. Using wills, manumission deeds and criminal court records, this chapter teases out the kinds of connections that enslaved people fostered and highlights the importance of specific locations of interaction. What emerges is a series of snapshots of the connected lives of the unfree in eighteenth-century Colombo.

In this period of Dutch East India Company (*Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, VOC) rule Colombo was both the gateway to the productive cinnamon-producing hinterland and an important node in VOC networks. Colombo was part of shipping routes, including local trade routes connecting the ports further north and south on the island, and intra-Asian trade networks, specifically enduring networks encompassing the Maldives, Malabar Coast, Madurai District, Coromandel Coast and Bengal. The Company insinuated itself into and reshaped slave trade routes in the Indian Ocean too, as Markus Vink has argued.[2] During the Company period, then, Colombo had strong shipping connections in the Indian Ocean as well as with the Netherlands, and shared port functions with Galle in the south-west and Jaffna in the north.[3]

Colombo's shipping patterns and trade position affected the composition of the port's population. Kumari Jayawardena characterizes Lanka before the arrival of European colonists as a "hybrid island", and ethnic mixing continued after the arrival of the Portuguese, and later the Dutch.[4] The town comprised indigenous population groups, immigrant Asians, European settlers and Company servants; enslaved people too constituted a sizeable share of the

population.[5] The diversity of the population of the port town led Raben to conclude that in as early as the 1680s "Colombo had become—or rather, had continued to be—the gathering place of foreigners and peoples who occupied an exceptional position in the Sinhalese social (caste) order".[6] Many of these people owned slaves who occupied the very lowest rung on the social ladder. To this population was added sporadic influxes of soldiers. In the mid-1760s, during the war with Kandy, "eastern" soldiers were shipped to Colombo from Batavia.[7] During the 1780s, the time of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War, whole regiments were hired from Europe to bolster Colombo's deficient military. Hundreds of men from the Luxemburg, Württemberg and de Meuron regiments were stationed in Colombo, swelling its population.[8] Raben comments that "as port cities do, they [Batavia and Colombo] brought together separate worlds in the confined space of the city".[9] Within this "confined space", enslaved men and women established social, sexual, commercial and criminal connections with fellow enslaved individuals and the non-enslaved.

This chapter explores the stories of named individuals who appear in the VOC records of the mid- to late eighteenth century. When one looks for them, the enslaved can be seen in the colonial archive, as Alicia Schrikker and Nira Wickramasinghe discuss in the introduction to this volume. Details of these people's lives and experiences as enslaved individuals in Colombo can be gleaned from these admittedly challenging institutional sources.[10] Company records are full of references to slavery and enslaved individuals, a handful of whose experiences of bondage and freedom in the town are brought to light in the rest of this chapter. The themes interwoven through these stories are the importance of place, mobility and the different types of connections that the enslaved fostered with each other as well as with non-slaves. The agency of the enslaved underscores these themes. From this reading of the VOC records emerges a reconstruction of some elements of being a slave in the Indian Ocean port town of Colombo.

This analysis builds on work that situates the enslaved firmly within the context of the unfree among whom they lived and laboured, and in connection with an "underclass" of free and unfree individuals. Nigel Worden's research on sailors in another VOC port town, namely Cape Town, brings to light the interactions between the seamen and enslaved people in locations such as the town's taverns. They were sites of multi-ethnic interactions, not all of them legal.[11] Kerry Ward's influential book *Networks of Empire* focused on forced migration, and covered the transportation of slaves, convicts and exiles between Batavia and the Cape.[12] Her work brings into a single

framework those people who experienced different forms of bondage—slavery, convict transportation and exile. Matthias van Rossum's work focuses on the various types of workers that the VOC employed in Asia and, in particular, on the numerous Asian workers who were employed by the VOC as, among other things, sailors.[13] In this rich vein of scholarship, the enslaved population is studied in connection with the other men and women who populated Cape Town, Batavia and other VOC ports and towns of the Indian Ocean littoral. Eric Jones' work focuses specifically on enslaved women, mainly those who lived and laboured in Batavia, whose intimate connections with men in the city, he argues, provided opportunities for social mobility; through intimate ties some enslaved women achieved status and escaped slavery.[14] In contrast to the Cape and Batavia, little research has been done on the history of slavery in VOC Ceylon (as the Company called the island of Sri Lanka in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries). This chapter takes up the task of bringing to light some aspects of what being a slave in VOC Colombo was like in the eighteenth century.

## Interaction in the town

In 1794, a criminal case involving numerous characters came before the Council of Justice. The statements provided by the accused and by witnesses were extremely detailed; they offer a window into understanding the connections between free and unfree people in the town, and provide insight into where these interactions took place. What emerges is a network of multiple and repeated interactions around sites of labour and petty commerce.

The accused in the case were three men of different legal status.[15] Amber was an enslaved man owned by the vice-mudliar of the Atapattu, Christoffel de Saram.[16] His accomplice, Troena de Wangso, was described in the court papers as Javanese, originating from Damak. He had been found guilty of a crime in Batavia and sentenced to transportation, arriving in Colombo as a convict in 1784. He was sent to the *materiaalhuis*, which must have functioned as a workhouse or prison, but he absconded from there in March 1793.[17] The third accused in the case was a free Sinhalese man named Andries who had managed to escape.[18] The social networks which brought together a slave, a transported convict and a free Sinhalese man and provided them with the opportunity to sell or pawn the goods they stole will be highlighted through the story of the burglary and subsequent events.

The very detailed statement which Troena de Wangso provided for the court—the candour of which the fiscal (public prosecutor) attributed to his hope of receiving a lighter sentence[19]—gives insight into the locations where the three accused met and the places where they tried to sell the stolen goods. Four sites of interaction are noteworthy for different reasons. The first is the materiaalhuis where the enslaved man Amber and the convict Troena de Wangso had been detained, and where they had become acquainted before committing the crime together. The details of why Amber had been working there were not revealed in the case.

The second important location in the case was Wolvendaal Church (see map: the church is marked "*d*"). It was there that Amber and Troena de Wangso reconnected and hatched the plot to rob Simon Gomes Nella Tambij, the head of the silversmiths in the town. According to the court papers, Troena de Wangso had been begging at the church when he and Amber met. Why Amber was at the church is unclear, but his presence may be an indicator of relative mobility for an enslaved man, or that he disregarded the regulations and surveillance that were intended to limit his freedom of movement.

The third location relevant to the case was a tavern where Amber and Troena de Wangso recruited the third accused, the free Sinhalese man, Andries.[20] At taverns slaves could not only mingle with others, but they could also drink, gamble and make contracts. In as early as the 1660s, the number of taverns in Colombo was restricted by ordinance, in response to the exponential growth in the number of public houses and the concomitant rise in feuds and alcoholic excess. Theoretically, there could be only two taverns in the fort and five in the town.[21] Not only was the number of taverns limited, but conduct within them was regulated via ordinances which attempted to restrict slaves' access to alcohol and limit social interaction in the city's bars.[22] Despite the prohibition, Amber and Troena went to talk to Andries in a bar, and the case records include the detail that they had seen him there before, locating all three men in the tavern at the same time on at least two occasions.[23]

Taverns in Colombo were not unique in their function as sites of interaction. Geelen et al.'s chapter in this volume highlights the importance of a tavern in Cochin as the enslaved man Cruz's place of work beyond the scrutiny of his owner, as well as the place at which he could interact with others. Looking across the Indian Ocean, Nigel Worden's work on the Cape Town "underclass" brings taverns, and the interactions that took place there, into

sharper focus. In taverns "visiting crewmen encountered the whole range of Cape Town's diverse underclass", which included those residing in the town and the surrounding areas, as well as temporary visitors from the VOC and from foreign ships in the harbour. Among those who would have spent time in the taverns, Worden includes soldiers, Company artisans, slaves, free blacks, Chinese traders, convicts, ex-convicts, burghers and free settlers.[24] It is quite likely that Colombo taverns played a similar role, as meeting places for the free and unfree, and for Colombo's residents and visitors.

Finally, the case of theft against Amber, Troena de Wangso and Andries brings to the fore sites of commerce and exchange. The case shows that individuals interacted in the streets, in the market, and in homes where food and drink, and—crucial to this case—stolen goods were sold. The case unravelled when Aliaar, a young Muslim man (denoted as "Moor" in the records), tried to fence a copper dish in the streets. The dish had been stolen from Simon Gomes, whose neighbour recognized Aliaar's goods as stolen property.[25] It turned out that Aliaar had acquired the bowl from his brother, a soldier named Sinne Wapoe, who had purchased the dish from Louisa Zose, a woman who sold rice from her home. Sinne Wapoe claimed that when he was out selling tea one afternoon Louisa had shown him the copper bowl and had asked him if he wanted to buy it, and that they had concluded the transaction near Wolvendaal Church.[26] Louisa, however, recounted a conflicting story—she claimed that Sinne Wapoe had bought the bowl from the thief himself, Troena de Wangso. In her statement, Louisa confirmed that the three men, Troena de Wangso, Amber and Andries, visited her home one night and, on that occasion, Troena had had the copper basin with him. Louisa's statement thus tied the three men to each other and to the physical evidence. Moreover, while answering the fiscal's questions, she revealed connections between the men quite separate from their collusion in the crime. Louisa sold cooked rice from her home and, as a result of this business, she knew the convict and accused, Troena de Wangso, who was one of her customers. Moreover, she was acquainted with the slave Amber because he owed her money for past purchases.[27] Troena de Wangso then confirmed that Sinne Wapoe had purchased the copper bowl from him. Together, the three men had gone to Louisa's house on the way to Sinne Wapoe's home in the Moorsche Straat (probably located in the Muslim Quarter, the *Moorsche Quartier*, marked "*p*" on the map), where Wapoe bought the dish from Troena de Wangso.[28] In contrast

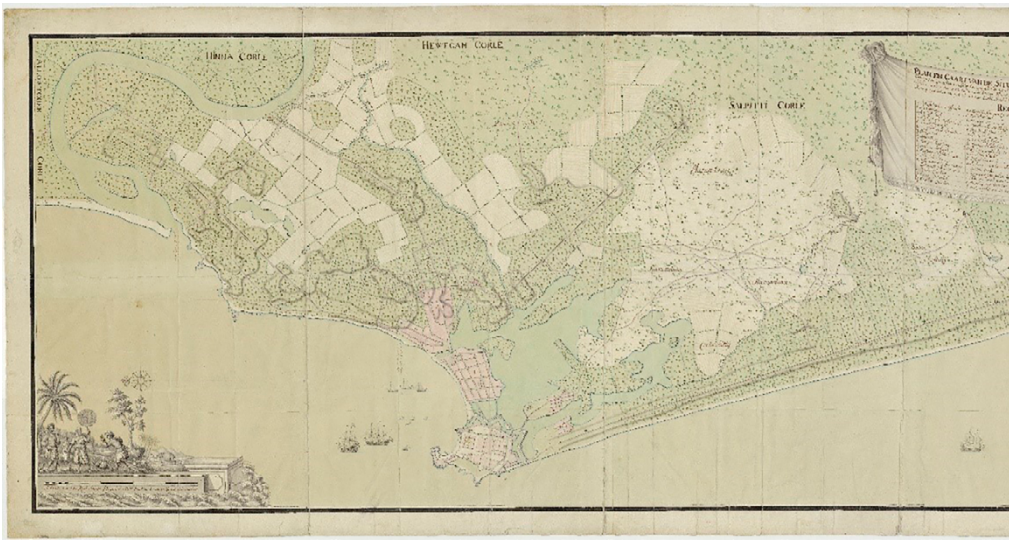



Figure 4.1. Late eighteenth-century map of Colombo.
Source: National Archives, The Hague, Verzameling Buitenlandse Kaarten Leupe, Archive number 4. VEL, Inventory number 953.

to Troena de Wangso's detailed statement, the slave Amber claimed, or feigned, ignorance of the crime. He denied everything, including his association with Troena and Andries.[29]

From the case records we catch a glimpse of the places where the three men interacted and hatched their criminal plans—the materiaalhuis, the area around Wolvendaal Church, and a tavern. After they robbed Simon Gomes, they tried to fence the goods; in the process, they interacted with free people such as the soldier Sinne Wapoe and the rice seller Louisa, with whom they and Sinne Wapoe had had pre-existing commercial connections. More than just indicating the extent to which free and unfree people interacted, this reading of the court records shows the nature of those interactions and the localities in which they took place. This case suggests that some slaves exercised relative autonomy, at least to the extent of leaving the master's house and having the (relative) freedom to determine their own movements during the day and at night.

A case of theft committed by an enslaved woman named Lizarde and her accomplice, a free Sinhalese boy named Christiaan, reinforces the idea that enslaved and free people mingled (relatively) freely in certain spaces in





Figure 4.2. Detailed map of Colombo. The register lists *a* as the Castle, *d* as Wolvendaal Church, *p* as the Muslim Quarter (*Moorsche Quartier*, probably the location of the Moorsche Straat), and *r* as the Company slaves' quarter. Source: National Archives, The Hague, Verzameling Buitenlandse Kaarten Leupe, Archive number 4. VEL, Inventory number 953.

VOC port towns. It was alleged that over a period of months Lizarde and Christiaan had stolen an astonishing number of things from the house left in their care.[30] While the list of goods provides a fascinating insight into the varied contents of a late eighteenth-century household, more importantly the case provides information on the extensive networks through which Lizarde and Christiaan fenced the goods.

According to the various case documents, Lizarde and Christiaan pawned or sold the stolen goods to a variety of people, including the barkeeper (*schagger/tapper*) of De Prins, Jacob Berarda of Genoa; the flagman; a Javanese woman, Paatma; a manumitted slave, Joana, who was born in Tranquebar;

the concubine of the slave Lakij who belonged to a Mr van Hek; the under-surgeon's widow, Engeltina Hopman; her sister, Debora; and the "Moor" Slema Lebbe Sultan, *kannekapul* (scribe) of the materiaalhuis. The crime and the initial criminal proceedings took place in Galle, but the proceedings were later transferred to the Council of Justice of Colombo, highlighting on the one hand the social networks established by Lizarde and Christiaan and, on the other, that such networks among slaves and free people were not limited to the larger settlement of Colombo.

The statements of the accused and witnesses provide incidental information that reveals that slaves enjoyed relative freedom of movement around the city and had the time and opportunity to establish friendships and acquaintances, some of which turned criminal. While slaves could of course establish connections easily with the slaves of the same household, the records also show that there were a number of specific places where connections between free and unfree people could be established. The cases show that enslaved individuals mingled with free people in the streets, buying and selling various goods[31] and visiting their neighbours.[32] The market was another area that gave slaves the opportunity to interact with other slaves and free people. The market in Batavia features prominently in the narratives of runaway slave women analysed by Eric Jones—plans were hatched there.[33] Similarly, slaves in the Cape were street vendors, hawking various goods including food, and in doing so creating a mobile market.[34] In theory, the Statutes of Batavia limited the interaction of slaves by prohibiting gatherings of three or more slaves, setting curfews and banning slaves from taverns.[35] However, as in the case of Troena de Wangso, Amber and Andries in Colombo, the streets and taverns of Cape Town were sites of interaction between soldiers, sailors, artisans, freed people and the enslaved.[36] In Colombo, as in other VOC port towns, the enslaved made use of the opportunities presented by some degree of (geographic) mobility.

## Intimate ties and intimate violence

It is unsurprising that enslaved individuals were connected to others, both enslaved and free, through intimate ties. Yet these ties are not always very clearly visible in the archive. Dutch colonial institutions' records reveal little detail about sexual relationships and kinship connections: there are often gaps regarding enslaved people's agency in general, and individuals' choices

in particular. The records are veiled windows—they provide glimpses into the complications of everyday life rather than neat patterns and trajectories. In her thoughtful and nuanced introduction to *Sex, Power and Slavery,* Elizabeth Elbourne writes:

> Silences mark the history of sexuality, reflecting both lacunae in historical records and the hush surrounding certain sexual practices in many times and places. Silences can be read, but to do so often requires resort to unconventional types of source material as well as recognition of the fact that not all silences (such as the frequent silences of enslaved women) can be filled with confidence.[37]

Elbourne also emphasizes the importance of not reducing the history of slavery and sexuality to relations between master and slave or to a history of rape. In line with this, and with due regard for the silences of the archive, I consider a wide range of sexual relations including, where possible, between enslaved people.[38]

Broadly speaking, we can identify two types of relationships, namely those among enslaved people and those between enslaved and free people. The criminal case discussed below mentions an instance of the former as an incidental detail in a murder case. The latter, namely sexual relationships between enslaved and free people, can be read back in a small number of wills and manumission deeds which detail the relationships between heirs and the deceased, and slave owners and the manumitted, respectively. Ordinances issued against concubinage (cohabitation outside marriage) provide the Company's point of view on enslaved people's relationships and allow us to get to the crux of the Company's concerns. Taken together, these different types of institutional sources reveal the sexual and kinship connections which constituted a significant part of the lived experience of slavery in Colombo.

In late 1770 and early 1771, four enslaved individuals were mentioned in the Dutch criminal records in connection with a murder—the victim, the perpetrator and two witnesses to the crime. All four individuals were counted among the nearly 400 Company-owned slaves in Colombo.[39] It seems that they lived at the VOC's materiaalhuis in the city, which was the locus of the violent events that unfolded. The accused was Apollo van Makassar, denoted in the records as "an eastern slave boy" and a Malay speaker.[40] The toponym Makassar indicates that at some point in his life he was sold and transported

from the slave markets in Makassar (on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi), or possibly that he was Makassarese.[41] Apollo's victim was a fellow Company slave, Moeijer Plema—possibly also a man of Southeast Asian origin, as he too understood Malay. The court records state that Apollo spoke to Moeijer Plema in Malay, while an enslaved woman named Diana witnessed this exchange. Apollo referred to Diana as his *vrouw* (wife), according to the report of Apollo's interrogation, but the Dutch authorities used *bijzit* (concubine) to categorize their relationship.[42] The fourth enslaved person mentioned in the court documents was a man named Christoffel Moettoe—a Company-owned slave, the materiaalhuis scribe, and a Colombo-born Catholic, who was about 27 years old at the time of the crime.[43] Interestingly, he provided a witness statement to the court, which he solemnised with an oath and signed with his own hand.[44]

The *mandoor* (overseer) of the Company-owned enslaved people living in the materiaalhuis was a man from the Dutch city of Hoorn, Johannes Wijnbergen. He was about 30 years old and declared himself a Catholic.[45] In the statement he gave to the court he indicated that he was on watch when he heard Apollo van Makassar and Apollo's *bijzit* Diana approach Moeijer Plema and speak in Malay. Wijnbergen suspected a fight would brew between the two men, and so he went to his room to fetch a *rotting* (cane). The next thing he heard was Diana screaming that one of the two men, Apollo or Moeijer Plema, was carrying a knife (*krits*/*kris*). Apollo stabbed Moeijer Plema multiple times, inflicting wounds which proved fatal.[46] According to the surgeon's report on his inspection of the body, Moeijer Plema died of the ten stab wounds that Apollo inflicted.[47]

As in other murder cases, the motives for the attack did not interest the VOC authorities.[48] While we cannot be sure, it is possible that the relationship between Apollo and Diana was the reason for the conflict between the two men—perhaps the men fought over Apollo's wife/concubine, Diana, as it happened at the VOC Cape.[49]

The distinction between *vrouw* and *bijzit* is apparent in the VOC's Cape Town records too—women who were referred to by enslaved men as their wives were labelled concubines by the Company. At the Cape, until 1823 enslaved people were not allowed to marry in a legal ceremony recognized by the church and authorities.[50] That enslaved people were precluded from marriage recognized by their owners and the authorities did not of course stop them from forming such relationships and, as Cape and Colombo records attest, from referring to one another as husband and wife.

Such relationships are often only fleetingly visible in the Company records. One family of enslaved people, spanning three generations, is revealed in manumission deeds. An enslaved woman named Bintang was manumitted in November 1794, along with her mother, Alida, and her children, Kassim and Patra. A later manumission deed reveals the identity of her husband, the father of her children—a man named Spadilje. The family members had all been owned and manumitted by the same man, Johan Gerard van Angelbeek.[51] Familial ties were also recorded in wills. Slave families made visible in official records include Bootje and Samia, a couple manumitted by testament in 1784, and the enslaved man Orendatius, his wife Maria, and their young daughter Susana who similarly entered the Company records when they were promised manumission by testament of Daniel Ternooij in 1782.[52] Five individuals who formed one family, consisting of Maart, his wife Aspatie and their three children—Ismael, Rebecca and Christoffel—were promised manumission by testament.[53] The slaves Floris, Lisie, Bastiaan and Maria, "being husband, wife and two children", were named as beneficiaries in a will—the family stood to inherit property as well as 300 *rijksdaalders* (Rds) from their owner.[54] These families who began their life after slavery with some property might have had some resilience against the precariousness of manumitted status.[55]

Relative to the (in)visibility of enslaved family units in the colonial archive, there are abundant references to slave mothers and their children. This stems from slavery being a condition inherited through the maternal line—the legal status of the mother as slave or free determined the status of her child. As I discuss below, the VOC's concerns about concubinage involving enslaved people revolved around the legal status of the children from such relationships and, by extension, the Company's labour force.

The VOC's regulations regarding concubinage were framed as religious concerns and explicitly regulated relationships between men and women of different religions. The Company sorted the inhabitants of Colombo into four religious categories—Christian, Roman Catholic, Muslim and Heathen. Company regulations prohibited concubinage between individuals of different religions, and threatened corporal punishment and hard labour on Company works for those who were caught.[56] Prohibitions of concubinage of an enslaved person raised religious concerns, but were probably subordinate to considerations of, crudely put, asset accumulation and provision of labour. The VOC followed the principle that "the fruit follows the womb"; that is, the child inherits the legal status of the mother. The application of this principle

meant that the child of an enslaved woman was also considered a slave, but that the child of a free woman was free. In the case of a concubinage relationship between an enslaved man and free woman, the child, like the mother, would be free. The Company perceived this as a loss to private slave owners as well as to itself. Thus, against the "fruit follows the womb" principle, a 1704 ordinance against concubinage (reissued in 1732) declared that the child of a free woman and a Company slave man would in fact be enslaved. The ordinances reveal not only the Company's concerns, but also the choices that enslaved people were making regarding intimate relationships.

The 1704 ordinance attempted to regulate sexual relationships between enslaved and free people and establish the legal status of children from such unions. It was a response to what the VOC considered to be changing patterns in relationships involving Company-owned slave men. Enslaved men owned by the VOC, and in particular those who were skilled, had stopped following the "usual custom" of choosing a partner from among the enslaved women owned by the Company. The relationship between Apollo van Makassar and Diana is an example of the "usual custom". But other men made other choices; the Company noted that skilled slave men chose to form relationships with free and freed women (manumitted slaves), with whom they lived in "a sort of concubinage and fornication". Children born of these relationships were born free and inherited the free status of their mothers. This was the crux of the matter for the Company. Thus, the VOC authorities forbade Company-owned enslaved men from living "as man and wife or in concubinage" with free women, and ordered that they choose their "wives or concubines" from among the Company-owned enslaved women. The Company's desire to protect its own property, in the form of slaves, is clearly demonstrated by the addition of a prohibition against Company slave men forming relationships with privately owned slave women, as the children of such unions would have been considered the property of the private slave owner, not the Company.[57]

Having set out the regulations, the Company then detailed the punishment for those caught contravening them. Free women—the ordinance mentioned *inlandse* (inland, or Ceylonese) women in particular—caught in concubinage with slave men would have their hair cut off and be made to labour in chains for three years. The children born to these women of slave men would be declared the property of the Company.[58]

The Company considered it necessary to reissue the ordinance in the early 1730s. The context of the 1732 ordinance prohibiting concubinage

between enslaved and free people was the growth in the number of free people who had taken up residence in the slave quarters (marked *r* on the map) just outside the Rotterdammer Poort. Free and enslaved were living together in that area, much to the Company's chagrin. Thus, it ordered all free people, manumitted slaves and privately-owned slaves to move out of the slave quarters; if they refused they would be punished. Following the order, the 1704 ordinance against concubinage was reissued.[59] That reissue indicates that the Company had not succeeded in its efforts to re-establish the "usual custom" of Company slaves forming sexual relationships with one another rather than with free and freed people in the city.

The Company's concerns, as revealed in the ordinances prohibiting concubinage, were specifically related to the accumulation of human property—their future labourers in the form of the children of such unions. The Company was not against concubinage per se, but forbade concubinage relationships from which it could not profit.[60] Moreover, these regulations, as well as others concerning the marriages of free people, can be seen as examples of the VOC's attempts to extend its jurisdiction over people and reinforce its sovereignty, and to maintain social control in order to extract labour from free and unfree population groups.[61]

While I have used Company ordinances to shed light on concubinage involving Company-owned enslaved men, other Company documents shed light on the relationships between enslaved women and free men. Sexual relationships between enslaved women and the men who owned them have been recorded in wills and manumission deeds. These sources indicate that relationships existed and that some existed for decades. But what the sources often do not reveal is the trauma, duress and power dynamics associated with at least some such relationships. Consent is not something we can decipher in this type of historical document. For at least two enslaved women, the relationships they had with their slave masters were of great consequence to their legal status. The wills and manumission deeds in which they were named indicate that concubinage between the enslaved woman and slave master had been a route to manumission for these two women and their children. In this regard, these two women's lives echoed processes of mobility and opportunity in VOC port cities like Batavia and Cape Town, and on another island, Mauritius.[62]

In 1782, Gerrardus Cornelis Kersse drew up his last will. In naming his heirs and dividing up his possessions, he mentioned a number of slaves and manumitted slaves, and in doing so revealed a family unit which comprised

enslaved and free people, alike. The first important beneficiary named in his will was Silvia Vilanders. Kersse left her the sum of 50 Rds, together with three trunks. A far larger inheritance was left to Kersse's "natural daughter", Susanna Cornelia Kersse, who, he states, was born to him of the former slave Silvia. While it is not spelt out in the will, it is most likely that while Silvia was working for Kersse as a slave they began some sort of sexual relationship, and as a result Kersse decided to manumit her. It is possible that she was already pregnant when manumitted, or she may have had the child at a later stage during their liaison. As there is no tag relating to slavery attached to young Susanna, her mother was probably free at the time of her birth.[63]

A manumission deed from August 1738 records the relationship between Frans Gomes and the four slaves who formed his immediate family. He manumitted the slave woman Rosetta who was his concubine, as well as their three children, Louisa, Agida and Elisabeth. The children are described as "procreated by the deponent".[64] Clearly, the relationship between Frans and Rosetta was an enduring one, but the individuals involved appear in the VOC records only briefly.

For Silvia and Rosetta, a sexual relationship with their master meant a route to freedom and an inheritance for themselves and their children. What remains undiscoverable is how these two women experienced that relationship while still enslaved, and how the relationship between each woman and her respective master changed after manumission. Consent cannot be read in these stories with any kind of clarity.

Consent was the issue under scrutiny in a unique rape case which was heard by the Council of Justice in the closing years of Company rule in Colombo. An enslaved woman named Tamar accused a European soldier of raping her.[65] By doing so she asserted ownership of her own body in a powerful way, challenging the core of chattel slavery according to which her body was not her own. In a classic he said/she said the accused claimed that intercourse had been consensual, and he told the court that he had left Tamar some coins on the assumption that the enslaved woman was prostituting herself.[66] Tamar's accusation led to legal proceedings which included calling a witness, an enslaved man named Lindor, who lived a few houses away from where Tamar lived with her master. That the fiscal pursued the case against the soldier, Laborde, was more likely a function of the identity of the accused than the Dutch authorities' concern with justice for an enslaved woman. Pierre Laborde was a soldier in the de Meuron regiment—one of three regiments of European soldiers hired by the VOC to protect their position

on Lanka in the face of British hostilities. The soldiers were notorious,[67] so the VOC is likely to have seen the accusation as an opportunity to set an example, tighten its grip on the regiment, and enforce Company authority and order. If this was indeed the case, we can imagine that Laborde would have been convicted, but we cannot know this as the outcome of the case brought by Tamar against Laborde has been lost.[68]

Enslaved women who lived and laboured in VOC settlements and towns across the Indian Ocean were subject to sexual abuse from slave masters, slave masters' sons and free men.[69] Tamar's story is unique in the Colombo archive, not because abuse did not happen in the society of that time but, tragically, because it was often not considered as such by the authorities. Rape was one aspect of the range of abuses, the "intimate violence" which enslaved women suffered at the hands of men, both slave and free.[70]

Despite the silences in the archive, various VOC sources shed faint light on the sexual and kinship relations through which, by choice or coercion, the enslaved in Colombo were connected to free and unfree people in the town. These connections, as well as the social, criminal and commercial ties explored in the first section, embedded the enslaved in the locality, as Alicia Schrikker and I claim elsewhere.[71] Zooming out from Colombo, the following section briefly explores more abstract connections beyond the island itself.

## Connections across the ocean

So far, this chapter has focused on connections contained within the space of Colombo. But there are indications in the archive that these social, commercial, sexual and familial ties were not the only ones that shaped the experience of bondage on the island. An avenue for further research is to understand the ways in which ideas of a world beyond the island shaped experiences of bondage on it. Archival documents point to religious connections and Dutch institutional connections that contributed to two women's experiences of enslaved life on Lanka.

The enslaved woman Deidamie carried a talisman with her, the origin of which can be traced to a Muslim priest in Batavia. Deidamie received the talisman from a fellow Malay slave, who received it from a Malay soldier from Java who lived in Colombo; the soldier received the talisman from a priest in Batavia, by which the soldier presumably meant a religious leader in the Muslim community there. Schrikker and I point out that following the

talisman's trajectory reveals the kinds of connections established by enslaved individuals in Colombo, and we suggested that Deidamie may have carried the talisman with her as a signifier of her sense of belonging to a community of co-religionists beyond the island.[72]

The case of a woman named Helena, who was involved in a dispute over her own status as slave or free, reveals similarly wide-ranging connections, but of a different kind. Schrikker and I argue that Helena was aware of the international scope of Dutch institutions, which came to light in her statement of intent to pursue her case beyond Colombo, taking it to the Company authorities in Batavia. Helena was aware of a Dutch legal institutional world which tied Colombo and Ceylon more generally to the VOC's Indian Ocean world.[73]

These women's connections beyond the island widen our view—from close relationships among individuals in Colombo, we zoom out to experiences or awareness of the networked nature of the VOC empire which, as Kerry Ward has argued, was constituted by webs and circuits, including important routes of forced migration along which enslaved people, convicts and exiles were transported.[74] Deidamie and Helena, it seems, were aware of this wider connected world which they occupied. Further research will bear out the suggestion that these are two examples among many of connected lives across the oceans.

## Conclusion

The Dutch East India Company records reveal, somewhat incidentally, that slaves maintained wide-ranging connections in Colombo which involved fellow enslaved as well as free people. Sometimes the records reveal long-lasting relationships, for instance, the sexual relationship between Rosetta and her master which led to Rosetta's and their children's manumission; other records offer fleeting glimpses of repeated interactions between enslaved people and free citizens, such as among those buying rice from the free woman Louisa Zose at her home, or Andries, Amber and Troena de Wangso meeting in a tavern. The interactions that come to the fore in the records are the social, sexual, commercial and criminal interactions between slaves and free people in Colombo. For some, ideas or awareness of cross-oceanic connections—religious or legal—add a non-local dimension to experiences of bondage.

But what were the implications of living connected lives in the town? First, sexual interactions between slaves and free people, and between people of different ethnic backgrounds created a legacy of mixed ancestry.[75] The agency of enslaved people is very much part of this story, but it is also important to take the silences in the archive seriously, particularly around the issue of consent in sexual relationships between individuals in vastly different positions of power. Second, the connected lives we see in the VOC records lead us to the conclusion that at least some slaves in Colombo experienced relative freedom, inasmuch as they were able to determine who they interacted with and where, beyond the master's household. Here, again, the agency of the enslaved is foregrounded. The case of theft involving Andries, Amber and Troena de Wangso allows us to locate various interactions between enslaved and free people around the town. This contributes further nuance to the spectrum of lived experiences that people within the legal category of slave were exposed to. Yet, as a note of warning, scholars should remain wary of conflating connections, interactions and solidarity, since cooperation in crimes and the connected lives of the enslaved did not necessarily constitute solidarity among an "underclass". Andries, Amber and Troena de Wangso were after all apprehended by enslaved men and then handed over to the fiscal—an occurrence that was also common at the Cape. Finally, recovering micro-level, individual stories of the enslaved in Colombo goes some way in countering the silences of the past. Reading the archives for details of the social, sexual, commercial and criminal interactions between enslaved people and free people in Colombo greatly enriches our understanding of enslaved people's experience of bondage in this part of the Indian Ocean world.

## Notes

1. This chapter is based on research conducted in the Sri Lankan Department of National Archives with the generous funding of Leiden University's Encompass programme. An earlier version was presented at the Leiden Slavery Studies Association's international conference in 2016, and at the National Archives of the Netherlands' *Rethinking the Dutch East India Company?* symposium in 2017. Thanks go to the participants for their feedback. I am grateful to the editors of this volume as well as to the peer reviewers for their constructive comments and suggestions.

2. Markus Vink, "'The World's Oldest Trade': Dutch Slavery and Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean in the Seventeenth Century," *Journal of World History* 14, no. 2 (2003): 131-177.
3. Remco Raben, "Batavia and Colombo: The Ethnic and Spatial Order of Two Colonial Cities, 1600–1800" (PhD diss., Leiden University, 1996): 45–46.
4. Kumari Jayawardena, *Erasure of the Euro-Asians: Recovering Early Radicalism and Feminism in South Asia,* 19. Colombo: Social Scientists' Association, 2007.
5. Raben, "Batavia and Colombo," 5. While the population composition of Batavia and Colombo was similar, absolute numbers were very different—Colombo had a much smaller population. Knaap's analysis of census data shows that the enslaved made up a considerable proportion of the Colombo population at the close of the seventeenth century: Gerrit Knaap, "Europeans, Mestizos and Slaves: The Population of Colombo at the End of the Seventeenth Century," *Itinerario* 5 no. 2 (1981): 84-101.
6. Raben, "Batavia and Colombo," 103.
7. Ibid., 110.
8. Ibid. On the role of de Meuron himself in the closing decades of the eighteenth century see Alicia Schrikker, *Dutch and British Colonial Intervention in Sri Lanka C. 1780-1815: Expansion and Reform,* 131-141. Leiden and Boston MA: Brill, 2006.
9. Raben, "Batavia and Colombo," 43. See Jayawardena, *Erasure of the Euro-Asians,* 32–33, for a description of the Swiss de Meuron regiment and its legacy in the burgher population of Colombo.
10. On court cases as sources and the incidental detail of lived experience revealed in those sources see Nigel Worden and Gerald Groenewald, "Introduction," in *Trials of Slavery: Selected Documents Concerning Slaves from the Criminal Records of the Council of Justice at the Cape of Good Hope, 1705–1794,* edited by Nigel Worden and Gerald Groenewald, xi-liv. Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 2005. Worden and Groenwald discuss the presence of the enslaved in terms of hearing rather than seeing them in the archive, noting that for the Cape in particular court cases are where we hear the voices of the enslaved most clearly, yet even then mediated through layers of power and translation. The problems and potential of court cases as historical sources are also dealt with in the chapter by Geelen et al. in this volume.
11. Nigel Worden, "Strangers Ashore: Sailor Identity and Social Conflict in Mid-18th Century Cape Town," *Kronos* 33 (2007): 72-83.
12. Kerry Ward, *Networks of Empire: Forced Migration in the Dutch East India Company.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

13. Matthias van Rossum, *Werkers van de Wereld. Globalisering, arbeid en interculturele ontmoetingen tussen Aziatische en Europese zeelieden in dienst van de VOC, 1600-1800*. Hilversum: Verloren, 2014.
14. Eric Jones, *Wives, Slaves and Concubines: A History of the Female Underclass of Dutch Asia*. DeKalb IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010. See also Eric Jones, "Fugitive Women: Slavery and Social Change in Early Moden Southeast Asia," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 38, no. 2 (2007): 215-245.
15. All documents relating to the case were bound and are available at the Sri Lankan Department of National Archives (SLNA), *Archives of the Dutch Central Government of Coastal Ceylon, 1640–1796*, Lot 1/4740, criminal dossiers, ff. 1r–36v. The dossier consists of a statement by the complainant, Simon Gomes Nella Tambij; seven witness reports; statements given by both of the accused; a note regarding Troena's convict past; and the fiscal's *eijsch* (suggested punishment). Discussion of the case is based on the analysis in my unpublished MA thesis: Kate Ekama, "Slavery in Dutch Colombo: A Social History" (Leiden University, unpublished ResMA thesis, 2012).
16. SLNA 1/4740, f. 21r.
17. Ibid., ff. 18r, 26r. Damak most likely refers to Demak in central Java.
18. Ibid., f. 33r.
19. Ibid., f. 29v.
20. Ibid., f. 18v.
21. Raben, "Batavia and Colombo," 33. The ordinance is included in Lodewijk Hovy, *Ceylonees Plakkaatboek: Plakkaten En Andere Wetten Uitgevaardigd Door Het Nederlandse Bestuur Op Ceylon, 1638–1796*., I, 145. 2 vols., Hilversum: Verloren, 1991 [Ordinance number 98].
22. Ibid., I: 191 [26]; II: 590–91 [417]; II: 591 note 20.
23. SLNA 1/4740, f. 18v
24. Worden, "Strangers Ashore," 77.
25. This echoes the importance of neighbours in the apparatus of informal surveillance which Geelen et al. highlight in their chapter.
26. SLNA 1/4740, f. 10r.
27. Ibid., ff. 6v, 13r, 14v.
28. Ibid., f. 12r.
29. Ibid., ff. 21r–v.
30. Lizarde's owner, Albertus Hissink, had gone to Mature, and his wife had gone to the village of Madampe to recover from an illness. Hissink left Lizarde and Christiaan in charge while he and his wife were away. SLNA 1/4702, criminal dossiers, ff. 31r–v, Articles 1 and 2.

31. Street vending was allowed in Colombo, but market stalls were confined to specific areas: Raben, "Batavia and Colombo," 31.
32. For instance, Louisa Zose established various contacts through her business of selling cooked rice; Sinne Wapoe surely did the same through selling tea. Amber, Troena and Andries went to Louisa's house to ask for fire and, in a different case, the slave woman Tamar went to a neighbour's house to ask for a kettle of water. Moreover, the case against Lizarde records her interaction with her master's neighbour. See SLNA 1/4740, ff. 13r, 14v, 10r, 6v; SLNA 1/4613, CR 1791, ff. 169r, 170r–v; SLNA 1/4702, f. 11v.
33. Jones, "Fugitive Women," 223.
34. Robert Ross, "The Occupations of Slaves in Eighteenth-Century Cape Town," *Studies in the History of Cape Town* 2 (1980): 10.
35. National Archives, The Hague, *Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (VOC), Archive number 1.04.02, Inventory number *638,* Articles 52–56, 59, ff. 742–743.
36. Nigel Worden, "Public Brawling, Masculinity and Honour," in *Cape Town between East and West: Social Identities in a Dutch Colonial Town,* edited by Nigel Worden, 207. Johannesburg, Hilversum: Jacana, Verloren, 2013.
37. Elizabeth Elbourne, "Introduction: Key Themes and Perspectives," in *Sex, Power, and Slavery*, edited by Gwyn Campbell and Elizabeth Elbourne, 8. Athens OH: Ohio University Press, 2014.
38. Ibid., 1.
39. NL–HaNA, *VOC*, 1.04.02, inv. no. *3323*, ff. 938v–939r (January 1771).
40. SLNA 1/4662 ff. 2r, 8r.
41. The difficulty of interpreting toponyms is also dealt with in Herman Tieken's contribution to this volume, as well as in Marina Carter's. See also Linda Mbeki and Matthias van Rossum, "Private Slave Trade in the Dutch Indian Ocean World: A Study into the Networks and Backgrounds of the Slavers and Enslaved in South Asia and South Africa," *Slavery & Abolition* 38, no. 1 (2017): 107-108.
42. SLNA 1/4662 ff. 2v, 8r.
43. SLNA 1/4662 f. 8r. His function was as kannekapul.
44. Slave testimony was not always accepted in court, but in this particular case it was testimony against a fellow slave that corroborated a European man's testimony, which is probably why it was accepted. That Christoffel was Catholic probably convinced the authorities that he understood the gravity and significance of the oath.
45. A Johannes Wijnbergen from Hoorn sailed to Asia in 1761 as a sailor, and left Company service in 1794. He sailed on board the *Lycochton*, a ship built in Enkhuizen. The ship completed a number of return journeys for the Enkhuizen

and Hoorn chambers of the VOC. Wijnbergen was on board when the ship left Texel in December 1761 and, after stopping at the Cape, arrived in Batavia in July 1762. NL–HaNA, *VOC*, 1.04.02, inv. no. 14472, f. 156; "De VOC site", accessed 4 April 2018, https://www.vocsite.nl/schepen/detail.html?id=10636.

46. SLNA 1/4662 f. 8r.
47. SLNA 1/4662 f. 4r.
48. This is true of a murder case in which the authorities were less interested in the murder than the talisman carried by the enslaved woman who murdered her son. The case is discussed in Alicia Schrikker and Kate Ekama, "Through the Lens of Slavery: Dutch Sri Lanka in the Eighteenth Century," in *Sri Lanka at the Crossroads of History*, edited by Zoltán Biedermann and Alan Strathern, 183-184. London: UCL Press, 2017.
49. See Worden and Groenewald (eds.), *Trials of Slavery,* 83–95 (Anthonij van Goa); 115–119 (Jephta van Batavia); 323–30 (Januarij van Boegies); 520–525 (Ceres van Madagascar and April van Ceijlon). Two noteworthy differences between the Colombo materiaalhuis case and the Cape cases are that the violence in the Cape cases of suspected infidelity and/or jealously was directed by men at their wives; and that the enslaved people involved were privately-owned and not Company slaves.
50. Nigel Worden, *Slavery in Dutch South Africa,* 57. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985; Robert Shell, *From Diaspora to Diorama: The Old Slave Lodge in Cape Town,* 250. Cape Town: NagsPro Multimedia, 2013.
51. SLNA 1/4146, 19 November 1794 [Johan Gerard van Angelbeek; Alida, Bintang, Kassim and Patra]; SLNA 1/4146, 17 September 1795 [Johan Gerard van Angelbeek; Spadilje].
52. SLNA 1/2665, 14 December 1784 [Jan Hendrik Borwater and Barbara Bregantina Lebeck], f. 8v; SLNA 1/2665, 8 July 1782 [Daniel Ternooij], f. 15v.
53. SLNA 1/2663, 1762 [Godfried Leonhard de Coste], ff. 41r–42r.
54. SLNA 1/2663, 1776 [Johanna Petronella Schade], ff. 56r–57r.
55. Kate Ekama, "Precarious Freedom: Manumission in Eighteenth-Century Colombo," *Journal of Social History* (forthcoming). Some of the individuals mentioned in this chapter are also discussed in the article where I show that manumitted status was precarious in eighteenth-century Colombo. For some manumitted slaves the change in legal status might have brought little change in material circumstances. Deeds and civil suits show that manumission could be revoked and debt could lead to re-enslavement.
56. Hovy, *Ceylonees Plakkaatboek*, I: 278–79 [195]; I:389–93 [257]; II: 673–74 [457]; II: 769–72 [530].

57. At the Cape, VOC authorities instituted a system of apprenticeship (*inboekstelsel*) in 1775 whereby children born of enslaved fathers and Khoi mothers were bound to farm labour until they were 25 years old. See Richard Elphick, "The Khoisan to C. 1770," and Hermann Giliomee, "The Eastern Frontier, 1770–1812," in *The Shaping of South African Society, 1652–1840*, edited by Richard Elphick and Hermann Giliomee, 29 and 318-319. Cape Town: Longman, 1989.
58. Hovy, *Ceylonees Plakkaatboek*, I: 309–10 [206].
59. Ibid., 394–95 [259].
60. As a point of comparison see Shell's analysis of the slave lodge at Cape Town. Contemporary travellers commented on enslaved women reportedly flaunting their European lovers in Shell, *From Diaspora to Diorama*, 257–59.
61. These ideas have been developed by Hamer for Batavia. See Deborah Hamer, "Marriage and the Construction of Colonial Order: Jurisdiction, Gender and Class in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Batavia," *Gender and History* 29, no. 3 (2017): 622-640. Elisabeth Heijmans extends the scope across the Dutch empire in an analysis of VOC and WIC ordinances in Elisabeth Heijmans, "Legislating Diversity in the Dutch Early Modern Empire: Regulations on Concubinage and Marriage as Consolidator of Authority" (paper presented at Deutscher Historiketag, Münster, Germany, 26-28 September 2018). See also Ann Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Imperial Rule*. Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2002.
62. See Jones' research mentioned above on women in Batavia. Robert Shell discusses manumitting enslaved women at the Cape in order to marry them in *Children of Bondage: A Social History of the Slave Society at the Cape of Good Hope, 1652-1838,* 384-385. Hanover VA: University Press of New England, 1994. Marina Carter's chapter in this volume deals with similar themes for the island of Mauritius.
63. SLNA 1/2663, *Miscellaneous Last Wills*, 12 April 1782 [Gerrardus Cornelis Kersse], f. 11r. From the naming pattern in the will it is possible that Kersse fathered another daughter with a free woman to whom he bequeathed 50 Rds.
64. SLNA 1/4145, *Protocols of Deeds of Emancipation of Slaves*, 6 August 1738 [Frans Gomes; Rosetta, Louisa, Agida, and Elisabeth], ff. 5r–v.
65. SLNA 1/4613. The criminal roll of 1791 includes records for January 1792. In his analysis of VOC criminal records from the Cape, Nigel Penn has found that no European man was convicted of raping a Khoikhoi woman or enslaved women, yet rape did occur: Nigel Penn, "Casper, Crebis and the Knegt: Rape, Homicide and Violence in the Eighteenth-Century Rural Western Cape," *South*

*African Historical Journal* 66, no. 4 (2014): 611-634. For the later period, Pamela Scully has shown the ways in which rape cases were dealt with in the Cape Colony following emancipation (1834/1838), arguing that they were crucial to ways in which the colonial state was structuring ideas of gender, race and identities: Pamela Scully, *Liberating the Family? Gender and British Slave Emancipation in the Rural Western Cape, South Africa, 1823-1853,* 153-175. Portsmouth NH: Heinemann, 1997.

66. The blurred boundaries between assumed prostitution and alleged rape are explored in Ghosh's article through a number of illuminating court cases from Calcutta. The victims were free Indian girls and women: Durba Ghosh. "Household Crimes and Domestic Order: Keeping the Peace in Colonial Calcutta, c.1770-1840," *Modern Asian Studies* 38, no. 3 (2004): 599-623.
67. The de Meuron regiment had first been stationed at the Cape where the soldiers—comprising Protestant recruits from Switzerland and numerous French convicts from Parisian jails to make up the numbers—were reportedly involved in duels, petty crimes and desertion. The regiment was transferred to Ceylon in the 1780s. See Charles-Daniel de Meuron, "Global Plants," accessed 17 April 2018, https://plants.jstor.org/stable/10.5555/al.ap.person.bm000125731. On the role of the regiment and de Meuron himself in the transition from Dutch to British rule see Schrikker, *Dutch and British Colonial Intervention,* 131-141.
68. The criminal roll for 1792 has been lost.
69. Nigel Worden states this clearly for VOC Cape Town: Worden, *Slavery in Dutch South Africa,* 57.
70. Ghosh uses this phrase to denote a range of domestic or household crimes which included rape, infanticide and domestic abuse and applies it in her analysis of court cases in colonial Calcutta: Ghosh, "Household Crimes," 599.
71. Schrikker and Ekama, "Through the Lens of Slavery".
72. Ibid., 183–84.
73. Ibid., 185–88.
74. Ward, *Networks of Empire.*
75. Jayawardena, *Erasure of the Euro-Asians,* 19-36.

# 5

# Boenga van Johor: "My forced journey from Batavia to the Cape of Good Hope"

*Lodewijk J. Wagenaar*

## Introduction

Novelists and playwrights are free to adapt stories from history according to their wishes and the tastes of their audience, but historians do not enjoy such freedoms. What liberty do they have to reconstruct the stories they find? Can they add details from other historical sources or fill in the gaps using informed imagination? How far can historians go? How can they fully reconstruct realistic historical actors based on scarce biographical material and rough sketches? These questions are particularly pressing for researchers who study subaltern groups, and especially challenging for those who study the lives and conditions of enslaved persons or their experiences after emancipation. We can trace many enslaved and emancipated individuals in the archives and identify them up to a point, but because of a lack of autobiographical material, in most cases it is nearly impossible to meet them as individuals with personal identities.

Historians trained in archival research are taught to stick to sources, but subaltern groups are rarely represented in sources, and even if they are we seldom hear their voices directly. The historical record remains flat and lacks nuance, individual expression and emotion, making it difficult to empathize with subaltern people. However, unearthing these voices from the archives is surely possible, as illustrated in an inspiring and interesting study by Saidiya Hartman who, in her book *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*, reconstructs the journey made by enslaved Africans from their homelands in the Ghanaian interior to "slave castles" along the coast of Ghana – the last stop before survivors were taken aboard ships to make the Middle Passage to America.[1] The book, in which she combines journalistic and scholarly skills, traces the fate of her forefathers, but also documents her

personal quest to understand her own identity. The notes appended to every chapter demonstrate that the narrative is informed by deep and detailed research. At the end of the narrative the reader better understands how the enslaved became "strangers" to their home culture and is able to empathize with them for the tragic fate they suffered, having been rudely severed from their cultures, homes and families.

Scholars of Atlantic history make use of slave autobiographies, and these allow readers to experience vicariously the lives and times of the authors; however, we must realize that contemporary (and later) editors would have polished, or even greatly adapted, parts of the texts. Such editorial processes become clear in a study by Marijke Huisman in which she discusses the reception of autobiographies written by enslaved American authors about their lives before emancipation, beginning with the well-known example of Olaudah Equiano (1789–1831).[2] Huisman researches the role of autobiographical witnesses in the genesis of knowledge about slavery and its past, focusing on the reception and appreciation of their writings in the USA, UK and the Netherlands. "Slave narratives" have become a much-discussed genre, and there have been critical debates about the authenticity of some of the texts. For example, scholars have queried whether Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, originally published in 1861 under the pseudonym of Linda Brent, was indeed written by Harriet Jacobs.[3] Studies in the 1980s, however, have shown that the doubts cast on the narrative's authenticity were unjust and that the text was indeed written by Harriet Jacobs.[4] Soon afterwards, writes Huisman, her narrative was accepted as one of the major works of the genre and was canonized in the 1987 edition of *The Classic Slave Narratives*.[5]

Such a rich overview, however, is not available for the Indian Ocean world and, even worse, it cannot be written for the lack of autobiographical texts that tell "from within" the life stories of people enslaved in Asian countries. The regrettable scarcity of such documents was confirmed by the contributors to the "Being a Slave: Indian Ocean Slavery in Local Context" workshop, held in Leiden in 2017. The lack of so-called ego documents is of course a general phenomenon with respect to the underclasses.[6] However, even among the subalterns, the enslaved are even more underrepresented in the archives, since their social status prevented them from expressing themselves in any way other than orally, both before and after emancipation.

There are, therefore, only very few surviving ego documents relating to members of the underclass from before the early twentieth century.

However, there are alternative sources that can inform us about the lives of the subaltern—judicial examinations and sentencing documents. By reading early-modern interrogations, we become invisible witnesses to another time and place, listening to the charged personal exchanges that took place during interrogations. Rudolf Dekker, writing about riots and revolts in Dutch cities, was an early champion of the use of such sources.[7] Lotte van de Pol, in her study on prostitution in Amsterdam, also used criminal documents.[8] Such criminal records have been maintained in archives in the Netherlands, and similar criminal papers have been preserved in the territories administered by the Dutch East India Company (VOC). The relevant documents are thus scattered over three continents, in VOC archives in The Hague, Cape Town, Colombo, Chennai and Jakarta. Robert Ross and Nigel Worden used Cape criminal records to demonstrate the potential of these documents as repositories of the social history of Cape Town in general, and slavery specifically.[9] But much remains to be done. In the Sri Lanka National Archives, for example, the criminal records and related documents of Colombo's Raad van Justitie (Court of Justice) comprise more than 150 files, some of which are quite voluminous. In these records one finds a variety of incriminated persons—across all social groups—who inhabited the coastal territories of the VOC in occupied Sri Lanka. Among the many indicted and sentenced individuals we also find enslaved, or formerly enslaved, persons. M.W. Jurriaanse's examples from the inventory include Apollo of Macassar; Itam, slave of the captain J.C.E. van Berski; January, slave of Andries Willem Dhieme; Deidamie, slave maid of the Burgher ensign-bearer (*vaandrig*) Johannes Wilhelmus van Cuylenberg; and Lizarde, slave maid of Albertus Hissink.[10] Kate Ekama analyses these cases in an imaginative way in her study of slavery in Colombo, as demonstrated in her contribution to this volume.[11] Together with the criminal records preserved in Jakarta, Chennai and Cape Town, these documents are a goldmine of information that bring us the voices of those who were tried and convicted. Especially in the interrogations they seem almost to speak to us directly. Thanks to such records, we are able to unearth the voices of individuals of the marginalized and oppressed slave populations in the Dutch colonies. Care must be taken, however, because even though some members of the judicial staff came from the Dutch Republic (or from other countries in Europe), the records were written by local clerks of Eurasian descent who worked in the service of the VOC. Therefore, we should assume that they may have had an equally biased outlook on the enslaved people brought to justice.

Though the VOC archives are a rich source of information, the records are far from complete, as is evident when one peruses the inventory of VOC records in the Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia in Jakarta.[12] The criminal sentences pronounced by the Court of Justice of Batavia, for instance, are available only for the years 1778–1785. Information on criminal justice can be also found under other headings, such as in files of procedural documents (*processtukken*). There, for instance, are documents pertaining to the criminal case against Fortuijn van Boegis, a Buginese person who was enslaved in, or traded from, Sulawesi in the Indonesian archipelago. Fortunately, many more records have been preserved from the lower court, the Schepenbank (College of Aldermen or urban court of justice, run by the aldermen or *schepenen*). The earliest criminal case lists from this archive date from 1621—deposited in the archives only two years after the foundation of Batavia in 1619! The criminal records run from inventory numbers 969 to 1092—files with criminal sentences date from 1623 to 1812. While only a small proportion of the criminal documents have been kept in Jakarta, an overwhelming proportion of relevant documents can be found in the Dutch National Archives in The Hague. These documents were sent to the Gentlemen Seventeen (the central board of the VOC), and were received by the Amsterdam and Zeeland chambers of the VOC which, by rotation, presided over this central board. Due to the webbed organization of the VOC, we decided to investigate multiple repositories of VOC records. This article, in fact, will show that it can be very rewarding for historians to trace the paper trail of life-convicted slaves across the Company's repositories, which document its activities in the Indian Ocean world.

Many convicted people were sentenced to be banished to Robben Island at the Cape of Good Hope to perform forced public works labour (*ad opus publicum*). The work traditionally consisted of the maintenance of roads, canals, moats and bridges, of preparing construction sites and of building the walls of fortresses. On Robben Island the forced labourers spent most of their time breaking rocks and cutting stones. Among them were many enslaved people, including Boenga van Johor, about whom the National Archives in Jakarta have no detailed information, but whom I accidently discovered in the National Archives of Sri Lanka, in Colombo. Though some records give some background information about the sentenced individuals, the sources found do not give a clue about an earlier social life of Boenga van Johor.[13]



Figure 5.1. Silhouette of Flora, enslaved maid of the Lutheran minister Jan Brandes, Batavia (now Jakarta), 1780-1785. Sketch Book of Jan Brandes.
Source: Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv.nr. NG-1985-7-3-13.

## Boenga van Johor[14]

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the authorities of the VOC in Batavia (now Jakarta) sent hundreds of convicts to the Cape to do forced labour and remain there after serving their sentences; they were banished for 15, 25, 50 years, or even for the rest of their lives.[15] One of those convicts was the slave maid Boenga van Johor, sentenced in 1735 by the Schepenbank of Batavia for having broken her chains. She was sent on board the VOC ship *Barbestein*, which was due to sail to the Netherlands via Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and the Cape. On 22 October 1735, however, the East Indiaman[16] was shipwrecked in the Bay of Galle, a maritime centre in south-west Ceylon. All of the crew and convicts—Boenga was not the only person on board with a banishment sentence—were saved. Later, Boenga continued her forced journey aboard the *Meerlust*. Her spectacular story traces the forced journey from Batavia to her final destination, Robben Island.

The voyage was a terrifying experience, the shock of which may well have caused lasting psychological trauma. From archival sources, however, we can only reconstruct her voyage and the miseries she experienced, as we have no ego documents detailing her presumed despair and agony. Though her arrival at the Cape in 1736 was documented, and the documents were filed by clerks of the Cape Court of Justice, she disappeared soon afterwards—no subsequent documents mention her whereabouts or situation.[17] I became curious about her fate and regretted that Boenga had not left behind any autobiographical texts that could have given us a glimpse into her experience of enslavement and a life without cultural identity and social relations. Her journey after her sentence, and especially the accident in the Bay of Galle, makes one realize how fully dependent she was on others, perhaps being able to dream but lacking any rights or the chance of changing her situation. Contemplating her forced journey, her fellow convicts on board the ship, and the particular circumstances of Robben Island, I considered the options she had to alter her situation, if only in a very limited way. She was, of course, a convict; nothing could change that. However, in my imagination, I saw her asking for a favour—to be freed from daily confrontations with the frightening sea surrounding her, especially after the shipwreck she had experienced. Cape weather can be rough and the waves in the Bay of Good Hope threatening. In my imagination, the following document appeared:

*Yang Mulia Tuan Jan de la Fontaine, Gubernur dan Kepala di* Cabo *da Boa Esperança*[18]

I, Boenga van Johor, submissively beg for the attention of the blessed ears of Your Honourable, Gubernur and Chief of the Cape Colony, hoping Your Honourable will listen to Your miserable servant though she does not deserve such a merciful gesture.

I, Boenga van Johor cannot read or write the language of Your Honourable Gubernur. In all my miseries, however, it seems that a lucky star in heaven has witnessed my ill fate and sent me a co-convict, Imam Malintam from Minangkabau. He can speak and write Malay, the language I learnt as a child in Johor. He assured me that Your Honourable does understand my native tongue; therefore, I begged Imam Malintam to entrust my humble request to the paper in his learned handwriting, which he agreed to do.

I do understand, Your Honourable, that by releasing my chains I acted against the rules of the Honourable Company and I accept my banishment to the Cape. However, Your Honourable Tuan, I beg you, listen to my sad story. For quite a long time after my sentence I was locked up in a dark prison, first on Pulau Edam, then below deck on a great ship. I could not see where I was, nor understand what was happening around me. I only heard the creaking sound of the ship's hull and of people shouting and swearing, day and night. Then suddenly an enormous clash occurred, and water poured in. Only after many hours, a few sailormen came down and released me and my fellow convicts who shared one and the same quod. We all were in shock and feared for our lives. Then after ages, we were put in a tiny vessel and, over a stormy bay, rowed to shore. There we were locked up again and kept under surveillance by black people we could not understand at all. From some white men, however, we understood that we had been shipwrecked off Galle on the Island of Ceylon, halfway between the great city of Batavia and our final destination.

Your Honourable Tuan Gubernur, we were then transferred to a great ship and again sat in the dark, chained up for many weeks or months. I could not count the days because we never saw the sun. Now I am at a place one calls Robben Island, and everywhere I look, I see breakers and endless masses of water. Your Honourable, I cannot stand anymore to see waves threatening to grasp me, to carry away my helpless body and kill me.[19]

Therefore, Your Honourable Tuan Gubernur, please have mercy and transfer your miserable servant to the mainland You call Kaap die Goeie

> Hoop. There, far from the swelling waves I swear I always will work hard, without any complaints or resistance, if only, Your Honourable, I never need see the frightful and horrible sea again in my life.
> This request has been brought to paper by me, Malintam van Minangkabau and signed on Robben Island on 10 April 1736, 28-Dhu al-Qidah of the Islamic year 1148.[20]

This, however, is fiction—Boenga did not write anything. She is like the convicts in Clare Anderson's study "who did not write memoirs of their experiences, but whose archival trace is substantial enough to maneuver them into the heart of histories of colonialism in the Indian Ocean".[21] Anderson suggests—and I agree—that men and women like Boenga, "because of extraordinary circumstances, came to the attention of the colonial authorities, and left more substantial traces in the archives than are usually discernible".[22]

If I were telling Boenga's story in the form of a novel, I would have inserted such a request in order to provide a point of departure for her further adventures after her transfer to the mainland. For a fictionalized account I would have closely studied *Unconfessed*, a beautiful and convincing novel by Yvette Christiansë about Sila van den Kaap, "slave woman of Jacobus Stephanus van der Wat of Plettenburg Bay in the Cape Province".[23] Christiansë reconstructs a life based on the historical trial of Sila, who is charged with killing her own child. In the novel, trying to imagine what desperation might have driven Sila to this, Christiansë succeeds in giving voice to Sila's emotions and constructing an identity for Sila and women like her by evoking a life so rudely affected by the sad fate of slavery.

For the moment, however, I will stick to the material evidence at my disposal and will reproduce the source material from the archives of the former Dutch East India Company that are scattered across the Indian Ocean. In that respect, my basic method does not differ greatly from the way Clare Anderson retrieved facts from the archives she visited. Like Boenga van Johor, Dullah, the first protagonist in Anderson's study, left no ego documents; in *Subaltern Lives*, however, we learn in great detail about the fate of this convict who was sentenced on 6 December 1816 by the British colonial authorities to "imprisonment and transportation beyond sea for life".

## Records documenting convicts sent to the Cape

The "note books of convicts sent from Batavia (Jakarta) and Ceylon (Sri Lanka) to the Cape (Cape Town)", kept in the archives of the Western Cape, refer to two East Indiamen that arrived in 1736, delivering a total of seven convicts or "bandits".[24] One such ship was the *Wickenburg*, which had departed from Galle on 16 January 1736 and arrived at the roadstead of the Cape on 4 April the same year.[25] On board were the crew, repatriating military men and artisans, and three convicts.

The first convict listed in 1736 was Assena Manka, a Muslim slave sent to the Cape to do public works labour on Robben Island for 50 years. His sentence by the Court of Justice in Galle was approved by the governor and councils of Ceylon on 12 February 1735. The second person listed was a certain Colombege Adriaan, born in Colombo.[26] He was sentenced to work in chains in public works for fifteen years, and after the fulfilment of that part of his sentence he was not allowed to leave the Cape, for he had been banished for the rest of his life. The notebook states that he died in 1755, which means that he lived at the Cape for some four years after having served his punishment of forced labour. The third *bandiet*—another Sinhalese—was named Moedoegame Game Bastiaan, sent to serve fifteen years in chains. The notebook mentions that he was released on 4 October 1766, after more than 30 years!

The *Wickenburg* was accompanied by the *Meerlust*, a "flute" ship owned by the Amsterdam Chamber of the VOC.[27] Under the responsibility of the skipper, Kornelis van der Hoeven, four convicts were delivered to the Cape. The people first mentioned were Louis and October, two slaves owned by Evert Lanius, an auctioneer (*vendumeester*) in Batavia.[28] After those two, the notebook mentions a certain Malintam from Batavia, a Muslim priest. The last convict mentioned as being on board the *Meerlust* was a slave maid, Boenga van Johor.

Boenga's status and social situation were not at all exceptional. In 1739, Batavia and Ommelanden (the districts immediately surrounding Batavia proper) had a population of 86,531 people, among whom 24,322 were enslaved (28.4 per cent of the total population) and another 6,286 people (7.29 per cent) were "Mardijkers"—manumitted slaves and their descendants.[29] Compared with the number of Europeans and Eurasians (altogether about 2,500 to 3,000 people), the number of slaves is astonishing. Most of them worked as domestics; an unknown number, however, was leased out to work elsewhere—some hired by private enterprises, others by the Company.

## A steady flow of convicts

The transfer of convicts to the Cape was part of a standard procedure followed by Company authorities in Batavia and Ceylon. A look at the notebooks kept in Cape Town (discussed above) reveals that the people sentenced to do public works consisted mostly of European servants, free Chinese people, other Asian people with free status and enslaved people. It may be useful to provide a few examples from the notebook to illustrate the kinds of convicts that were sent to the Cape before 1736, when the abovementioned seven convicts arrived on board the *Wickenburg* and *Meerlust*.

For 1731 there is a list of sixteen Chinese convicts, all from Batavia. The notebook mentions that ten of them were sent to do forced labour on farms, and that five of them died at sea during the journey. Further, we read about an Adriaan Samson, who was banished for life by the Council of Justice in Galle. Then we find three other males—a "free Buginese from Batavia", a "free Balinese from Batavia", and an emancipated slave from Batavia. In 1732, four convicts arrived. Two of them—Christina "alias Anna Maria" and Pasquaal Barbeda—had been sentenced to twelve years. A third person (also from Ceylon) had been banished for 50 years by the Council of Justice in Jaffna. Convict number four was a European servant of the VOC named Adolf Wessel, from Amsterdam.[30] The last was sentenced by the Council of Justice in Colombo to serve in chains in public works for three years. For 1733 the notebook lists a Jan Pietersz Bak from Lossum near Copenhagen, sentenced by the Council of Justice in Colombo to serve in chains for six years on Robben Island. In the same year, two slaves from Batavia had each to serve two years in chains, and were sentenced to then stay there, banished "for their whole life". A Chinese person from Batavia shared this fate, as did two free Javanese from Batavia.

In 1734, two European convicts arrived at the Cape. The first was Christiaan Schoonheer from Amsterdam, sentenced by the Council of Justice in Colombo to be banished for five years (the notebook states that he was released—*verlost*).[31] The second European was Jonas Jansz, also from Amsterdam, banished for five years[32] and also released. The third convict was a Sinhalese named Tottegamme Nainde Appoe,[33] sentenced by the Council of Justice of Galle "to be whipped with the rope round his neck, to be marked by the iron, and to be banished to Robben Island in chains for all his life".

In 1735 nine convicts arrived, including one Chinese and one person from the Maldives who was in the service of a certain Narichaen, a Muslim

*nachoda* (captain) residing in Ceylon.[34] The remaining seven originated from several ethnic communities in Ceylon. Remarkable among them was a slave named Domingo—born at Kelaniya; heathen (read: Buddhist); and owned by a high-ranking Sinhalese man named Wierakon Appoehamie.[35] Domingo was sentenced by the Council of Justice in Colombo to do public works for 50 years; the sentence was confirmed by the governor and councillors of Ceylon on 13 July 1734.

These examples give a fair impression of the composition of convicts sent from Batavia and Ceylon to the Cape, though the composition may differ from the average for other years (as they are listed in the notebooks in the Cape archives), where we see that an unusually large number of convicted slaves sometimes arrived; and, indeed, in other years no slaves at all arrived.[36] Typically, however, we see quite a mix of origins and social status, such as in 1736, the year Boenga van Johor arrived.

## Boenga van Johor—From sentence in May to departure from Batavia, 23 July 1735

On 19 May 1735, Boenga van Johor, a slave owned privately by a free *Christen vrouw* (Christian woman) named Clarinda van Timor,[37] was sentenced in Batavia—the capital of the VOC trade empire in Asia—to be sent to the Cape of Good Hope to serve ad opus publicum for five years over and above the period that she was already serving from an earlier sentence. In the eyes of the VOC, Boenga had seriously offended Company rules—with the help of others, she had undone the chains that she wore after having been sentenced for an earlier criminal offence. In the marginal notes of the resolutions of the meeting of the Schepenbank, the remark made to Boenga by the bailiff of the Batavian Ommelanden, *drossaart* (bailiff) Justinus Vinck, makes it clear that Boenga had, indeed, repeated her crime:

> The plaintiff addressing the prisoner Boenga, [said] that only a short time after she had been punished and chained in front of the Townhall [*Stadhuijs*], she again had released herself from the chains but was arrested; then on the order of the mandur or overseer [*mandadoor*] of the Crafts Quarter of Batavia, she was whipped on her buttocks and chained again, therefore she now has violated [the sentence] of being banished in chains twice.[38]

Like other convicted persons in the same trial, Boenga was then whipped *gestrengelijk* (seriously) on her naked back. However, unlike the other slaves and first offenders sentenced in this trial (Cate van Mandhaan, Ganty van Boeton and Mina van Batavia), Boenga was marked by the iron—a standard procedure in the Dutch Republic to make convicts who were sent to the houses of correction (*tuchthuizen*) identifiable.

Since no ship was scheduled to leave soon, Boenga was sent to the island of Edam (now Pulau Damar Besar, one of the so-called Thousand Islands), some eighteen kilometres north of Batavia. The island was gifted by the Batavian Government to Johannes Camphuys (1634–1695) when he left his post as governor general in 1691. Edam was famous for its Japanese-style country houses, beautiful gardens and menagerie. Jan de Marre (1696–1763), who arrived as a skipper of the East Indiaman *Heesburg* in 1728,[39] visited the island of Edam during his stay in the East Indies and described it in quite exalted terms. Boenga certainly did not obtain relief from her misery by seeing "the beautiful Edam", nor did she enjoy a "stroll under the green and eye-catching shade".[40] Her only consolation may have been the company of three other convicts—Louis and October, the abovementioned enslaved servants of the auctioneer Evert Lanius, and a Muslim priest named Malintam from "Maningcabo" (Minangkabau, the highlands of West Sumatra).[41] The four convicts may have stayed in a slave lodge on the island, for the Batavian ship repair wharf had three locations—Onrust, a neighbouring island named Kuiper and Edam. Edam was not only the leisure island of the governor general, but there were also warehouses and a sawmill powered by a Dutch-type windmill similar to the two on the wharf island of Onrust. The Company owned hundreds of slaves, and hired even more private slaves to work at the three locations of the wharf, housing them in a huge slave lodge on Onrust.[42] (The one on Edam was apparently quite modest.[43]) It is quite possible that the four convicts were kept separate from the enslaved labourers, and that they were housed in a temporary shed in one of the warehouses. Boenga was kept chained; possibly this was a measure to prevent her from walking off and committing suicide. This tragic form of resistance was by no means exceptional, as we have seen from the example of Ontong in Geelen et al.'s contribution to this volume. There we read that Ontong tried to break free but failed to take his own life—consequently he was brought to court "to defend himself against the hefty charge of attempted suicide".[44]

With her fellow convicts, Boenga stayed on Edam for about eight weeks, then the four were transferred to the *Barbestein*,[45] which lay at anchor in the

roadstead of Batavia. On 21 July 1735 the authorities of the ship signed a declaration stating that they were taking over the responsibility of taking the convicts to the Cape. The document concerning Boenga reads:

> The authorities of the ship Barbestein take over in good security from the employees of the Honourable Aldermen of this city [Batavia] and transfer under good surveillance via Ceylon to the Cape of Good Hope, the slave maid Boenga van Johor, in order to serve there the time of her banishment in chains, according the appointment by Their Honourables of 19 May last, and accordingly by the resolution of Their Honourables [Governor-General and Councillors of the East Indies] taken on the 27th of that month, the original signed by [Adriaan] Valckenier and [Johannes] Thedens [Councillors].[46]

Together with the *Ketel*,[47] *Wickenburg* and *Meerlust*, the *Barbestein* left the roadstead of Batavia on 23 July 1735.[48]

## The journey to Ceylon to the arrival in the Bay of Galle, 22 October 1735

It is not quite clear what route the ships took. From the *Generale Missiven* one learns that the ships carried Japanese copper to be delivered in Tuticorin on the south-east coast of India, and rice for Ceylon.[49] Because of the stop at the Madurai Coast the voyage took two months, a horrifying experience for the four involuntary passengers.[50] It is likely that they were kept below deck at all times, in lockups specially made for the occasion. The food may have been the ordinary fare prepared for the sailors and soldiers; on the leg between Batavia and the Cape the diet will have contained rice and cadjang beans (lentils)—acceptable fare, though there would have been no fruit. Their situation must have been unbearable—not knowing where they were, how things would go, or how, when and where their misery would end—until at last the ship arrived in the roadstead of Colombo on 22 September. Even if the convicts had been informed about their arrival in Ceylon they would not have understood where they were. One can only speculate about this part of the journey, but the fact that the ship anchored safely in the Colombo roads may have given the captives some feeling of security.

After unloading and reloading, the four ships left Colombo and sailed southwards to Galle, where goods were waiting for transhipment to the

Netherlands. The *Barbestein* sighted the bay on 20 October 1735 but stayed outside, anchored at the so-called Outer Roadsted (*Buyten-rede*) because of strong winds and waves. The next day, 21 October, the *Barbestein* lost one anchor after the other. The pilots, Barend Joosten and Heere Jansz, decided to take their chances and try to enter the Bay of Galle, in the hope that spare anchors could be supplied. But that hope was misplaced, and without anchors the ship fell prey to the waves. Three cannon shots were fired to warn the authorities ashore that the vessel was on the brink of shipwreck. The master of equipment (head of the Maritime Department), Carel Pieter Swensen, could not be of any help, as heavy breakers made all rescue attempts hopeless. Around 8 a.m. on 22 October 1735 the ship ran aground and started leaking. Sand filled the inlets of the pumps and within an hour the lower deck was flooded.

It is not difficult to imagine that the people aboard the *Barbestein* feared for their lives. Below deck, Boenga must have heard the initial panic of crew members shouting and rushing hither and thither. Was she kept in chains during the voyage from Batavia? And, if so, how long was it before orders were given to release her and the other convicts, and move them from their perilous situation to safety? For Boenga and her fellow convicts the sounds of the ship running aground must have been sickening and frightening, for they were locked up and unable to fully understand what was happening. From the sources, however, we know that they were all released and safely taken ashore. They may have been locked up again in the depot (*materiaalhuis*) in Black Fort, where convicts and Company slaves were kept.

## Ship lost, ship's papers salvaged

The Dutch East India Company has become famous for its diligent record keeping. Many files concerning the shipwreck of the *Barbestein* have been kept and can be studied in the Sri Lanka National Archives. From the letters to and from Colombo,[51] many of which have detailed reports, we learn that on the day after the disaster the commander and councillors of the Galle Commandment set up tents on the shore close to the site of the shipwreck near the watch-house (*gravet*) of Unawatuna.[52] From there, Commandeur (Commander) Jan Macaré (1686–1742) coordinated the rescue of goods and people; also, there was a steady flow of letters to Colombo to inform Governor Diederik van Domburg (1685–1736) of the fate of the *Barbestein* and to obtain instructions. Among these files are copies of the salvaged ship's

papers, including documents on the convicts sent from Batavia. Louis and October, "both slaves from Ternate", had been sentenced for having committed "violence and hooliganism" and for issuing threats and so on—neither had confessed and both denied the accusations.[53] The Malay "priest" (*imam*) Malintam, from Minangkabau (spelled "Manin Cabo"), had been sentenced for plotting murder, to which he had confessed.[54] Boenga was sentenced for breaking her chains and for violating her banishment.[55]

From several documents we learn exactly what happened to the goods on the *Barbestein*—the sugar and saltpetre in the hold of the ship, understandably, were lost; however, much of the other cargo—such as the textiles from India (which appear to confirm that the *Barbestein* had earlier sailed to Tuticorin)—was successfully removed.[56] The textiles were bleached, dried and sorted, and the items that were not of export quality were allocated to be sold in Galle.[57] We also learn about the rescue of useful parts of the ship, such as masts and yards. Some documents actually confirm the saving of everyone on board, but there is no record of the distribution of crew, passengers and convicts on the returning ships—the *Ketel*, *Wickenburg* and *Meerlust*.[58] We know, however, that Boenga was transferred to the Cape with the other convicts on board the *Meerlust*, for that has been documented in the abovementioned notebook of convicts sent to the Cape.

Within a few days the *Barbestein* broke into three.[59] The reports inserted in the resolutions of the Council of Galle give a thorough account of the investigations by the commander and council to find out what had happened and what exactly had caused the loss of the ship. There we also find evidence given by the skipper, mates and other ship's officers, as well as the local VOC pilots based in Galle.[60] It is not known what happened to Boenga after she was taken ashore. She may have joined the other convicts and slaves and been forced to work in the depot or elsewhere in Galle, which she may have preferred to her next forced journey by sea—the last leg of her voyage from Ceylon to the Cape.

## The *Meerlust* sails to the Cape

On 16 January 1736, the East Indiamen—*Ketel*, *Meerlust* and *Wickenburg*—left Ceylon and sailed to the Cape.[61] Dirk Prest, who had lost his ship, the *Barbestein*, was appointed first mate of the *Ketel*—he was later chosen by the ships' council to replace skipper Adriaan Krielaard, who had died on the voyage.

Little is known about the ships' journey since no ships' logs have been kept. On 9 April 1736 the three ships arrived safely at the roadstead of the Cape, where they stayed until their departure for the Netherlands on 27 April.[62] In the meantime, the four convicts were registered and their names inserted in the notebook of convicts. From that moment on their names seem to disappear from Company files. A further search of the Cape archives for more information about Boenga may be worthwhile, though there is only a small chance of finding out more. The Company meticulously recorded the names of the convicts sent back to Batavia or Ceylon. We find in lists between 1750 and 1781 a certain Pasquale van Colombo, who was sentenced on 25 May 1723 to 25 years of forced public works labour and, as the lists show, was sent back in 1751.[63] Oursson van Sambouwa (Sambawa) was sentenced in Batavia in 1737 and sent back there on 10 October 1750, following the decision of the Cape Government. Baatjoe van Boegis (Sulawesi), an enslaved domestic owned by Christoffel Schultz, *Backmeester* of the Utrecht Gate of Batavia, was sent back in 1751. He was sentenced in 1740, and sent back in 1750 aboard the East Indiaman *Vrijburg*, which had departed from Zeeland on 18 May 1750, lay at anchor in the Cape roads between 19 September and 26 October, and arrived in Batavia on 3 January 1751.

There is no mention at all of Boenga van Johor. No message of transfer, being sent back, or demise. She may have stayed at the Cape until the end of her life. One thing is certain—she had arrived in a society which, like Batavia, was fully dependent on slave labour, so the Company would not have released her without reason. Boenga may have set her hopes on a better life after serving her punishment; however, I did not find recorded any mention of her after her arrival in 1736.

## Discussion

Mentioned in Kerry Ward's *Networks of Empire* as one of many forced labourers shipped to Cape Town from South and Southeast Asia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Boenga comes to life in the sources connected with the shipwreck of the *Barbestein* on 22–23 October 1735. This East Indiaman transported four convicts, three slaves and one Muslim priest. The files kept in the ship's box (*scheepsdoos*) and the documents kept in the Cape archives give ample evidence of judicial procedures, sentences and the execution of the verdicts in Batavia. Combined with data retrieved from sources such as

the *Generale Missiven* and publications such as *Dutch–Asiatic Shipping*, it is possible to reconstruct the fate of Boenga van Johor; however, first-hand testimonies of people like her are extremely rare. With the help of the available sources, historians can try to understand what she may have experienced, and accordingly they can reconstruct for the public some aspects of the lives of enslaved people. One is tempted to use fiction to work more freely with historical facts, thereby escaping the historian's traditional methods and constraints, which require sticking to scarce facts as retrieved from sources.

One may question, however, whether writing a novel delivers a better result than a historical study. Sue Peabody clearly discusses the implications of telling the story of Furcy in three competing genres. Furcy was a slave born around 1786 who fought for 26 years for official recognition of his freeborn status. On 23 December 1843 he finally obtained the judgment of the French judicial system that he had been born free ("Furcy est né en liberté").[64] Earlier, the journalist and author Mohammed Aïssaoui had written the novel *L'affaire de l'esclave Furcy*,[65] but Peabody, though admitting that "the novel offers interesting narrative possibilities", chooses the genre of microhistory because "it joins the elemental power of good storytelling (characters, plot, description) with a postmodern commitment to revealing the architecture of historical research and exposition".[66] In the attachment to the article, she tries to explain the essential differences between microhistory, biography and fiction by tackling three times, and in three different ways, a crucial episode in the life of Furcy's mother Madeleine that had sad implications for her son's life.

Peabody's experimental works are kept short, like the imagined document I inserted at the beginning of this chapter, which can also be considered experimental. In the case of my experiment, however, its main purpose is to show what could have been learned had Boenga left us ego documents to tell us about her miseries.

## Notes

1. Sadiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007.
2. Marijke Huisman, *Verhalen van Vrijheid. Autobiografieën van Slaven in Transnationaal Perspectief, 1789–2013*. Hilversum: Verloren, 2015.
3. Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, edited by Nellie Y. McKay and Frances Smith Foster. New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002.

This is a perfect edition, with contemporary responses and selections of Jacobs' other writings, an introduction to her world, and a section with critical essays.

4. Huisman, *Verhalen van Vrijheid*, 160.
5. Henry Louis Gates Jr. (ed.), *The Classic Slave Narratives*. New York: New American Library, 1987.
6. The term *ego document* refers to sources which contain information on personal lives and experiences written by authors themselves. The term was coined around 1955 by the Dutch historian Jacques Presser. For a short article on ego documents see the website of the "Center for the Study of Egodocuments and History," http://www.egodocument.net, accessed 20 March 2019.
7. Rudolf Dekker, *Holland in Beroering: Oproeren in de 17de en 18de Eeuw*. Amsterdam: Ambo, 1982.
8. Lotte van de Pol, *Het Amsterdams Hoerdom: Prostitutie in de Zeventiende en Achttiende Eeuw*. Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 1996; revised edition:. *Sociaal-Historische Studie Naar de Prostitutie Door Vrouwen in Amsterdam Tussen ca. 1650–1750*. Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 2003, published in English: *The Burgher and the Whore: Prostitution in Early Modern Amsterdam*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, translated by Liz Waters.
9. Robert Ross, *Cape of Torments. Slavery and Resistance in South Africa*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983. Nigel Worden and Gerald Groenewald, *Trials of Slavery. Selected Documents Concerning Slaves from the Criminal Records of the Council of Justice at the Cape of Good Hope, 1705–1794, Van Riebeeck Society Second Series 36*. Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 2005.
10. M.W. Jurriaanse, *Catalogue of the Archives of the Dutch Central Government of Coastal Ceylon, 1640–1796* Colombo: Ceylon Government Press, 1943. This inventory can be accessed through "Towards a New Age of Partnership", TANAP.net.
11. See also Kate Ekama, "Slavery in Colombo" (Master's diss., Leiden University, 2012). For a discussion of these cases in a legal history context see A. Schrikker and Kate Ekama, "Through the Lens of Slavery: Dutch Sri Lanka in the Eighteenth Century," in *Sri Lanka at the Crossroads of History*, edited by Zoltán Biedermann and Alan Strathern, 178-193. London: UCL Press, 2017.
12. G.L. Balk, F. van Dijk and D.J. Kortlang, *The Archives of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and the Local Institutions in Batavia*. Leiden and Boston MA: Brill, 2007, with contributions by F.S. Gaastra, Hendrik E. Niemeijer and P. Koenders. This inventory can be accessed through TANAP.net.
13. Seen from a social perspective, Boenga as a person appears rather nondescript, so to speak. Extraordinary in this respect is the example given by Paul Bijl,

Wange van Balie (1798-1869), who in his autobiography spanning the years 1802-1810 gives evidence of a family world inhabited by his father, grandmother and brothers. See Paul Bijl, "Acts of Equality: Writing Autonomy, Empathy, and Community in an Indonesian Slave Narrative", chapter 7 in this volume.

14. Boenga (*bunga*) in the Malay language means "flower". European slave owners usually gave their enslaved domestics a new name after acquisition in order to avoid having a stranger in the household. Her owner, the free *Christen vrouw* Clarinda van Timor, apparently had no objection to her originally given name, since Malay as *lingua franca* was not strange or hostile to her.
15. From the very beginning of its presence at the Cape, the VOC used Robben Island as a concentration camp. A famous example is Eva van Meerhof (?1643-1674), the wife of the Danish surgeon Peter Havgard (in VOC documents called Pieter van Meerhof). As a child of twelve the Khoi girl Krotoa, renamed "Eva", entered the service of the Van Riebeeck family. In that capacity she also acted as interpreter and hence as mediator between the Company and Khoi people. In 1665 she followed her husband when he became overseer of Robben Island. After his death Eva's uncontrolled drinking habits got her into trouble, and consequently she was sentenced to be sent to the island—then as a condemned criminal. The story of "Krotoa-Eva" plays a major role in the history and historiography of South Africa. See, for example: Trudie Bloem, *Krotoa-Eva: The Woman from Robben Island*. Cape Town: Kuele Books, 1999; Dan Sleigh, *Islands*. London: Secker & Warburg, 2004. (Translation from: *Eilande*. Kaapstad: Tafelberg, 2001).
16. An East Indiaman, a three-masted sailing vessel, of different tonnage and design. The returning *Barbestein* was an East Indiaman of the first charter, about 160 feet long and with a loading capacity of 1,100 tons. The flute ship *Meerlust* belonged to the third charter—it measured 130 feet and could transport a load of 600 tons.
17. See text below, and endnote 9.
18. "To the right honourable Jan de la Fontaine, Governor of the cape of Good Hope".
19. The main argument in this constructed request ("I cannot stand anymore to see waves threatening to grasp me, to carry away my helpless body and kill me") differs sharply from the concept of the sea as a gate to freedom, as described by Anne Marieke van der Wal. See her contribution to this volume, "'Hoera, dit skip seil uit oos'. The Sea as a Site of Memory in the Folk Songs of the Enslaved Community and their Descendants at the Cape".
20. Retrieved from the past by Lodewijk Wagenaar for the "Being a Slave" workshop at Leiden University, 29–30 May 2017.

21. Clare Anderson, *Subaltern Lives. Biographies of Colonialism in the Indian Ocean World, 1790–1920*, 4. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
22. Anderson, *Subaltern Lives*, 6.
23. Yvette Christiansë, *Unconfessed*. Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2007.
24. Western Cape Archives and Records Service, Inventory of the Archives of the Court of Justice of the Cape Colony (CJ), 1652–1843; Documents Regarding Convicts and Exiles 1722–1822; Note Books of Convicts (1722–1786), "Attestatie-boek—Banditen. *Lijste van zodanige banditen als er uijt India na herwaarts zijn gesonden, als van Batavia [en Ceylon],*" inv. no. 3186, 1722–1757.
25. The ship *Wickenburg* was built in Middelburg by the VOC Chamber Zeeland in 1722; it could carry 850 tons of freight and was taken out of service in Batavia in 1748 after having made eight journeys to the East Indies. After its departure from the Cape on 27 April 1736, the ship arrived at the roadstead of Rammekens (Zeeland) on 29 August 1736. Her skipper was Pieter Zwanendrecht. See J.R. Bruijn, F.S. Gaastra and I. Schöffer, *Dutch–Asiatic Shipping in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, 3 vols. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987. From here, the ship numbers given in volumes II (outgoing) and III (homebound ships) are given as "DAS," followed by the number and the digit indicating the particular number of the outgoing or homebound voyage. The arrival on 29 August 1736 was of DAS 6960.5.
26. His origin is given by the Sinhalese suffix "ge" after Colombe (Colombo).
27. The flute *Meerlust* was built in 1725 at the Company's wharf in Amsterdam. Weighing 600 tonnes, it made five journeys to the East Indies and was taken out of service in 1744. DAS 6959.3 mentions that the ship stayed at the Cape from 4–27 April 1736 and arrived at the roadstead of Texel on 28 August 1736. On board was a crew of 89 sailors (inclusive of the skipper and officers). Also on board were three categories of VOC servants being repatriated—eleven soldiers, five artisans and fourteen *impotenten* (sick or handicapped servants). The ship was loaded with goods to the value of 155,904 guilders. The skipper was Kornelis van der Hoeve.
28. Evert Lanius was auctioneer in Batavia from 1712. See François Valentijn, *Oud en nieuw Oost-Indiën, vol.* IV, pt. 1, 413. Dordrecht: Joannes van Braam; Amsterdam: Gerard onder de Linden, 1726.
29. Remco Raben, "Batavia and Colombo. The Ethnic and Spatial Order of Two Colonial Cities, 1600–1800" (PhD diss., Leiden University, 1996), 89–93.
30. The research guide, *VOC Opvarenden*, of the National Archives (The Hague) mentions an Adolf Wessels from Amsterdam who entered the service of the VOC in 1735. He was possibly repatriated from the Cape in 1738. See "VOC Opvarenden," Nationaal Archief, http://www.gahetna.nl/collectie/index/nt00444, accessed 20 March 2010.

31. *VOC Opvarenden* mentions a Christiaan Schoonheer from Amsterdam who left service in Asia in 1733. That was the year of his sentence—convicts were then formally dismissed and their contracts terminated.
32. *VOC Opvarenden* mentions a Jonas Jansz who entered service in 1730. He left the service in Asia on 29 May 1734—possibly the year of his sentence.
33. *Nainde*: a husbandman of low caste who performed menial tasks as compulsory service, such as the transport of timber and cinnamon; the word "appoe" (Sinhalese: *appu*) suggests that he occupied a high position within his group.
34. *Nahada*: possibly the clerk meant a *nachoda*, which is the word related to Chinese skippers.
35. Wierakon Appoehamie: today, his name would be spelled "Wirakon". "Appuhamy" is an honorific for sons of high-ranking native chiefs in the Company's territory of Ceylon.
36. See in particular the chapters, "Crime and Punishment in Batavia, circa 1730 to 1750" and "Forced Migration and Cape Colonial Society," in *Networks of Empire: Forced Migration in the Dutch East India Company* by Kerry Ward, 85-125 and 239-282. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. On page 261, Ward briefly mentions Boenga of Johor and her sentence of banishment for five years, in addition to her previous sentence for having broken out of her chains in Batavia—information retrieved from the Convicts Rolls, vol. 3188 (1728–1795), kept in the Cape Town Archive Repository (CA).
37. Slaves were named after their region of origin or after the port of embarcation they left for transport after sale. Thus, Clarina came from Timor. Later on, she was manumitted on the condition that she convert to Christianity. People like her were categorized as "free Christian women". Many emancipated slaves possessed slaves in their own right.
38. Western Cape Archives and Records Service, CJ 2563, "Copies of Sentences of Persons Banished from Batavia, Ceylon and Elsewhere, 1736–1742" (*Vonnissen der persoonen dewelke soo van Batavia als Ceylon herwaarts sijn gesonden. Beginnende met den jaare 1736 en eijndigende met den jaare 1742*), 110; sentence of 19 May 1735, copied a week later, on 26 May, in Batavia. The Dutch text reads: "De heer eisser voegende de gev[angene] daarbij, dat zij maar weijnig tijds nadat alhier voor 't Stadhuijs was afgestraft en in de ketting geklonken daarna wederom opgevat is, wanneer zij ter ordre van den mandadoor in 't Ambagtsquartier op haar billen gegeselt en aldaar de novo in de ketting geklonken is, zulx zij nu twee malen haar banissement in de ketting heeft gevioleerd."
39. DAS 2735.3: the *Heesburg*, built in 1720 for the Amsterdam Chamber of the VOC, left the roadstead of Texel for its third outward voyage on 10 May 1728,

stayed at the Cape from 27 September until 23 October, and arrived in the Bay of Batavia on 21 December 1728. DAS 6820.3: Jan de Marre left Batavia on 13 October 1731 as skipper of the same vessel (then sailing in charter for the Zeeland Chamber) and arrived on 18 June 1732 in the roadstead of Rammekens.

40. Jan de Marre, *Batavia. Begrepen In Zes Boeken,* 231. Amsterdam: Adriaan Wor, en de Erve G. onder de Linden, 1740: "Stelt u, ô schoon Edam! in heuchelyker licht./ Wien lust het niet zich hier 't ontheffen van zyn kommer?/ Te wandlen onder 't groen van 't oogverrukkend lommer? [...]". About Jan de Marre as skipper, examiner of the seamanship of the Amsterdam Chamber of the VOC, director of the Amsterdam City Theatre and author see Jaap R. Bruijn, *Schippers van de VOC in de Achttiende Eeuw, Aan de Wal en Op Zee,* 94-97. Amsterdam: De Bataafsche Leeuw, 2008.

41. Sri Lanka National Archives (SLNA), 1/5220, *Letters from Colombo to Galle, With Annexes,* 29 July–30 December 1735, no. 149, *Extract of the Resolutions Taken by the Council of the Dutch East Indies,* 27 May 1735: [in translation] "[...] to send Louis and October, slaves of the auctioneer Evert Lanius; Malintam van Maningcabo, Malay [speaking] priest, and also Boenga van Johor via Ceylon to the Cape to serve their banishment in chains, and to station and keep them temporarily on the island of Edam".

42. In 1757, the number of Company slaves in the Artisans' Quarter in Batavia and on Onrust totalled 1,846; see Raben, "Batavia and Colombo", 100. In 1735, the numbers were perhaps a few hundred less. The number of slaves labouring on Onrust would have included the ones working at Edam and Kuiper—the latter were returned every night to the neighbouring island of Onrust.

43. Lodewijk J. Wagenaar, "Het Eiland Onrust Bij Batavia als Onderdeel van het VOC-Scheepsbedrijf in de 17de en 18de Eeuw," *Antiek* 25, no. 2 (1990): 65-80; on slaves and convicts see especially pages 74–76.

44. Alexander Geelen, Bram van den Hout, Merve Tosun, Mike de Windt and Matthias van Rossum, "Between Markets and Chains. An Exploration of the Experiences, Mobility, and Control of Enslaved Persons in Eighteenth-Century South-West India", in this volume.

45. *Barbestein*: built in 1717 by the VOC Chamber Zeeland, 1,100 tonnes; the ship made six outward journeys; at the end of the sixth voyage, the ship arrived in the roadstead of Batavia on 10 April 1733 (DAS 2875.6).

46. SLNA 1/5220, no. 126:

> De overheden van 't schip Barbestein, nemen van de bedientens van Heren Schepenen dezer stede, in goede verzekering over en vervoeren onder goeden toezicht over Ceilon naar Cabo de Goede Hoop, de slavinne

> Boenga van Johor, ten einde aldaar volgens haar Eerw.[r]: appointements de dato 19. maij jongstleden, en Harer Hoogedelens daarop genomene resolutie op de 27. dies maants, den tijd van haar bannissement in de ketting uit te dienen. Batavia, in 't Casteel, den 21. Julij, Ao. 1735 / [orig. get.] Valckenier [en] Thedens [Achter stond] Ordonnantie van den 16. Julij op de overheeden van 't schip Barbesteijn verleent.

47. *Ketel*: built by the Rotterdam Chamber in 1721, 810 tonnes. The ship made seven outward voyages and was sold in 1748 to Spanish merchants in Manila. See DAS 2503.1 and later voyages.
48. "Resources," *Boekhouder-generaal Batavia. Het goederenvervoer van de VOC in de achttiende eeuw*, http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/boekhoudergeneraalbatavia, accessed 20 March 2019, gives the departure date of the four ships as 23 July 1735. *Generale Missiven van Gouverneurs-Generaal en Raden aan Heren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (GM), volume 9, edited by J. van Goor, 663. The Hague: s.n, 1988, gives, wrongly, 23 June.
49. *Generale Missiven* 9, 663.
50. *Generale Missiven* 9, 735.
51. SLNA 1/5220, *Letters from Colombo to Galle, With Annexes*, 29 July–30 December 1735.
52. SLNA 1/5339, *Letters from Galle to Colombo*, 4 August–30 December 1735, Letters dated 20–25 October 1735.
53. SLNA 1/5220, no. 150, *Verdict of Wednesday 2 February 1735 by Pieter Boockesteijn, Bailiff (*Baljuw*) of Batavia, Contra Louis and October, Slaves from Ternate.*
54. SLNA 1/5220, no. 151, *Verdict of Wednesday 20 April 1735 by Justinus Vinck, Bailiff (*Drossaart*) of the Batavian Countryside (Bataviase Ommelanden), Contra Malimitam from Manin Cabo, Malay Priest.*
55. SLNA 1/5220, no. 152, *Verdict of Thursday 19 May 1735 by Justinus Vinck Contra Eleven Persons, Among whom Boenga van Johor.*
56. Tuticorin (now known as Thoothukudi) was the VOC centre on the Coast of Madure where cloth from the hinterland was collected. It came under the administration of the Government of Dutch Ceylon.
57. SLNA 1/5339, *Letters from Galle to Colombo*, 4 January–30 December 1735, Letter of 25 October 1735 (sent at 6:30 p.m., when it was already dark!).
58. *Generale Missiven* 9, 768: the High Government in Batavia initially planned to send the *Iepenrode* from Batavia to replace the *Barbestein*, but there were not enough goods to make equipping a fourth ship profitable. DAS 6991.2: On 1 January 1737, the *Iepenrode* left Batavia, but was shipwrecked on 21 May 1737 at the Cape.

59. Because the *Barbestein* was shipwrecked, it was never added to the list of ships leaving Ceylon. Since *Dutch–Asiatic Shipping in the 17th and 18th Centuries* does not register the Batavia–Ceylon section for homebound ships leaving from Ceylon (this is, of course, not relevant to the ships which plied directly between the Netherlands and Ceylon), there is no DAS number for the *Barbestein* after its arrival in the roads of Batavia on 10 April 1733. From the *General Missiven* and the archives of the Bookkeeper General, however, we know that following its arrival the ship made trips to Persia (via Cochin on the Malabar Coast, where seven slaves were bought) and Cheribon. See *Generale Missiven* 9, 514, 627, 643, and 663; "Resources," *Boekhouder-generaal Batavia. Het goederenvervoer van de VOC in de achttiende eeuw*, http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/boekhoudergeneraalbatavia, accessed 20 March 2019.The ship arrived on time in Batavia, to be re-equipped for the homeward voyage via Ceylon. As we have already seen, the *Barbestein* had left Batavia on 23 July 1735.
60. SLNA 1/5043 *Ordinary Minutes of the Political Council of Galle*, 1 February 1734–10 March 1736 (not paginated), Meeting of 7 November 1735.
61. See DAS 6958.5 (*Ketel*), DAS 6959.3 (*Meerlust*), and DAS 6960.5 (*Wickenburg*).
62. The *Ketel* arrived it the Texel roads on 27 August 1736; the *Meerlust* followed the next day; the *Wickenburg* anchored at Rammekens on 29 August 1736. Together they had transported goods to the value of 572,007 guilders.
63. Western Cape Archives and Records Service, CJ 3190: "Lists of Exiles Sent Back to India After the expiration of their Sentences, 1750–1781" ("Naamrollen van sodaanige Bannelingen als derselver Bannissementen uijtgedient hebbende weederom successievelijk naar India terug gesonden suijn etc. etc. Beginnende met den 10 Octobr. 1750 en eijndigende met [1781].").
64. Sue Peabody, "Microhistory, Biography, Fiction. The Politics of Narrating the Lives of People Under Slavery," *Transatlantica* 2, *Association Française d'études Américaines* (2012): 1-19.
65. Mohammed Aïssaoui, *L'affaire de l'esclave Furcy*. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2010.
66. Peabody, *Microhistory*, 8.

PART II

# Legacies, Memories, Absences

# 6

# At Sea in the Archive

## Slavery, Indenture and the Nineteenth-Century Indian Ocean[1]

*Yvette Christiansë*

It is November 2009 in the auditorium of downtown Johannesburg's Market Theatre. A conch is being blown. The air is filled with the sound of water surfing against the hull of a ship, but it is not coming from a ship. Rather, this invocation of a ship cutting through the ocean comes from the friction of a man's hand brushing, in circles, across the taught surface of a ravanne, a drum heard in the Indian Ocean's archipelagos, in India and on the Eastern shores of Africa. Men, dancers from La Réunion, Mauritius, Madagascar, India, Sri Lanka and South Africa, move in the semi-darkness. They comprise the La Réunion-based Theatre Taliipot. They call out names taken from archives around the Indian Ocean as placeholders for women, men, girls and boys who were carried into slavery, apprenticeship and indenture. Although the publicity for the performance referred to it as a ritual that invokes "timeless heroes who opened up paths to freedom", heroism's triumphalism elides the repeated horrors as well as the most humble acts of survival by the generations of subjects and citizens in the nations of the Indian Ocean.

The lives and experiences of people caught up in the demand for unfree labour reach across time and merge, just as the waters of the Indian Ocean merge and link Mumbai with Mombasa; Mahé Island with Zanzibar, Pemba, Northern Mozambique, Tanzania, Malawi, the Comoros, Muskat and Sur Masirah, Madagascar, Sudan with Mumbai and Muskat, South Sulawesi with South Africa, Mauritius; La Réunion with Uttar Pradesh; Mogadishu with Muscat, Colombo with Chennai, Diego Garcia with Perth. Their coerced movements link the Indian Ocean through disruption and displacement as much as through continuity. These forms of unfreedom are at the heart of this ocean's modern emergence. They express the different but coerced itineraries of Africans and Asians in a region that was radically transformed by trade—Arab, European, Asian, American—and by colonial capitalism *and* abolitionism.

That those captured into slavery or enticed into indenture are not fully lost is politically important to acknowledge. Their heirs are the nations around and within the Indian Ocean, as well as further afield and across the world in the Caribbean, the Americas, Europe, Asia and the so-called Middle East. Projects of national or regional historiography, of recuperation and re-narration, and even reparation have particular salience for and within these communities. But they depend on learning to listen to what remains in and of those vanished persons and the systems that effected their disappearance. While respectful of those recuperative efforts, my concern in this essay is with readings of archives and the practice of interrogating the unfulfilled and often betrayed promises that structured and signified the transformation from slavery into apprenticeship, slavery into indenture, and indenture to free labour: promises that were broken but which nonetheless and at the same time provided a motive force for transformations in the forms and organization of labour. For the enslaved and for slavers these promises functioned differently. But, as in so many cases, this history has largely been understood from the position of the dominant, which has survived in print, as record, and finally as historical truth. Yet the "face" of this "truth" is presented as coherent, orderly and organized. My concern is to look again and to see how the strategies for creating this impression were, themselves, confronted by the predicaments of those displaced into coerced labour.

In all of its zones—the northwest, the southwest, the northeast—the Indian Ocean is awash with the evidentiary trace of the people who faced the horizons of those often broken, always deferred, promises. Any critical or recuperative historiographical effort to follow the traces of the so-called marginal cannot escape the fact that such traces are themselves scattered and that this scattering is revealing of the failures of colonial and slaving intent *as well as* the violent responses to mask or redress these failures. It is for this reason that I speak of the archipelagic nature not only of the Indian Ocean but of the archives themselves: archipelagos of archives.

These archives are housed in physical and centralized depots in and around the Indian Ocean, and in those imperial and mercantile centres of Europe, the Americas, in Gulf States, the Middle East and Asia. Through descendants these formal archives are linked to the informal, in private homes and (non-archival) institutions, in albums and ribboned boxes, in family belongings and salt-aired storage rooms, in songs, stories, musical instruments, in gestures and remembered gestures. Other material

reminders exist, of course. Sarah Longair's chapter in this volume points to a (fetish-like) potency that still accrues to the accoutrements of slavery such as a set of slave stocks found in Zanzibar around the time of Independence, whose destruction the government approved on the grounds that they could reanimate and racialize historical grievances.

The archival dispersal of which I write is not reducible to the question of informality or non-institutional knowledge systems. As indicated above, dispersal also occurs *within* the formal structures of official archives. Within assigned categories and the mastering logic of catalogues, I want to argue, rest the effects and the traces of dispersal and anxieties about dissolution. This dispersal and dissolution take place on two distinct but related planes. Dispersal simultaneously entails the way in which names and acts are differently signified, distributed and sometimes concealed by incommensurable categories and the effacement of the specificities of the individuals whose traces, sometimes as fulsome testimonies, sometimes as vague and partial marks, can be discerned in the documentary record. The dispersal of these traces accompanies and, in some ways, subtends the dissimulation of the continuities of unfreedom within the legal and institutional transformations that ostensibly marked the end of slavery and the emergence of indenture as its free alternative.

My concern therefore is to reread the residues of these doubled processes within the archival records that were generated inside slavery and the system of indentured labour that was created to replace it in the Indian Ocean. My focus is upon the British colonial archive.[2] Can we descry how those historical compulsions that surfed into the horizons of promise conjured before the enslaved and indentured, reached through the long nineteenth century—long because the processes of emancipation and indenture did not cease at the century's end but continued the unfolding of unfreedom well into the twentieth century and even the present day. Returning to formal archives to reconsider the histories of transformation effects a return to the histories of dissimulation that haunt the interstices of the social orders which have ostensibly been purged of the violent institutions of slavery and indenture. It generates a two-fold set of concerns, embedded within a single question: what happens to the promise of freedom when it cannot be separated from processes of dissimulation that relentlessly present unfreedom as liberation? And how can the compulsions of dissimulation be undone?

## Acts and forces

Although there had been decrees and other measures abolishing or limiting slavery in its various institutional forms around the world and across centuries, two decisions between March and December 1807 gave nineteenth-century abolitionists special cause for hope. These decisions were the United States of America's Act to Prohibit the Importation of Slaves and the British Abolition of the Slave Trade Act.[3] The territorial scope of the British Act alone was vast, given the geographical expanse of British imperialism. The British aspired to a nearly universal prohibition, grounded in a reformed humanism and spurred by economic rationales that looked more and more to the economic opportunities of *laissez faire* market relations and the relative profitability for capital of waged labour. Celebration was tempered by a fundamental reality however. While the American and British Acts banned the importation of slaves, domestic slavery remained legal and, although both Acts anticipated an extension of abolition and a future of freedom for the once enslaved, the massive economic enterprise of slave trading, specifically "in" Africans, would not and did not go easily. Neither the institutions nor the consciousness that depended on slavery could be transformed without broader, structural and ideological changes. And for this reason, the gap between the abolition of the trade and of slavery itself was often conceived—by people of differing ideological commitments—as a problem of time, or as a promise to be resolved; a horizon to be reached. This was itself dissimulated in the notion that the formerly enslaved needed to be prepared for their freedom through a period of apprenticeship, and that those dependent on slavery would need to be persuaded through compensation for labour lost. This period of "preparation" was, in effect, a period of persuasion that racialized vagrancy laws to keep many of those emancipated *in situ* with former "owners". This is what Françoise Vergès might include in her argument about French abolition to describe such a period as *un moment ambigu*.[4]

To enforce the intent of its Abolition Act, the British government undertook a tripled approach of international and maritime policing, as well as bureaucratic surveillance and enforcement. The US and Britain, as well as other European powers, also relied upon the efforts and effects of missionization in the argument for gradual change. Linked with exploration activities within Africa, missionaries and missionization facilitated treaty negotiations with African Chiefs, aimed at disrupting the trade at "the source". On the "demand" side, treaties were negotiated with trading nations in Europe and

the Americas or, as a Select Committee of the House of Lords referred to them, "various civilized States", a phrase that sounds the alarm about any presumption that Britain's diplomacy was symmetrical. The category of "civilized State" specifically precluded parity between African chieftainships and European states or their agents.

Nevertheless, the British government charged its Admiralty with intercepting vessels in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, as well as the Mediterranean, while working with treaty signatories in the waters off the Americas and Caribbean islands.[5] America maintained a small squadron of prevention ships in the Caribbean between 1819 and 1861. In adherence to the 1817 Anglo-Portuguese Convention for the Prevention of the Slave Trade, the Brazilian colonial government policed that coast between the ports of Campos and Santos from 1819 to 1822, during which time around 14,000 Africans were rescued from slavers and manumitted.[6]

A network of maritime courts was established or enhanced in all ports where treaty courses operated on the West and East African coasts, in the Arabian Gulf, in the West Indies, off South America, and in the South Atlantic. Between 1819 and 1871, in accordance with their treaties, Commissioners representing the Netherlands, Spain, France, Portugal and Britain sat in judgment on seized vessels.

Britain's Indian Ocean fleet operated into the last decade of the nineteenth century, rescuing Africans from the holds of vessels.[7] The trade also remained tenacious in North-East Africa until the British-Egyptian 1880 Convention for the Suppression of the Slave Trade Act, when that traffic into and through Turkey, from North Africa, East Africa and the Caucasus was finally hampered. The Admiralty Fleet also stationed itself at Malta to patrol the Mediterranean and liberate captives moved out of North Africa.

It was not until the mid-1840s that there was any real indication of the impact of the British and American Acts, and this was only along West Africa and the North Atlantic. Success was once again tempered. The trade had pushed south, past Angola and into the Bight of Benin.[8] The significant increase was in the Indian Ocean, especially in the Mozambican Channel and along today's Tanzanian and Kenyan coasts, where ships from the Americas, the Gulf States and Britain purchased slaves who had been forced-marched from the African interior. Indeed, this abduction from Africa's interior had constituted a key rationale for missionizing abolitionists, who argued that their own entry into the continental interior could intervene in and interrupt such trade.[9]

To give an indication of the scope of this increase, Charles Hotham, the Commander of the HMS *Penelope,* reported to the Secretary of the British Admiralty in August 1848 that some 10,000 Mozambican slaves had been landed at Havana between May and June 1846. He cited this as evidence that traders had found a way to avoid seizure off the West Coast by expanding to the Indian Ocean, making use of, and expanding, older European, American and Omani trade routes and infrastructures.[10]

Those rescued were most commonly called Liberated Africans, Captured Negroes, Recaptives, Returnees or *Emancipados*. Few were returned to their birthplaces or homes. The reality for the majority of those liberated in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans was "apprenticeship" in places from which they would never return, and which were often the same places into which they would have been sold. Thus, for example, Africans liberated from in the Middle Passage were taken to plantations and public works in the West Indies or to the vineyards at the Cape of Good Hope once they had recovered from the debilitations of the slaving voyage. Closer to the West African coast, they were taken to Sierra Leone. Liberated in the Indian Ocean, they were delivered to putatively safe havens in Cape Town, Durban, Mauritius, the Seychelles, Freretown, Aden and Mumbai. Others were drawn into mission projects, such as those in Sierra Leone or in areas around Zanzibar, in Aiden and outside Mumbai where villages of converts were supposed to counter slavery and Islam, as well as to establish friendly trading partners and intermediaries to facilitate local relations.[11] Some were apprenticed to the British or Portuguese navies for service in the navy, colonial armies or police forces. Not slaves, but not entirely free, and in fact obligated to work as apprentices, Liberated Africans were inserted into contexts that had not changed. With increasing labour crises due the growing pressure of anti-slaving laws and policies, planters and others reliant upon slave labour wrote of crops unharvested and of profits declining. In this excitable air, the "apprenticed" African labour attracted immediate attention, and that led to appeals for access to them.

Although the means, knowledge and will to restore people to the places from which they had been abducted were limited, the authorities of liberationist institutions often justified the "transfer" of Africans to unfamiliar ground on the basis of their supposed vulnerability to recapture "at home". In 1875, for example, a British Consul-General at Zanzibar (and formerly of the Seychelles), Major W.F. Prideaux, cautioned against the establishment of Liberated African settlements on the East Coast of Africa, particularly around Zanzibar. Even if settled within the protection that the Sultan had guaranteed

through the 1873 Slave Trade Suppression Treaty, Prideaux argued, they would still be at risk of being raided and kidnapped into slavery again.[12] Neither should they be returned to their homes or any place on the East African mainland, considerations that he described as "highly inexpedient".[13]

Apprenticeship in so-called safe places that promised Liberated Africans "indisputable welfare" in the Indian Ocean was clearly what men like Prideaux had to believe in—given his investment in the salvationist enterprise revealed in the high moral tone of his report. His evidence came in the form of an anecdote. It was not first hand, but told by the Anglican Bishop of Mauritius, Bishop Vincent Ryan, who narrated the response of children liberated to Mauritius when it was suggested that they be sent home to teach their people trades that they had learned on the island. According to Ryan, the children refused any further instruction: "Why should we learn and labour, when the only reward of our industry will be that we should be sent to our people, who will either kill us or sell us again into slavery". Questions about redaction and the collective voice of the "we" and "our" aside, Prideaux used this anecdote to energize his superiors' moral sensibilities and convince them of his position. He went so far as to say:

> the only way to harmonize the liberated slave, is to remove him far away from the contaminating influences of his past life. Sentimental considerations should not be allowed to stand in the way for, in the districts which supply the slaves, a man's nearest relations are generally his worst enemies and the sale of a son by his father is an incident of daily occurrence.[14]

Such generalizations share the rhetorical pitch of the reported speech of the children on Bishop Ryan's Anglican mission. Questionable, they nonetheless show more than the expected outcome of a belief in one nation's moral obligation of "guardianship" over others in arenas in which that nation's actions exacerbated conflict and risk. There is a recognition of the internal hierarchies and social conflicts in the communities from which slaves were drawn—whether these preceded the trade and were mobilized by it or whether they were the result of the interventions of slavery into the social fabric of the African communities being ravaged by its intrusion. And there is a concern, however superior or imperial, for the destiny of the liberated.

The gap between the ideal and lived consequences of liberation, as it was conceived by Prideaux, is summed up in his warning that, even though

Britain had appointed itself the "guardian of the liberated African", it "should provide for his [sic] actual indisputable welfare, and not use him as an instrument for any ulterior purpose, however philanthropic it may be".[15] Freedom was to be given for freedom's sake and as a means to enter the epistemic and moral order of Enlightenment practice. No doubt Prideaux's criticism pointed to the propagandist work that missionaries encouraged—specifically the missionaries who had already been setting up villages on the East Coast of Africa. But it was also congruent with, or at least did nothing to undermine, the fact that Liberated African men could be automatically signed on to serve in the British colonial military and police as free to work in the interest of freeing then policing others.

Prideaux's ambivalent concerns about the fate of the Liberated Africans were not new. Reports about the abuse of the British apprenticeship system surfaced in the colonies within a few years of the 1807 legislation, and again around the time of Abolition, as well as in the 1870s. Citing one early case involving 117 enslaved East Africans on board the Portuguese *Constantia*, which ran aground north of Cape Town in 1808, Christopher Saunders points out that in the Cape Colony indenture simply meant unpaid labour, slavery by another name, without any commitment to what an apprenticeship would entail.[16] In 1838, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Glenelg, warned that apprenticeship of Liberated Africans in the British West Indies could become a simplistic replacement of slave labour.[17] Thirty-eight years later, Rear Admiral Cumming informed a Royal Commission that landing Liberated Africans into apprenticeship at the Seychelles was "equal to banishing them entirely" for a "miserable pittance" in conditions "worse than slavery".[18]

Amid the allegations about the nature of apprenticeships, accusations also arose about profiteering from liberation itself. In January 1873, Seychelles Governor Gordon was compelled to respond to newspaper reports of an accusation by Henry Morton Stanley that British Naval officers were hiring out Liberated Africans to planters in the Seychelles.[19] He claimed that for every Liberated African landed at the Seychelles and sent into indenture the English government received between five and ten Maria Teresa Thalers or something like 22 to 220 pounds sterling. Governor Gordon denied the accusations.[20] Rather, he claimed, Liberated Africans "entered" into a contract with "an employer before a stipendiary magistrate, not for the benefit of the Government, but for their own, at a regular rate of wages, from which no deduction is made, or allowed to be made, to meet any claim on the part of the Government." Immediate entry into indenture was, for Gordon, a necessary

deflection of "great suffering and mortality among the Africans" and a way of ensuring that their presence would not become "a curse to the rest of the community". Nevertheless, he had to admit that it was "true that a fixed fee is paid to the Government by the employer on allotment to him of a liberated African, just as an indenture fee is paid in many colonies on the engagement of coolie labourers; but the amount of this fee ... is fixed under regulations".

Whether Prideaux's idealistic perception of British guardianship and the sentiment shared with Bishop Ryan's generically fabular account of the liberated children, or Stanley's accusations and Governor Gordon's hedging defence of the treatment of Liberated Africans on the Seychelles, each cannot extract himself from an overall sense of "clamour" and excitability surrounding Africans. This excited rhetoric reached across the Atlantic, into the Caribbean and off South America, and throughout the Indian Ocean and up into the Gulf Arabian Sea; indeed, into every place in which they had been taken as slaves.

## Contract with freedom—a horizon of solutions

Governor Gordon's rebuttal of Stanley's accusations rested upon the idea of the contract. The weight given to the contract attributed to the Liberated Africans a rationally self-interested, economically calculating subjectivity—precisely that kind of capitalist subjectivity that the British government claimed it wanted to cultivate through apprenticeship. Apprenticeship was essentially a medium to force the liberated to become what they were destined to be, the contract a revelation to them of this unknown destiny. Moreover, this strange, assigned identity freed the planters from their culpability in contracting labour on terms that the indentured did not understand or could not refuse. And, of course, that raw, base reality of the demand for labour remained. "Apprenticed" African labour, supposedly "freely" given, was in this sense doubly appealing to local planters and other would-be masters and mistresses. An initial antipathy to the abolition of slavery was thus converted into eagerness for apprentices. Yet ambivalence remained. The colonial government's intrusion into local affairs generated considerable resentment. And the expanding economy of empire was not to be sustained by the mere conversion of the previous populations of unfree into freed labour, and the diminution of the plundered populations strained its growing scope.

Petitions were sent to Governors, Governors sent the petitions to the Colonial Office in Britain. Yet even when granted apprentices, the need for

labour could not be satiated. In the space in which developing views about "free" labour and local desires did battle, African labour became too problematic—it allowed the metropole to increase its scrutiny of local affairs and was costly to traffic. And thus, into the horizon of an ostensible (African) freedom South and Southeast Asians were inserted through the regime of indenture—as "Coolies". Indentured Indian labour appeared from the perspective of British colonial authorities, and their liberal allies, to be an "ideal" alternative because agreements entered into were framed as voluntary and thus appropriate to free market logics.

This was not mere coincidence with the abolition of African slavery. Abolition became the impetus for stepping up a practice of sourcing labour from India and China, amongst other places that were believed to be sources of inexpensive labour.[21] There had been a long tradition of moving labour from the colonies of the Dutch East Indies to other sites where the Dutch East India Company held sway. The system of indenture allowed Britain to do so similarly. Sourcing labour from India was instigated as early as 1816 when the East India Company's Governor General of Bengal made provision to supply convict labour to Mauritius and its dependencies, thereby supplementing slave labour on government works as well as on plantations.[22] At a glance, convict labour, like slave labour, appears to lack the presumption of freely entered contract; the distinction is nevertheless unstable. To accept it is also to accept the liberal fetish of decision-making, the idea of a self-interested and calculating subject, and of course it presumes the equal knowledge and capacities of the parties to enter the bargain, as it were.

Not that all officials were swayed by the presumption of the freely entered contract, not for Liberated Africans and not for Indentured Indians or Indentured Immigrants, as Indians were referred to on Mauritius. The continuity between the fate of Liberated Africans and that of the Indentured Indians emerged during interrogations of naval officers and colonial officials by an 1876 Commission of Inquiry into Britain's obligations to those liberated and to treaty nations.[23] When a former judge of the Seychelles, Francis Fleming, was examined about the contract system in the Seychelles the Commissioners were already suspicious of the notion of the freely entered contract as it applied to Liberated Africans and, by extension, to Indentured Indians in Mauritius.

Fleming could not see the connection, no matter how the Commissioners framed the queries about the possibilities of refusal. Despite his use of terms such as "brought" and "allotted" when referring to apprentices, he insisted

that they were free from coercion. His account of how Liberated Africans were entered into a five-year contract upon landing at the Seychelles was a tableau of mutuality in which "[t]he Master and the liberated African both went before the District Judge and the contract was explained to both parties, and then they entered into it".[24] Pressed on whether "the" Liberated African was asked if he [sic] wanted to enter into this arrangement, Fleming replied flatly that "he was asked". Pressed further whether this representative Liberated African always answered in the affirmative, Fleming had to admit that he did not know if anyone ever said they "wished to enter into" a contract. He "did not know of any instance of" refusal. The possibility of refusal seemed incomprehensible.

At that point of the examination, Commissioner Campbell asked if Fleming knew whether Indentured Indians taken to Mauritius had any option, to which Fleming implied that the question whether there was an option was moot since it was not an issue by the time the indentured worker was landed at Mauritius. And, finally, when the Commissioner asked bluntly if he considered a Liberated African to have any greater option than an Indentured Indian, Fleming simply could not say. Refusal or an attempt to break a contract had never arisen for him: "I never knew an African to say 'I will not enter into the contract.' If that question had arisen I do not know what would have become of him because there is no provision for a liberated African if he does not choose to work".[25] Yet the police records in the Seychelles and Mauritius clearly answer this question. The "idle" or dissolute were deemed to have broken the law, as vagrants, and they were sent to prison to labour in government works before being returned to their masters/employers.

The movement of indentured Indians or the *girmitya*, those who went "under agreement", might be considered shackled by the terms established at slavery's end, where the claim of free entry into contract marked the point of supposed difference from slavery. Indians left their homes for contracts in cane fields in the Caribbean, the Americas, Mauritius, Natal in South Africa, and for railways in East Africa. The contract gave the appearance that the indentured were not subject to the strictures of slavery. The documented fact that the indentured were deemed criminal if they chose to terminate their contract before its term signals otherwise.

Indian objection to indenture attempted to counter the massive volume of propagandistic material that suggested there were no real complaints from those who travelled to, say, Mauritius. This was despite the fact that a considerable body of evidence suggested a death rate worthy of concern,

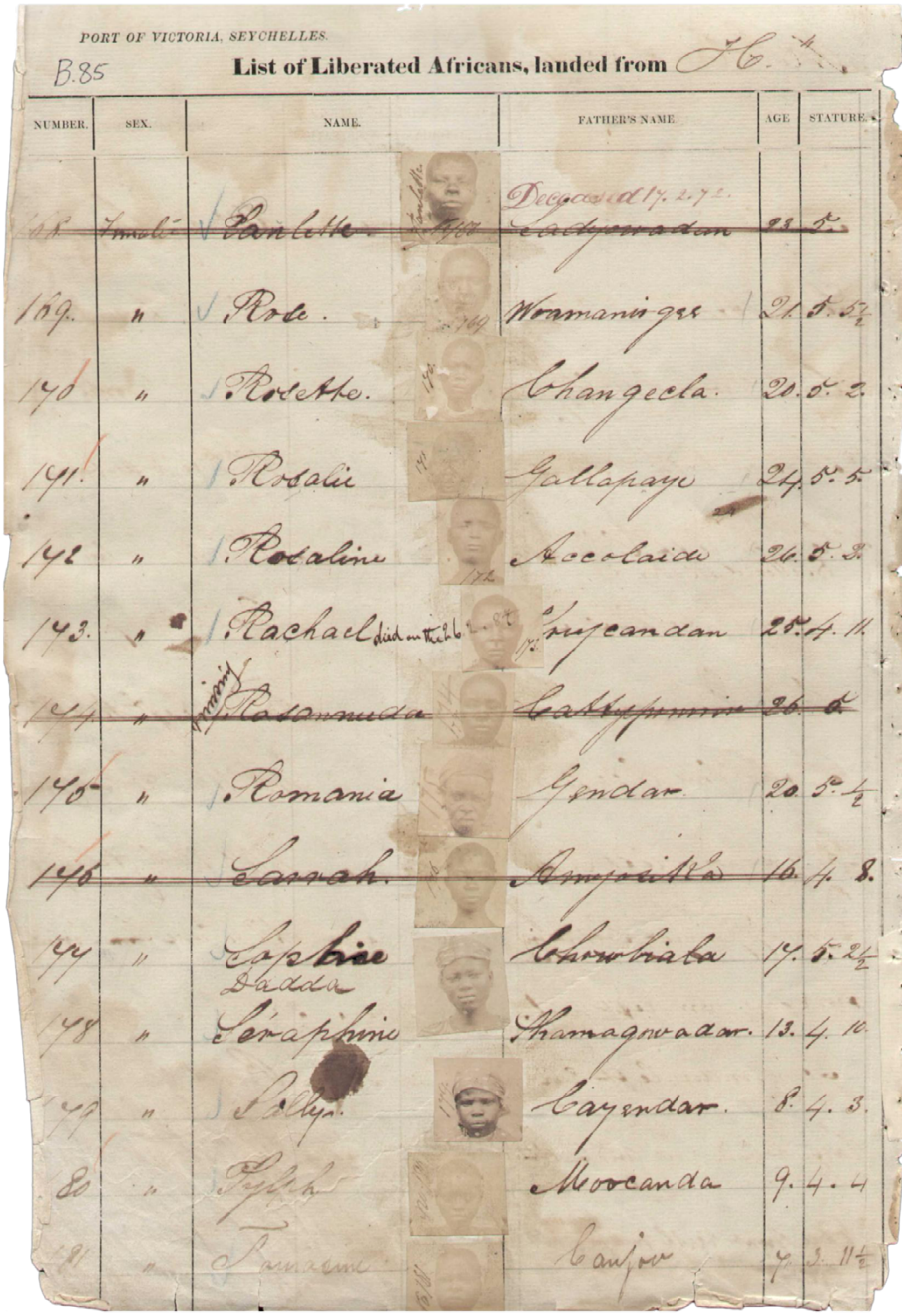
and conditions of work that would often have failed to pass the standards demanded (if often violated) in the metropole. Instead, different commissions and reports merely asked returnees how much they felt they had earned and if they had maintained family roots in India.[26] Nonetheless an 1841 report (J.P. Grant's "Minute on Coolies") recorded the troubling regularity of the same utterance of many who were examined upon their return to India: "I have no complaints".[27] This apparent lack of complaint bolstered an outlook that had already been adopted by the imperial Government of India in 1836, when a report commissioned at that time advised that there was no reason to imagine any complaints about ill treatment in Mauritius. Critical to this reassurance was the insistence that "emigrants go *voluntarily*, and *with a knowledge* of the conditions to which they subscribe".[28] Complaints, if made, were already nullified by the voluntary status of the work. Freedom was in this sense a mechanism for transferring responsibility to the contracting, labouring subject. The indentured worker had made a "choice".

One might say that this freedom of the contracting, self-indebting labourer was simultaneously an indemnification of the employer. Indeed, this view prevailed among colonial authorities in spite of local, Indian public conversation during the first six years following the British abolition of slavery and Mauritian recruitment of Indian labour. Public debate culminated in the 1840 Calcutta Commission of Enquiry Report—which had perhaps prompted Grant to follow up with his "Minute on Coolies". Long before Francis Fleming was confounded by the prospect of similarity between African apprenticeship in the Seychelles and Indian indenture in Mauritius, the 1840 report raised a clear alarm that the misery of indentured workers, transported "under the name of free labourers will approach" that of "those inflicted on the negro in the middle passage of the slave trade." The history of slavery for which indenture was an answer and substitute was thus made into a point of origin that could function as a *persistent* measure, a moral ground zero *and* constantly repeating possibility enshrined in the prediction of that verb "will". However, it is timely to note here Marina Carter's caution about a simplistic reading of indenture as a new form of slavery. Addressing the historical perceptions and fears, my argument is that these official documents and public discussions suggest anxieties that one would become the other, Further, I am arguing that it is instructive to understand the excitable sphere in which slavery, apprenticeship and indenture obfuscated the fracture between emancipation/freedom and what W.E.B. Du Bois called after Karl Marx the "emancipation of labor".[29]

The continuity always already implied in that verb and the struggle against its predictions prolonged the acutely reverberating anxieties and perplexity surrounding the mass movements of people through the Indian Ocean under the names of liberated, apprenticed and indentured labour. For what is clear is that freedom of labour is not merely a matter of how a contract is agreed to but what the conditions of the possibility of entering such agreement might be—this, even before the conditions of labour present themselves. The one might become the revelation of the other. The responses of Seychelles Governor Gordon (to Stanley's accusations) and Fleming (to the Royal Commission) reveal how this notion of choice attributed to Liberated Africans or Indentured Indians was transformed into a convenient rhetoric. It would not be an overstatement to stress that it is at this level that the continuities between African slavery, Liberated African apprenticeship and Indian indenture in the Indian Ocean show themselves. And it is at this level that the dissimulations of those presumptions and axioms that spoke through Fleming, or that rendered him so myopic, have to be most scrupulously analysed in the record, for they reveal precisely the longevity of what scholars have rightly called the "forces and compulsions of history".

## Acts and compulsions

The deferral of a more complete emancipation expressed tensions between those opposing sides of the liberal impulse of Abolition and missionization, with their often-compromised relationship with emerging *laissez faire* economics, on one hand, and the determined local plantation economies which were sometimes bolstered by the loyalties of local colonial officials on the other. Separated spatially and temporally from the metropole, and dependent upon, as well as socially immersed in, the small communities of colonial officialdom, local officials understood the utility and expediency of meeting local demands by insisting upon using their local knowledge to interpret the law. They could have recourse to both hypocrisy and necessity, and their rhetoric often combined the two. Their opponents, who claimed moral supremacy, could also be accused of having little understanding of local social and economic realities, or even of their recent profiting from slavery. Regardless of the rhetorical strategies deployed in the struggle, the bodies, hearts and minds of enslaved Africans became the terrain on which these opposing sides did battle.

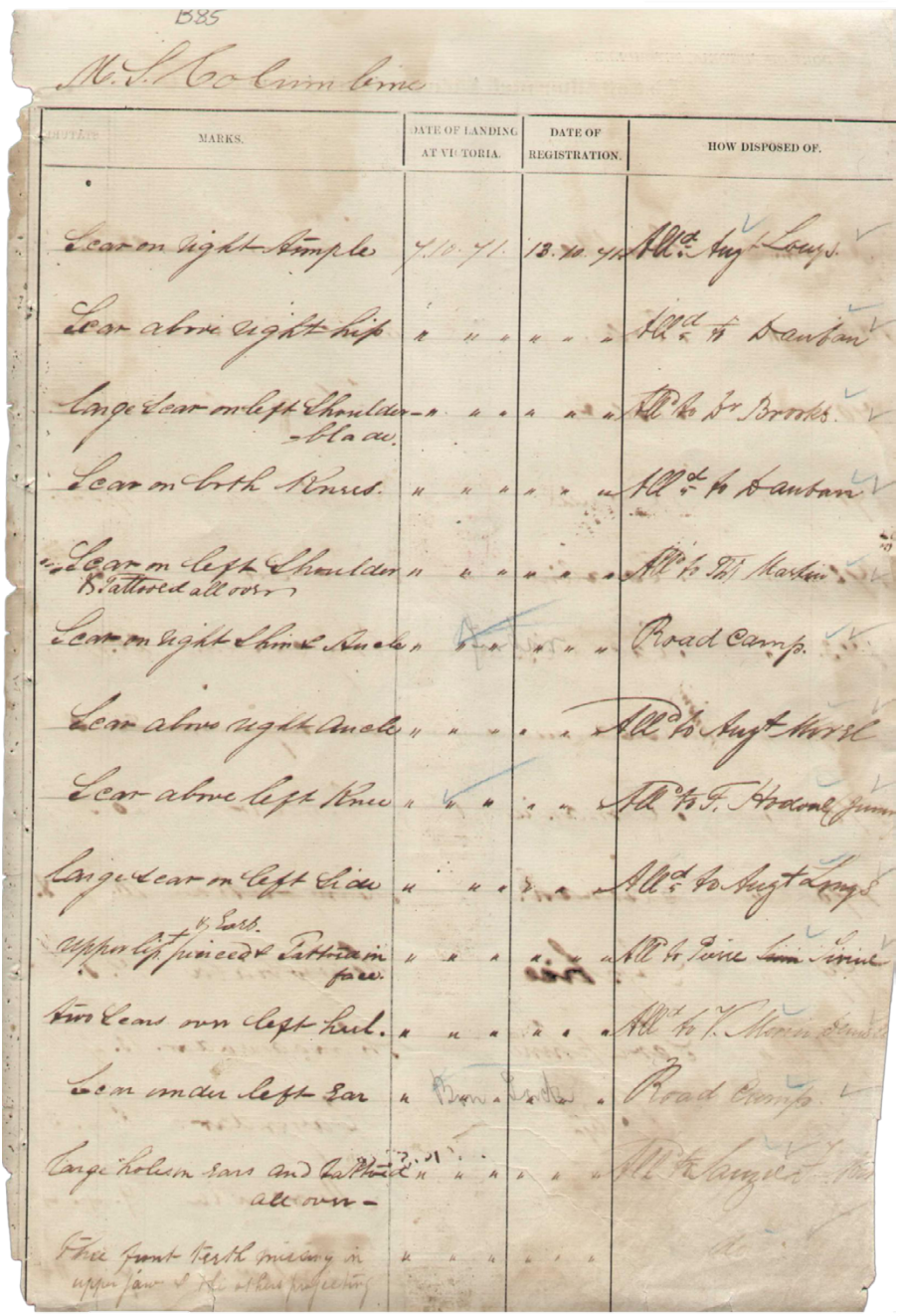


PORT OF VICTORIA, SEYCHELLES.

B.85 **List of Liberated Africans, landed from** H.C. 4

| NUMBER. | SEX. | NAME. | FATHER'S NAME. | AGE | STATURE. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 138 | Male | Camille | Deceased 17.2.72 Cadjeradan | 23 | 5. |
| 139. | " | Rose. | Womanigue | 21. | 5. 5½ |
| 140 | " | Rosette. | Changecla. | 20. | 5. 2. |
| 141. | " | Rosalie | Gallapaye | 24. | 5. 5. |
| 142 | " | Rosaline | Accolaide | 26. | 5. 3. |
| 143. | " | Rachael | Trejeandan | 25. | 4. 11. |
| 144 | " | Rosamunda | Cadjeprmie | 26. | 4. |
| 145 | " | Romania | Gendar | 20 | 5. ½ |
| 146 | " | Sarah. | Amprille | 16. | 4. 8. |
| 147 | " | Sophie Dadda | Chowbiala | 17. | 5. 2½ |
| 148 | " | Séraphine | Shamagwadar. | 13. | 4. 10. |
| 149 | " | Sibyl. | Cayendar. | 8. | 4. 3. |
| 150 | " | Sybil | Moocanda | 9. | 4. 4 |
| 151 | " | Tamarin | Canjou | 4. | 3. 11½ |

Figure 6.1. Two pages from HMS *Columbine*'s register of Liberated Africans landed at Port Victoria on 7 October 1871.
Source: Seychelles National Archives.



B85

M. S. S. Co Com'ns Line

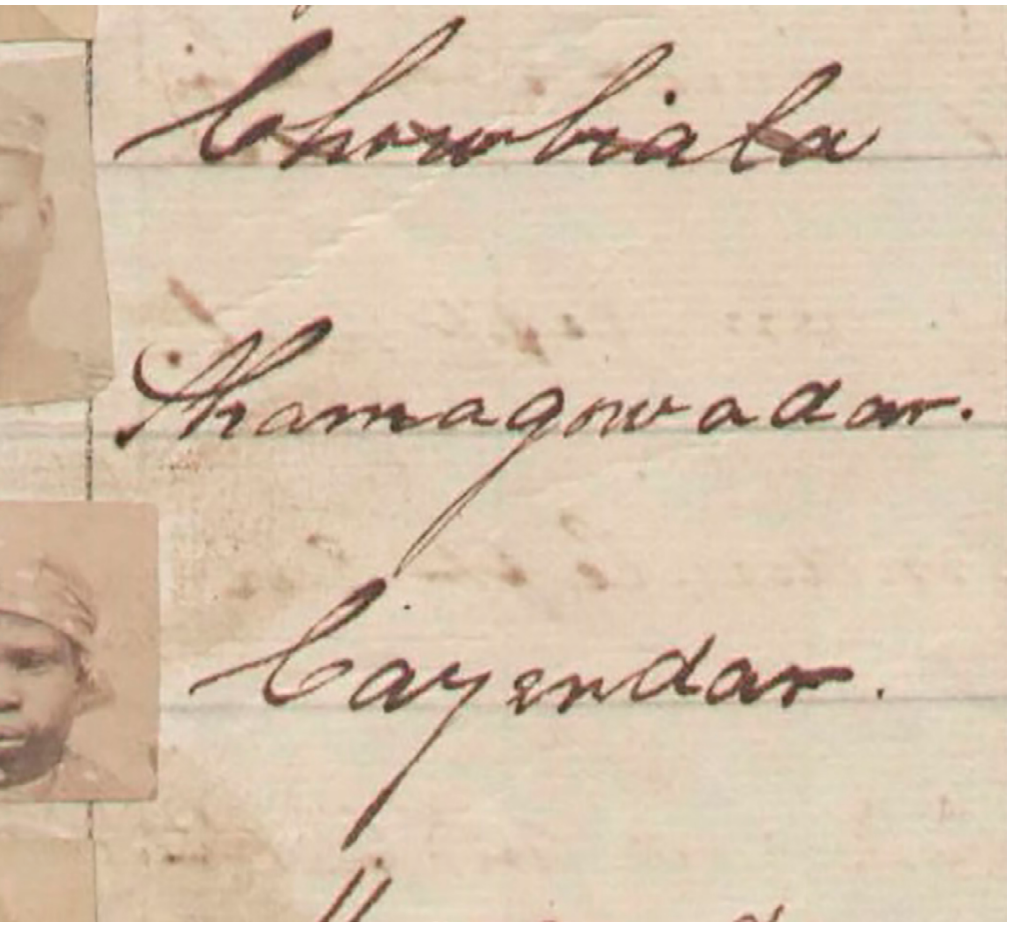
| MARKS. | DATE OF LANDING AT VICTORIA. | DATE OF REGISTRATION. | HOW DISPOSED OF. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Scar on right temple | 7.10.71 | 13.10.71 | All'd Augt Louis |
| Scar above right hip | " " " | " " " | All'd to Dawson |
| Large scar on left shoulder blade. | " " " | " " " | All'd to Dr Brooks |
| Scar on both Knees. | " " " | " " " | All'd to Dawson |
| Scar on left Shoulder Battered all over | " " " | " " " | All'd to Th Harlan |
| Scar on right shoulder Back | " " " | " " " | Road Camp. |
| Scar above right Back | " " " | " " " | All'd to Augt Morel |
| Scar above left Knee | " " " | " " " | All'd to F. Hrdonk Jun |
| Large scar on left side | " " " | " " " | All'd to Augt Lange |
| Upper left [illegible] Lateral incisor & Canine fore. | " " " | " " " | All'd to Pierre Simile |
| Two Scars on left hand. | " " " | " " " | All'd to T. Morin Jun |
| Scar under left Ear | " " " | " " " | Road Camp. |
| Large holes in ears and Battered all over | " " " | " " " | All'd to Langlois |
| Five front teeth missing in upper jaw & 2 others projecting | " " " | " " " | |



Figure 6.2. Detail from HMS *Columbine*'s register.
Source: Seychelles National Archives.

How did this moment of transformation enter the archival record? And what can we learn from this archive about the ways in which slavery and its abolition in the Indian Ocean influenced and haunted the systems of indenture that would later merge the coastal worlds of the Indian Ocean in new ways? Such questions ask for re-readings of the material practices and discourses produced in the effort to enforce this end that was not one.

Something of the larger task of an analysis of slavery and its end has to be addressed here. This analysis has typically entailed chronological demarcations, metrics, scale and calculations of economic consequences, as well as




the discernment of economic motive and ideological rationale. The archives upon which this analysis has rested have been read with reference to specific conceptual categories, and these categories are themselves embedded in the archives as structuring principles: law and juridical transformation; trade and international relations; labour and wages; land and title; social status and sovereignty; slave and apprentice. On the basis of that doubled relationship between the terms of analysis and the structure of "the" archive, scholars have questioned these records for what they reveal about the ideological contests waged between missionaries, economic liberals, apologists for empire

and others. On a bureaucratic level, the *forms* of documents themselves require re-reading to better understand how they function, and to materialize and communicate something of their structural logic.

As has been suggested in this chapter thus far, the high-minded discourse about the shift from the regime of slavery to the regime of apprenticeship and indenture was compromised by those practiced demands for labour that traversed both. And, as has been further indicated, the confrontation of *de jure* ideal with *de facto* reality generated perceptual and epistemic, as well as moral anxieties among colonial authorities and abolitionists, as well as slavers. With the notable exceptions of testimonies encouraged and collected by missionaries, and in instances where they were called to give evidence, the Liberated Africans' reactions to being captured, liberated and passed into apprenticeship constitute a minute fraction of the voluminous records produced by parliamentary debates, commissions of inquiry, surveys and reports. The genre of slave narrative did not apply to them in a strict sense, as they were not slaves. They were subjects *of* the Royal Crown but subjected *to* the Crown's approval of apprenticeship, and they were not entirely free. Outside familial memories and forms of cultural performance such as songs or dance, much of the subjectively perceived actuality surrounding individual Liberated Africans comes from these records, however. Depositions taken for Royal Commissions of Inquiry were constrained by the parameters of inquiry, which concerned themselves with the facts of what happened, where, and when, and with the effectiveness of the law. What the newly liberated "felt" or "thought" about their experiences was not of concern for the form of inquiry that was the official record of event and process. The archival record does not bother itself with the interpretation or signification of that vague concept, freedom, as it might have been perceived by the formerly enslaved. But it does reveal an enormous concern on the part of the colonial authorities about their capacity of oversight and control. Here, too, the restraint of a single essay that reads the record for what it reveals forecloses on an engagement with first person narratives that do exist, even in the form of court testimonies or brief answers to brief questions by naval commanders.

A sense of "not knowing" permeates documents that attempt to assert the metropole's aspirations. A lack of certainty was not only an unexpected effect of asking whether African apprentices or indentured Indians entered their contracts freely or had the option of declining. "Not knowing" was exacerbated in and around all British colonies that had maritime dealings in all contexts where slavery continued. "Not knowing" produced a plethora of

documents whose sheer volume and noise attests to the bureaucratic anxiety of governing the potentially ungovernable. An argument can be made that every admiralty seizure of a slave vessel, every mission-supported testimonial and every prosecution of people found slave trading in contravention of the law testified to the persistence of the trade, and the trade to the demands for labour, and the demands for labour to the commodities to which the world had grown accustomed, whether in Europe, the Americas, the Middle East, the Gulf States or Asia. Every contravention of an anti-slaving treaty challenged the authority of each signatory.

As new techniques of governmentality were developed, there also proliferated discourses and practices of interpretation governed by what we can only call a practical hermeneutics of suspicion: for example, how to distinguish from a distance a vessel engaged in ordinary trade and one carrying human cargo? And, simultaneously, how to pass for a vessel engaged in ordinary trade and not one carrying human cargo? The traders' adjustments to British, Anglo-American, Anglo-Brazilian and other policing actions provoked this hermeneutics and demanded its refinement, as disguise, obfuscation and jurisdictional challenges became part of the traders' practices. For every technique of decipherment there emerged a new technique of encryption or occulting. As a result, suspicion inserted itself into all institutions of British colonial and maritime law, into missionary activity, into economics and trade, and into relations between colonies and their metropolitan governance with profound consequences for international relations and national identity formation. This time of jockeying and instability also had consequences for what the end of slavery betokened about the changing nature of political, economic and epistemological power for the imperial centre—not only in Britain but among competing imperial powers. For the Liberated Africans and Indentured Indians on (what were for Europe's eyes) distant Indian Ocean islands *de jure* argument and *de facto* action were simply that—argument about them.

Debate also raged around measures of keeping track of the African apprentices and indentured Indians. For the former, the need was to ensure that local planters would not spirit them away to trade, and for the latter the need was to ensure that they were not cheated out of their wages through, for instance, impersonation or what we might now call "identity theft". But in truth, what had been generated by anti-slavery and indenture was a new round of mass movements of peoples across the Indian Ocean, from Asia and Southeast Asia into the Caribbean and to the Americas. Chinese joined

Indians, Sri-Lankans, as well as Africans and others sought by colonial interests. This mass had to be tracked, controlled.

Of all the bureaucratic attempts to support legislation, one device claimed, or performed a claim to, certitude. This was the form of the register, which shared histories of accounting and categorizing, histories of cargo manifests that provided salient details about goods or passengers. For passengers and cargo alike, the primary concern was the same: quantities (numbers of classes of things, volume, weight) at embarkation and disembarkation. For passengers, of course, these numbers had different entailments, for they implied needs as well, and thus additional provisions, additional cargo.

Three types of Register were created to keep account of slavery's transition into contracted labour: the Register of Liberated Africans, the Slave Register and the Register of Indian Immigrants. The Register of Liberated Africans was created in 1808. By 1823 it existed simultaneously with slave registers legislated in all British colonies. Both forms of register were created *in situ* and sent to the Colonial Office's Registry of Colonial Slaves.[30] Slave Registers were updated triennially. Registers of Liberated Africans and the later Registers of Indian Immigrants (Indentured Indians) were created as groups embarked (Indentured Indians) or were landed (Liberated Africans). The details of these Registers were updated when any change in an individual's circumstances could be noted.

The purpose of both African registers was threefold—to enable identification of slaves trafficked illicitly, to keep track of those enslaved before 1807, and to perform the transcendence of the Colonial Office's and hence the Law's, oversight, i.e., across distance and time. That the Slave Register shared the structure of the Register of Liberated Africans reveals something of the asynchrony of the transition and alerts us to the fact that the history was not that of linear progression, but perhaps also one of "catch up" in which legislators had still to accommodate the fact that slavery, as an institution, continued and, as such, still needed to find its objects—slaves.

## The future anterior of liberation

It is possible to imagine the column titles of the Register of Liberated Africans as performing a kind of bureaucratic visual grammar and social syntax that nominates, categorizes, identifies and disposes of people according to left-right reading practices. While such columns were not unique to the

Seychelles register, there is in their progression a phantom rhetoric whose force guides their progress and consequence.

Its column headings reveal that grammar: Number, Sex, Name, Father's or Mother's Name, Age, Stature (sometimes Height), Marks (sometimes Distinguishing Marks), Date of Landing (or Port), Date of Registration and, finally, the heading "How Disposed Of". In that progression which is moving not only in the familiar (European) direction of left to right reading, but also in the sense of moving "forward", the final "say" is given to the planters. Their names, and not the slaves' names, appear in that last column as the ones who were "pre-disposed" to receive fresh, supposedly legal labour, the cost of which was to be supplemented by the apprenticeship system's compensations.

Given Prideaux's recourse to a Kantian categorical imperative, the title of that last column, "How Disposed Of", is a harrowing mark and index of instrumentalization. There is no escaping the implication that there is an agent of a transitive verb, the one who did the disposing, but this figure cannot be seen. The object to which something is being done, the category of person called "Liberated African", is also completely effaced. Power simultaneously conceals itself as agent and enacts its agency, while the agency of the disempowered is doubly negated. In the left to right reading, the name of the Liberated African subject is absorbed into disposal and into the sublime opaque face of mastery behind a master's or mistress's name. In the very syntax and grammar of the register of liberation there is the demonstrable persistence of slavery's logic, which comes back as a ghostly but potent force. It came back because it was being hidden—not absent, but hidden and therefore persistently immanent to the economy of liberation itself.

In the left to right reading conventions, the Liberated Africans have already been given western names, and in the register's logic the children precede their mothers or fathers, even as their mothers or fathers fade into the past by still another identifying practice, that of noting the marks on each body or, in Hortense Spillers' distinction, in the flesh. For the Liberated Africans, who are not supposed to be slaves, the word "slave" might have been removed, but the column of distinguishing marks keeps them consigned within the same "ruling episteme" that Spillers identifies as having the power to name and assign value: the "original metaphors of captivity and mutilation".[31]

But the continuities evidenced in the transformation of the Slave Register could also be found elsewhere. For example, entwined within the promised

solution of indentured Indian labour was a system of middlemen, the *Kangani*/recruiter system that resembles and might be called a reappearance of the same functionary of slavery. The *Kangani* system arose as another set of middlemen, often using the same practices and plying the same routes as had their predecessors. What Fleming took as moot, the contractual agreement that preceded an indentured Indian's landing at Port Louis in Mauritius, was not always what it might have appeared to be at that landing. Take, for example, the following testimony:

> I was told I could get ten rupees a month wages, food and clothing...I asked how far Meritch was; they said five days' journey, and that if I pleased I could remain in service there or return; they thus deceived me and got me on board.[32]

Or a note in Grant's 1840 "Minute of the Coolie Question":

> See a story of a woman dragged by three Coolies going to Mauritius, and so carried off...not allowed to return though she vehemently prayed to do so, "as having been illegally cudpurled," because she was shipped as a Coolie.[33]

And:

> A case of endeavouring to kidnap a woman who was dragged and shut up in a box. Capt. Birch's Evidence.[34]

Kidnappings and raids occurred alongside, or through the lure of, promises of wealth and freedom from the restrictions of caste. Many were compelled with no other option than to take on indenture to settle family debt. Their contract was their bond, and this was something like a second bondage—that to senior kinspeople, elders or other creditors and that to the new employers.

The practices that drew upon Indian labour were shaped by the same ideological perspectives that remained inclined to hierarchy, to profit, and to simply transferring attitudes from one kind of labour to another. Stereotyping of Africans as in need of restraint or incapable of self-discipline was supplemented by stereotyping of "coolies" as limp and without aspiration—even in official discourse.[35] Indeed, the misappropriated word "Coolie" itself continued the pejorative and exclusionary terminology of

plantations.[36] African slaves might have been replaced by Indian *grimitaya*, but plantation consciousness remained intact. Whether "Nigger" or "Coolie", the crops required attention, and functional continuity at the level of labour performed was accompanied by a continuity in the organization of daily life in many regards for those performing it, as has been well documented.[37] A register renamed, one pejorative term substituted by another.[38]

## New forms of return and registration

Keeping track of Liberated Africans and Indentured Indian workers by relying on names, and in the case of Liberated Africans those distinguishing marks, proved inadequate in spite of strict rules about maintaining the register. Even with descriptions and newly assigned, non-"native" names, the Seychelles government sometimes "lost" individuals. In 1877, for example, the Chief Civil Commissioner, C.S. Salmon, could not account for 305 Liberated Africans: 181 men, six boys, 117 women and one girl.[39] He listed them as "residence unknown". In 1878, 233 out of 2,095 were once also listed as "residence unknown". Some "might" have been taken to Mauritius or "other islands in its jurisdiction".[40] In the same two-year period, Acting Inspector of Africans, H. Leipsic, also noted discrepancies between the register and the reported numbers of deceased Liberated Africans—only 280 out of 407 deceased had been struck off the register. J.P. Grant's terse complaint of 1841 registers the same concerns about disappearances in Mauritius: "out of 356 Coolies" noted in a ship's register "only 25 or 30 answered by the name by which they were shipped." His complaints echoed earlier reports about the underlying inadequacies of Mauritian registers.

As official records whose brief was to keep track of the Liberated Africans and Indian Immigrants during their periods of apprenticeship in the Seychelles and indenture in Mauritius, these registers were effectively useless.[41] The more that authorities like Leipsic tried to keep track of what actually happened to Liberated Africans or Indian Immigrants, the more the instruments of verification revealed their inadequacies. In the Seychelles, people were disappearing, perhaps sold away again, and the inadequacy of "information" called "distinguishing marks" only indicted the register as a failed instrument of surveillance and identification in a context of relative and ironic mobility—the apprenticed were supposedly moving voluntarily.

## Saving face

By 1862, the struggle to keep track of apprentices and indentured workers produced new measures with new instruments. In Mauritius (as in other Mascarene islands under its jurisdiction), Ordinance No. 16 of 1862 installed a "pass" system. Indentured Indians had to carry a "ticket" of identification. Unlike the register, the ticket was to serve both the colonial record keepers *and* the bearer—and it was mobile. By contrast, the Liberated Africans register remained bound to an official's office. It was still consulted to prove identity, for official purposes and not as an instrument of self-identification. One symbolic difference was that the Mauritian identity ticket supposedly extended the "seeing eye" of the law, which reached to wherever the bearer presented herself or himself, while the register underscored a fundamentally unwieldy bureaucracy. And once again, what was evident in one reflected and even redoubled upon the other. The register's unreliability was repeated in the ticket's vulnerability to being stolen or lost. And, as with the vagueness of descriptions, the ticket shared the futility of reliance upon an "officially recorded" name. Although indentured workers were encouraged to use savings banks, there was no way to prove that the man or woman presenting the ticket to withdraw monies was or was *not* the one named.

A newer technology seemed to offer a solution. Over 50 years after the banning of the slave trade and some two generations into the epoch of putatively free labour, photography arrived and offered itself as a supplement and source of stability.[42]

In 1864, the Acting Protector of Immigrants in Mauritius, H.N.D. Beyts, wrote to the Colonial Secretary to suggest that the addition of a "portrait" to the ticket/identity document would check "false personations, desertions and other offences, of which immigrants render themselves guilty by producing and using tickets which are not their own."[43] At last, the "truth" value of the photograph offered some certainty. Was not the copy of the face in the photograph proof of the face before it?[44]

In the Seychelles, the register did not give way to the mobile pass or ticket system. Instead, what might be called the earliest passport-sized photographs appeared in a new column in the Liberated African register after 1867. Once again, what happened with the register has something to say about the relationship between intent and actual consequence, certainly in the case of the Liberated Africans. On the surface, this new device would seem to suggest that a limit had been reached in the continuity of official record. But the

overall system of which the register was a constitutive part remained intact. The older apparatus had merely absorbed the new technology of surveillance, while giving the renewed format the appearance of precision and perfected knowledge. This technological development was introduced into governmental structure where it can be said to have provided the medium in which the continuity of unfreedom between slavery in indenture was secured for the purposes of imperial governmentality.

These passport-sized images of the Seychelles register literally put a face to the number, the assigned name and the distinguishing marks. In this, the images appear to have been added to bring the weight of 'truth values', derived from the claim to indexicality that had accrued to photography by the 1870s. Yet the indexicality of these photographs does not partake of the affirmation of an "I" or a "here". The dynamic exchange between the announcing "presence" of an "I" and "thou" that might be assumed in the photograph is really deflected into the designating "you", "her", and "him" of the register's record as it creates a category of person who, then, becomes a "they" and "them". Just where the "I" of the photograph is, or just how the face in that photograph understood its image, remains uncertain.

We can read these images against their grain. We can, for example, see in the photographs of the Seychelles registers something of what Roland Barthes calls photography's certifying function. Each photograph, Barthes argues, is a certificate of "presence".[45] For Barthes, this presence is also produced to secure memory that is, nevertheless "*fabricated* according to positive formulas".[46] Yet, rather than securing memory, it "actually blocks memory" and becomes "counter memory", underscoring the loss of our ability to "conceive duration, affectively or symbolically".[47] In the context of slavery's transformation into apprenticed labour, the photographs of the register anchor figures in a moment that is simultaneously one of liberation and re-captivity. Hence, the photograph serves both slavery and anti-slavery projects. Framed as they are by the logic of the register the photographs did not circulate. Nor could they function as supplements to memory—either for the one photographed or for the one who would otherwise seek to recall them as subjects whose history had given them an image (a distilled significance—as mother, father, brother, sister or member of a social group). Between those narrow margins of the register's new column, they have been "given to be seen" by and *as* the immanent presence of power—even when that power was as ineffectual as officials like C.S. Salomon were. Not so much indexes as symbols, then, these photographs are like screen images for imperial governmentality. And

once again, the one in the image vanishes—is secreted in the moment of being shown, is abducted in the moment of being liberated.

Such vanishing also has its material reality and second order of indexicality in the Seychelles registers where some photographs have fallen off, been removed, or damaged. Thus, to take just one example, the HMS *Columbine* register of January 1872 contains the damaged photograph of Anesiphon, who was assigned the number 363, and whose mother's name is given as Yahwah Tika. The marks on his photograph could be scratch marks, or they might have been produced when, at some late moment, the pages of the ledger were pressed together so tightly—like those pallets on which slaves were made to lie in the holds of ships—that when opened there was a tearing and something of the "proof of life" that the photograph claims to show was torn away on the back of another "Liberated African". These are not the distinguishing marks that the register intended to note. Yet they are precisely the kind of marks that distinguish, symbolically, slavery's violence and the subsequent violated promise of liberation. Like all the other Liberated Africans noted in the pages of the *Columbine* register, Anesiphon's appearance leads, in that left to right movement of the trained reading eye, directly to his "disposal" into apprenticed labour. In effect, he leaves his photograph behind—it remains in the domain of the register— while he moves on, like the other members of his group, literally vanishing out of the right-minded margin of the register's attempt to secure evidence of his existence.

At the same time that all of these photographs authenticate the claims made in the register, they reveal and confirm that the Register of Liberation is submitted to the same (continuing) reality of slavery's records, its flawed and vulnerable but nonetheless dissimulating effectivity. They end in the final tally of ownership or its euphemism, apprenticeship. I remarked earlier upon the grammar of the column, the sum, the record in the form of the register. Like all grammar, it is a set of regulations, awaiting its content. The *Columbine*'s photographs are, in the end, the register of a persistent demand for "free" labour—not in the sense that labour is free to sell itself, but in the sense that plantation economies would not have to pay for it, or at least far less than would those whose freedom was being promised by the liberationist cause.

In a milieu that was already predisposed to deception, a photograph might be inserted as one small attempt at a final, irrefutable sign of truth and presence. But the history to which photography was linked, as a technology that was long established by 1860, was one in which the need for captions, for narrative, could never be assuaged, even though the narratives

called for photographs to authenticate them. The photographs in the register suffer from a lack of narrative. The faces stare forward—we cannot say "at us"—always liminal, between the columns of details for which they are supplement. But though liminal, they do not move. This is the irony of their passport size, for the register is a document of arrival, of terminus, and not a travel document in the sense that a passport, which stands for proof of nationality and citizenship, accords a bearer the protections of international law, as well as recognition. These photographs are meant to compel recognition, but recognition remains the prerogative of power, and the subjects of these photographs remain outside the circuit of self-representation, just as the photographs remained outside the circuits of social exchange before and beyond the market. The Liberated Africans, after all, did not have the experience of affirming their existence in the act of looking at themselves via the photograph. Neither was the photograph-bearing pass of indentured labour a real "passport". Its apparent mobility and freedom to move was itself inscribed within and captured by the history of slavery out of which it had grown and for which it promised an alternative. The task for future historiography of this space might be the elaboration of the narrative summoned by the photograph and waiting to be told as more than a caption.

## Notes

1. Originally delivered at "Being a Slave: Indian Ocean Slavery in Local Context," 29-30 May 2017, Leiden University. Portions of this chapter relating to photographs in the Seychelles Liberated Africans Register were also delivered at the Symposium of the British Slave Trade at the John Hope Franklin Center at Duke University in September 2007, and circulated at the Working Group on Slavery and Freedom at New York University in March 2010.
2. This focus is expedient for the sake of what is possible to achieve in a single essay. It therefore can only allude to, or make passing reference to, the anti-slaving movements in other contexts, which have to include those within Arab-speaking countries.
3. Arguments have been made that the British and American abolitionist watersheds originated in the American and French revolutions. In the British case, abolitionists were galvanized by the personal accounts of freed black people who had fought on the side of the British fleeing to Britain (London) and Canada (Nova Scotia). It is also important to note here the earlier and later bans

against the trade, including Denmark's 1792 ban of trading "new" Africans into its West Indian Colonies. And, while Cuba ignored Spain's abolition of slavery in 1811, that decision contributed to the international anti-slaving momentum. Sweden banned the trade in 1813, the Netherlands in 1814, and Portugal in 1819. Although France banned the trade in 1817, this legislation came into effect only in 1826.

4. Françoise Vergès. "Postface de Françoise Vergès" in *Nègre je suis, nègre je resterai. Entretiens avec Françoise Vergès*, by Aimé Césaire and Françoise Vergès, 71-136, 103. Paris: Albin Michel, 2005. In the absence of a vigorous, real debate about the status of French territories, Vergès argues, France remains unable to transform economic and social inequality and, thus, redress the effects of colonial racism. This is the ambiguity of French abolition which has produced a national myth: *le mythe national*.
5. The British action began with two vessels in 1808, operating as the West Africa Squadron which became known as the Africa Squadron, the Anti-Slavery Squadron or Preventive Squadron. Between 1819 and 1869 six vessels flew under this flag. See Jeff Pardue, "Africa Squadron," in *The Historical Encyclopedia of World* Slavery, edited by Junius P. Rodriguez, 20. Santa Barbara CA; ABC-CLIO, 1997.
6. For example, the *Dous de Marco* intercepted the *Continente*, owned by José Francisco Dutra, on 6 June 1835 near Sao Paulo. The exact number of slaves on board is uncertain (between 36 and 66). They had originally been on another slaver, the *Aventura*, but it is not clear whether they were transferred from it or had been rescued from it only to be captured again. The *Continente* and the *Aventura,* another slaver, were taken to Rio de Janeiro for trial. The Liberated Africans were emancipated. See AHI 1835. In Cuba, the Mixed Commission court operated out of Havana as the Havana Slave Trade Commission, which liberated some 35,000 Africans between 1824 and 1865. The first ship to be seized and tried in that court was the *Maria da Glória*, commanded by Jaoa Jose Fonseca and Jose Cotarro. It was seized on 16 June 1824 by the Spanish navy brig, *Marte*, commanded by Jose Apodaca. While the ship was released because it sailed under a Portuguese flag and, as such, was not bound by any treaty, the Spanish government manumitted the Africans but as apprentices.
7. Although the anti-slaving fleet per se was no longer operating in the first decades of the twentieth century, records show that naval vessels were still actively liberating captives.
8. The Bight was known on pre-1820 maps as the "Slave Coast". The Bight of Benin ceased being a major trading area after Britain took Lagos: David Eltis and David Richardson, "West Africa and the Transatlantic Trade: New Evidence

of Long-Run Trends," in *Routes to Slavery: Directions, Ethnicity, and Mortality in the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, edited by David Eltis and David Richardson, 16. London: Frank Cass & Company Ltd., 1997.

9. George Lydiard Sullivan (sometimes spelled Sulivan) wrote of his first voyage into the Indian Ocean as a midshipman of the *Castor* in 1849 that traders were operating on behalf of American slavers as well; George Lydiard Sulivan, *Dhow Chasing in Zanzibar Waters and on the Eastern Coast of Africa, Narrative of Five Years' Experience in the Suppression of the Slave Trade*. London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low, & Searle, 1873.
10. Charles Hothman. "Letter from Charles Hotham to the Secretary of the Admiralty. August 17. 1848," in *First Report From the Select Committee on the Slave Trade Together With the Minutes of Evidence and Appendix*, 143. London: The House of Commons, 1849.
11. Those settled in Mumbai were known as the Bombay Africans and it was from their midst that Richard Burton, John Hanning Speke, Henry Morton Stanley and David Livingstone all sought guides and translators for their explorations at the suggestion of the President of the Royal Geographical Society and British Governor to India, Henry Bartle Frere. In the late nineteenth century, some of these "Bombay Africans" did return to the east coast of Africa to areas around Mombasa where the Christian Mission Society had established its Mombasa mission in 1844, which it renamed Frere Town in 1875. *Church Missionary Gleaner*, Vol XII.I, March1885, 34.
12. The Church Mission Society had already committed to a settlement of freed slaves near Mombasa, under the leadership of Reverend Price. The 1873 Treaty, signed by Sultan Bargash bin Said, Nasir bin Said bin Abdallah and John Kirk (British Political Agent), closed public slave markets in the Sultan's dominions and banned the export and traffic of slaves. No Indian or British subject was allowed to trade in slaves. For Prideaux see "Captain Prideaux to the Earl of Derby, 2 January 1875," in *Correspondence with British Representatives and Agents Abroad, and Reports from Naval Officers relating to Slave Trade*, by House of Commons (1876) Vol. LXX, 327.
13. Prideaux, "Captain Prideaux to the Earl of Derby, 2 January 1875", 291.
14. Ibid., 292.
15. Ibid., 291.
16. Christopher Saunders, "Liberated Africans and Labour at the Cape of Good Hope in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 18, no. 2 (1985): 223-239. See especially 228 with reference to the slave Vileelagani/Nancy.

17. Lord Glenelg, "Circular Despatch from Lord Glenelg to the Governors of the West India Colonies, 15 May 1838," House of Commons, *Liberated Africans: Correspondence Respecting the Treatment of Liberated Africans*, Vol. XXXIV, 1840: 3.
18. "Circular Despatch from Lord Glenelg to the Governors of the West India Colonies, 15 May 1838" in *Liberated Africans: Correspondence Respecting the Treatment of Liberated Africans*, by House of Commons, Vol. XXXIV, 1840.
19. "Mr. Stanley in Liverpool." *London Daily News*, Friday 8 November 1872: 3.
20. House of Lords. *Mauritius. Correspondence respecting the Condition of Liberated Africans at the Seychelles*. Vol. XXIX. [1]: 426.
21. Richard Allen, *Slaves, Freedmen and Indentured Labourers in Colonial Mauritius*, 16. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. Allen's research shows that China, Singapore, Ethiopia and Madagascar were considered as sources of "inexpensive agricultural labor" for Mauritius, along with India. Although my attention is on what archives reveal about the relationship between liberated African apprenticeship and Indian indenture in the Indian Ocean, I do not want to imply any dismissal of the fact of these interconnected, related mass movements since they did not exist in isolation—the study of their interrelations still remains a field open to the necessary research and scholarship that it deserves, a call that Richard Allen has made repeatedly. Indeed, a study of Chinese indenture in Cuba, for example, shifts the notion that only European colonial governance busied itself with commissions and inquiries into the movement and fate of indentured workers. The Chinese government had sent its own commissioners into Cuba in 1874, and into Peru. See *Chinese Emigration. The Cuba Commission. Report of the Commission Sent by China to Ascertain the Condition of Chinese Coolies in Cuba*. Shanghai: Imperial Maritime Customs Press, 1897. https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=yale.39002005464905;view=1up;seq=7.
22. House of Commons, *Papers Relating to East India Affairs, viz. Regulations Passed by Governments of Bengal, Fort St. George, and Bombay, in the year 1816*, Vol. XIII, 1819.
23. House of Lords. *Royal Commission on Fugitive Slaves. Report of the Commissioners, Minutes of Evidence, and Appendix, with General Index of Minutes of Evidence and Appendix*. 1876. Vol. XXXV [i], 1876. See Fleming's examination: 103-105.
24. House of Commons, *Royal Commission on Fugitive Slaves*, 388.
25. Ibid. 388.
26. Secretary to Indian Law Commission to H. Prinsep, Secretary to the Government of India. IOLR Bengal Public Proceedings. 16 September 1836. The Colonial Secretary to the Secretary of the Government of India, IOLR Indian

Public Proceedings, Range 186, Vol. 99. 9 August 1841. Calcutta Commission of Enquiry Report. 1840. See 58. *Report of the Committee on Indian Labourers, Bombay. IOL. A Bombay Public Proceedings*. Range 347, Vol. 71. 20 September 1839.

27. J.P. Grant, "Minute on the Abuses Alleged to Exist in the Export of Coolies," in *Hill coolies. Copies of papers respecting the exportation of hill coolies, received from the government of India; in continuation of those presented to the House of Commons on the 11th day of February last*, by House of Commons Vol. XVI.483, 1841.
28. Emphasis added.
29. See Marina Carter, *Servants, Sirdars and Settlers: Indians in Mauritius, 1834-1874*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995. See also Marina Carter, *Unshackling Slaves: Liberation and Adaptation of Ex-Apprentices*. London: Pink Pigeon Press, 2001, for an account of the African slave population on Mauritius post emancipation in April 1839. See W E B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America: 1860-1880*, 16. New York: The Free Press, 1998. Carter locates Indian indenture in Mauritius within the larger scale of recruitments of Indian labour across the British Empire. See *Voices from Indenture: Experiences of Indian Migrants in the British Empire*. London: Leicester University Press, 1996.
30. Slave registers, as opposed to Registers of Liberated Africans, were established in Trinidad in 1813 and adopted throughout British colonies by the 1820s (the exceptions being the Cayman Islands and Honduras). See, for example, the Registry Act of 2 October 1818 for Guiana. A centralized Office for the Registry of Colonial Slaves was established in London in 1819 to which copies of all registers kept in colonies were sent. See African Institution, *A Review of the Colonial Slave Registration Acts, in a Report of a Committee of the Board of the African Institution made on the 22nd of February 1820*. London: Ellerton and Henderson, 1820.
31. Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," in *Black, White and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture*, by Hortense Spillers, 208. Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003.
32. "Djoram (Juhoorun) Aya, vide Captain Finniss' Memoramdum dated 1st August 1838", in *Report of the Committee Appointed by the Supreme Government of India, to enquire into the Abuses Alleged to Exist in Exporting from Bengal Coolies and Indian Labourers, of Various Classes, to Other Countries; Together with An Appendix, Containing the Oral and Written Evidence Taken by the Committee and Official Documents Laid Before Them*, by House of Commons, Exhibit No. 10. Calcutta: G.H. Huttmann, Bengal Military Orphan Press, 1839.
33. Grant, "Minute on Coolies", 6.

34. Ibid., 6.
35. George A. Grierson, *Report on Colonial Emigration from the Bengal Presidency,* 6. Calcutta: Government of Bengal, 1883.
36. Arthur and Juanita Niehoff, *East Indians in the West Indies,* 64-65. Milwaukee WI: Olsen Publishing Co., 1960.
37. In a parallel structure to the notion of servitude, which is not so much a condition of being as a relation of subservience, Mauritian poet Kahl Torabully has re-signified "Coolie" as a condition no longer subordinate. Reframed as a historical condition and experience, Torabully's coinage, "Coolitude", is expansive and inclusive of shared histories of exile, labour and diasporic formations, as well as transcultural political genealogies. For a collaboration between Torabully's poesis and Marina Carter, historian of the Indian Ocean, see Marina Carter and Khal Torabully, *Coolitude: An Anthology of the Indian Labor Diaspora*. London: Anthem Press, 2002.
38. Repurposing also applied to seized slave vessels, a fact fictionalized in Amitov Ghosh's fictional trilogy about Indian Ocean indenture. Repurposing becomes an ironic continuity in these histories of displacement. On the other hand, the encounters between displaced peoples produced enabling cultural hybridities that were invoked by the Ravanne musicians and dancers referred to at the beginning of this chapter. Through gestures, the recitation of names without inserting them into genealogies, their performance speaks the losses and discontinuities that are born of the continuities between slavery and indenture. See Ghosh's Ibis trilogy: *Sea of Poppies* (2008), *River of Smoke* (2011), and *Flood of Fire* (2015).
39. C.S. Salmon, "Seychelles Liberated African Report 1878," in *Blue Book Containing Reports on British Colonial Possessions for 1877, 1878, and 1879*. 278; The Acting Inspector of Liberated Africans, H. Leipsic, also added his report to this document.
40. Salmon, "Seychelles Liberated African Report", 279.
41. Ibid., 282.
42. By the time the US required Chinese residents to carry identification certificates that included their photographs (1892) and by the time that the British Aliens Order (1920) required that all who entered the country carry a passport with a photograph, this practice had been fully established in the Indian Ocean.
43. House of Lords. *Report of the Royal Commissioners Appointed to Enquire into the Treatment of Immigrants in Mauritius*. Vol. XLVI. [1]: 218. The idea reportedly came from Auguste Chasteaneuf, who was Clerk at the Audit Office at the time.

44. If Henry Morgan Stanley had been in Mauritius at the time, he might have levelled accusations about profiteering similar to those he had levelled at Seychelles officials regarding Liberated Africans. At two shillings, the cost of each photograph was borne by the indentured worker and the profits went to the photographer. By 1888 the total cost to indentured workers was £20,000. By the late 1860s one photographer, Alexander Lecorgne, was one of the wealthiest men in Mauritius.
45. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography,* 87. New York: Hill & Wang, 1981.
46. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 93. Emphasis added.
47. Ibid, 91.

# 7

# Acts of Equality

## Writing Autonomy, Empathy and Community in an Indonesian Slave Narrative

*Paul Bijl*

### Introduction

Sometime in the nineteenth century, a formerly enslaved man from the Indonesian archipelago, Richard Heindrik Wange van Balie (1798–1869), wrote a memoir of his life as a slave in the Indian Ocean region.[1] The memoir begins with his birth, covers his early youth with his family on their small farm on the island of Magarij, his enslavement and that of his brothers when he was four or five years old, and his life as the domestic and field slave of different masters across the Indonesian archipelago up to 1810, when he was taken to the Netherlands by his last, Dutch owner and finally emancipated.[2] Living for the rest of his life in the city of Delft, Van Balie learned how to read and write Dutch, married, had seven children, and worked in a variety of occupations, including as a servant, a gardener and a porter.[3] Fifty-nine handwritten pages of this unpublished document, currently in the possession of Van Balie's descendant, Ron Siteur, come from a twentieth-century copy of the original text—a handwritten notebook, now lost. As no other slave narratives from Indonesia are known, this is, in many ways, a unique document, the analysis of which is a direct response to the question phrased by the editors of the current volume in their introduction: "What did it mean for people to be caught in this Indian Ocean web of slavery?"

In this chapter, I will read the writing of this memoir as well as specific elements of its contents as what I term "acts of equality": those acts through which subjects, no matter who they are, constitute themselves as equal to all other subjects. I will discuss how Van Balie establishes himself as equal to his white Dutch readers in three respects: as an individual human being he is morally autonomous; in terms of interpersonal relationality he writes

himself as capable of establishing an emotional bond, such as a friendship, through mutual empathy; and with regard to nationality he writes of his origin community as different from yet equal to the Netherlands. His acts of equality include seemingly modest deeds like reading the newspaper, feeling the love his father felt for him, and describing the work done on the farm of his family of origin. These acts have great implications for the moral autonomy, empathy and community of not just Van Balie himself, but also of other black and (formerly) enslaved people. Van Balie's acts of equality did not emerge out of nowhere; rather, his narrative can be seen as an appropriation of particular Enlightenment, Christian and nationalist discourses circulating in Europe at the time, which offered him the opportunity to write his equality against the many discourses of (racial) hierarchy he encountered and sometimes reproduced. Through an analysis of this memoir along these lines, this chapter makes two scholarly points: the first argues for a broadening of current thinking about equality in slave narratives and abolitionism, while the second proposes a correction to the rather bleak image of enslaved and black people in the nineteenth-century Dutch colonial archive.

At the same time, this chapter is a confirmation of some of the historical insights provided in the chapters in the first part of this volume, in particular Geelen et al.'s assertion that "for the Indian Ocean World, it is recognized that 'forms of status obligation, bondage, and temporary slavery (for debt, etc.) coexisted with forms of hereditary slavery similar to that in North America'"—Van Balie, namely, becomes a slave due to his late mother's debts, making his a liminal case in between debt and hereditary slavery. Lodewijk Wagenaar's remark that in an Indian Oceans context "it is nearly impossible to meet [enslaved and emancipated subjects] as individuals with personal identities" is both relativized and confirmed in this chapter, as on the one hand we have here a striking amount of autobiographical material, while on the other hand the writing of a self proves always to be subject to the genres and discourses that are available, pointing to the mediated nature of any encounter. Moreover, even when ego documents of formerly enslaved people are uncovered by historians, as in the case of Wange van Balie by Reggie Baay in his 2015 book on the history of slavery in the Dutch East Indies, Dutch public and literary attention is hardly grabbed, reflecting the general lack of interest in the Netherlands in texts written by Indonesians about the Dutch colonial past.[4]



Figure 7.1. Portrait of Wange Hendrijk Richard van Bali. Etching by Ernst Willem Bagelaar.
Source: Rijksmuseum, object number RP-P-BI-245.

## Acts of equality

I develop the notion of an "act of equality" based on "acts of citizenship", coined by Engin Isin and Greg Nielsen in the field of citizenship studies, and on philosopher Jacques Rancière's concept of equality.[5] Whereas these theories are primarily concerned with equality in a political sense, Van Balie's acts can be more aptly described as establishing social equality. Nevertheless, I argue that these theories can inform the conceptualization of acts of political as well as social equality. Isin and Nielsen developed the concept of acts of citizenship to supplement studies on formal citizenship (membership of a nation-state) and substantive citizenship (actual ability to claim rights), and to shift the focus "from subjects as such to acts (or deeds) that produce such subjects".[6] Acts of citizenship, they hold, rupture social-historical patterns and "break with repetitions of the same and so anticipate rejoinders from imaginary but not fictional adversaries".[7] Van Balie may have encountered some of these very real adversaries in the daily newspaper he read, in which slaves and black people were regularly accused of being lazy and uncivilized (among other things); here I will read his memoir, in part, as a response to them. His acts of equality can be interpreted as interruptions of the many acts of inequality he faced.

In Rancière's work equality is the principle of politics, but it is not meant in the sense, as Todd May explains, of a "passive equality" that involves the distribution of rights and ensuring representation by institutions, but it refers to an "active equality".[8] In Rancière's work, active equality or simply "politics" is an interruption of "the police": "the organization of powers, the distribution of places and roles, and the systems for legitimizing this distribution".[9] Rancière writes:

> Spectacular or otherwise, political activity [politics] is always a mode of expression that undoes the perceptible divisions of the police order by implementing a basically heterogenous assumption, that of a part of those who have no part, an assumption that, at the end of the day, itself demonstrates the sheer contingency of the order, the equality of any speaking being with any other speaking being.[10]

Van Balie introduces this "heterogeneous assumption"—the assumption of equality—in various ways; for instance, by writing an ego document and addressing his reader as a friend. What the theories of Isin and Nielsen and Rancière have in common is the conceptualization of equality not as

a position that is (eventually) facilitated by institutions or discourses propagated through one's newspaper, but as a mode of subjectivization which can be constituted through acts. Subjects are not the origins of speech, but speech constitutes subjects.[11]

As I have already indicated, while both these theories were developed primarily for the political world of rights, citizenship and democratic equality, in his memoir Van Balie never explicitly claims rights or citizenship. The memoir does describe moments characteristic of conditions experienced by other slaves and some antagonism towards owners—Van Balie's brothers, for instance, made a plan to flee across the mountains to an uncle to escape enslavement, but never executed it—and can therefore be said to have traces of collective subjectivization that have the potential to be translated into political claims. Nowhere in this memoir, however, do these moments turn into acts of political equality in terms of actual claims to rights or citizenship. The equality that Van Balie forges emerges through his writing of his individual as well as natural family's moral autonomy, capacity to empathize, and ability to be part of a community equal to any other community, including that of the Dutch nation. It therefore lies in a realm different from the political: it can more accurately be characterized as social equality.

Nevertheless, the acts of social equality that Van Balie performs do have a strong connection to Isin and Nielsen's and Rancière's acts of equality in the political realm when seen in the light of Lynn Hunt's *Inventing Human Rights*. In this historical study, Hunt theorizes the relationship between social history and human rights at end of the eighteenth century, in particular the connection between being seen as an equal human being and claiming human rights. She connects social and political equality by showing that equality as a function of one's humanity is a basis for equal rights. According to Hunt, "[t]o have human rights, people had to be perceived as separate individuals who were capable of exercising independent moral judgment" and as "able to empathize with others".[12] In other words: to be deemed "ready" for rights one had to be seen as human, and being human means performing certain acts indicative of one's humanity and social equality. In this chapter, in addition to the individual and interpersonal levels of equality theorized by Hunt through moral autonomy and empathy respectively, I add a third level: the (national) community, which became increasingly important over the course of the nineteenth century.

When seen through the lens of Hunt's work, Van Balie's acts of social equality can be read as those humanizing acts which laid the groundwork

for political equality. His writing of an autonomous, empathetic self, born in a national community which was in many ways equal to Dutch society, and his conceptualization of himself as a man with a history and personal development who participated in Dutch national (print) culture through reading, writing and practising Christianity, put him on an equal social plane with the readers of his text. Hunt writes, "[i]n the eighteenth century (and indeed, right up to the present), all 'people' were not imagined as equally capable of moral autonomy .... [C]hildren, slaves, servants, the propertyless, and women lacked the required independence of status to be fully autonomous", and were therefore not seen as fully human.[13] Throughout the nineteenth century, these groups raised their voices, protesting their social and political situations through the abolitionist, labour, feminist and child labour movements. Van Balie's memoir can be read as participating in these movements. Social equality does not automatically translate into political equality, but with Hunt's work in mind we become aware of their historical connections.

## Equality and abolitionism

Approaching this memoir through the lens of acts of equality allows for a twofold scholarly positioning: firstly, a broadening of the idea of equality in slave narratives and abolitionism; and, secondly, an act of repair in the historiography of abolitionism in the Dutch empire, about which the current consensus is—for good reason—too little, too late.

Although many publications focusing on abolitionism and slave narratives in the US mention equality, only a small number elaborate on this concept. In these studies, equality—in the sense of equal rights and citizenship—is conceptualized as the ultimate goal within certain abolitionist movements; it would be established within the framework of what Isin and Nielsen call "formal" and "substantive citizenship", and forms an example of "passive equality". In both James McPherson's *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction* and Paul Goodmans's *Of One Blood: Abolitionism and the Origins of Racial Equality*, equality is seen as ultimately distributed by institutions. In other words, it is passive, not active.[14] Similarly, the approach of Celeste Condit and John Lucaites, who analyse what they call the "rhetoric of equality" in American public discourse, particularly in relation to African-American history, does not provide the conceptual framework to see equality as a social or political

starting point, dependent not on institutions or public discourse, but on acts of subjectivisation by those whom Rancière describes as "those who have no part".[15] Through the concept of acts of equality, this chapter will show that when placed in the historical context of nineteenth-century Europe Van Balie's appropriation of certain Enlightenment, Christian and nationalist discourses in the description of his life before, during and after slavery can be read as him positioning himself and his community of origin as human beings, equal to his white Dutch readers.

The second scholarly point concerns the current image of abolitionism in the Dutch empire, and the possibility that an analysis of Van Balie's text can offer a correction by focusing on the acts—in this case of writing equality—of the (formerly) enslaved. This chapter contributes to a larger body of scholarship that focuses on the presence and resistance of colonized and enslaved subjects in the Dutch imperial world—for instance, by looking at slave uprisings in Suriname and the work of black intellectuals in the Netherlands.[16] Van Balie's text, in particular, can broaden our perspective on nineteenth-century thought about slavery in the Dutch world.

Historians agree that, unlike Britain and the US, the Netherlands did not have an anti-slavery movement to speak of: Dutch abolition was late (1862) and Dutch abolitionism lacked mass appeal as it remained elitist and never became a mass movement.[17] The only Dutch abolitionist publication that became somewhat of a bestseller, W.R. van Hoëvell's 1854 text *Slaves and Free Men under Dutch Law*, argued for neither political nor social equality as it described black people as less "developed" than whites, yet somehow more so than Malays who, like Van Balie, came from the Indonesian archipelago.[18] Racialization also played a key role in government argument against abolition. As the Dutch colonial secretary J.J. Rochussen put it in the early 1860s: "If the emancipated mass of negroes in Dutch Guiana [currently Suriname] is left to its own strength, or rather its own weakness, what else can one expect for the future than a decimation of its numbers by misery, leprosy and venereal diseases?"[19] Finally, Marijke Huisman has shown that although Dutch publishers brought out translations of the slave narratives of Olaudah Equiano, Frederick Douglass and William Wells Brown, "slave autobiographies were not recognized as significant contributions to the discussion on slavery and emancipation".[20]

With Van Balie's text we have a powerful and, as we will see, self-identified black indictment of slavery based on the assumption of equality, written in Dutch in the Netherlands. Unpublished, perhaps even unread,

this unique document nevertheless offers the opportunity for a correction to the historical image of Dutch thinking about slavery. It makes visible what has remained unseen in the Dutch world—protests against the experiences and effects of enslavement—and therefore forms a welcome intervention in a field that, until now, has mostly had access to white Dutch texts on slavery, which portrayed (formerly) enslaved people as either barbaric or pathetic, and never equal.

In what follows I will first elaborate upon discourses of equality and inequality in Europe at the time Van Balie lived there, using his own newspaper as an important source. I will then interpret his memoir as an act of equality to make visible how he appropriated and interrupted these discourses by focusing on three elements: the writing of the memoir itself and his father's role in it, acts that show Van Balie and his family's moral autonomy; his addressing of the reader as a friend, establishing Van Balie's capacity to empathize; and, finally, his attempt to demonstrate the similarities between Magarij and the Netherlands, indicating the equality of national cultures. Together, these acts of equality actively assume Van Balie's and his family's equality with the European society he was embedded in and add a critical voice to thought about slavery in the nineteenth-century Dutch empire.

## Thinking racial (in)equality in nineteenth-century Europe

In *The Invention of Humanity*, Siep Stuurman maps the world-historical polyphony of discourses on common humanity and equality from ancient times to the present day.[21] In Van Balie's memoir we find appropriations of three discourses that could be used to facilitate thinking equality: Enlightenment, Christian and nationalist. Enlightenment discourses on equality, which Stuurman calls "modern equality", are the most prominent sources for this memoir, made evident by how Van Balie writes of himself as a morally autonomous and empathetic subject. Christian equality can be found in his remark "we are all Adam's offspring, all have to appear before Christ".[22] As Catherine Hall writes, the idea that all of humankind are Adam's children conveys a basic principle of evangelical liberal humanitarianism, of which slavery is a gross violation.[23] Finally, nationalist equality can be traced in Van Balie's description of Magarij as different from but equal to the Netherlands, a positioning that can be connected to Johan Gottfried von Herder's (1744–1803) both relativist and universalist thoughts on national culture and humanity.

However, all three discourses mentioned above also have the potential to engender inequality. Stuurman writes that drawing from the same European Enlightenment ideas, nineteenth-century Europe saw the widespread circulation of modern *in*equality, trickling down from eighteenth-century Europe in four variants, two of which are of special interest here: racial classification on the one hand and, on the other, and often overlapping with the former, the perceived authority of the enlightened few over the not (yet) enlightened many.[24] Racial classification came in several variants: while some in the nineteenth century did not essentialize race and saw all people as possessing a capacity for development, others viewed race as "coloured" rankings within a rigid hierarchy. In these latter systems, white was the "default setting of humanity", while people of colour represented various degrees of degeneration.[25] We can recognize two temporalities here: a static model in which black people are considered irreparably lesser than white people, and a progressive model in which white people are thought to have "already" attained the modernity, civilization or Christian faith that black people can work towards. Van Balie engages with the first, static temporality by countering it—he shows that black people love their children, just as whites do theirs, and therefore have the capacity to empathize—and with the second, progressive one by showing that he is just as advanced as his white readers, for instance, in terms of adopting the Christian faith.

In her study on Dutch perspectives on the world in 1800—around when Van Balie arrived in the Netherlands—Angelie Sens writes that slaves were thought of either as victims, or as heathens who were uncivilized and inclined to behave in a beastly way.[26] Around the time Van Balie wrote his memoir in the mid-nineteenth century this view had not changed fundamentally, as we have already seen in the remarks by Van Hoëvell and Rochussen discussed above. Between 1830 and 1870, the *Rotterdam Newspaper* (*Rotterdamsche Courant*), which Van Balie mentions reading, had over 1,300 articles in which the word "slaves" appeared, mostly in the context of Dutch and American debates about slavery. In 1856, for instance, an anonymous writer claimed that liberating slaves was an act of love and a deed worthy of the Lord, but also that "a normal slave is not a civilized European": "they're not all Uncle Toms". This respondent argued that with respect to slaves Europeans first needed to revive "the human being in the human being", or else emancipation would only lead to laziness or lawlessness. Slaves should first be turned into Christians, and one way to achieve this was to take black children away from their parents at birth in order to offer them a Christian education.[27] In

other articles from the same newspaper, (formerly) enslaved people are called lazy, idle, barbaric, immoral, inclined to vagrancy, and not prone to domesticity, family life and obligations (in general, it seems).[28] Both temporalities mentioned above return in these articles, with some authors describing black people as stuck on a developmental time scale and others arguing for their education and conversion.

Most of these articles addressed African slavery in the US, the Caribbean and Suriname, as already in the eighteenth-century transatlantic slavery gained most attention at the expense of Indian Ocean slavery.[29] Most crucially, however, Van Balie himself self-identified as black (*zwart*): he talks about the community in which he was born and about his Indonesian owners as black, whereas he calls Dutch whites "white", either using the Dutch word *blank* or the Malay word *orangpoetie*, meaning "white man". He also does not try to distance himself from other slaves, except when he says that he only knows about people from the "southeast", not those from "east", "west" or "southwest", "because I have never been there".[30] I will therefore read Van Balie's slave narrative as belonging to the same semantic field as these newspaper articles and interpret his thoughts on slavery as a reflection on its diverse set of practices as a whole. What the categories used to characterize slaves in the *Rotterdam Newspaper* essentially establish is a hierarchy, and by disrupting these categories Van Balie effectively subverts this inequality. It is against the background of these articles in his own newspaper that I will read Van Balie's writing of himself as an empathetic, loving and loved, knowledgeable, conscientious and hard-working person, friend of the reader, child of Adam—before, during and after his enslavement—as acts which, against the opinions of his adversaries, produce him as equal to them.

## Writing moral autonomy

Using the genre of the memoir, Van Balie shows how he developed from an innocent and in many ways pre-conscious child caught up in the system of slavery to a knowing and conscious adult—just like his father had been. In writing on the equality of black people, Van Balie makes clear that not only is he an adult himself, but also that those who raised him possessed what Hunt has identified as the two related but distinct qualities of moral autonomy: the ability to reason and the independence to decide for oneself.[31] Crucial in the writing of his own moral autonomy is the fact that in the memoir, like in

any retrospective narrative with a first-person narrator, a "double I" is produced—in this case a narrator-I called Van Balie and a character-I called Naî, which was the name by which his family of origin called him. It was through the contrast between these two Is that Van Balie could draw attention to his personal development and growth—not, however, from a barbaric black to a civilised black, but from a child of responsible and loving black people to a morally autonomous adult.

The full title of his work is *The Memory of the Courses of Life of Naî from the Village of Leeot on The Island of Magarij Near Bima, Near the Island of Java, Now, Wange Heindrik Richard van Balie*. Extensive research has been done on ego documents from the nineteenth-century Netherlands, and an inventory of such documents from between 1814 and 1914 shows that both "memory" (*Herinnering*) and "course of life" (*Levensloop*) were widespread concepts used by the authors of this genre, making it likely that Van Balie somehow had access to at least one of these documents.[32] However, what immediately sets Van Balie's title apart from all these others, next to the meticulous indication of his place of birth—which obviously needed more explanation than the average Dutch town—is that his life is divided into two phases: one as Naî and one ("now") as W.H.R. van Balie. This double I opens up in the text two different narrative worlds, each with its own characters, places, props and temporalities. The world of young Naî, which is discussed elaborately, is populated by his father, grandmother and brothers and, as he is taken away into slavery by his owners, their servants and other slaves. It is the world of colonial Indonesia with islands, boats, monkeys and farms, and it lies in the past. The narrator-I lives in the present-day Netherlands—then the nineteenth century—surrounded by Dutch people and a wholly different set of props, including newspapers, Bible passages and carriages. Though this world is less often referenced, it is nevertheless continually present, if only because the narrator lives in it and his perspective is shaped by it.

It is through the filtering perspective of narrator-I that the reader accesses the thoughts and feelings of the character-I Naî, which creates a sense of intimacy during the many heart-breaking moments that Van Balie's young self experiences as he is separated from his family and seeks someone to offer him "sweet words of comfort".[33] The text also creates an intimacy between the narrator and the adults in young Naî's life, in particular his father, as the adult narrator Van Balie and the character of the father share the kind of life experience that the young Naî still lacks; both adults observe him in his childish ways. Throughout the first part of the text, when Naî is still living with

his family, it feels as if he has two fathers: his biological father, whose gaze is always mild, and a much more critical older self, the narrator, who often castigates him. It is in the constrasting reactions of these two men to the same situation that their moral autonomy becomes apparent—for instance, when Naî burns the house down after playing with fire, or when he fails to foresee the man-made disaster of enslavement that is about to strike his family. The two men have radically different responses—while the narrator calls Naî "naughty" and "naïve", his father always responds with compassion and unconditional love. Van Balie offers a touching illustration of this difference in his interpretation of his father's response after it had become clear that the three sons would soon be taken away from the family. In Van Balie's words, Naî still went out to play with his friends as if nothing would change, "but my father knew and that is why he let me have my way, he probably thought: during the brief moment that remains, let pleasure do its work, it won't be long".[34] The memoir thus creates a group of adults around the young Naî that reflects on his behaviour and well-being. Of this group, the father and grandmother are loving without exception, while the narrator-I often lectures the young Naî, perhaps indicating that Van Balie blamed himself for his enslavement and the separation from his family. What all these black adults share is moral autonomy: they are able independently to observe and reflect on a situation and then decide for themselves its moral meaning. The fact that their personal autonomy was severely limited by the system of slavery does not alter this. When Naî, after arriving in the Netherlands, chose his Dutch names, one of them was that of his father: Wange.

Van Balie's acquisition of moral autonomy and his capacity independently to distinguish good from evil also come to the fore clearly with respect to the practice of slavery. Unlike the young Naî before his enslavement—whom he describes as living "like a fish in the water", a Dutch expression for a feeling of wholeness with one's surroundings—the older narrator sees "dark clouds" looming over the family, symbolizing the men who would take him and his brothers away, never to return.[35] He repeatedly emphasizes the devastating effect of his enslavement; for instance, he recalls the last time he passed his family's village without being allowed to enter it as "the saddest of all days of my youth".[36] Reflecting on the different ways in which his owners treated the child slave Naî, Van Balie writes, "What makes one human being different from another? The first master kept me as her own child, and here [in a later master's house] they did not even speak to me, though I had food and drink enough, I did not lack bacon and meat, but I lacked help and comforting

words to comfort my bitterly saddened heart".[37] In this passage, Van Balie not only passes a moral verdict on the treatment slaves received from different owners, but also offers his inner child what he seems to have lacked most: recognition and validation of his feelings—in short, empathy.

## Writing empathy

According to Hunt, in her writing about the late eighteenth century, "[t]o be autonomous, a person [had] to be legitimately separate and protected in his or her separation; but to have rights go along with that bodily separation a person's selfhood [had to] be appreciated in some more emotional fashion". This emotional fashion was empathy or, in Hunt's words, "the recognition that others feel and think as we do".[38] In Van Balie's memoir empathy is a core theme, and while some of his owners are indifferent to young Naî's sadness, his family of origin, certain other owners, and, if he is not behaving like a critical parent, even the narrator-I often try to understand and mirror his feelings of sorrow and fear. Here, I will focus on another empathetic relation found throughout the text, namely, the one between the narrator and the narratee, who is addressed as "reader", "friend", and sometimes, in one word, as "friendreader".

Van Balie addresses his reader(s) around twenty times as "friend" or "friends". In almost every instance he invokes the friendship of his readers when he returns to the central trauma of this text: the separation from his father, grandmother and brothers. The word "friend" is never far away from words such as "grimness", "melancholic", "sad" and "sorrowful", as in this typical instance: "yes my friend, I will stop telling you about this grimness, because my heart is becoming small and became melancholic [weemoedig], yes my friends and reader, who of you would not become sad in your hearts to read about such a household and hear that their children were taken away before their eyes".[39] How did Van Balie's text's conception of friendship fit into and depart from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century concepts and practices of this type of relationship? Crucial for him, I argue, was equality, which was forged through the production of intimacy and the sharing of inner experiences.[40]

In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Britain and France, philosophers devised strict criteria for what qualified as friendship, as for most of them friendship could exist only with equality.[41] A majority of philosophers,

following Aristotle, held that "true" friendships were based on virtue and mutual respect and concern, whereas "lesser" friendships were based on need and self-interest, or else merely the pleasure of company. In everyday usage, difference in rank did not disqualify a relationship from being considered a friendship, leading to the nineteenth-century usage of the word to characterize a broader range of relations than philosophy and literature reflected, including those between family members, people who formed ties through business or socializing, and even patrons and clients. According to the philosophers, the patron-client relationship in particular "involved benevolence and protection but not the equality that mutual friendship implied".[42] One example of a patron-client friendship is in the work of Ukawsaw Gronniosaw (1705–1775), published in 1772 and considered the first slave narrative in English. Olaudah Equiano (1745–1797), whose slave narrative was published in 1789, also writes about a white American he met and befriended, although here the inequality was also apparent.[43]

Van Balie's usage of the word "friend" does not imply the kind of hierarchies found in the writings of Gronniosaw and Equiano. When writing about people with whom he has a vertical relationship, in particular his various owners, he employs a different vocabulary, referring to them as "masters" and himself as a slave. This hierarchical relationship between owner and slave is replaced by one of horizontal empathy in those moments when Van Balie addresses his reader as friend. He asks them to imagine his situation, for instance when his family had just heard that the three children would be taken away into slavery: "Well my reader, what do you think of this family, is this not a sad situation for us my friend and reader, where have joy and cheerful days gone?".[44] Conversely, he imagines how his readers will feel—for instance, when he supposes they will be sad in their hearts to read his memoir.

Historians of friendship have analysed not only conditions for friendship, but also processes of exclusion: which people are deemed capable of entertaining an equal relationship? Several philosophers of that time claimed that true friendship was not possible among the "common people"; they believed that the difficult conditions in their lives had hardened their hearts and prevented disinterestedness. True friendship, in the eyes of Adam Smith and David Hume, also distinguished savages from (civilized) Europeans. In the words of Hume, "Asiatic manners are as destructive to friendship as to love".[45] This tendency to exclude people of colour from notions of friendship became stronger in the course of the nineteenth century. With respect to the eighteenth century, Garrioch could still discuss the Enlightenment-inspired ideal of

being "a friend to all humanity".[46] Nineteenth-century nationalism, however, with its ideals of cultural, linguistic and racial unity, made it more difficult for friendships to cross differences.[47] Literature in the nineteenth century warned readers of the limits of friendship, in particular with respect to religion and race, for instance in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847).[48] In the context of empire in the nineteenth century, various models of friendship were circulating, many also characterized by distance and hierarchy, such as the idea of befriending colonial subjects to "uplift" them, as in various civilizing projects like the Dutch "ethical policy", which can be traced to the publication of the 1860 novel *Max Havelaar* by Multatuli, well within Van Balie's lifetime.

Through the production of intimacy and the sharing of inner experiences, Van Balie summons what Hunt calls "the notion of a community based on autonomous, empathetic individuals who could relate beyond their immediate families, religious affiliations, or even nations to greater universal values".[49] It has become apparent that sentimentality was part of Van Balie's interpellations, as was the case with many of his contemporaries. Garrioch traces the rise of the perceived importance of sentiment in friendship in the Romantic period, particularly in novels such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761) and Germaine de Staël's *Corinne* (1807), but also in various forms of "intimate writing" such as letters, journals and autobiographies which often contained an "intensely emotional language to describe friendship".[50] The nineteenth-century US saw the emergence of a "culture of affective individualism, becoming mutually introspective, self-disclosive, affectionate and emotionally expressive".[51] The sentimentality surrounding friendship from the mid-eighteenth century onwards can be read as a claim to social equality: "a man of feeling did not necessarily have distinguished ancestors but he was worthy of consideration nevertheless".[52]

Drawing on these ideas, Van Balie makes a powerful argument that he and other black people also have feelings of empathy, especially in terms of friendship, love and other forms of intimacy. At several points in his text he recounts the good times he enjoyed with his playmates, and even describes one of their games elaborately. In another passage, he argues against the apparently widespread idea in the Netherlands at the time that "in the East" parents sold their own children.[53] The most fundamental act of equality in terms of empathy, however, was his addressing of the reader as a friend, precisely because most potential readers were likely to be found across racialized boundaries. In a kind of Althusserian counter-interpellation, by choosing to address the narratee in this way Van Balie positions himself as equal to his white reader.

## Writing community

After exploring how Van Balie established himself as a morally autonomous human being with the capacity to form empathetic bonds and, having moved from individual to interpersonal relations, in this last section I discuss how he wrote of himself as part of larger (imagined) communities. Operating in two narrative worlds—colonial Indonesia and the Netherlands—Van Balie writes of himself as part of both. The way he positions himself as part of nineteenth-century Netherlands comes closest to what we can call, in Isin and Nielsen's terms, an act of citizenship, for he actively participates in national print and religious culture. Building on the work of Benedict Anderson, we can see Van Balie's various actions—reading a Dutch newspaper, producing an ego document, and quoting various Bible passages—as acts that allowed him not only to imagine, but also to assert himself as part of the nation of the Netherlands.[54] Here, however, I will focus on his description of his home community of Magarij in relation to the Netherlands.

In the previous paragraph I discussed nationalism as an exclusionary and hierarchizing discourse that poses an obstacle to the cultivation of empathy and friendship across racial boundaries. Nationalist discourses could have affected Van Balie's social equality in two ways—one, the supposedly less civilized nature of an Asian community like the one on the island of Magarij; and, two, his exclusion from the imagined community of the Netherlands because of racialization and differentiation in terms of culture and language. However, when analysing how Van Balie writes about his community of origin, we find hardly any indications that he saw Magarij as the lesser of the two countries. On the contrary, he conceived of his home and new community as different in cultural expression but equal with respect to their participation in humanity. It is therefore fruitful to view Van Balie's perspective on the relationship between his old and new communities in the light of German philosopher J.G. Herder's writing on national cultures and humanity. He is considered "one of the first modern writers to recognize the need to protect cultural diversity and to foster the plurality of cultures".[55]

According to Sonia Sikka, "in his accounts of language, climate, and religion, of the variability of human happiness, the nature of reason and the unfolding of history, Herder charts a complex course navigating between the poles of particularism and universalism".[56] Engaging throughout with the problem of cultural relativism, Herder's thinking "examines how universal expressions of human life are always restricted by the cultural context in

which they are produced; but it also pursues the universal quality at the heart of culturally determined forms of expression".[57] According to Herder, nations were separated "not only by woods and mountains, seas and deserts, rivers and climates, but more particularly by languages, inclinations, and characters",[58] but phrases like these did not preclude him from thinking about the nature of "humanity" as a universalist notion.[59] Even as he establishes himself and his family as equals in terms of their humanity, Van Balie also elaborately describes the specific forms of cultural expression that can be found in Magarij, and especially how it contrasts with practices in the Netherlands; therefore, he also can be analysed as balancing universalism and relativism, just like Herder.

Van Balie elaborates on many aspects of life on the island of Magarij. He discusses, among other things, the division of labour between the different family members, the composition of the family's livestock—two pigs, some chickens and roosters, and two dogs for protection against monkeys and other wild animals—the kind of produce their farm yields, the cooperative system they had developed with their neighbours to farm land, trade with seafarers, the production of clothing, housing construction and the beauty of the local landscape. Early in the memoir, Van Balie describes daily life in his home community, and how he and his brothers helped their father work on the family farm: "[e]arly in the morning we went to the field to do our daily work and at night we came home with rest and peace to find grandmother having done her household tasks, orderly and clean, and our diner ready, and that is how we lived from one day to another".[60] His father, he writes, was poor, and their lives were simple, but all in all the picture he paints is idyllic and his descriptions are often infused with nostalgia.

That Van Balie sees his home community as different from yet equal to the Netherlands becomes apparent in how he compares the two communities. Placing the two narrative worlds he engages in side by side, he distinguishes between how things are done "in this country" (the Netherlands) and how things are done "according to our way" (that is, the way of the community in Magarij). For example, about the produce they harvest from the fields he writes, "Our foods from the field consisted of rice, millet, Turkish grain and potatoes, not like the ones in this country, but larger and elongated, this type of potatoes we call petatas".[61] A recurring theme in Van Balie's comparisons concerns objects or skills present in the Netherlands, but not in Magarij. Yet, he is always quick to point out that these should not be seen as lacking, but as things that are unnecessary, certainly to the people of Magarij. Manuring "like here in Holland" is not needed, he holds, because there is plenty of

land, and that despite the fact that in Magarij there is no knowledge of breeding there is always plenty of fresh bacon and meat available.[62] If Van Balie sometimes touts the qualities of one community over another, it is in subtle ways: when speaking of Magarij; he says people may not wear "fine or fashionable costumes like in this country", but are also not "proud".[63]

Both Van Balie's emphases, in this last example, on modesty as opposed to pride, as well as his general attention to the rural aspects of his home community, were significant aspects of European and specifically Dutch nationalism. As Gert-Jan Johannes has shown, nineteenth-century Dutch nationalism, seeking to distinguish itself from the bigger nations it was surrounded by, in particular France and Britain, focused on the country's smallness.[64] In the context of imperialism, Dutch authors embraced what was seen as the Dutch small scale and imagined their community as one that did not participate in the international power games of big nations, a conception that survived into the twenty-first century. More generally, this praise of modesty led to a glorification of mediocrity: what made the Netherlands great was precisely its averageness. Van Balie seems to suggest Magarij sometimes outdid the Dutch in terms of its Dutchness. With respect to rural living, the Netherlands, influenced by nineteenth-century nationalism, subscribed to a national identity that idolized the countryside as "the true, timeless soul of the nation".[65] In a tendency which would culminate in the second half of the nineteenth century with, among other things, the opening of a museum focused on rural life and architecture (*Openluchtmuseum*), Dutch rural culture became an increasing part of the national consciousness from the beginning of the century onwards, with a particular focus on traditional costumes worn by farmers and fishermen who were supposed to embody the "original" Dutch population and were expected to wear "indigenous" clothing, deemed "uncorrupted by international fashion".[66] If indeed the heart of a nation could be found in the modesty of its rural inhabitants, there was no community with more heart than Magarij, Van Balie seems to suggest. His writing of Magarij and the Netherlands as different yet equal is an act of equality for his community of origin as a whole.

## Conclusion

Through the analysis of a slave narrative, written in Dutch in the Netherlands by a man born in late eighteenth-century Indonesia, this chapter has sought to change thinking about equality in slave narratives in general and Dutch

abolitionism in particular. By writing of himself as a morally autonomous and empathetic subject, born in a community at least equal to the imagined community of the Dutch nation, Wange van Balie did not wait for the acknowledgement of his status as an equal and a human being, but instead assumed his and his community of origin's place as an equal part of humanity, despite important elements in public discourse—Dutch abolitionism as well as anti-abolitionism and his newspaper—telling him otherwise. I introduced the concept of an act of equality to make visible how, in his case, the acts preceded the subject, who did not wait for institutions or public discourse to grant him social equality but constituted it himself. By writing of himself and his black Indonesian family, he interrupted discourses of racial hierarchy and inequality and deftly appropriated the politics of equality circulating through particular constellations of Enlightenment, Christian and nationalist thought. His narrative shows that equality can be read to be actively assumed in slave narratives, and that it is possible to think about (former) slaves and black people in the Dutch empire not as either backward or pathetic, but as equal.

## Notes

1. Wange van Balie, "De Herinnering van Levens Loopen van Naî op het Dorp leeot op het Eiland Magarij na bij Bima, bij Eiland Java Nu Wange Heindrik Richard van Balie" (unpublished manuscript), private collection of Ron Siteur. Several of the themes in this chapter were already explored in Sarie Hertgers, "'O! mijn vriendleezer het is droef gedag der dagen dat ik nooit zal vergeten': Over vriendschap, herinnering en moraliteit in het egodocument van Wange Heindrik Richard van Balie, voormalig slaaf uit Nederlands-Indië" (master's thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2017). Hertgers also made a transcription of the manuscript.
2. Van Balie writes about his island of birth as "Magarij", which is currently the name of the western part of the island of Flores, part of the Republic of Indonesia. In Indonesian this regency is called Manggarai.
3. Ron Siteur, "Beschrijving van de levensgeschiedenis van Wange van Bali," last modified September 2009, http://www.wangevanbali.nl/.
4. Reggie Baay, *Daar werd wat gruwelijks verricht: Slavernij in Nederlands-Indië,* 153-60. Amsterdam: Athenaeum, 2015.
5. Engin F. Isin and Greg M. Nielsen, "Introduction: Acts of Citizenship," in *Acts of Citizenship*, edited by Engin F. Isin and Greg M. Nielsen, 1-12. London: Zed

Books, 2008; Jacques Rancière, *Dis-agreement: Politics and Philosophy*, trans. Julie Rose, Minneapolis MI: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

6. Isin and Nielsen, "Introduction," 2.
7. Ibid., 2.
8. Todd May, *The Political Thought of Jacques Rancière: Creating Equality*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008.
9. Rancière, *Dis-agreement*, 28.
10. Ibid., 30.
11. Jacques Rancière, *The Method of Equality: Interviews with Laurent Jeanpierre and Dork Zabunyan*, trans. Julie Rose. Cambridge: Polity, 2006.
12. Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History*, 27. New York: Norton, 2007.
13. Hunt, *Inventing*, 28.
14. James McPherson, *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964; Paul Goodman, *Of One Blood: Abolitionism and the Origins of Racial Equality*. Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1998.
15. Rancière, *Dis-agreement*, 30; Celeste Condit and John Lucaites (eds.), *Crafting Equality: America's Anglo-African Word*. Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993.
16. These intellectuals included the Ashanti Prince Aquasie Boachi and the Javanese clerk Sastrå-tåmå who were both in Delft in the 1840s when Van Balie was living in that city. On Boachi see Allison Blakely, *Blacks in the Dutch World: The Evolution of Racial Imagery in a Modern Society*, 257. Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 2000. On Sastrå-tåmå see Cees van Dijk, "1600–1898: Gezanten, slaven, een schilder en enkele scholieren," in *In het land van de overheerser: Indonesiërs in Nederland 1600-1950*, edited by Harry A. Poeze, 15. Dordrecht: Floris, 1986.
17. Maarten Kuitenbrouwer, "The Dutch Case of Anti-Slavery: Late Abolitions and Elitist Abolitionism," in *Fifty Years Later: Antislavery, Capitalism and Modernity in the Dutch Orbit*, edited by Gert Oostindie. Pittsburgh PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995.
18. W.R. van Hoëvell, *Slaven en vrijen onder de Nederlandsche wet* Zaltbommel: Noman, 1855.
19. Quoted in Kuitenbrouwer, "Dutch Case of Anti-Slavery," 76.
20. Marijke Huisman, *Verhalen van vrijheid: autobiografieën van slaven in transnationaal perspectief, 1789–2013*, 188. Hilversum: Verloren, 2015.
21. Siep Stuurman, *The Invention of Humanity*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2017.

22. Van Balie, "De Herinnering," 50.
23. Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830–1867*. Cambridge: Polity, 2002.
24. The other two forms of modern inequality identified by Stuurman are political economy ("a new science that justified social inequality in terms of utility and productivity") and biological and psychological theories of sexual difference. See Stuurman, *Inventing*, 24.
25. Ibid., 344.
26. Angelie Sens, *'Mensaap, heiden, slaaf': Nederlandse visies op de wereld rond 1800*, 112. The Hague: Sdu, 2001.
27. "Emancipatie der slaven," *Rotterdamsche Courant*, 4 July 1856, https://www.delpher.nl/.
28. *Rotterdamsche Courant*, 23 November 1855, 2, https://www.delpher.nl/; *Rotterdamsche Courant*, 18 September 1856, 2, https://www.delpher.nl/; *Rotterdamsche Courant*, 6 August 1857, 1, https://www.delpher.nl/; *Rotterdamsche Courant*, 7 April 1864, 2, https://www.delpher.nl/.
29. Sens, "Mensaap," 98.
30. Van Balie, "De Herinnering," 10.
31. Hunt, *Inventing*, 28.
32. See for instance Emanuel Francis's (1798-1880) *Herinneringen uit den levensloop van een "Indisch2 ambtenaar van 1815 tot 1851, medegedeeld in brieven*. Batavia: H.M. van Dorp, 1859. The inventory mentioned is Arianne Baggerman et al., "Egodocumenten 1814-1914 (repertorium)," Onderzoeksinstituut egodocumenten en geschiedenis, accessed 29 March 2018, http://www.egodocument.net/repertorium.html.
33. Van Balie, "De Herinnering," 25.
34. Ibid., 15.
35. Ibid., 9, 1.
36. Ibid., 42.
37. Ibid., 40.
38. Hunt, *Inventing*, 29.
39. Van Balie, "De Herinnering," 10.
40. Stacey Oliker, "The Modernization of Friendship: Individualism, Intimacy and Gender in the 19th Century," in *Placing Friendship in Context*, edited by Rebecca G. Adams and Graham Allan, 18-42, 20. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
41. David Garrioch, "From Christian Friendship to Secular Sentimentality: Enlightenment Re-revaluations," in *Friendship: A History*, edited by Barbara Caine,

165-214. London: Routledge, 2009. All information in this paragraph is derived from this chapter.

42. Garrioch, "From Christian," 186.
43. Ibid., 188.
44. Van Balie, "De Herinnering," 14.
45. Garrioch, "From Christian," 200.
46. Ibid., 167.
47. Marc Brodie and Barbara Caine, "Class, Sex, and Friendship: The Long Nineteenth Century," in *Friendship: A History*, edited by Barbara Caine, 223-278, 224-25. London: Routledge, 2009.
48. Brodie and Caine, "Class, Sex," 237.
49. Hunt, *Inventing*, 32.
50. Garrioch, "From Christian," 199.
51. Oliker, "The Modernization," 24.
52. Garrioch, "From Christian," 199.
53. Van Balie, "De Herinnering," 10.
54. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1983.
55. John K. Noyes, *Herder: Aesthetics against Imperialism*, 4. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015.
56. Sonia Sikka, *Herder of Humanity and Cultural Difference: Enlightened Relativism*, 3. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
57. Noyes, *Herder*, 8.
58. Quoted in Noyes, *Herder*, 212.
59. Sikka, *Herder*, 5.
60. Van Balie, "De Herinnering," 9.
61. Ibid., 2.
62. Ibid., 3, 38.
63. Ibid., 4.
64. Gert-Jan Johannes, *De lof der aalbessen: over (Noord-)Nederlandse literatuurtheorie, literatuur en de consequenties van kleinschaligheid 1770–1830*. The Hague: Sdu, 1997.
65. Arno Neele, *De ontdekking van het Zeeuwse platteland: Culturele verhoudingen tussen stad en platteland in Zeeland 1750–1850*, 153. Utrecht: Waanders, 2011.
66. Neele, *Ontdekking*, 153.

# 8

# Rituals of Rule

## Infanticide and the Humanitarian Sentiment

*Pamela Scully*

**Editors' note:**
This chapter is a reprint of Chapter 7 of Pamela Scully's book, *Liberating the Family. Gender and British Slave Emancipation in the Rural Western Cape, South Africa 1823-1853* (Portsmouth NH: Heinemann,1997). More than twenty years later, it remains a seminal piece that addresses the lives of women, newly freed from slavery through a foray into the nature of the legal discourse on marriage, death, family that was elaborated by colonial authorities to claim sovereignty over the body of women in Cape colony. Her study precedes the scholarly turn to the Indian Ocean of the recent decades and the growing importance of post-colonial approaches to slavery and slave memory encapsulated in the works of inter alia Paul Gilroy and Saidiya Hartman and other scholars of Atlantic slavery.[i] Scully's work builds on and draws from a rich body of literature on Cape slavery, especially the pioneering historical works of Ross and Worden, and gestures towards the more recent literary approaches to enslavement in Cape colony epitomized in the work of Meg Samuelson and Jessica Murray who see in literature a way of filling the gaps of the archive.[ii] Pamela Scully's work speaks to approaches to Cape slavery that have foregrounded the making of memory and continuities of enslavement, colonialism, apartheid and post-apartheid.[iii]

In the decade immediately following the final abolition of Cape slavery in 1838, a cluster of ostensible infanticide cases occurred in three rural districts. In the 1840s, six women with connections to mission stations in Caledon, Swellendam, and the Cape districts were charged with the crime of infanticide or concealment of birth. These infanticides were not remarkable; between 1843 and 1870 at least thirty-seven such cases are recorded in the criminal records of the Western Cape.[1] This cluster of cases involving

mission stations is, however, unusual: for the following two decades only two infanticides by women connected with mission stations were found in the records of the Cape Supreme Court.[2]

As distant onlookers of these events we are left with many questions. Was there anything particularly significant about the 1840s that might have caused women connected to mission stations to kill their newborn infants? Why did the colonial state pay such close attention to these events? And why did the judge in two cases seem to be at odds with the sentence passed and appeal on the women's behalf for clemency from the English justice system?[3] These cases in rural areas of the Western Cape warrant the attention of history if only because they underscore the profound repercussions of engaging in a social act which lay at the intersection of important social processes unfolding in the Western Cape in the mid-nineteenth century.

Infanticide implicated various colonial actors in contestations over definitions of freedom, motherhood, sexuality, and authority; it lay at one juncture of competing moral and legal economies of power.[4] The trials of Elizabeth August, Franscina Louw, Lea, Anna Sebastian, Wilhelmina Alexanders, and Dorothea Gideon were in part ritual procedures through which the British colonial state sought to demonstrate legitimacy against, and hegemony over, competing colonial actors when the balance of power between freed people, missionaries, former slaveholders, and the state was clearly contested and equivocal. The cases of Franscina Louw and Elizabeth August in particular became the basis for discussions between various branches of colonial society regarding the nature of justice, punishment, and the production of a respectable colonial working class.

In 1838 the missions and the Colonial Office had been in general agreement as to the need to propagate marriage and family among people newly freed from slavery. But from the 1840s it became clear that colonial officials and missionaries had rather different ideas both as to how to promote respectability and also how to accommodate freed people in colonial society. The cases of infanticides on the missions in the 1840s exposed a wider set of anxieties over labor, the place of the missions, and the nature of colonial rule.

The killing of infants in the rural Western Cape surely happened before the 1840s, yet the records are mostly silent on this action.[5] The apparent increase of crimes such as infanticide and prostitution reflects in part the penetration of British legal discourse into new terrains of social life in the empire. In the course of the nineteenth century, marriages, deaths, family

relationships, and sexual activities all came under the legal spotlight in both the metropole and the colonies.[6] Thus, even as the private sphere became conceived of as a domain separate from a place called "the public sphere," relations there became ever more analyzed, codified, and intervened upon.

Thomas Laqueur has argued that the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century witnessed the elaboration of a humanitarian sentiment which sought to "declare epistemological sovereignty over the bodies and minds of others" by locating and describing suffering and offering a "model for precise social action". Narratives focused on the diseased, wounded, or dead body–such as the autopsy and infanticide–were the locus for this union between "facts, compassion, and action".[7] The emphasis on searching out, and then pardoning, perpetrators of infanticide enabled the dual and ambiguous project of humanitarianism to be elaborated in practice–blame in order to pardon, mark the person in order to demonstrate how much they need our help.[8] Scientific and medical discourse was central to the reclamation of the diseased or fallen body. "The new consciousness of infanticide was not unconnected with the enhanced self-image of the medical profession".[9] Infanticides and autopsies become a stage on which the medical profession demonstrated knowledge in detailed examinations of the body, in order to reach moral conclusions as to the guilt or innocence of the defendant: knowledge of the individual body legitimated intervention and power over the individual soul.

If a broader humanitarian discourse was developing in the nineteenth century, it was clearly contested and far from hegemonic, particularly in the colonial setting. This cluster of ideologies dominated British imperial life in the nineteenth century and had particular resonance at the Cape in the 1840s as various colonial actors sought to control the terms of postemancipation society. At the Cape, tensions between Dutch-speaking farmers, local district officials, mission stations, and the British colonial state recast the dynamics of the humanitarian struggle. The 1840s were particularly important in framing the terms of British rule and intervention. Former slaveholders still smarted from the loss of their slaves and had not yet fully come to appreciate how much the British shared their belief in deference and hierarchy. For slaves too, the 1840s were a period in which they demonstrated some independence from both missionaries' and colonial officials' understandings of the meanings of freedom and respectability.

In order to hear the multiple meanings of the infanticide cases, we have to bear witness to the tensions and cracks in the various actors' conceptions of law and power and to women's accounts of their actions. We need to locate the

"discovery of infanticides" on the rural missions within the broader transformations occurring in the rural Western Cape in the postemancipation period.

## Missions and morality

In 1838 many freed people had looked to the missions as places which could provide them with a plot of land to call their own. Missions also promised some freedom from farm labor, a future for their children who would be educated in the ways of the colonizers' world, and inclusion in a community of the saved. Missionaries stipulated that access to these opportunities depended upon acceptance of the moral discipline of the mission. For many freed women and men this offer, and the kinds of social behavior upon which it was contingent, seemed a worthwhile bargain. The influence of the mission spread beyond its boundaries in part because of the constant flow of men to and fro from work on the farms. The boundaries of mission and farm life were very permeable: indeed, some people who considered themselves members of a mission station often lived nearly as many days on a farm as did people who resided permanently on a farm. The mission community was as important as a symbolic space, as a frame of mind, as it was a physical location of community and independence.

The religious teachings of the missions provided one language through which former slaves could evaluate their lives. Community help and community censure underpinned much of the activities of individuals on the stations. The missionaries encouraged people to follow religion through kind words; they also cowed and intimidated members of the community by threats of expulsion. Missionaries took more seriously than their peers in government the need to ensure that people on their stations lived according to strict rules of sexual propriety and monogamy. These rules became even more important after emancipation as farmers began to complain about the stations, often framing their complaints through an attack on the lax standards of the missions.[10] The Moravians blended Pietist, Lutheran, and Calvinist beliefs, stressing both the spiritual inner life and the dignity of work. They policed social interaction between members of the community to prevent what they perceived as immoral and inappropriate behavior.

Both the London Missionary Society and the Moravians had strict moral requirements for inhabitants of their stations. Apart from murder, the greatest sins were extramarital sex and illegitimacy, and mission regulations

were designed to prevent such moral lapses. At the LMS stations "matters of sexual morality and drunkenness were the most common reasons for exclusion" from church membership.[11] Section 29 of the Rules and Regulations of Genadendal explicitly stated that anyone who "cohabits in an irregular manner, or is guilty of adultery cannot remain a member of the institution, and deviations from the rules of virtue and chastity are subject to church discipline [...]".[12] Indeed, in 1842 a missionary at Groenekloof stated that "there is a regulation of our Institution with respect to unmarried women having illegitimate children. If we find they are in such a state [...] we then desire them to leave this place."[13] Sexuality was policed by making people return to their "dwelling, and none is allowed to walk about the establishment" after church each night. Parents had to ensure that their children only stayed overnight in other people's houses with their permission and all "intercourse between the sexes" had to be "according to the rules of morality".[14]

In the early years after the ending of slavery the missionaries rejoiced that "[we] have no reason to complain of the conduct of the former slaves, who have lived among us only one year and a half. They go out to their work, and return quietly, and behave themselves very peaceably and orderly; they frequent the Church diligently, & shew great devotion."[15] A Wesleyan missionary reported in 1842: "During the past year considerable improvement in the religious advancement of our members has taken place; many of them now appear to better understand their duty to God and each other, and they often weep and lament that so many years of their lives have passed away in sin, and in ignorance of God and his salvation [...]".[16]

However, by the early 1840s missionaries across the Cape and the West Indies lamented that the people under their charge were falling into sinful ways.[17] In the Western Cape, the Moravian missionaries were most vocal about the moral degeneration at their stations. Teutsch of Genadendal despondently noted in 1843 that there were "too many nominal members of our flock, who are in a state of lukewarmness or indifference to spiritual things". His colleague Kolbing wrote: "During the last months, we have had to complain ... of many deviations from the way of holiness, many instances of individuals yielding to temptation, and fulfilling the appetites and lusts of the flesh [...]".[18] In 1842 H. Helm of Zuurbraak rejoiced that a religious revival was taking place at the station but in 1843 while he said the revival continued he also remarked that the year had "been a time of trial [...] a few cases occurred in which not only were involved some of the new converts,

but also such as had been members of the church for some years, which caused us much grief". By the next year Helm now lamented that the

> revival of our young people have [*sic*] not realized the hopes which I did entertain of them 3 years ago. The making of the road and bridges in this colony, in which they are employed, has been the occasion to bring them in contact with labourers of bad habits, and some of the young people ... became worldly minded and were enticed to commence drinking again [...][19]

The Wesleyan reports are much more opaque. Missionaries only made references as to how much their congregants still needed to learn or to the fact that at Raithby station near Stellenbosch, for example, there had been "a marked improvement in their general conduct". Possibly the fact that the Wesleyans preached to the community at large rather than on a relatively self-contained station made them less hopeful of bringing about an immediate revolution in social and moral habits.[20]

The growing concern about morality on the missions in the early 1840s arose partly because of missionaries' ambivalence about the movement of thousands of emancipated slaves onto their stations. Missionaries worried that the freed people would bring sinful ways to the stations which had previously ministered mainly to the indigenous Khoisan. After 1838 missionaries explicitly targeted sexual and gender relations as areas needing reform and intervention. In 1840 missionaries at Groenekloof mission signaled a new emphasis on the importance of legal marriage by deleting the clause from the 1827 regulations which allowed people who had cohabited before they arrived on the mission to be treated as married people.[21] In addition, the expulsion of women from the station for extramarital sex only started in the 1840s at Zuurbraak mission station.[22] This is one reason for the proliferation of ostensible infanticide cases in the 1840s involving women with connections to mission stations.

In the 1840s, the battle for virtue on the Moravian and LMS missions in the Western Cape took place particularly through the regulation of women's sexuality.[23] Single women in particular were seen as posing special challenges to the morality of the community. Missionaries attempted to control women's sexuality because through pregnancy their bodies testified to supposed immoral behavior on the part of the entire mission community. One missionary stated that if a single woman "had brought forth a child at Zuurbraak I would have called upon her and questioned her in the presence

of the overseers and told her she had forfeited the Institution that is that she must quit".[24]

The stress on women's morality also owed much to the notion, common in Europe in the nineteenth century, that women were the repository of moral virtues and able to control their sexual desire, if it was acknowledged at all, far better than men. This concern with women's morality arose partly because women played such an important role on the missions. Women formed the backbone of the religious community at the missions, attending church and school more regularly, and more likely to have been baptized than the men who were so frequently off the station.[25] Women at the missions bore the responsibility of maintaining the virtue of both themselves and men. It is therefore not surprising that missionaries primarily blamed women for perceived lapses in morality among the mission community as a whole.

Former slaveholders also focused on black women's sexuality. As we have seen, gender was always implicated in the complex struggles over labor. White farmers identified the missions as the root of their difficulties in finding cheap labor and especially female domestic servants. These farmers argued that missions encouraged women not to engage in waged work, promoted education which took children and women out of the labor market (at least in theory), and provided families with a haven from farm labor. They framed their complaints about the new gendering of labor relations through a specific attack on freed women's sexuality and their supposedly immoral habits. White farmers argued that the missions encouraged debauchery and licentiousness.[26] In 1845, for example, T. B. Bayley, a farmer in Caledon district, blamed the lack of labor in the district on the support given to families by the missions in the form of houses and gardens. Bayley stated that Moravian missions were "directly injurious to the Farmer & indirectly to the Labourer" and he illustrated this by pointing to the supposed immorality of the "Hottentots" from Genadendal. Bayley specifically targeted women's supposed sexual habits, notably including all women in his description of the "Hottentots" from the station including ex-slave women who had come to Genadendal after emancipation: "Again whenever I have employed some particular women, they have always been attended by certain men. *not* [*sic*] husbands [...] I believe conjugality and female chastity are of no great consequence [...] and this is the result of so much idleness, & so little superintendence [...]".[27]

Settlers' sexualization of freed women was framed in part by the ubiquitous belief in Cape settler society that Khoi and slave women were

predisposed to immorality. Such a representation assumed greater importance in the postemancipation period. The ending of slavery allowed freed women to redefine sexual relations by rejecting the passivity often forced upon them in sexual relations under slavery. Freed women exercised choice both through patterns of sexuality and reproduction, and by refusing to be mothers. Those choices, to the extent that women were in a position to choose, were circumscribed by law which rendered them dependent on men, by the economy which made it difficult to secure personal autonomy with economic independence, and by pervasive male notions that women should be sexually available.

## Narratives of infanticide

On 18 May 1840, James Barnes, the resident magistrate of Caledon district, made a preparatory examination of a case of possible infanticide perpetrated by a woman named Lea. Lea never speaks in the records of this case; we only hear the testimony of Adonis, a freed man, and Michael Daniel Otto, the field cornet of Diep River. Otto told the magistrate that Lea had come to his house some ten days before on her way from Genadendal. His wife had asked Lea if she had a husband as Lea looked pregnant but Lea denied carrying a child. Adonis stated that the previous morning he had followed a fellow laborer into a neighbor's garden. On seeing something under a fig tree they had gone to examine it and found the body of a baby. Adonis said that "stones and part of a brick were laying near the child". No other records of the case were found.[28]

Two years later two women connected to mission stations were convicted of infanticide. These cases became the center of a discussion about missions and morality between the governor, judges, and the attorney general. Franscina Louw of Zuurbraak was convicted of the murder of her baby on 26 April 1842. Franscina Louw, who like Lea also worked on a farm, admitted to burying her baby but said that the child had been born dead. Apparently she was not given the opportunity to defend herself in the magistrate's court. The court heard the testimony of Anna Christina Laurens, Franscina's employer. Anna Laurens testified that Franscina had said "she was sickly, and that her courses had remained away in consequence of her having got wet by rain". However on 26 April Franscina went to the river for water and then told Mrs. Laurens that "her courses which had remained away so long had appeared". Franscina said she had washed her body because it was "troublesome" but

her employer thought that she was pregnant. Do not "deny it any longer," Mrs. Laurens said, "you must bring forth a child. You had better tell me now so that I may send for my mother".[29]

Anna Laurens's mother examined Franscina and saw that her breasts were full of milk. Finally Franscina told Mrs. Laurens that she would confess as her breasts were so

> full of milk she was obliged to milk them out. She complained also that there was something in her private parts; and at last she told me she had had a child and been delivered of it on the Tuesday Morning when she had gone to the river for water. I asked her what she had done with it. She moved her hand to shew how she had dug a hole, and she said she had put it in the hole. She said the child had been born dead and that its head was swollen. I asked why she had not told me of it and she said she was afraid I would be frightened.[30]

Franscina's mother also testified. Delie Louw said that she had known that her daughter was pregnant before Franscina went to the farm and that she had scolded her about it. Apparently her daughter had been terrified of being expelled from Zuurbraak, which she "knew would be the case if she got a child without being married".[31]

The case of Elizabeth August arose out of similar circumstances. On June 14 1842, Elizabeth came to the missionary at Groenekloof, and according to him said that he must forgive her: "She came in clasping her hands together and saying you must forgive me! it [*sic*] was not yet a child–it was not yet a child–it was only a bladder and if you will not believe me I will go and shew you [...]". The next morning the missionary saw Elizabeth at her parents' house. Elizabeth August said she had had a child on the Sunday afternoon and had twisted its neck and then rolled it up in a sheepskin and put it under her bed till 7 p.m. when everyone was at service. She had then buried it near the river.[32]

In 1848, Wilhelmina Alexanders, also a member of a Moravian station, but this time of Elim in Caledon, was brought to trial for concealing the birth of a child. She had been a widow for about four years when the incident occurred. Two children found the body of a baby girl wrapped up in a petticoat and covered with the skin of a merino sheep buried in the ground about two hundred yards from Wilhelmina's home. The missionary asked Elizabeth Smals, a midwife at Elim, to go and investigate the different houses

of the station to see who had had a child. On coming to Mrs. Alexanders' house, Mrs. Smals examined her.

> I could smell the smell women have when they are in childbed, I then examined her breasts both of which were full of milk, and when rubbing it the milk ran out of it in my hands, I asked the prisoner "Wilhelmina what have you done" on which she voluntarily confessed that on the Saturday night before she was delivered of a child the one which was found, in a fowl house ... I know the prisoner a long time she lives in a state of widowship [...] I never heard before that she was in a state of pregnancy [...] It appeared that the child was born alive ... the prisoner denied it, and said that after the birth she tried to put her fingers in the mouth.

The doctor who was called to examine the body said that he found the child's lungs in "perfect state, filling the whole of the inside of the thorax and [...] filled with air, as proof that the child must not only have breathed, but also cried". In the preliminary exam Wilhelmina Alexanders herself said:

> I admit to having been delivered of a female child [...] I wrapped it up in an old petticoat, and concealed it there to shew to our Superintendent Elizabeth, but on Sunday [...] I got weak, and it was found before I could put my intention into action.[33]

The following year, Anna Sebastian, who lived at Genadendal, was tried at Swellendam on 12 May on the charge of concealment of birth. According to the special verdict which the jury delivered, "she proceeded to the bushes near the bridge, where she was delivered of the child, without being aware that she was about to be delivered of the child [...] she left the child [...] at the spot where it was born, and [...] she afterwards gave no information to any person that she had been so delivered [...]". The jury stated that it could not say if the facts added up to a charge of concealing the birth of the child. In a letter dated 22 May 1849 the attorney general ordered her to be released and a verdict of not guilty entered on the record.[34]

The final mission-related infanticide for which I have records in the 1840s concerns Dorothea Gideon. In 1848 she had been at Elim for some nine to ten years. This suggests that she probably had been a slave, and had participated in the great movement to the missions of the late 1830s. In 1849

she was charged with the crime of concealment of birth, the court not being able to determine if her child was born dead or alive. Dorothea was married and a formal member of Elim mission station. She worked, however, at the farm Eland's Kloof in the service of the Moolman family. Apparently the Elim community was alive with gossip that Dorothea had had a baby while at Eland's Kloof. On her return from the farm, therefore, Dorothea was brought before the four missionaries and questioned. She confessed to having buried her baby alive. A missionary reflected that Dorothea and her husband often went to work together and he could not understand what had made her kill her child. Perhaps, he said, it might have been

> the trouble of rearing the child [...] it struck us that she might perhaps have had connection with another person or the trouble of rearing the child which induced her to commit the crime on a former occasion about six years ago there was a report at Elim that this person had a miscarriage she admitted to me that it was so, but that the child not being full grown or alive she buried it [...][35]

Dorothea said only, "My husband is the cause of all this it is true that I was delivered of a child and after it died, I buried it".[36]

## Interpreting infanticide

What do we do with these tales of desperation? All the women were connected in some way to mission stations. And it was precisely their ties to missions, and their status as women who could be reclaimed into respectable working-class society, which generated the interest of the state.[37] Lea had come from Genadendal to join her father on the farm where he worked. Franscina lived on Zuurbraak and worked on the Laurens's farm. Elizabeth August lived on Groenekloof; Wilhelmina and Dorothea lived on Elim.

We hear little from these women as to their reasons for hiding their pregnancies, concealing the birth of their babies, and/or killing their children. The court narratives are constructed using answers by doctors, lawyers, members of the mission communities, and farmers and their wives to questions posed by the magistrate. We enter the events through the interpretations of onlookers, and through a linear narrative constructed by colonial officials operating within a historically specific ideology regarding

the relationship between law, medical discourse, and state power. How do we avoid replicating the structures of power illuminated so eloquently in the records? And to what extent do we participate in colonial discourse in labeling the events "infanticide"?

The "facts" of the cases suggest that the women had hidden their pregnancies, and then in one way or another either actively killed their children or left them to die of exposure. The court narratives give no hint that the women abandoned their babies in the hope that they would be rescued by members of the community.[38] It seems indeed that we are dealing with infanticide–or at least the European definition thereof. Infanticide was conceptualized as a crime in which a mother killed her infant of under one year.[39] But did the women in the cases share this criminal definition of infanticide?

As members of the rural poor they participated in a complex and heterogeneous cultural life with origins in slave culture, Khoi and San societies, and the societies of East and Central Africa. As such they possibly brought to the killing of infants a different cultural perspective than that of the British or the Dutch. Many pre-capitalist African societies had a variety of codes regarding infanticide.[40] Isaac Schapera argues that San and Khoi societies of the Northern Cape also practiced infanticide as a means of child spacing – killing a baby born while another was still at the breast by burying it alive or leaving it to be eaten by wild animals. Schapera states that the Khoisan communities of the southern Cape did not follow this practice, but the similarity in the practices of the six women involved in the 1840s cases to those he describes suggests possible cultural continuities.[41]

Dorothea Gideon "dug a hole in the ground and buried it [the baby] alive".[42] It is not clear if Wilhelmina Alexanders intended to kill her child, but she left it in the cold overnight. Franscina Louw claimed that her child had been born dead–she buried the infant in a hole near the river.[43] We should be wary of overstating such a possibility, however, since the rural context of these infanticides meant that burial or exposure might have been the only means of committing the crime in any event.

If the form of infanticide in the mid-nineteenth century retained some similarity to earlier practices, the meaning of and the reasons for the practice were not necessarily the same. Schapera, writing in 1935, used sources from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as evidence for his comments on contemporary Khoisan societies. He provides an a historic ethnography which portrays a society supposedly living in the 1930s as it might have in the eighteenth century–and suggests that the eighteenth-century picture is

pristine in its "authenticity" and lack of contact with European influence. But Khoisan societies of the eighteenth century had already been in long contact with European settlement: infanticide as birth-spacing might well have been a culturally specific response to colonial disruption of previous birth-spacing practices.[44] In giving weight to a culturalist interpretation we have to accord that infanticide as we encounter it in these cases is embedded in a colonial context of material and ideological domination.

It is striking that all six women hid the fact that they were pregnant–which suggests that they had always intended to somehow get rid of the babies at birth.[45] Wilhelmina Alexanders was a widow of four years when she gave birth. She kept her pregnancy secret from the community. Four women were apparently so frightened of the consequences of having illegitimate children that they hid their pregnancies and buried their children. In all the cases, fear of being abandoned by the community and of being banished from the station seems to have governed their actions. This fear was a real one. Lehman, a missionary at Groenekloof Moravian mission stated that

> We have poeple [*sic*] who have been there a long time, who tell it to the younger ones–when new people come to the institution we tell them, if you do not behave like a Christian x [*sic*] according to the Word of God–you will be turned out. I am as certain that it is as well-known that young women will be turned out if they have bastard children–as they know it is wrong to have bastard children.[46]

The women were brought before the missionary of their station where they confessed to the sin of killing their child, but this did not necessarily absolve them of having contravened the laws of the community.[47] Moravians, in particular, put much emphasis on confession as a means of cleansing the soul, but it did not always translate into redemption. The community was a source of strength and love, but also of intervention. The need to belong to the mission community seems to be one reason why these women concealed the births and deaths of their illegitimate children, but those very communities were also the instruments of their undoing. In the trial of Dorothea Gideon, for example, August Lemerts of the station stated that there was "a talk at Elim that the Prisoner Dorothea [...] has been delivered of a Child". Female neighbors turned in Wilhelmina Alexanders to the Superintendent of Elim.[48] As the backbone of the religious life at the stations, women were, perhaps, particularly protective of moral and religious standards. Jealousy

over the sexual lives of women who chose not to follow the strict injunctions against premarital and extramarital sex might also have fueled women's complaints against their peers. Fellow women often turned in the perpetrators of infanticide. Lea was turned in by Keyter's wife, while both Wilhelmina and Dorothea were exposed by women.

Dorothea Gideon, the only married woman of the six, situated her case within a very specific context of blame. She stated "my husband is the cause of all this." Was she blaming her husband for having made her pregnant? Was she condemning him for making her work and therefore making it difficult for her to rear a child? Was she indeed blaming him for making her kill her child? On the missions, a sexual division of labor in which women worked in the gardens at the missions and men worked either in artisanal crafts or on the farms might have created resentment among those women who had to work on the farms. Did the fact that at least three of the five women were employed outside the home factor into their actions? Did they compare their situation unfavorably to other women who were able to reside on the missions?

Lea, Franscina Louw, and Dorothea Gideon were farm workers. It is possible that one reason for their actions arose from their status as women workers whose employment could be terminated by her employer if they became pregnant.[49] However, in their subsequent investigations into these cases, neither the missionaries nor the state considered that the women might have been forced to kill their children precisely because of their incorporation into the wage labor economy as subordinates to men.[50] The moral codes of the stations regarding illegitimacy and the permanent casting out of perceived miscreants become the causal factor in the narrative of infanticide.

Without knowing the exact histories of Lea, Franscina Louw, Wilhelmina Alexanders, Anna Sebastian, Elizabeth August, and Dorothea Gideon, it is difficult to write of their longings and feelings, of their cultural perceptions of the world around them. In the court narratives the women and the witnesses make much of the dishonor and humiliation which accompanied illegitimacy on the mission stations. We must be wary of attributing such feelings to the women whom we meet third hand, and in a very structured judicial context. Yet people were caught up in the regulatory world of the mission regardless of whether its moral precepts helped them in daily life. Infanticide was imbricated in colonial definitions of right and wrong, and official scripts of justice and power. As such we must place these cases into other contexts at the Cape and in the international moral economies in the decade after slavery.

## Moral reclamation and the humanitarian sentiment

Infanticide at the Cape became, for a moment, a site of the elaboration of a new conception of power by officials in the emerging colonial state. The Cape infanticide narratives can be interpreted as forming part of a wider cluster of discrete and overlapping discourses regarding upliftment of the "worthy" poor, the inculcation of morality, and the institution of new forms of rule based on a capillary conception of power emanating from the sovereignty of the state.[51]

The British and Cape impulses behind infanticide/concealment of birth prosecutions rested on slightly different foundations. The colonial Ordinance of 1845, which allowed for criminal prosecution for concealment of birth, prefigured its British counterpart by sixteen years.[52] The ordinance allowed juries to award an alternative sentence if infanticide could not be proven. Rose argues that this alternate sentence was part of a move in the British justice system towards leniency regarding conviction of women for cases of infanticide.[53] At the Cape this ruling was more ambivalent. The ordinance widened and deepened state power with more coercive intentions, at least with regard to the prosecution of black women.[54] Indeed the governor stated as much in May 1845. He said the ordinance had been submitted to the Legislative Council, it "having appeared to the Attorney-General, that the criminal law of this Colony was defective in not constituting the concealment of the birth of a child a crime, inasmuch as facilities were hereby afforded for the commission of infanticide without detection".[55]

The colonial state focused on infanticide precisely because it was in many ways an act which was situated at the heart of different cultural understandings of morality and autonomy. In killing her child, a woman declared sovereign power over both her body and the body of her child. Possibly through infanticides these women also refused "maternity" and the "maternal instinct." They thus rejected the constructions of motherhood promoted, for example, in the amelioration legislation and on the mission stations.[56] These infanticide proceedings became symbolic trials serving as platforms from which colonial officials described what behavior was not acceptable, legitimated state legislation on the sphere defined as "private," and sought to inculcate practices and values conducive to the reproduction of a self-reproducing rural elite and stable working class needing minimal state intervention.

In the humanitarian discourse we witness the rise of "the expert" who comes to know more about the individual than the person herself. Under

Roman Dutch law the doctor's decision was central to the determination of guilt. The decision as to whether a child was born dead or alive rested on medical testimony as to whether the lungs floated when thrown in water. If they did, the child was deemed to have been born alive.[57] Ordinance No. 10 of 1845 gave the medical expert a larger stage on which to jostle for authority with the legal profession. Physical exams involved issues of power and state intervention in a very private sphere. The court narratives are constructed in such a way that the doctor's testimony is cited last: as the reader we turn to him for resolution of the case. In the case of Elizabeth August, Dr. William Daly's testimony contradicts her claim to having strangled the child: "[T]he baby might have been smothered either by the placenta itself or by being under the bedclothes or by the actual process of childbirth." Daly stated that he might have missed the damage to the child's neck if the clerk of the court had not told him of Elizabeth August's confession.[58]

Attending to the struggle between new conceptions of power allows us to account for what at first appears to be an anomaly in these cases when compared to others in England in the same period. Lionel Rose states that there was enormous public sympathy for mothers who were believed to have killed their babies and that juries were generally loath to return "a criminally culpable verdict against a female witness".[59] At the Cape juries were more ambivalent than their British peers and this period generally passed a verdict of guilty.

Until the late nineteenth century juries in the rural areas came only from the white community. The Cape law "relating to juries contained no colour bar [...] but in practice juries tended to be dominated by whites". Only qualified voters, of whom the vast majority were white, and always male, were allowed to sit on juries. In Cape Town juries were mixed, although still dominated by whites, but in the rural areas it was only after 1874 that juries were made up of both white and "coloured" men.[60] Possibly the unsympathetic verdicts rendered by many rural juries in infanticide cases stemmed from an ill-disguised resentment against former slaves and dependent laborers who now in freedom were seen to be confirming a long-held belief that they were immoral and untrustworthy. Racism no doubt played a part since white juries probably found it easy to convict an African woman. That many of these women seem to have had sexual relations out of marriage might also have contributed to the juries' willingness to convict the women of infanticide. Juries used the weight of the law to sentence members of their former slave class to death. Lea was sentenced to death and was hanged after a trial in the Circuit Court at Swellendam.[61] Both Franscina Louw and Elizabeth

August were also condemned to death, but the chief justice asked that their sentences be commuted. It was through a revocation of the verdicts on these latter two cases that the colonial state challenged missionary notions of authority and sought to establish the hegemony of the colonial state over the missions.

## Rituals of rule

The humanitarian discourse of the colonial state was multifocused and practiced with discrete effects on different colonial actors. Colonial officials sought to reclaim rural women into the respectable working-class community through pardoning their sins and laying a foundation for action. They also targeted the missionaries who had caused the pain. *Naming* the women as deviant established the moral superiority of the British colonial state vis-à-vis both those women who had killed their children, and the missionaries, who it was argued had caused the women to take that action. In summing up the trial of Elizabeth August, the attorney general praised the Moravians for helping "their disciples learn to combine active performance of the duties of this life with the most fervent aspirations after another and a better". However, he also argued that the crucial problem on the mission stations was that the rule regarding women's morality was imposed by the missionaries instead of coming from the community itself.

> If that rule were the natural growth of moral and religious feeling amongst the coloured class itself [...] it would in all probability, be attended with comparatively few dangers [...] it will be strongly fortified by sentiment and principle against the original temptation, and even if she chance to fall, her mind and moral feeling are too well disciplined to allow her to incur the sin of murder rather than the shame of exposure [...] But [...] does it not come to pass that females of infirm principles and half formed notions of right and wrong, confound all the boundaries of criminality, and, in their darkened imaginations, are found to fear the frown of the missionary and expulsion from the institution more than the guilt of murdering their offspring?[62]

This targeting of the missionaries played into wider tensions between state and missions over control of the laboring population. This tension became

increasingly evident in the 1850s with the constitution of commissions investigating landholding on the missions and addressing the white farmers' concerns about their inability to secure cheap sources of labor.[63]

The attack by members of the Cape government on infanticide on the mission stations invoked and legitimated Victorian gender standards. Women were blamed for killing their children, but not held responsible for their actions.[64] The implicit assumption was that "infanticide was male-instigated, and women left to their own devices, would never kill their children [...]".[65] Laying blame on the missionaries removed agency from the women and again resolved the issue within the parameters acceptable to the colonial state by legitimating state intervention into the lives of the rural poor.

Once the infanticides on the mission stations came to their attention the attorney general and other high-ranking colonial officials were appalled at the rigidity of mission station regulations towards lapsed members of the community. The judicial documents in the infanticide cases of Franscina Louw and Elizabeth August present a particularly vivid example of how colonial officials characterized the difference between civil society and the mission stations. The governor stated with regard to Franscina Louw:

> I agree with the judge that the crime of which she is convicted is to be attributed to their dread of the consequences of being expelled from the Missionary Institution of Zuurbraak, and therefore taking into consideration the favourable circumstances mentioned in the Judge's letter, together with his opinion that it would not be prejudicial to the ends of justice that the sentence of death should be suspended until her case shall have been submitted to the Gracious consideration of Her Majesty the Queen, I have granted her a Reprieve [...].[66]

Three months later the chief justice of the colony sent a similar letter to the governor regarding the case of Elizabeth August and asking for clemency. He hoped that the observations of the presiding judges in the two cases

> will produce a relaxation in a rule which was made for the encouragement of morality, but which from its undue severity leads unfortunate females to the commission of the most unnatural Crimes [...] however it would be a delicate task for the Govt to interfere further with those institutions than has been done on these two occasions, leaving it to time and experience to shew that *rigorous discipline will not supply the place of*

> *morality, and that Missionaries to effect their object must appeal to other and higher sources for checks to the evil which they wish to eradicate by public expulsion and excommunication* [my emphasis].[67]

In the interpretation of these cases by high government officials the missionaries' conception of power did not allow for reclamation of women who had fallen from grace through contravention of sexual and family norms. The chief justice argued that discipline could not prevail over habit. He implied, instead, that the cultural transformation of freed people would be more successfully accomplished in the realm of civil society where the state would help inculcate habits and values which would be shared by all.

But were the moral projects of the British colonial state and the Moravian missionaries so very different? For most of their residence in the Cape since 1792 the Moravians had enjoyed good relations with the government, especially in comparison to the stormy relations between the London Missionary Society and colonial officials and farmers. As we have seen, the Moravian community was rooted in respect for authority, hierarchy, and the word of God as interpreted by the missionaries. This had served the stations well in the immediate post emancipation period. In addition, both the Moravians and the London Missionary Society subscribed to many of the sentiments outlined by Chief Justice Wylde and William Porter. One of the main aims of Philip's reforms on LMS stations in the 1820s was precisely to lead by example, to instill morality through the inculcation of habit.[68]

Indeed the colonial authorities caricatured missionary authority and judicial practice. Procedures existed to allow the reentry to the mission community of people who had been expelled. Reverend Helm of Zuurbraak stated that if she "had shown any signs which led me to think that she really repented of her conduct I would have told her she could remain".[69] By the mid-nineteenth century the numbers of expulsions at Genadendal had increased, but expulsion had also become more difficult to enforce. This was partly in response to community pressure: relatives simply kept the person at the station. This speaks too to tensions within the community itself as to the means of inculcating morality. Significantly, in 1857, the Cape government added a section to the Rules and Regulations of Genadendal which made expulsion subject to the consent of the magistrate.[70] The government wrote into law the desire for firmer civic control over missionary life for which the attorney general, the governor, and the chief justice had implicitly appealed in their analysis of the mission infanticide trials of the 1840s.

## Conclusion

The extensive prosecution and scrutiny of cases of infanticide relating to mission stations in the 1840s can be regarded as examples of competing theaters of colonial hegemonic practice. The Moravians and the LMS shared to some extent the Dutch farmers' conception of power as being located in theatrical demonstrations of power over the body of the individual. Missionaries and state alike exploited the occasion of infanticide to invoke rituals of rule. Colonial officials, I have argued, used these cases as practices to illustrate simultaneously both the immorality of the crime of infanticide, the wrongheadedness of the missionaries, and the beneficence of British justice. Similarly the missionaries exploited the occasion of infanticide to invoke rituals of religious observance – such as confession, which at once bound the mission station together through religious practice and targeted as "other" the woman who had stepped outside the boundaries of convention.[71]

The difference between the colonial state and the missionaries revolved around the proper arena of demonstrating power and the ultimate means whereby to fashion a colonial community. For the missionaries, and the mission community, the sphere of articulation remained the mission station and the mission court. For the colonial state, theaters of rule were to be located in the public space of the colonial legal system. The 1840s produced a convergence of factors which helped privilege the articulation of some colonial tensions within a discourse on infanticide. The "discovery" of infanticides on mission stations in the 1840s is a product and a reflection of a moment of acute struggle between different colonial actors to define the contours of colonial rule. The cases of infanticide also uncover the ways in which ideas of race, gender, and sexuality helped to define both the worlds which freed women had to negotiate after 1838 and the laws which were put into place in the new era of freedom. In the early 1850s, the confluence of race, sexuality, and the elaboration of colonial identities were very clearly exposed in discussions about rape, and particularly through those cases which involved the rape of freed women.

## Notes

i. Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic. Modernity and Double-Consciousness*. Harvard MA: Harvard University Press, 1995; Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection. Terror, Slavery and Self-Making in Nineteenth Century America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997;

II. See, for instance, R.J. Ross, *Cape of Torments. Slavery and Resistance in South Africa*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963; Nigel Worden, *Slavery in Dutch South Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985. For recent literary approaches see Meg Samuelson, "Rendering the Cape-as-Port: Sea-Mountain, Cape of Storms/Good Hope, Adamastor and Local-World Literary Formations," *Journal of South African Studies* 42, no. 3 (2016): 523-537; Jessica Murray "Gender and Violence in Cape Slave Narratives and Post-Narratives," *South African Historical Journal* 62, no. 3 (2010): 444-462.

III. Sarah Nuttall and Carli Coetzee, *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1998.

1. This is a tentative figure based on a survey of the criminal records of the Cape Supreme Court from 1843 to 1870, and also on local criminal records for Stellenbosch, Caledon, Swellendam, Paarl and Worcester. Edna Bradlow states that there are many cases of infanticide in the Cape criminal records: Bradlow, "Women at the Cape in the Mid—Nineteenth Century." *South African Historical Journal* 19 (1987)" 51-75. 73. Fifteen cases of concealing the birth of a child were brought before the Supreme Court between 1860 and 1879: Patricia van der Spuy, "The Involvement of Women in Violent Crime as Processed by the Institutions of Justice in Cape Town, 1860-1879" (B.A. Hons. diss., History Department, University of Cape Town, 1989), Table 3, 47. Andrew Bank documents fifteen cases between 1890 and 1900: Andrew Bank, "Crime in Cape Town, 1890 to 1900" (BA. Hons. diss., History Department, University of Cape Town, 1988), Table 4.1, 82. Ordinance No. 10 of 1845 allowed the state to prosecute women for concealment of birth if there was not clear evidence of infanticide. This cast the net of identification much wider than had been the case under the infanticide legislation. See CA, CCP 6/3/1/6.

2. CA, CSC, 1/1/1/14, Case of Betje Blankenberg, 15 January 1850. She was found guilty of concealment of birth, the jury being unable to tell if the child was born dead or alive. She received a "recommendation to mercy" owing to the good account of her character given by J. Stegmann, a missionary from the station. Also CA, CSC, 1/1/1/19, 2 February 1863, Margaretha Roubyn of Pniel, who received twelve months' hard labour for concealing the birth of her child. She did not receive a recommendation to mercy.

3. Particularly in the light of judicial attitudes to the rape of black women see Chapter 8, "Rape, Race, and Sexual Politics of Colonial Identities," in *Liberating the Family? Gender and British Slave Emancipation in the Rural Western Cape, South Africa, 1823-1853*, edited by Pamela Scully, 153-175. Portsmouth NH: Heinemann, 1997.

4. See Nancy Scheper-Hughes, "Culture, Society, and Maternal Thinking: Maternal Detachment and Infant Survival in a Brazilian Shantytown," *Ethnos* 13, no. 4 (1985): 291-317, 292, for a discussion of the cultural construction of maternal feeling. Also Carolyn Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman: A Story of Two Lives*. New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987.
5. An analysis of the records of the Cape Supreme Court from its inception in 1828 and of local criminal records from 1828 to 1838 revealed only three cases of infanticide, including one in Cape Town. I am grateful to Helen Bradford for sharing her data with me. See Van der Spuy, "Collection," Paper 4, 152-198, for an analysis of all infanticide in the amelioration period.
6. See Kenneth Ballhatchet, *Race, Sex, and Class under the Raj: Imperial Attitudes and Policies and Their Critics, 1793-1905*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980; Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, Vol. 1. New York: Vintage Books, 1990; Judith Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980; and Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics, and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality Since 1800*. London: Longman, 1981.
7. Thomas Laqueur, "Bodies, Details, and the Humanitarian Narrative," in *The New Cultural History*, edited by Lynn Hunt, 178, 179, 188. Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1989.
8. See Douglas Hay et al., *Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1975, for discussion of the use of pardon as a means of exercising power. For application in the South African context see Pamela Scully, "Criminality and Conflict in Rural Stellenbosch, South Africa, 1870-1900," *Journal of African History* 3, no. 2 (1989): 289-300. Of course this narrative is very much a part of the humanitarian discourse of abolitionist ideology.
9. Lionel Rose, *Massacre of the Innocents: Infanticide in Britain, 1800-1939*, 41. London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1986.
10. See below.
11. Jane Sayles, *Mission Stations and the Coloured Communities of the Eastern Cape, 1800-1852*, 39. Cape Town: A.A. Balkema, 1975.
12. ASL, CGH, Select Committee, *Granting lands in Freehold to Hottentots*, S.C. 11, 1854, 38.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid., 42. The *Periodical Accounts* of the Moravian Church provide the best archival sources for internal mission politics. The correspondence of the London Missionary Society does not provide quite the same degree of detail about issues relating to family and gender.

15. HA, "Diary of Genadendal, 1840," *PA*, XVI, CLXXIII (December 1841), 30.
16. SOAS, "Notes by Rev. Joseph Jackson after a visit to KhamiesBerg Station in Little Namaqualand after a visit to Cape Town; Extract from Stellenbosch District Report," in *Report of the Wesleyan-Methodist Missionary Society for the Year Ending April 1842,* 79. London: Wesleyan Missionary Society, 1842.
17. William A. Green, *British Slave Emancipation: The Sugar Colonies and the Great Experiment, 1830-1865,* Ch.11, 341. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987. For an excellent discussion of missionary discourse in Jamaica see Sean Buffington, "After the Rio: Social Relations and Ideologies in Metcalfe Parish, Jamaica, 1866-1871" (paper presented to the Conference on Postemancipation Societies and Race, University of Michigan, April 1993).
18. HA, Letter from Teutsch, *PA*, XVI CLXXXI (December 1843), 462; Letter from Kolbing, *PA*, XVI, CLXXXIl (March 1844), 518.
19. CA, LMS ZL 1/3/15, Box 18, Folder 5, Jacket A, Report for 1842 by H. Helm, 2 August 1842; ZL 1/3/16, Box 19, Folder 3, Jacket C, Report for 1843 by H. Helm, 1 November 1843; ZL 1/3/17, Box 21, Folder 4, Jacket B, Report for 1844 by H. Helm, 1 November 1844.
20. SOAS, *Report of the Wesleyan-Methodist Missionary Society for the year ending April 1846,* 62. London: Wesleyan Missionary Society, 1846; *Report of Wesleyan-Methodist Society for the year ending April 1853,* 43. London; Wesleyan Missionary Society, 1853.
21. Elizabeth Helen Ludlow, "Missions and Emancipation in the South Western Cape: A Case Study of Groenekloof (Mamre), 1838-1852," 82 (M.A. diss., University of Cape Town, 1992). Raum suggests, however, that the Moravians were fairly accommodating to customs as long as they did not conflict with Christian ideas. People were permitted to live together without legal marriage as long as they adhered to the general moral principles of the station. I have relied heavily on Raum for my understanding of the Moravians and Genadendal history: Johannes Raum, "The Development of the Coloured Community at Genadendal Under the Influence of the Missionaries of the Unitas Fratum, 1792-1892" (M. A. diss., University of Cape Town, 1952). See also Isaac Balie, *Die Geskiedenis van Genadendal 1738-1988*. Cape Town: Perskor, 1988.
22. CA, GH 28/19, No. 3, Statement by CP, Trial of Franscina Louw, 23 July 1842.
23. Raum, "Development," 31.
24. CA, GH 28/19, No. 3, Enclosure No. 3, Deposition of H. C. J. Helm, 23 July 1842.
25. H.A, Letter from Genth, Elim, *PA*, XVI, CLXXV (June 1842), 134; Letter from Kolbing, Genadendal, *PA*, XVIII, CC (September 1848), 389. Raum, "Development," 42, argues that women were "more susceptible to the teachings of

the missionaries than the men. One reason for this was, as the missionaries realized themselves, that the men left the settlement in order to work."

26. This discourse was pervasive in the mid-nineteenth century. See Clifton C. Crais, "The Vacant Land: The Mythology of British Expansion in the Eastern Cape, South Africa," *Journal of Social History* 25, no. 2 (Winter 1991): 255-274. See also ASL, CGH, *Master and Servant*, JP, Zwartkop's River, question 11, 70. He argued that women rarely stayed in employment for longer than three months "In ten years, I have had but one adult female servant who was not a drunkard, or vicious character of a worse description." D. Buchanan, JP, SWM, complained that "the institution swarms with idle women and naked children." *Master and Servant*, Question 11, 82.
27. Bayley argued that "a more dissipated, immoral, and dishonest race of people than the Hottentots of Genadendal cannot be found in any civilized quarter of the globe." CA, CO 4024, No. 26, T.B. Bayley to SG, 24 February 1845.
28. CA, 1/CAL 1/1/1, 18 May 1840. The case is brief and sparse. The RM wrote in the margins that the case was sent to the CP in Cape Town. For conclusion of the case see CA, CO 503, No. 39, Justice Menzies to Governor Napier, 5 April 1841.
29. CA, GH 28/19, No. 1, Enclosure No. 1 for Despatch 150, 1842. Records of Proceedings in the Case of Franscina Louw, Statement of Anna Laurens, 28 July 1842.
30. Ibid.
31. CA, GH 28/19, No. 3, Enclosure No. 3, Deposition of H.C.J. Helm, 23 July 1842, enclosing letter and memorandums, Deposition of Delie Louw, n.d.
32. CA, GH, 28/20, No. 1, Enclosures to Despatch No. 209; Proceedings of the Trial of Elizabeth August, testimony by Joseph Lehman, 20 October 1842.
33. CA, 1/CAL 1/1/1, Preliminary examination into the case of Wilhelmina Alexanders for concealing the birth of child, 16 February 1848.
34. No preliminary examination could be found for her trial. We know of her case only through the printed indictment which is lodged in the Circuit Court Swellendam on 22 May 1849.
35. CA, 1/CAL 1/1/2, Documents in the Circuit Court trial of Dorothea Gideon for Concealing the Birth of her Child on 1 May 1849 at Eland's Kloof, 4 October 1849. Preliminary Examination conducted by RM, statement by August Lemerts, n.d.
36. Ibid, Statement of Dorothea, n.d.
37. The working-class background of these women is consistent with every other infanticide case I have found in the Supreme Court Criminal Records.

38. Compare John Boswell, *The Kindness of Strangers: The Abandonment of Children in Western Europe from Late Antiquity tot Renaissance*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1988.
39. Johannes van der Linden, *Institutes of Holland, or Manual of Law, Practice, and Mercantile Law, for the Use of Judges, Lawyers, Merchants, and All Who Wish to Have a General View of the Law,* 5th edn., section 12. Cape Town: J.C. Juta and Co, 1906; Rose, *Massacre of the Innocents*.
40. In Zulu society, for example, one twin was often left out to die so as to enable the mother to give all her milk to only one baby and thus strengthen its chances of survival. See Marianne Brindley, "Old Women in Zulu Culture: The Old Woman and Childbirth," *South African Journal of Ethnology* 8, no. 3 (1985): 98-108. I am grateful to Keletso Atkins and members of the South African seminar at the University of Michigan for highlighting this concern. Nancy Scheper-Hughes argues that maternal bonding is culturally and historically specific and that in communities where infant mortality is high, parents distance themselves from their children in order to see if the infants will survive: Scheper-Hughes, "Culture, Scarcity, and Maternal Thinking."
41. Isaac Schapera, *The Khoisan Peoples of South Africa,* 116. Reprint, London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1960.
42. CA, 1/CAL 1/ 1/ 2, Testimony of Johannes Albertus Moolman, missionary, 4 October 1849.
43. 1/CA, GH 28/19 No.1. Testimonv of Anna Christina Laurens, 21 July 1841. I cannot tell if Franscina Louw killed her baby or not although she had concealed her pregnancy. The jury found her guilty of infanticide.
44. See Nancy Rose Hunt, "'Le Bébé en Brousse': European Women, African Birth-Spacing, and Colonial Intervention in the Belgian Congo," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 21, no. 3 (1988): 401-432, for a similar argument.
45. Abortion might have been attempted, but we have no way of knowing. Helen Bradford is currently working on a history of abortion in South Africa.
46. CA, GH, 28/20, No.1, Enclosures to Despatch No. 209; Proceedings of the Trial of Elizabeth August, testimony by Joseph Lehman, 20 October 1842.
47. See Vicente Rafael, "Confession, Conversion, and Reciprocity in Early Tagalog Colonial Society," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 29, no. 2 (April 1987): 320-339.
48. CA, 1/CAL 1/1/2, 4 October 1849; CA 1/CAL 1/1/1, 16 February 1849.
49. Employers did terminate women's employment on these grounds. For example in 1867 Mary Ann Chappel, aged sixteen, who was apprenticed to J. G. Faure

of Stellenbosch, became pregnant as the result of a relationship with another labourer on the farm and Faure fired her in terms of the Masters and Servants Act of 1856. The attorney general adjudicated that this dismissal was legal. However, Mary Ann having been originally apprenticed when she was under ten years of age, the indenture itself was illegal. CA, 1 / STB, 10/160, Henry Baas to RM, 11 February 1867; AG to Acting CP, STB, 15 February 1867.

50. For more analysis of the context of labour in these cases of infanticide see Pamela Scully, "Narratives of Infanticide in the Aftermath of Slave Emancipation in the Nineteenth-Century Cape Colony, South Africa," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 30, no. 1 (1996) (Special Issue on Wicked Women and the Reconfiguration of Gender in Africa, edited by Dorothy Hodgson and Sheryl McCurdy): 88-105.
51. See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1977, for a discussion of how the industrializing state (not his terms) reconfigured relations of power based on the sovereignty of the state and the displacement of sovereignty located in the individual. On discourses of upliftment see Elaine Hadley, "Natives in a Strange Land: The Philanthropic Discourse of Juvenile Emigration in MidNineteenth-Century England," *Victorian Studies* 33, no. 3 (1990): 411-437.
52. For a similar observation see Sandra Burman and Margaret Naude, "Bearing a Bastard: The Social Consequences of illegitimacy in Cape Town, 1896-1939," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 17, no. 3 (September 1991): 373-413, 387. Rose, *Massacre of the Innocents*, 71, gives information on the metropolitan chronology.
53. Rose, *Massacre of the Innocents*, 70.
54. From a brief perusal of verdicts it appears that the perceived race of the victim played a large part in the type of verdict delivered. White women were more likely to be found to have extenuating circumstances for infanticide, although juries appear to have become more lenient in general in the course of the nineteenth century.
55. CA, GH 23/15, No. 86, Governor to SSC, 14 May 1845.
56. I am grateful to Philippina Levine for alerting me to this point.
57. Van der Linden, *Institutes*, 218.
58. See CA, GH 28/20, No. 1, Case of Elizabeth August. Testimony of Dr. William Daly, 20 October 1842. Also CA 1/CAL 1/1/1, Case of Wilhelmina Alexanders. Testimony of Abraham Albertyn, doctor, 16 February 1848. Laqueur cites a case of infanticide in which the medical testimony contradicts the woman's confession of having killed her child: Laqueur, "Humanitarian Narrative," 188.
59. Rose, *Massacre of the Innocents*, 43.

60. Albie Sachs, *Justice in South Africa,* 60, 59-70. Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1973.
61. CA, CO 503, No. 39, Justice Menzies to Governor Napier, 5 April 1841. Wilhelmina Alexanders received twelve months' hard labour in 1848 for concealment of birth. CA, CO 575, High Sheriff to SG, 3 March 1848. I have the circuit court trial records, but no verdict for Dorothea Gideon's case. CA, 1/CAL 1/1/2, Circuit Court trial of Dorothea Gideon for Concealing the Birth of her Child, 4 October 1849.
62. William Porter, *The Porter Speeches. Speeches Delivered by The Hon. William Porter, During the Years 1839-1845 Inclusive,* 132-136. Cape Town: Trustees Estate and Saul Solomon and Co., 1886.
63. For example, see GB, Parliament, House, Minute by SG on Representative Institution for the Cape, dated 14 January 1851, in "Further Papers Relative to the Establishment of a Representative Assembly," *Parliamentary Papers* 1851 (1362), p. 165; SAL, CGH, Parliament, "Debate on Missionary Lands, 3 August 1854," *The Advertiser and Mail's Parliamentary Debates in the First Session of the First Parliament of the Cape of Good Hope, Appointed to meet 30th June 1854,* State Library Reprints, 33, 1 (Pretoria: State Library, 1968); ASL, CGH, Select Committee, *Minutes of Evidence taken before the Select Committee of the House of Assembly on Granting Lands in Freehold to Hottentots,* S.C. 13 (Cape Town: Saul Salomon and Co., 1856).
64. See Ruth Harris, "Melodrama, Hysteria, and Feminine Crimes of Passion in the Fin de Siècle," *History Workshop* 25, no. 1 (1988): 31-63, for a discussion of how women manipulated this perception to their advantage in murder trials.
65. Rose, *Massacre of the Innocents,* 26, with reference to England and the leniency of infanticide convictions.
66. CA, GH 23/14, Vol. 1, No. 152, Governor to SSC, enclosing the report of the proceedings on the case of Francina [*sic*] Louw, 10 August 1842.
67. CA, GH 23/14 No. 209, Chief Justice Governor, 31 October 1842.
68. Richard Lovett, *A History of the London Missionary Society, 1795-1895,* 2 vols. London: Oxford University Press, 1899.
69. CA, GH 28/19, No.3, Trial of Franscina Louw, 23 July 1842.
70. Raum, "Development," 56-59.
71. At Groenekloof, "the expulsion of young women is public. I first intimate it privately to the party and afterwards publish it from the Pulpit, the name of the cause of her expulsion." CA, GH 28/20, No. 1, Trial of Elizabeth August, Testimony of Joseph Lehman, 20 October 1842.

# 9

# *"Hoera, dit skip seil uit oos"*

## The Sea as a Site of Memory in the Folk Songs of the Enslaved Community and their Descendants at the Cape

*Anne Marieke van der Wal*

*Hoor ek die see sing, sing? Hoor ek die meeue sing?*
*Nee! Nee! Ek hoor die vryheid, ja die vryheid sing!*
Adam Small[1]

In the poem *Vryheid* (Freedom), cited above, the Cape Coloured[2] poet Adam Small sketches a scene in which a Coloured couple, perched on a cliff at the edge of the Cape peninsula, stare out over the sea longing for the freedom the ocean represents. When they turn back inland towards their home on the Cape Flats, they move towards a world of repression and subjugation. The poem's narrator exclaims in despair, "Do I hear the sea sing, sing? Do I hear the seagulls sing? No! No! I hear freedom, yes freedom sing!"[3] While this poem describes the oppression experienced by the Coloured population in twentieth-century apartheid South Africa, Small has in his work often made a link between the struggle against apartheid and the struggles of his forefathers during slavery.[4] The image of the sea as a space of freedom—but at the same time a freedom which cannot be reached—exemplifies the way the sea features in the memories of the descendants of the enslaved as a space of longing and desire. This is at least evident in the Atlantic world, where the sea is often imagined as a site of loss, dispersal and longing, but also as one of contact and exchange.[5] This awareness of the ocean as a "hybrid cultural space" can be attributed to, amongst other writings, Paul Gilroy's influential work, *The Black Atlantic*, in which he has argued for a focus on the Atlantic Ocean as a zone of contact in which a counterculture of modernity emerged.[6] Unfortunately, Gilroy leaves the experiences of enslaved people in the East largely untouched in his work, whereas, as Isabel Hofmeyr has argued, "the

Indian Ocean is the site par excellence of 'alternative modernity'".[7] Hofmeyr argues that because of the complex nature of slavery in the Indian Ocean world, studying the "Brown Indian Ocean" enables scholars to explore in more depth the "meaning of slavery and freedom", as well as the relationship between slave systems and "modernity".[8]

South African poet and literary scholar, Gabeba Baderoon, has argued that the sea features prominently in the memory and cosmology of the Cape Coloured community, not only as a site of transference (the middle passage) and of desire and longing, but also as a place of belonging, living next to the sea and living off the sea.[9] However, she claims that this presence can no longer be found in the "folk memory"[10] of the Cape Coloured community, but is mainly found in more recently produced artistic creations and performances,[11] such as, for instance, Adam Small's work cited above. In this chapter, I will argue that the memory of slavery and an "Indian Ocean consciousness" has not been erased from the folk memory of the Cape Coloured community, and that it continues to exist in this community's folk song repertoire. This chapter draws on my dissertational work, *Singing of Slavery, Performing the Past*, in which I bring to light the existence and persistence of a cultural memory of the South African slave past in the folk songs of the Cape Coloured community. I specifically focus on songs that contain references to the sea and ask how the Indian Ocean works in the memory culture of the enslaved community at the Cape and its descendants.

On examining the folk song repertoire of the Cape Coloureds, which are part of the broader *Kaapse Klopse* (Cape [music] clubs) music tradition—that originated during slavery and continued after emancipation as a commemorative tradition[12]—it becomes apparent that the image of the sea is omnipresent. Many of the songs can be considered sea shanties, fishermen's songs, seafaring songs or songs that otherwise refer to the Indian Ocean. The repertoire of folk songs includes lyrics and descriptions of musical performances from before Emancipation in 1834, which were recorded in travel accounts and memoires, as well as in song books published by folklorists in the early twentieth century; it also includes songs published and performed post-Emancipation. All the songs cited in this chapter have been attributed to the enslaved community and/or their descendants by those who recorded and published them. Whereas some songs were thus recorded and published decades after the abolition of slavery, they are nevertheless revealing evidence of the slave past. The nature of songs as oral performances allows them to change easily over time so as to comment on the changing socio-political context, yet older song texts and/or

melodies remained a source of inspiration for newer compositions. What is more, the social position and economic opportunities in society did *de jure* change with the Emancipation, but several scholars have shown that *de facto* these opportunities were limited and racial discrimination continued.[13] Certain occupations and social positions were unattainable for the former enslaved, and many found themselves doing the same work for sometimes the same masters as before emancipation.[14] In this situation, it is not hard to imagine how songs which had emerged in times of slavery continued to function, more or less in the same form, as social commentary in the post-emancipation context as well. As Vivian Bickford-Smith has similarly argued:

> Kinship and occupational ties, as well as cultural forms, helped forge community identities in [post-emancipation Cape Town] .... Cultural forms, such as stories about the past and emancipation day celebrations, served to remind members of their shared heritage of oppression and bondage. So did continued white domination of power and resources, and the continued perceivable correlation between darker pigmentation and deprivation.[15]

What makes songs a particularly useful source of analysis for investigating a possible "Indian Ocean consciousness" is that "music unseats language and textuality as pre-eminent expressions of human consciousness".[16] Folk songs, as opposed to literature or art, represent a more collective expression of a community's ideas and communal consciousness. When we accept these songs, the old and the more recently recorded, as echoes of a more distant past, tracing the image of the Indian Ocean in these song lyrics of the enslaved and their descendants could potentially shed light on the experiences of the enslaved in this part of the world, and on what it meant to be a slave in the Indian Ocean world.

## Sea shanties of the Cape

Historical accounts of settlers and travellers at the Cape in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries stand testament to the intimate connection between the enslaved community and the sea, as a source of life and exchange but also as a site of diasporic memory. Arriving at the Cape after a long voyage from Europe, for instance, travellers describe how they were

first greeted by enslaved people coming out in smaller vessels to greet the incoming fleet. "We were hardly come to anchor before a crowd of black slaves and Chinese came in their small boats to sell and barter for clothes and other goods",[17] wrote the Swedish naturalist Carl Peter Thunberg upon his arrival in Table Bay in 1772. Similarly, British captain Robert Percival wrote how "immediately on a ship coming to anchor, she is surrounded by boats, laden with fish, vegetables, and fruit, which the slaves of the Dutch colonists come to sell for their masters".[18]

We tend to see the enslaved as workers on the land, labouring in sugar-cane or cotton fields; yet, at the Cape, labouring at sea was equally important among the tasks assigned to the enslaved. Fishing at the Cape, for instance, had predominantly been the task of enslaved people as well as freedmen from the East.[19] Moreover, fish was an important part of the slave's food rations at the Cape, as it was plentiful and cheap.[20] Several slave songs collected by early twentieth-century folklorists testify to this; for example, the songs *Hoedjies baai*, *Nieuw Seemandslied* and *Waarna toe nou*. "Free-black fishing families [aided by enslaved workers hired out as fishermen] formed one of the first identifiable occupational labouring communities in Cape Town, which dominated the foreshore area up into the early twentieth century".[21] Increasing the profitability of a business through mutual dependency is clearly expressed in the following song:

| | |
|---|---|
| Hoeral, hoeral, die wind waai oos, | Hoorah, hoorah,[22] the wind blows East |
| Sou staat wij uit naar see | So we go out to sea |
| Die wind die waai sou diep al see | The wind blows so deep at sea |
| Vertrouw malkander op see | Trust each other at sea |
| Die wind die waai sou diep al see | The wind blows so deep at sea |
| Vertrouw malkander op see. | Trust each other at sea. |
| | |
| Maar onse geld wordt suur verdien, | Our money comes at a hard price |
| Ja somstijds met plesier; | Yes, sometimes with pleasure |
| Hier staat wij als broeders al en dit rond, | Here we stand as brothers in a circle |
| Vertrouw malkander op see.[23] | Trust each other at sea. |

Such "sea shanties" or "work songs" were most likely sung during work on the beach or on board fishing boats. Some songs provided relief from the monotonous and strenuous work of the enslaved, for example: "More gaat Tannie na die Baai, na die Baai, na die Baai, na die Baai. Die meide trek die

lijn op sy. Ma-ga boe-ra bam die hart klop aan" ("Tomorrow Auntie goes to the bay, to the bay, to the bay, to the bay. The girls pull the [fishing] lines in. Ma-ga boe-ra bam the heart is beating").[24] As is evident from the lyrics, such short songs describe work processes (hauling nets and lines onto the beach) and seem to offer a beat to coordinate a working rhythm. Pooling of resources was essential to (freed) slave fishermen, who lacked capital but had close kinship networks in town. While men fished, women and children scaled, gutted and dried fish along the shoreline and sold the product in town. Both songs clearly testify to this. Perhaps the most vivid and eloquent portrayal of this Cape fishing community, consisting of enslaved and free blacks, can be found in the song *Visterman vannie Kaap* ("Fisherman of the Cape").[25] Although collected and published after the abolition of slavery, this song illustrates that this sense of belonging to the Cape and the sea existed long before Emancipation.

| | |
|---|---|
| Ek is 'n Vister van die Kaap, | I am a fisherman of the Cape |
| Die Bo-Kaap is my woning. | The Bo-Kaap is my home. |
| My naam is Achmat Samsodien, | My name is Achmat Samsodien |
| Die oop see is my koning. | The open sea is my king. |
| Hy gee vir my die kabeljou | He gives me codfish |
| Harder, geelbek, stompneus, kreef, | Grey mullet, geelbek, stompneus, lobster. |
| En dan is daar die lekker snoek: | And then there is the tasty pike: |
| Wie wil dan sonder smoorvis leef? | Who wants to live without braised fish? |
| Maar hoe sal ons met stormweer | But how will we in stormy weather |
| Weet waar die hawe lê? | Know where the harbour lies? |
| Roei, roei maar oor die golwe, | Row, row over the waves, |
| Viljeé se rots sal sê. | Viljeé his rock will tell |
| Drieankerbaai se vetkers | Three Anker Bay's light house |
| Sal geel brand in die mis | will burn yellow in the mist |
| Om ons te wys waar Roggebaai | To show us the way where Rogge Bay's |
| Se strand wag vir die vis. | beach is waiting for the fish. |
| En wat dan as my bokkie | And what if my darling |
| Nie daar wag op die strand? | Is not waiting at the beach? |
| Daar's baie visse in die see, | There is plenty of fish in the sea |
| En baie bokkies op die land. | And many darlings on the land. |

Work songs or sea shanties often developed spontaneously within the enslaved community, but were sometimes also demanded and imposed by the slavers to ensure endurance and prevent melancholy amongst

the enslaved. Numerous accounts of slavers, sailors and enslaved people in the Americas have testified that "on the way to the new world, African captives were encouraged or forced to dance and were sometimes 'whipped into cheerfulness'".[26] In the Indian Ocean context, Dutch slavers similarly enforced dancing and singing by the enslaved while on board slave ships sailing to the Cape. In the following account, a Company official gives advice on how to deal with slaves who suffer from illnesses, such as dysentery, on board the slave vessels that sailed the east coast of Africa bringing newly captured slaves from regions such as Mozambique or Madagascar to the Cape of Good Hope: "[t]he best way to cure this disease, is to separate those who suffer from those who are healthy, and to minimize the confining of the sick, but to let them do light works or dance to keep them moving."[27]

While there is no mention of singing or music, the reference to dance, in this context evokes the songs that accompanied the dancing. Such forced performances are described by European settler Samuel Hudson on witnessing the arrival of slave ships in Table Bay at the beginning of the nineteenth century:

> They [the enslaved] are brought on deck to dance, to amuse themselves and to dress their faces in smiles tho' beneath a broken Spirit and a breaking heart. Yet such is their fear of their inhuman Masters and the idea of the Cats[28] that they bow obedient to their Tyrants' wills and dance and laugh and sing and appear perfectly contented with their wayward fortune.[29]

## Diasporic memory in seafaring songs

Such slave ship performances were not only demanded from the enslaved to ostensibly ensure their physical (and perhaps mental) wellbeing, but, as historian Genèvieve Fabre has pointed out for the Atlantic world, such performances also served to hide the dehumanizing effect of slave voyages on the enslaved.[30] At the same time, such slave ship performances have also been viewed as evidence of ships being the carriers of memories and diasporic identities. Scholars such as Patrick Manning and Edward Alpers argue that musical performances during the middle passage were instrumental in forming a diasporic culture of the enslaved community. In *Recollecting Africa: Diaspora Memory in the Indian Ocean World*, Alpers argues that "the

principal vehicle for African [or Asian] memory and identity in the Indian Ocean World are music, song and dance; religion and healing; language and folkways".[31]

What enslaved people on board the slaving vessels bound for Cape Town sang is unfortunately not recorded; however, a set of lyrics that reappears frequently in the slave song repertoire at the Cape is the verse "Na Batavia, Na Batavia" (To Batavia, To Batavia), which serves as a repetitive bridge connecting several different slave songs. Batavia (present-day Jakarta) was the capital city and central port of the Dutch colonial presence in the Indian Ocean world, and whereas most enslaved at the Cape were not originally from Jakarta or the Indonesian archipelago, the port functioned as the central hub in the (slave) trading network of the Dutch East India Company, connecting the different (slave) markets along the shores of the Indian Ocean. The references to "Batavia" can thus be read as symbolic of the middle passage, or perhaps a representation of a longing for the East and a life before bondage.

A longing to sail "East" rather than "West" can be detected in other songs, as for instance in "Hoeral, hoeral, die wind waai oos!" ("Hoorah! Hoorah! The wind blows East"),[32] cited above, and "Hoera, dit skip seil uit Oos" ("Hoorah, this ship sails from the East"). Whereas this longing is not always for a specific geographical location in the East such as Batavia/Jakarta, several songs mention the unspecified area named *Oos* (East) which could be read as a reference to the Indian Ocean world and a place free from the chains in colonial South Africa. The particular freedom which life as a sailor represents becomes apparent in the following lyrics.

| | |
|---|---|
| Hoera, dit skip seil uit oos | Hoorah, this ship sails from the East |
| Wil gy teken vir ene matroos | Do you want to sign up as sailor |
| [...] | ... |
| Veel van matrosies leven | Many sailors live |
| Aan dit gal moes in hem gaat vergeven | This bile within him, we should forgive |
| Sterwen wy op dit zee | If we die at sea |
| Dis beter als op dit land | This will be better than on land |
| Veel van matrosies leef al in ons vaderland[33] | Several sailors already live in our fatherland. |

The "freedom" of which this song speaks is not moral freedom—detachment from family, wives, responsibilities, etc.[34]—but a specific detachment from land (the Cape) and a preference for the freedom of the open sea. The call

of the sea and the calling to the profession of sailor or fisherman is clearly expressed in this song, as in other songs such as *Wy moes die See bevaaren* ("We have to sail the sea").[35] The sea, which was omnipresent in the lives of the enslaved and their direct descendants, as they worked either on or near the water, thus seems to have symbolized to them their separation from their countries of origin, but also the "connecting tissue to memories of a life before and outside of slavery".[36]

Contrary to this view of the sea as a representation of a life outside bondage, Sowande' M. Mustakeem has argued that the "middle passage" (and as such the sea as a symbol) should not simply be seen as an intermediate stage in the process of becoming enslaved, but rather as a crucial part in the dehumanizing process of enslavement. She states that "the middle passage comprised a violently unregulated process critically foundational to the institution of bondage that interlinked slaving voyages and plantation societies".[37] The middle passage should therefore be predominantly seen as a site of loss, and the sea as a "site of slavery".[38] There is certainly a duality in the symbolic power of the sea, as both a barrier and a memento of loss, as well as a symbol of freedom.

Lodewijk Wagenaar's experimental attempt to give a voice to the enslaved Boenga van Johor[39] who was imprisoned on Robben Island off the coast of Cape Town, allows us to speculate on possible negative associations enslaved had with the ocean. In an imaginative letter, Wagenaar allows Boenga to speak to the past and present and reveal how enslaved were traumatized by the sight of the sea as it became a reminder of the horrors experienced on route to the Cape. In the gripping, speculative but very plausible illustration of Boenga's passionate plea to the Governor of the Cape, she vouches, "I cannot stand anymore to see waves threatening to grasp me, to carry my helpless body and kill me".[40] That Boenga's potential plea to be transferred to the mainland away from the sight of the ocean remained unheard and misunderstood is the most likely scenario, as Wagenaar shows that no records have been found which indicate that Boenga ever left Robben Island. Moreover, that the voyage across the Indian Ocean was a traumatic experience for the enslaved usually went unnoticed and unacknowledged by colonial administrators and settlers. Civil governor at the Cape, Lord Macartney, for instance wrote in 1797 in defence of the slave trade that "the slaves of this colony are brought from the short distance of Mozambique and Madagascar, they have encountered neither the hobglobins of the [Atlantic] middle passage, nor the scramble of a west India market".[41] Yet the account by Samuel Hudson of

the forced slave dances on deck indicates that the suffering of enslaved on board was clearly observable for all who wanted to see. Similarly, Lady Anne Barnard recorded in her diary in 1800 how she had observed the landing of a slave ship in Cape Town harbour and had been appalled by the sight of such a great number of enslaved (around 600) that had been kept below deck. When asking about the conditions on board, she was surprised to be told that "not many had died ... only 50".[42]

That the sea can also be a site of terror and danger becomes apparent from several Dutch sailors songs such as "Verschrikkelijke Storm" ("Terrible Storm")[43] and "Omstandig Verhaal, van het verongelukken van de agt Oost-Indische Retour Schepen"[44] ("Detailed story of the perishing of the eight East-India return ships") as well as the "seafaring songs" which are part of the so-called "Nederlandse liedjies" genre of the Cape Coloured community, such as "Wy moes na dit see bevaaren" ("Why must you sail the seas")[45] which all relate the Cape's stormy reputation. Such songs about storms and good helmsmanship can also be found in more recent folk songs of the Cape Coloured community. For example, a song entitled Boeta Gila[46] which speaks of a storm preventing fishermen from sailing out and catching fish. Or the following song "Ankers op" ("Anchors up") which eloquently speaks of the havoc-wreaking storms that can hit the Cape peninsula.

| | |
|---|---|
| Hoor hoe brul ou Leeukop! | Listen how old Lion's head[47] roars |
| Die wind spring op Llandudno, | The wind slams into Llandudno[48] |
| Hy gryp en skud die huise, | He grabs and shakes the houses |
| Hy druk die bome plat. | He presses down on the trees |
| Ankers op, die vis is weg, | Anchors up, the fish is gone |
| Die duikers skiet die skeure in. | The duikers[49] hurl into the cracks |
| Ankers op, die seevoëls waai | Anchors up, the seabirds fly |
| Soos wit papiere na die land. | Like white papers towards the land. |
| Breekwater toe, Bakoven regs, | Breaking waters, Bakoven[50] on the right |
| Met ronde brode van die dood. | With round breads of death. |
| Ankers op, al langs die kus, | Anchors up, passed the coast |
| Die water klim-klim in ons skuit. | The water climbs-climbs into our vessel |
| Die Twaalf Apostels staan nog pal, | The Twelve Apostles[51] are still standing tall |
| Maar almal het hun mantels aan. | But all with their cloaks on. |

The sea as site of terror and trauma is thus clearly present in the song repertoire, and challenges the association of the sea as site of freedom, but does

not per se connect the terror of stormy seas to that of the terror of slavery. Nevertheless, when one considers the fact that several seafaring songs in the Cape Coloured song repertoire are of Dutch origin,[52] images of coercion and psychological enslavement surface and it becomes harder to identify the seafaring songs, and the image of the ocean, as sites of memory of a life before or outside slavery. Yet, following Gilroy's argument that the Black Atlantic was a space of contact and hybridity, and that the exchanges across the ocean led to the emergence of a counterculture of modernity and Creole culture, the adoption of Dutch songs by the Cape Coloured community should not be read as a sign of subjugation but rather as a sign of exchange. As Isabel Hofmeyr has noted, port cities such as Cape Town functioned as funnels of "concentrated exchange" that were not only limited to the cultures and traditions of the East and East Africa, but also incorporated the cultures and traditions of the "West".[53] Enslaved and free black fishermen working in Cape Town harbour would have been well positioned to pick up seafaring songs from passing sailors on board VOC ships bound for Batavia or Amsterdam. In parallel, the many taverns in this port city were frequented by the enslaved and sailors alike, and on such occasions musical traditions must have been exchanged and intermingled. Historian Victor de Kock has noted that music, in particular, was the universal language that enabled social contact between such diverse communities.[54] These musical borrowings were not unidimensional, nor were they a sign of cultural imperialism, but rather this "interracial [musical] cooperation" should be regarded as "opposition to racism and segregation".[55]

The so-called *Nederlandsliedjies*—the genre of Dutch songs that covers most seafaring songs—are among the favourites in the Cape Coloured song repertoire. They are seen as a repertoire "which is endowed with a sense of historicity and a strong feeling of belonging to Cape Town and South Africa, because it is rooted in slavery and has been the result of a series of creative acts".[56] The lyrics evoke memories of this community's past and present connections to the ocean. Additionally, the performance highlights the hybrid origins of the song tradition, as the lead vocalist demonstrates his melismatic singing technique with its obvious Eastern tone scales, and the choir—which swerves back and forth as if to the rhythm of the waves—sings the backing vocals in a clearly Western tone scale. Together, they sing songs on themes such as the high seas, the life-giving nature of the sea, and life as a sailor. As such, the performance of such (Dutch) seafaring songs signifies most vividly the presence of a "Brown Indian Ocean consciousness" in the Cape Coloured memory culture.

## Conclusion

In the song lyrics of the Cape Coloured community one encounters the image of the sea as an open and free space, the image of sailors and, more specifically, the image of the ship as a vehicle with which to sail towards freedom. But, more importantly, the ocean and the ships that sail on it represent a zone of contact, and act as carriers of ideas and memories. Paul Gilroy reminds us that "ships were the living means by which the points within that Atlantic World were joined". The symbolic power of the sea and of ships is that "they were mobile elements that stood for the shifting spaces in between the fixed places they connected".[57] In Adam Small's poem, *Vryheid*, the couple longs for the sea but also for the boats that are the vehicles with which one can sail towards freedom. In what is often described as the most famous and popular folk song of the Cape Coloured community, *Daar kom die Alibama* ("Here Comes the Alibama"),[58] the image of a ship and the sea as connecting tissue is used to represent not a route towards freedom per se, but rather a debate on what slavery and freedom mean. The song celebrates the coming of an American ship to Cape Town's shores. It speaks of the arrival of the American confederate warship, CSS *Alabama*, in Table Bay in August 1863 in the midst of the American Civil War.[59]

| | |
|---|---|
| Daar kom die Alibama | Here comes the Alibama |
| Die Alibama kom oor die see | The Alibama comes over the sea |
| Daar kom die Alibama | Here comes the Alibama |
| Die Alibama kom oor die see | The Alibama comes over the sea |

The arrival of a warship which could be spotted from Cape Town harbour created quite an uproar at the time. Apart from the excitement and novelty of this sighting, it is apparent that the ship was also seen as the bearer of news and ideas. The continuing popularity of the song, predominantly within the Cape Coloured community, is sometimes attributed to the fact that it commemorates the American Civil War, a war fought over the abolition of slavery.[60] To the members of the Cape Coloured community, who themselves had been emancipated only one generation before the warship's arrival, the ship and the song commemorating its arrival in Cape Town could have evoked memories of their own struggle for emancipation. Like the Dutch sailor songs with their references to sailing East, and the fishermen's songs and the sea shanties which allude to the early fishing communities

consisting of free blacks and the enslaved at the Cape, the image of the ocean in this song seems to function as a space for memories of the slave past.

## Notes

1. Translation from Afrikaans: "Do I hear the sea sing, sing? Do I hear the seagulls sing? No! No! I hear freedom, yes freedom sing!" from Adam Small, *Vryheid, Kitaar my kruis,* 42. 2nd edn., Cape Town: HAUM, 1962.
2. "Cape Coloured" refers to a mixed-race community living mainly in the Western and Northern Cape in South Africa, who are the descendants of the enslaved community in South Africa. The use of the term is highly debated as it is a reminder of the racist ideology and segregationist policies of the apartheid regime. See Louise Viljoen, "Displacement in the Literary Texts of Black Afrikaans Writers in South Africa," *Journal of Literary Studies* 21, no. 1–2 (2005): 95. However, other labels such Cape Malay, Brown Afrikaner and "Bruin mense" evoke other uncomfortable associations. The term "Coloured" thus is still an official term, recognized and used by the South African state to designate this community.
3. Small, *Vryheid*, 42.
4. In Adam Small's poetry, the theme of liberation from oppression (during apartheid) is often addressed using the metaphor of Moses leading his people out of slavery in Egypt. In so doing, Small connects the struggle against slavery with the struggle against apartheid. See Michael Cloete, "Language and Politics in the Philosophy of Adam Small: Some Personal Reflections," *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde* 49, no. 1 (2012): 127.
5. Bernhard Klein and Gesa Mackenthum, "Introduction. The Sea is History," in *Sea Changes: Historicizing the Ocean*, edited by Bernhard Klein and Gesa Mackenthum, 2. New York: Routledge, 2004.
6. Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic. Modernity and Double-Consciousness*, 15. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1993.
7. Isabel Hofmeyr, "The Black Atlantic Meets the Indian Ocean: Forging New Paradigms of Transnationalism for the Global South—Literary and Cultural Perspectives," *Social Dynamics* 33, no. 2 (2007): 13.
8. Hofmeyr, "The Black Atlantic," 14.
9. Gabeba Baderoon, "The African Oceans—Tracing the Sea as Memory of Slavery in South African Literature and Culture," *Research in African Literatures* 40, no. 4 (2009): 91-93.

10. The term "folk memory" refers to popular expressions of the cultural memory of a community.
11. Baderoon, "The African Oceans," 89.
12. A.M. van der Wal, "Singing of Slavery, Performing the Past. The Folk Songs of the Cape Coloured Community as Cultural Memory of the South African Slave Past, 1657–present" (PhD diss., Utrecht University, 2016).
13. Sampie Terreblanche, *A History of Inequality in South Africa, 1652-2002*. 9. Scottsville: University of Natal Press, 2002.
14. Wayne Dooling, "In Search of Profitability: Wheat and Wine Production in the Post-Emancipation Western Cape", *South African Historical Journal*, 55:1 (2006), 88.
15. Vivian Bickford-Smith, "Black Ethnicities, Communities and Political Expression in Late Victorian Cape Town", *Journal of African History* 36, no. 3 (1995): 445.
16. Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 74.
17. Carl Peter Thunberg, *Travels at the Cape of Good Hope 1772–1775*. Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1986, cited in Nigel Worden, *Slavery in Dutch South Africa*, 39. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
18. Robert Percival, *An Account of the Cape of Good Hope*, 43. London: C. & R. Baldwin, 1804, cited in Karel Schoeman, *Portrait of a Slave Society: The Cape of Good Hope, 1717–1795*, 489. Pretoria: Protea Boekhuis, 2012.
19. Nigel Worden, Elizabeth Van Heyningen and Vivian Bickford-Smith, *Cape Town. The Making of a City*, 62. Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 1998.
20. Schoeman, *Portrait of a Slave Society*, 207.
21. Worden, Van Heyningen and Bickford-Smith, *Cape Town*, 64.
22. *Hoera* is Dutch for "hoorah". However, in this written version it says *hoeral* instead of *hoera*. This implies it might not mean hoorah, but perhaps *hoor al*, translated as "listen everyone".
23. Izak David du Plessis, *Die Bijdrae van de Kaapse Maleier tot die Afrikaanse Volkslied*, 162. Kaapstad: Nasionale Pers, 1935.
24. du Plessis, *Die bijdrae van die Kaapse Maleier*, 131.
25. Izak David du Plessis, *Kaapse Moppies*, 18. Kaapstad: Nasionale Pers, 1977.
26. Geneviève Fabre, "The Slave Ship Dance," in *Black Imagination and the Middle Passage*, edited by Maria Diedrich, Henry Louis Gates and Carl Pedersen, 34-35. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
27. Cape Archives, Council Resolution, C. 181, 2–88. Dinsdag den 13 Jan 1789. Original text: "de beste middelen om deeze ziekte in desselvs loop te stuiten, zijn het afzonderen der Lijders aan dezelve Laboreerende van de gesonde

Slaven; deeze zo min mogelijk te kluijsteren, maar integendeel door ligt werk en danzen in eene gestadige beweeging te houden".

28. A whip made out of several knotted cords.
29. Robert C.H. Shell, "Introduction to S.E. Hudson's 'Slaves'," *Kronos* 9 (1984), 48.
30. Fabre, "Slave Ship Dance," 34–35.
31. Edward A. Alpers, "Recollecting Africa: Diasporic Memory in the Indian Ocean World," *African Studies Review* 43, no. 1 (2000): 90.
32. du Plessis, *Bijdrae van die Kaap Maleier*, 162.
33. M.A. Gassiep, *Nederlandse Volksliedjies soos deur die Maleiers gesing*, 20. Johannesburg: Ivan Joffe, 1942.
34. This stereotypical image of an unattached and free-spirited sailor does, however, appear in some "seafaring songs" of the Coloured community; for instance, in the songs *Wat ly daar een seeman* ("How does a sailor suffer"), *Ons Erfenis, 'n versameling van die gewildste Kaapse-Nederlandse Liedere* (Beit-ul Aman: Kaapstad), and *Nieuwe Seemanslied* ("New Sailor's Song"), in du Plessis, *Bijdrae van die Kaap Maleier*, 78.
35. *Wy moes die See bevaaren* ("We have to sail the sea"), from Gassiep, *Nederlandse Volksliedjies*, 12.
36. Baderoon, "The African Oceans," 95.
37. Sowande' M. Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea: Terror, Sex, and Sickness in the Middle Passage*, 3. Chicago IL: University of Illinois Press, 2016.
38. Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea*, 5.
39. In this edited volume's chapter entitled "Boenga van Johor. My forced journey from Batavia to the Cape of Good Hope".
40. Yang Mulia Tuan Jan de la Fontaine, Gubernur dan Kepala di Cabo da Boa Esperança ("To the right honourable Jan de la Fontaine, Governor of the cape of Good Hope"). Retrieved from the past by Lodewijk Wagenaar for the "Being a Slave" workshop at Leiden University, 29–30 May 2017.
41. Macartney: Private letter, 24 July 1797, cited in Margaret Lena, "Speaking for the Slave: Britain and the Cape, 1751-1838," *Literator* 20/1 (1999): 108.
42. Diaries of Lady Anne Barnard: 10 March 1800, cited in Lena, "Speaking for the Slave," 109.
43. Anonymous, "Verschrikkelijke Storm Voorgevallen aan Kaap de Goede Hoop." Lbl Meertens 15002 ([1870 ca.]).
44. "Pertinent en Omstandig Verhaal, van het verongelukken van de agt Oost-Indische Retour Schepen, de Flora, Westerwyk, Paddenburg, Ipenrode, Duinbeek, Roodenrys, Goudriaan en de Buis, dewelke op den 21. Mey 1737. door een verschikkelyke Storm of Orcaan uit den Noord-Westen aan de Caap de Goede

Hoop zyn geleven" (translation: "Pertinent and detailed story of the disaster of the eight East-India return ships, the *Flora, Westerwyk, Paddenburg, Ipenrode, Duinbeek, Roodenrys, Goudriaan* and the *Buis*, which on 21 May 1737 perished, because of a terrible storm or hurricane from the North-West at the Cape of Good Hope"), published in the "De Schiedamse Jeneverstoker" songbook (1730), 72.

45. *Wy moes die See bevaaren* ("We must sail the sea"), from Gassiep, *Nederlandse Volksliedjies,* 12.
46. Batoe derives from the Malaysian word Batu which means stone or rock. Batoe Gila could thus refer to some of the visible large boulders just off the coast of Cape Town.
47. Lion's head (Leeukop) is a 669-metre high mountain between Table Mountain and Signal Hill in Cape Town.
48. Llandudno is today a rather posh seaside suburb of Cape Town. It was designated as a township in the Cape Town vicinity in 1903, but had in the more distant past already been settled by Khoikhoi clans.
49. The duiker or "common duiker" is a small antelope found throughout South Africa.
50. Bakoven is the name of a seaside suburb of Cape Town, probably called after a boulder in the shape of a smelting chimney: Peter E. Raper, *Dictionary of Southern African Place Names*. Internet Archive (1987) 63.
51. The Twelve Apostles are a mountain range on the Cape Peninsula.
52. du Plessis, *Bijdrae van die Kaapse Maleier*, 19–20; Denis-Constant Martin, *Coon Carnival. New Year in Cape Town: Past and Present,* 27. Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 1999; Armelle Gaulier and Denis-Constant Martin, *Cape Town Harmonies: Memory, Humour and Resilience,* 77. Cape Town: African Minds, 2017.
53. Isabel Hofmeyr, Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie and Preben Kaarsholm, "Durban and Cape Town as Port Cities: Reconsidering Southern African Studies from the Indian Ocean," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 42, no. 3 (2016): 382.
54. Victor de Kock, *Those in Bondage: An Account of the Life of the Slave at the Cape in the Days of the Dutch East India Company*, 91-92. London: Allen & Unwin, 1950.
55. Denis-Constant Martin, *Sounding the Cape: Music, Identity and Politics in South Africa,* 248. Somerset West: African Minds, 2013.
56. Gaulier and Martin, *Cape Town Harmonies,* 81–82.
57. Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, 16.
58. The popularity of this song is confirmed by most choir captains I interviewed during my fieldwork in South Africa in 2008, 2010, 2013 and 2015. See also Martin, *Coon Carnival,* 84.

59. Edna Bradlow and Frank Bradlow, *Here Comes the Alabama*. Cape Town: Westby Nunn Publishers, 1958.
60. Colin Howard, *The "No-Persons": An Investigation Into Aspects of Secular Popular Music in Cape Town,* 33. (Master's diss., Goldsmiths College, University of London, 1994).

10

# The Materiality of Indian Ocean Slavery and Emancipation

## The Challenges of Presence and Absence

*Sarah Longair*

Barely visible in a photograph of the Peace Memorial Museum in Zanzibar in 1926, a year after the museum's opening, are a set of slave stocks, objects which speak tangibly of the punitive experience of slavery. These politically charged objects were displayed in the historical section of the museum at ground level, resting on the bases of the wooden stands displaying photographs of historic sites around Zanzibar. Their exact origin is unknown, although during the institution's creation a colonial official on Pemba island suggested that slave stocks could be acquired there for the museum.[1] The legacy and memory of slavery was a delicate issue in British colonial Zanzibar. The British were proud of the humanitarian mission of abolition, but some members of the Arab community, the ruling elite alongside the British, blamed the end of slavery for a downturn in their economic fortunes. Emancipation gradually transformed Zanzibari society, as the formerly enslaved renegotiated their identities and communities within colonial Zanzibar.[2] Within this sensitive situation, the curators may have discussed the location of the stocks in the museum display, and significantly they are not mentioned in the various museum guidebooks. Their display at foot level allowed for an ambiguous interpretive path to be trodden. In the absence of documentation, one can only speculate as to the justification for their position. Perhaps the curators decided that the stocks could easily be ignored or highlighted by a museum guide as necessary. Such an uneasy compromise reflected the British approach to dealing with this inflammatory issue.

The question of representing slavery resurfaced in the Museum in 1957, at a time of increasing political tension between representatives of the Arab community, many descended from slave-owners, and of the Afro-Shirazi

Party, which sought to cohere the interests of the African community including the Swahili majority, former slaves and their descendants, and more recent migrants from the mainland.[3] C.H. Thompson, then archivist-curator, recorded that "the opinion has been expressed in Arab circles that the Museum, through its exhibits relating to the slave trade, is a subtle political weapon to keep African and Arab apart and so consolidate the position of the European".[4] Five years later in August 1962, as the political situation intensified still further, a member of the colonial government requested that "during these days of party tension, no pictures should be on show which might tend to exacerbate racial feelings".[5] Some months later, a letter from Thompson's successor as curator reveals the ultimate fate of the stocks:

> Two pieces of wood at Museum about 25 ft. long each, with holes in them. These were used for fastening legs of slaves (slave fork). As they were too big they could not be put in any store; therefore they were kept outside at the entrance of my office rather at a conspicuous position. With your permission I should like to destroy them. The wood is not good and has holes. Therefore they have no cash value; I shall split and dump them into the sea.[6]

The Zanzibar government approved this action the following month. Objects of such potency, which made palpable individual suffering and simultaneously represented the atrocities of the slave trade, were deemed too sensitive for retention in the tense climate of decolonization and ethnic identity politics. The destruction of the stocks, however, is a significant loss to Zanzibar where few genuine remnants of the island's slave history and heritage remain.[7]

This example highlights numerous issues with recovering the materiality of slavery. It is the story of deliberate destruction of significant objects, but it simultaneously reveals how material things retain their power and significance within the museum setting and can become politicized. The legacy of slavery loomed large over the *Zama za Siasa* (Time of Politics) of 1957–1963 in Zanzibar.[8] As we have seen, the Zanzibar Museum first chose to manage this contentious issue by placing objects out of easy eye-view, at floor level, then chose the heavy-handed solution of destruction. What is singular about this particular story of loss in the wider picture of the material culture of slavery is that we know the reason for this object's absence. The decision to acquire the object in the first place is also noteworthy, especially given the challenges it

presented in display and interpretation. As this chapter will demonstrate, the material record of the experience of being a slave in the Indian Ocean region is subject to the forces of colonial collecting practice. The few possessions of enslaved people were rarely deemed worthy of acquisition by Europeans whose priority in these regions was an ethnographically-driven project to collect material from indigenous populations. These lacunae reflect Wayne Modest's observations about Caribbean collections – these island cultures were "not ancient enough yet not modern enough" for collectors.[9] Enslaved peoples and their societies before and after emancipation defy simple categorization and hybridity is often present through their material culture. As Sujit Sivasundaram has identified in relation to Sri Lanka, Europeans overlooked the "creole and hybrid" in preference to the "indigenous".[10] This paucity of material evidence then influences how Indian Ocean slavery and its legacies are presented in museums. As Jones has noted in this volume in relation to the Netherlands, histories of slavery are now permanent features in several museums in Britain and are the subject of temporary exhibitions. However, the Atlantic story tends to dominate. John McAleer has highlighted how public histories of the slave trade in the Indian Ocean "have been mediated by the collecting and representation of objects and attendant knowledge relating to them".[11]

The limits of British collecting practice forge particular views of Indian Ocean societies and seriously constrain our ability to recover their material worlds. Archival studies of the Atlantic world reveal that the enslaved themselves owned and consumed a variety of material goods.[12] Higman lauds these efforts but highlights that "we lack a general model to guide our understanding of the relative presence and absence of evidence".[13] Yet, as is widely acknowledged, patterns of slave trading and slave cultures differed greatly between the two oceans. Archaeology offers another possibility for recovering items or objects not collected at the time, although this is a challenging task. As Wynne Jones reminds us, "slavery tends to leave little archaeological trace".[14] Concerted efforts are being made to reveal these traces in the Indian Ocean world.[15] Donley-Reid, for example, identified the areas in which enslaved people lived and the role played by enslaved women in households in Lamu.[16] Kusimba has examined rockshelters in south-east Kenya to explore the impact of the slave trade on migration patterns and the economic and political upheaval wrought by slave and cattle raiding.[17] Croucher's excavations of clove plantations in East Africa offer evidence from buildings and objects to complicate our understanding of gender and slave identities.[18] Research has also been conducted in the island destinations of many East

African slaves, the histories of which are discussed by Christiansë in this volume. Excavations have taken place in the Le Morne Cultural Landscape, a UNESCO World Heritage site in Mauritius. In the Le Morne "Old Cemetery", the burial site of a community of maroons and later freed slaves, Seetah has established the ethnicity of these individuals and material culture which was, though European in origin, used in an African or Afro-Malagasy manner in the burial site.[19] In combination these sites speak of resistance of the enslaved and the development of their own cultural practices. These various projects continue to provide new interpretations of sites, material evidence and data that fill some gaps in the material record, offering new possibilities for museums and heritage sites.

This chapter explores evidence of the Indian Ocean slave trade in museums in Britain and how we might interpret them to reinsert the story of the enslaved into these objects' histories. Françoise Vergès has demonstrated that there are alternative ways of presenting histories of complex island societies and memories in the absence of objects in a post-colonial museum.[20] My intention in this chapter is not to propose that objects should hold a privileged position in museological interpretations of the Indian Ocean experience of enslavement, but I seek to investigate the few material remnants to expose slave narratives and understand the logics of collecting that have led to their preservation. As with archives, the perspectives of the enslaved are often silenced in museum collections. Edward Alpers's 2007 study of the "other middle passage" based on British records shows how we can expose elements of the Indian Ocean slave experience using these British sources.[21] Similarly, Christiansë in this volume shows how we can tease out the narratives of the enslaved through an imaginative close study of archives. This chapter will first examine objects associated with the explorer David Livingstone and collected to promote the cause of abolition. It will also examine objects and images of the Bombay Africans, emancipated men who supported British exploration in East Africa.[22] Finally, it will look at objects amassed by colonial officers in post-abolition Zanzibar. These objects are currently housed in the David Livingstone Centre, the British Museum and the Royal Geographical Society. This limited selection of objects exposes the self-interest of British collectors and their priorities, but I seek to demonstrate that further study of their histories and the archival record can highlight the agency of the enslaved and their experiences. By looking at objects and *seeing* the slave in museum collections, museums can find alternative ways to interpret their collections and defy the colonial intentions of collectors.

## Collecting in the name of abolition: David Livingstone

By the mid-nineteenth century, Britons were principally interested in the Indian Ocean slave trade in pursuit of the cause of abolition. Christiansë gives detailed accounts of this process in her chapter in this volume. The expeditions and publications of David Livingstone were the most influential of these endeavours and exposed the British public to the continued presence of slavery in the region. Supported by the abolitionist lobby in Britain, Livingstone brought eastern Africa to the attention of politicians and the public. The Slavery Abolition Act came into force in the British Empire only in 1834, and abolitionists, hitherto focused upon the Atlantic, then turned their attention to eastern Africa and the Indian Ocean. Livingstone was critical in propagating first-hand accounts of the East African slave trade, describing its horrors in detail, which the newly self-righteous British public lapped up. He campaigned for intervention in the region with his powerful rhetoric proposing "Christianity, civilisation and commerce" as the keys for eradicating the slave trade in the interior of eastern Africa. Livingstone, however, was not an enthusiastic collector or particularly drawn to material culture.[23] Of the objects amassed on these expeditions remarkably few relate directly to slavery.[24] This scarcity contrasts with how loudly this narrative speaks within Livingstone's writings and in his self-identification as an anti-slavery campaigner.

One of the few objects attesting to Livingstone's anti-slavery mission is a yoke or goree, now in the David Livingstone Centre in Blantyre in Scotland. These wooden forks, placed around the neck of slaves to restrain them, graphically illustrate the plight of enslaved people as they were forced to make arduous treks from the inland to the coast of East Africa. A small illustration of a goree features in the first part of Livingstone's *Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambezi and Its Tributaries: And of the Discovery of the Lakes Shirwa and Nyassa* when he briefly mentions an encounter with a slave party which they did not free as they did not know what to do with them afterwards.[25] It is possible that this object was collected during an episode described later in this book when Livingstone and his party met another slave coffle. Livingstone was incensed by what he saw, particularly noting the drivers who, "bedecked in various articles of finery, marched jauntily ... They seemed to feel that they were doing a very noble thing, and might proudly march with an air of triumph".[26] At the sight of the white men, the slave drivers fled and their leader, before himself bolting from the scene, admitted that these slaves had

not been bought but captured in war. Livingstone's party then set about freeing the captives who "in their way of expressing thanks, clapped their hands with great energy".[27] The women and children were easier to free as they were bound by rope, but releasing the men was more challenging "as each has his neck in the fork of a stout stick, six or seven feet long, and kept in by an iron rod which was riveted at both ends across the throat".[28] A saw carried by Bishop Mackenzie was used to cut through the yokes. Livingstone was told by the slaves of earlier attempts by two women in the party to untie the ropes which bound them, but they were shot to deter others, an important reminder of the regular attempts by enslaved people to resist.

Livingstone retained a goree, which became part of his personal collection, much of which was transferred to the David Livingstone Centre. We later learn in the *Narrative*, however, one reason why few such remnants survive. After being released from their bonds, the women of the party were told to cook the food they had been carrying. At first they took some coaxing – they "seemed to consider the news too good to be true" – but then they "went at it with alacrity, and made a capital fire by which to boil their pots, with the slave sticks and bonds, their old acquaintances through many a sad night and weary day".[29] The enslaved women immediately took this opportunity to burn the objects of their confinement. Livingstone interpreted this deliberate destruction as a symbolic celebration of the women's freedom.

The preservation of such material within British collections proclaims the role of Livingstone and his party in the abolition of slavery. As with many such narratives, the abolitionists, their sacrifice and their cause sit at the heart of the story. This focus is evident in the caption in the catalogue for the Livingstone exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery in 1996 in which the yoke was displayed: "[w]ooden yoke removed by Livingstone from the neck of the slave".[30] This brief description clearly marks out Livingstone's benign action as the central point of interest of the object rather than the experience of the enslaved wearer confined and punished by it. This was, naturally, an exhibition about Livingstone, yet the enslaved person exists only as an object of the explorer's action. Livingstone himself noted the punitive nature of the goree later in his text. On an encounter with 30 young men and boys in slave-sticks he noted that:

> The weight of the goree seemed very annoying when they tried to sleep. This taming instrument is kept on until the party has crossed several rivers, and all hope of escape has vanished from the captive's mind.[31]

Although Livingstone observed and recorded the cruelty of such devices, in the exhibition devoted to the man himself the cult of Livingstone, which began during his lifetime and endures to this day, dominates the interpretation of such objects. However, as we have seen, a closer examination of the circumstances around its acquisition offers an alternative narrative which highlights the agency of enslaved women in the destruction of these objects. As Morgan Meyer has observed, absences can have their own materiality.[32] The absent gorees and bonds here convey a potent message about resistance and the response of the enslaved to their condition.

An image of slaves wearing gorees in a slave coffle was the only plate included in the published *Narrative* depicting the slave trade in action. This is somewhat surprising, given that the horrors of the slave trade and the need for legitimate commerce were central themes of the book. To overcome the lack of representation of the slave trade, Livingstone asked Horace Waller – a fellow abolitionist who arranged for publication of Livingstone's works with publisher John Murray – to emboss a gold emblem on the cover of the volume. He suggested, "I think a man in a slave stick with his hands tied behind and the slaver with a hold of the other end of the goree [slave stick] & a musket in his right hand will be best".[33] The exposure of the iniquity of the slave trade, a message threaded throughout the *Narrative*, was thus given visual prominence lacking within the plates in the book. The image was drawn by J.B. Zwecker and engraved by J.W. Whymper based, according to Tim Barringer, on a verbal description by Livingstone. He may also have shown Zwecker the object.[34] The goree in these images acts as a potent symbol of the cruelty of the trade, with the object itself a material counterpart to the abolitionist narrative. Handler and Steiner have revealed that this image was reproduced in a variety of publications in the UK and the US, rarely with any specific reference to Livingstone and sometimes erroneously captioned as relating to Mungo Park and the Atlantic slave trade.[35] So well did the goree and the column of enslaved people capture the essential image of African slavery that its key reference points to the Indian Ocean, Livingstone, and his proud moment of freeing of slaves, faded through its reproduction.

## Exploration, geography and the material culture of slavery

Livingstone's explorations were in part sponsored by the Royal Geographical Society (RGS), and his explorations are closely tied in with the growing stature of this institution, founded in 1830 to promote the expansion of geographical knowledge. Livingstone's fame in the mid-nineteenth century played a major role in bringing prominence to exploration and the RGS in the public and imperial eye, a phenomenon Felix Driver describes as "geography militant".[36] The RGS also became a repository for objects, images and texts related to exploration and currently houses numerous items associated with Livingstone. Most of these can be regarded as Livingstone relics, including his watch, his collar, his pocket-knife, copies of his signature, or sections of the tree under which he was buried.[37] In addition, the RGS holds a set of slave chains and leg irons from East Africa, attached by a padlock which has been torn apart. The RGS online catalogue speculates that they could have been acquired during the occasion described in the previous section when Livingstone and his party physically assisted with the removal of such bonds.[38] This online entry also states that Livingstone used these chains and irons as props for his lectures in London during which he railed against the slave trade. Such powerful, heavy and noisy objects tangibly brought the punishing conditions endured by enslaved people home to his British audiences and assisted Livingstone in bringing this story of inhumanity to life. These objects of punishment represent Livingstone's attempt to bring the experience of "being a slave" vividly to his audiences in Britain, while also enhancing the authenticity and drama of his performance.

Livingstone's explorations were not undertaken simply in the service of expanding geographical knowledge and the Christian mission. The Zambesi expedition of 1858–1863 was specifically charged with bringing back examples of raw materials, commercial products and botanical specimens that might be cultivated there to encourage "legitimate commerce" to combat the slave trade.[39] John Kirk, the expedition doctor, collected a large number of objects and specimens including samples of cotton and basketwork, while Thomas Baines, the expedition artist, recorded local manufacturing methods.[40] The Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew, which in part sponsored the Zambesi expedition, received the specimens and objects amassed during the expedition. At this time, Kew was home to the Museum of Economic Botany, an institution showcasing the economic potential of the expanding British Empire.[41] Kirk documented these items carefully, including the community

and place from which they were collected, as well as botanical information including the type of plant from which they were made. While the specimens remain in Kew, several of the examples of material culture collected by Kirk were moved from Kew to the British Museum in the 1960s as curators deemed them of more anthropological than botanical interest.

These collections link to the history of slavery in two ways. First, they provide evidence of material cultures of various African peoples from which people were enslaved. Whilst necessarily collected with Kirk's particular mission in mind, their condition and documentation provide important examples of pre-colonial African cultures, technologies, communities and traditions which were ruptured by the slave trade. They are a material memory of pre-enslavement lives. Secondly, such objects illustrate the British mission to expand commerce as a viable strategy to counter the slave trade. Livingstone's mission was not officially one of colonization. Nonetheless, British exploration and the production of knowledge about the region ultimately paved the way for the later annexation of swathes of territory in East and Central Africa. In this respect, these objects and their detailed labels describing the economic potential of plants and people are an ominous sign of future exploitation. Kirk's personal involvement in abolition did not end at this point. As Consul-General at Zanzibar in the 1870s and early 1880s, he was instrumental in negotiating the treaty to abolish the slave trade with Sultan Barghash at Zanzibar in 1873. His diaries record his meticulous observation of the numbers of slaves traded and he shows genuine concern for their plight.[42] Kirk became a significant collector of antiquities while stationed at Zanzibar although he seems to have amassed no objects which testify to his central role in abolition.[43] This is a telling silence, given the fervour with which he pursued the cause of abolition and his interest in African cultures.

## Exploration and emancipation: the role of the Bombay Africans

It is clear that through men such as Livingstone, British ambitions to explore the African interior and to abolish slavery were intimately connected. While the celebrated stories of explorers focused upon the individual as a hero taking on the wilds of the unknown, these men were entirely dependent upon local actors. Exploration was far from being a European project. No expedition could take place without a team of hundreds of men and women to act as porters, translators and guides. As Driver and Jones note, "Many of these

intermediaries, for their part, acquired far more knowledge of exploration than most European explorers could ever hope to attain."[44] Critical to several expeditions were the group now known as the Bombay Africans – enslaved boys from East Africa later liberated by the British Navy. They were then taken to western India and educated in mission stations along the coast. When David Livingstone was planning his explorations in India, these men were ideal guides and assistants with their knowledge of various East African languages and regions, as well as English. Sidi Mubarak Bombay, James Chuma, Abdullah Susi, Matthew Wellington and Jacob Wainwright are just some of those whose names and histories have been recorded and researched.[45] The exhibition entitled *Bombay Africans, 1850 – 1910*, curated by Clifford J. Pereira, at the RGS in 2007 and part of the commemoration of the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade, was devoted to these men; it then toured the UK, ensuring that their story was brought to a wider audience. It was one of the few events in that year to focus upon the story of the Indian Ocean.

Objects related to these remarkable men are scarce. Several were awarded special medals by the RGS for participating in expeditions. In 1873, a set of medals was struck for those who had been with Livingstone on his final expedition and took his body back to Zanzibar and on to England. These so-called "faithful followers" were given medals of which two examples exist, one in the RGS (given to Richard Rutton) and the other in the British Museum, awarded to "Thomas (Khamees)". Thomas was probably the English name given to this man – whether he was a liberated slave we do not know, although the taking of Christian names was common for the emancipated who were educated in missions. John Kirk in fact donated this medal to the British Museum in 1886 shortly before he returned to Britain from acting as Consul General in Zanzibar. It is possible that Thomas/Khamees died either before he was given the medal or after, and his family presented it to Kirk. While Livingstone's face prominently features on the obverse and the name of the follower was merely inscribed on the edge, it is nonetheless significant material evidence of the collaborative nature of exploration and in some cases the close relations explorers developed with their assistants.

Photographs and paintings bring the histories of the Bombay Africans to the fore. Tembo, an assistant to James Grant and John Hanning Speke, appears in a painting by Henry Wyndham Phillips, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1864. Driver argues that in this image Tembo represents the importance of local knowledge as evidence for exploration, along with maps, sketches and specimens. Grant and Speke valued local knowledge, but were

criticized by men such as Richard Burton who frowned upon the reliability of using local informants.[46] Driver has pieced together Tembo's history, noting that he was a formerly enslaved boy, possibly from present-day Tanzania, adopted by General Rigby, Consul at Zanzibar from 1858 to 1861, who brought him to London in 1863. Tembo and another formerly enslaved boy were presented at the RGS and other meetings by Grant and Speke; as Driver explains, "their presence presumably intended to confirm the possibility that black Africans could provide useful evidence for geographical research".[47] Furthermore, Tembo and his companion represented the success of the British abolition movement and missionary education across the Indian Ocean, as well as celebrating their pivotal role in British exploration.

The Bombay Africans were also captured in photographs. As seen in Christiansë's chapter, photography emerged as a vital technology of empire in the mid-nineteenth century and served multiple purposes, including as a tool of surveillance, but also, as in this case, to celebrate and commemorate imperial achievement. What is remarkable here is that two East African boys feature as part of this celebration. A series of images and *cartes de visite* made in 1874 after Livingstone's death are the most famous images of the Bombay Africans. Abdullah Susi and James Chuma posed for various photographs in the grounds of Newstead Abbey, home of William Frederick Webb, a former explorer and friend of Livingstone. They had accompanied Livingstone's body back to Britain, thanks to the financial aid of Dr James Young, a Scottish chemist and friend of Livingstone.[48] The series shows different figures surrounding a table of objects and papers related to Livingstone, upon a lion-skin rug. Chuma and Susi are dressed in sober Victorian suits.[49] In one image, Chuma and Susi kneel and sit either side of the table, with rifles placed in front of the table alongside Livingstone's hat, and a Union flag prominently covering the table. In another version, Livingstone's children and Horace Waller, editor of Livingstone's journals, pose on each side, with Chuma and Susi at the centre of the composition. Waller looks up at the two men, indicating the importance he placed upon their knowledge and understanding, and their loyalty to Livingstone. They spent many hours with Waller decoding Livingstone's last journals. When they were presented with their RGS medals in 1874, Waller stated, "The faithful companions of Livingstone were able to give an intelligible account of every river and mountain and village in the regions they had passed through; and such aid as they could give was of the first importance to Mr Livingstone in preparing the work on which he was engaged."[50]

Sidi Mubarak Bombay features in two portraits in the RGS collections. His name itself explicitly speaks of Indian Ocean mobility – "sidi" being the name in India for migrants and their descendants from Africa, while Bombay indicates that he was educated in the Bombay Presidency after his emancipation. The provenance of one photograph, taken later in his life, is unknown.[51] The other is a stereoscopic portrait taken by James Grant in 1860, and acquired by the RGS on 17 January 1861. Grant's photographs include some of the earliest images of Zanzibar.[52] Inscribed beneath the image on the album page is the title "'Moobarik Bombay' who has accompanied Capt. Speke during 2 expeditions in Central Africa". Mubarak wears a white robe and cap, carrying a rifle across his body. His white-robed figure stands out prominently in front of a large dark carved wooden door, probably locating the image to Zanzibar. He looks away from the camera and has evidently held this pose still for some time for his figure to be captured sharply during this early phase in the development of photographic technology. While the caption ties his significance to Speke, echoing the constant placement of the Bombay Africans as subsidiary to the European explorer, he was deemed significant enough to be portrayed individually and, as his career demonstrates, his knowledge and experience were critical to numerous explorers, including Burton, Speke, Grant, Stanley and Cameron. Painstaking research has pieced together Sidi Mubarak's life story, giving this portrait, unlike so many photographs of the enslaved, a biography to accompany it. One final portrait of Bombay no longer exists. Sir John Kirk donated five lantern slides of "East Africa and a portrait of 'Bombay"' to the RGS in 1894, but this collection was "destroyed on 9th February 1951 as it had faded".[53] The fate of this photograph underlines the fragility of the fragmentary records of those people enslaved and emancipated in the Indian Ocean world.

## Colonial collectors in post-slavery East Africa

While explorers largely represented the prelude to colonialism in East Africa, the mission to abolish slavery continued to concern British colonial officials after the establishment of British rule. Many donors to the British Museum were involved in the anti-slavery campaigns, yet few acquired objects which relate to this story. Sir John Kirk, for example as mentioned earlier, donated important objects from his personal collection to the British Museum on his return from Africa, including the earliest examples of Swahili material

culture acquired by the Museum. Yet objects relating to the slave trade are notable by their absence from his collections. Two of Kirk's successors in the colonial service at Zanzibar, however, did acquire and donate sets of slave stocks. The first was Claud Hollis who, while serving in Mombasa in the early 1900s, collected a set of two-metre-long slave stocks and donated these to the museum in 1909 along with other important Swahili collections. These are the oldest examples so far located in British museum collections and their acquisition soon after the abolition of slavery in East Africa makes them particularly significant.

The second set of stocks were collected by William Harold Ingrams, who served in Zanzibar in the 1920s and was a significant collector and writer, publishing the first anthropological study of the island.[54] He curated the historical section of the Zanzibar Museum with which this chapter began. His written work does not discuss the slave history of the islands in great detail and his studies of the peoples of the island do not examine the former slave communities – an omission which scholars since have been trying to remedy.[55] In 2014 his collection was donated to the British Museum by his daughter and included a set of slave stocks with five apertures. In recent discussion with the curator it appears that there is no physical evidence upon them to suggest that they were ever used and they are much smaller (at 50 cm long) than other examples. Ingrams, after all, collected them more than twenty years after the treaty abolishing slavery in Zanzibar in 1897. One of the apertures is distinct with an additional concentric carved circle, and these small, possibly unused, stocks are an anomaly within his collection which concentrates largely on the material culture of the Swahili. He may have had them commissioned to document former practices on the islands, although we can only speculate as he does not record these objects in his writings. As with many objects associated with enslavement, while their form speaks vividly of their intended use, records to bring the human element and suffering to light remain scarce.

## Conclusion

The story of the Atlantic slave trade dominates the representation of slavery in British museums. The Indian Ocean rarely features and, if it does, is commonly part of the story of abolition or exploration. Museums often try to engage the public with personal narratives and, as this chapter has

shown, the self-interest of colonial collectors has erased many of these individual stories and material legacies. Projects such as the exhibition about the Bombay Africans have attempted to redress this imbalance and bring these histories and rarely heard voices to a wider public. As we have seen, objects in permanent collections which relate most directly to the Indian Ocean slave experience are those of punishment and confinement. While they were collected to demonstrate the iniquity of the trade and celebrate British humanitarian endeavours towards its abolition, they also make tangible the harsh reality and punitive regimes of slavery. There are other methods of recovering the material worlds of slavery. Close study of photographs and texts reveals clothing, beads and other articles worn by enslaved people. These objects were, in general, not collected but there is potential to find comparable objects in ethnographic museum collections. This chapter has focused upon objects acquired during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to make clear how the forces of colonialism and priorities of European collectors in East Africa and the Indian Ocean world impinge upon the material record of enslavement. The focus by the many colonial collectors upon the "indigenous" leaves cultures emerging from former slave societies unrecorded in museums. The material that we do have makes plain the violence inflicted upon enslaved peoples. Simultaneously, the seizure and removal of such objects from the region indicates the British role in abolition of the slave trade and celebrates the British humanitarian mission. The disavowal of British involvement in the earlier Atlantic trade and a focus upon positive British endeavours in bringing about abolition reflect criticisms levelled at some British museums' representations of slavery more widely.[56]

Museums are attempting to fill the lacunae in collections. With the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund, the National Maritime Museum (NMM) in 2002 acquired the Michael Graham-Stewart collection, which comprised over 450 items, many of which related to Atlantic and Indian Ocean slave trades and abolition. The creation of the permanent Atlantic gallery in the NMM, opened to coincide with the bicentenary of abolition in 2007, means that much of this material is on display while the numerous photographs of Atlantic and Indian Ocean slavery from the Michael Graham-Stewart collection are now easily available online.[57] This example is typical of how special exhibitions and celebrations offer museums the opportunity, and in many cases the budget, to enhance their collections in these areas. Nonetheless, McAleer notes that even after the acquisition of this collection, the NMM "remained very weak in objects that could illustrate the lives and cultures

of the enslaved, and convey their agency and resilience".[58] Considering the growing concentration of archaeologists on the issue of slavery, discussed at the start of this chapter, the material record and our understanding of the sites of slavery and the experience of the enslaved in the Indian Ocean through material culture will continue to grow.

Close examination of objects, museum archives, photographs and associated texts can reveal hidden stories to fill the gap in the material record and offer opportunities to highlight the agency and cultures of enslaved people. Collections associated with explorers have the potential too to reveal the critical role of the emancipated as mediators and enablers of British exploration of Africa. Recent exhibitions have brought these "hidden histories" to light. While such displays have focused on their role as explorers, in this context I propose that they can also be considered as part of the material record of abolition and emancipation. I have also highlighted occasions where we know why objects are now absent. Such stories of the deliberate destruction of objects of punishment by enslaved people demonstrate how absent objects can speak as powerfully as those that are present.

## Notes

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3. Jonathon Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones: Racial Thought and Violence in Colonial Zanzibar,* 63. Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 2011.
4. ZNA: DF 9/5 Museum Policy 1956 – 1963, Curator to Chief Secretary, 27 July 1957.
5. ZNA: DF 9/5 Museum Policy, 1956 – 1963, Permanent Secretary (Education and Welfare) to Archivist/Curator, 31 August 1962.
6. ZNA: DF 9/5 Museum Policy, 1956 – 1963, Archivist/Curator to Permanent Secretary (Education and Welfare), 8 February 1963.
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28. Ibid, 378.
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56. See, for example, the country-wide celebrations of the 200th anniversary of abolition in 2007. McAleer, '"That Infamous Commerce in Human Blood,"' in *Representing Enslavement and Abolition in Museums: Ambiguous Engagements*, edited by Laurajane Smith et al., Routledge Research in Museum Studies 3. New York: Routledge, 2011.
57. Many of these objects are discussed in Douglas J. Hamilton and Robert J. Blyth (eds.), *Representing Slavery: Art, Artefacts and Archives in the Collections of the National Maritime Museum*. Aldershot and London: Lund Humphries and National Maritime Museum, 2007.
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11

# The Shadows of (Public) Recognition

## Transatlantic Slavery and Indian Ocean Slavery in Dutch Historiography and Public Culture

*Guno Jones*

### Introduction[1]

Some eight years ago, I was in Amsterdam with my partner on Open Monuments Day (*Open Monumentendag*). On this day historic buildings classified as heritage sites are open to the general public. One stately Amsterdam canal house—which housed exhibits spanning art, interior design, decorations and the books of the family that once lived there—was of particular interest to us. We walked round the building, looked at the exhibited art and strolled through the beautiful garden. Our tour, however, was brutally disrupted by a certain advertisement (see Figure 1). It offered for sale "castrated, firm Madurese or East-Java [sic] pull-cattle" and "beautiful Madurese bulls" next to "firm, young and healthy East Javanese workers, men and women for agricultural work and mining", the latter for "60 Florin per adult", by "H. Leeksma" in "Soerabaia". The poster was hanging on a wall, showcased as part of the exhibition. Was I *really* seeing this? Typically, "postcolonials", in uncovering colonial violence, habitually read "Dutch heritage" against the grain, but the violence in this advertisement was hidden in plain sight.

As I was more familiar with representations of transatlantic slavery, it took me a while to realize that the advertisement *might* have been referring to slavery in "the Dutch East Indies", as colonial Indonesia was known in the Netherlands. While the advertisement appeared in the *Sumatra Post* in 1902—in the formally post-abolition era, when those "on sale" would legally have been contract workers and Leeksma would have received a broker's fee—its objectification and dehumanization of colonized people bears similarities with actual advertisements of slavery from a few decades earlier. Such continuities are testimony to the afterlives of slavery in colonial Indonesia.[2]




Figure 11.1. Cattle and Colonized for Sale.
Source: Exhibited image of *Sumatra Post*, 1902 (photograph by author on location).

Since so little is known of the Dutch role in slavery in colonial Indonesia, actual depictions of it are hard to recognize.

In the Netherlands, people do not generally associate "East Java" (Java is one of the main islands in the Indonesian archipelago) with slavery. Representations of the Dutch East Indies often celebrate the great "Dutch entrepreneurial spirit", but disavow the violence of Dutch colonialism. Paul Bijl has argued that though there are ample traces of systemic colonial violence in "the East" in the Netherlands, its "memorability" has remained limited because there is no proper conceptual apparatus and "dominant discourses do not produce them (the victims of colonial violence) as belonging to national history".[3] There is a conspicuous difference between the discourse on the "East Indies" and "West Indies" in reference to Dutch colonialism. While the dominant Dutch discourse on "the East" has remained nostalgic, discourse on the Dutch Caribbean colonies of Suriname and the former Dutch Antilles (six islands in the Caribbean Sea) have notably dropped nostalgic articulations of the Dutch colonial past.

Decades of scholar–activist interventions have succeeded in reframing Dutch colonialism in the Caribbean as a national shame—as such, the role of the Dutch in transatlantic slavery is the central focus. Despite the backlash against these efforts, the connected politics of memory has had a visible impact in the public sphere, as I will demonstrate in this chapter. However, *visibilising* the Dutch role in transatlantic slavery has rendered the Dutch role in Indian Ocean slavery *invisible*, regardless of the fact that structural and systematic Dutch military violence during the wars of decolonization has recently entered decolonial politics of recognition and some scholarly work.[4] This bifurcation of Dutch slavery is visible in monuments, debate, practices of memory and commemoration, museum exhibitions, history-education and media representations, and it also characterizes knowledge production. One might even argue that slavery is, culturally and epistemologically, "allowed" in representations of Dutch colonialism in Caribbean history, but not in those of Indonesia. This is striking, since the use of enslaved people was "central to the East India Companies established by various European powers throughout the Indian Ocean world", as Alicia Schikker and Nira Wickramasinghe point out in the introduction to this volume. While the role of the Dutch (and other European empires) in Indian Ocean slavery concerns geographically dispersed locations (places such as Ceylon, Cochin, Batavia, Cape Town and Mauritius), as Schikker and Wickramasinghe observe in comparing Indian Ocean Slavery with Transatlantic Slavery, I will focus

on the historical narration and public memory of the Dutch role in slavery in 'the Dutch East Indies', as colonial Indonesia was referred to in colonial discourse.

Michel-Rolph Trouillot's conceptualization of the relationship between power and historical knowledge production in his seminal work, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*,[5] has a particular and perhaps somewhat surprising resonance for the case of Dutch slavery. The epistemological and public afterlives of Dutch slavery in the "East Indies" and "West Indies" show the distinctive impact of silencing on similar histories of oppression. The recent and partial de-silencing of transatlantic slavery in the Netherlands, as an outcome of a politics of citizenship among an engaged part of Caribbean Dutch citizens, has transformed transatlantic slavery from a "non-event" into an event worthy of public debate, monumentalization, public commemoration, exhibitions and research in the Netherlands. Unfortunately, the frames of the politics involved in de-silencing transatlantic slavery (rendering it a meaningful historical event) were not sufficiently broad to do the same for slavery in colonial Indonesia, which is still very much a "non-event" in the Dutch public sphere. This sharply uneven bifurcation of Dutch slavery should alert us to unintended consequences, incompleteness and losses in any politics of recognition. Although this bifurcation is being cautiously addressed in discussions among members of diasporic post-colonial communities with genealogies in different parts of the Dutch empire, there seems to be a political and affective investment in its sustenance. The bifurcation appears to be informed by varied experiences of colonialism and reflects the differential positioning of the colonized and members of post-colonial communities in present-day Dutch society.

This chapter unpacks some of the social and political dynamics in the uneven public and epistemological afterlives of colonial slavery in Indonesia and the Caribbean and argues why it is important to transcend the status quo. Rather than explaining this phenomenon, I hope to sketch its complexity. I will discuss the afterlives of both histories of slavery in the contemporary Dutch public domain and in knowledge production, and the diverse power dynamics and genealogies of (public) engagement involved. I will look at the differential positioning of transatlantic and Indian Ocean slavery in knowledge production, public memory and commemoration culture, and media productions and museum exhibitions. I will also examine how inclusion and exclusion from citizenship and nation are negotiated, articulated and contested via public and epistemological engagements with slavery. With

regard to Indian Ocean slavery, I am interested in the nexus between the (constitutionally and ideologically legitimized) Dutch involvement in slavery in colonial Indonesia and the rise of Dutch racial capitalism and, specifically, how this cornerstone of Dutch colonial rule in "the East" is narrated and remembered in post-abolition historiography and public culture in the Netherlands. Therefore, I will not include slavery and bondage in local societies in Indonesia in this piece.

## Dutch slavery in knowledge production

Author Reggie Baay, one of the few researchers who works on slavery in the Dutch East Indies, recently made the following observation:

> Slavery in the East does not exist in the Netherlands. The Dutch history of slavery is emphatically limited to Suriname and the Antilles. It seems as if a ballotage-commission has weighed the slave-trade and slavery in the Dutch East Indies and deemed it as being too light. Was slavery over there not cruel enough? Was it not extensive enough? Maybe it didn't meet the "definition" of slavery? ... how is it possible for slavery in the one former Dutch colony to be included in Dutch history, while slavery in the other Dutch colony is not included in Dutch history? Why do we think our children should learn about our colonial history of slavery and the involvement of our ancestors with it in Suriname and the Antilles, but not about the former Dutch East Indies? [translation G.J.][6]

We should take a closer look at some of the conditions that make possible the present status quo in historiography and history education on slavery that Baay captures so effectively. Before I discuss these conditions of possibility, a few words on the epistemological position that informs this chapter. My perspective on historical knowledge-production is based on the constructionist premise that "the facts" do not "speak for themselves" (they cannot be retrieved objectively), but are interpretations of events based on non-neutral archival sources that are turned into historical narration informed by dynamics in the present. From a constructionist point of view, the entire process of historical knowledge production is a reflection of particular power formations between people.[7] Along this line, I will give central attention to the power dynamics involved in the knowledge production and public culture of

slavery in the Netherlands. As a consequence, this chapter differs somewhat from, for instance, the very empirically rich chapters of Lodewijk Wagenaar and Kate Ekama in this book that approach facts in a different way.

While nowadays transatlantic slavery is certainly more visible than Indian Ocean slavery in knowledge production and educational material, the present-day visibility of the former cannot be taken for granted – it is the result of a long history of engagement and struggle. Sustained engagement by activist-scholars and critical academics has played a major role in furthering the presence of transatlantic slavery in public history, although this recognition is highly contested and not necessarily irreversible. For a long time only a small group of academics conducted research on Dutch transatlantic slavery, and the phenomenon was not included in the canon of Dutch history.[8] Arguably, this situation was nurtured by the epistemological compartmentalization of "colonial" and "Dutch" history, which excluded slavery from metropolitan Dutch history. In 1995, Ann Stoler observed that "the history of the metropole is structurally set apart from the history of the colonies" in the Netherlands.[9] Along the same lines, Gloria Wekker recently observed:

> ... within departments of history, the discipline was centrally structured such that there was a preponderance of majors, courses, and specializations that dealt with national history, while a small, separate minority of the curricular materials was devoted to the expansion in the world, meaning colonial history. ... The metropolitan and colonial parts of Dutch colonial empire are still overwhelmingly treated, both inside and outside academia as separate worlds, the metropolitan and the colonial, that did not impinge upon each other.[10]

However, even if we take the epistemological separation of "colonial" and "Dutch" history into account, the relative silence on slavery in accounts of the former "Dutch East Indies" is striking. Transatlantic slavery was primarily studied within the framework of colonial history and its role in the history of the metropole initially received only limited scholarly attention. But its presence was and still is much more prolific (and continually expanding) in knowledge production than slavery in colonial Indonesia.[11] Several observations can be made about the Dutch transatlantic slavery knowledge field. First, it has developed from an academic research field to a knowledge field in which history, heritage and memory are deeply interwoven. The fecundity of

research on transatlantic slavery especially, directly or indirectly, draws from the deep engagement with the history of slavery and its afterlives of advocates in Caribbean Dutch communities. Moreover, scholar-activists have utilized the existing body of knowledge on transatlantic slavery in their politics of recognition. This is not to suggest that "traditional Dutch academic" research on slavery is "neutral" (not situated in power dynamics), but that the power dynamics within academia were made invisible by reigning objectivism in Dutch historical knowledge production. Some prominent Dutch historians of slavery have been known to be epistemological gatekeepers, systematically supressing novel research perspectives on slavery within academia, as Pepijn Brandon has demonstrated. This reflex has also been observed by long-time historian of Dutch colonialism Susan Legêne.[12]

"Traditional" academic knowledge production on transatlantic slavery has arguably been one of the conditions of possibility for the emergence of a politics of public recognition, but the lively public memory and commemoration culture that has emerged in the last twenty years—and the post-colonial/decolonial perspectives in which it is embedded—has also inspired critical assessments of the earlier knowledge production and has facilitated the emergence of new perspectives on the history of slavery. Post-colonial critiques have revealed the politics and non-neutrality inherent in "traditional" scholarship on slavery by deconstructing paradigms, terminologies, interpretations and frames of reference.[13] Second, knowledge production on slavery is no longer exclusively done to serve the needs of intra-academic debates; there are also "hybrid" knowledge projects that design and engage knowledge production to match the interests of a wider public. For instance, the emergence of publicly accessible databases on the enslaved and manumitted have made genealogical research much easier than it was before. And the knowledge production of the Mapping Slavery team[14] enables heritage tours for those interested in the Dutch history of slavery. Third, the mutual constitution of colony and metropole, as has been advocated by post-colonial/decolonial scholars, has been taken up in some recent knowledge work. Thus, knowledge production in this area is no longer exclusively a historiography of transatlantic slavery in the Caribbean colonies. Instead, the afterlives of slavery are being explored in interesting ways, and the connections between Caribbean slavery and Dutch capitalism and main Dutch institutions presently receive more attention in research. As regards the latter, a pioneering study authored by historians Pepijn Brandon and Ulbe Bosma that quantifies the importance of Trans-Atlantic slavery

for the economy of Holland in the eighteenth century has recently been published.[15] Whether these shifts in research have the potential to change the epistemological compartmentalization of national and colonial history in academic institutions is yet to be seen.

Fourth, it should be mentioned that the notion of the "knowledge field of transatlantic slavery in the Netherlands" is somewhat problematic, since it hides the preponderance of Surinamese plantation slavery in knowledge production and public history. While publications on slavery in Curaçao exist,[16] plantation slavery in Suriname seems to have drawn the most scholarly attention so far. Much less is known about the particularities of slavery as it existed in Curaçao, where there was no large-scale plantation economy and the enslaved often "worked in and around the harbor as construction workers, artisans, sailors, traders, musicians, and military personnel".[17] From an agonistic perspective on knowledge production, this is not about some inherent significance of "plantation slavery" as compared to "non-plantation slavery," but, rather, it points to the power dynamics in knowledge agendas in the Netherlands. For a variety of historical reasons, Surinamese Dutch citizens, who initially opposed dominant discourse at the risk of being ridiculed, have been prominent in "de-silencing" the history of transatlantic slavery, in particular, plantation slavery. The relative revelation of the horrors of Surinamese plantation slavery has impacted on knowledge production and public culture—it also reveals how a politics of recognition may unintentionally foster new silences. In what way does the focus on "plantation slavery" in Dutch knowledge production of transatlantic slavery (instead of "harbor and construction slavery") *pre-structure* the kinds of questions we tend to ask about slavery? Which stories are represented in the knowledge field, knowledge agendas and public initiatives aimed at de-silencing "transatlantic slavery"?

Notwithstanding its contested and "incomplete" nature, knowledge production on transatlantic slavery has grown in recent years. In contrast, the history of Dutch slavery in Indonesia is strikingly absent. The multidimensionality in the transatlantic slavery knowledge field, particularly as it pertains to plantation slavery in colonial Suriname, is absent in the case of "Dutch East Indies" slavery. Only a few authors have published work on slavery in colonial Indonesia. This is not because the slavery in "the Dutch East Indies" was, as compared with transatlantic slavery, "less serious", as seems to be the general perception. The epistemological divide between slavery in the "East Indies" and "West Indies" is not dictated by some inherent difference between the two—it is a consequence of the distinctive dynamics

involved in the historical narration of both slaveries *after* their respective abolitions. Baay and Van Rossum demonstrate that, keeping in mind some basic features of slavery in colonial Indonesia,[18] there were many similarities between transatlantic and Indian Ocean slavery.[19] Both slaveries were dehumanizing tragedies characterized by the commodification of enslaved bodies, which implied an absolute negation of legal personhood. However, as already mentioned, in-depth studies of the different dimensions of Dutch East Indies slavery—let alone its connections with the metropole—are almost non-existent. This absence is not exclusive to knowledge production, but has shaped public debate, understandings of slavery, and the public memory and commemoration culture in the Netherlands. Attempts to narrate and represent more "integrated", comparative versions of Dutch slavery are scarce. The few exceptions include work done by the Mapping Slavery team. The relative de-silencing of transatlantic slavery has enriched knowledge production of Dutch history. But how would our understanding of Dutch slavery and its impact on Dutch society change if the Dutch involvement in Indian Ocean slavery were systematically included in knowledge practices?

## The disavowal of slavery and its afterlives in public Dutch culture

Before 2000 transatlantic and Indian Ocean slavery were equally absent from public Dutch memory and commemoration culture. In 2001, historian Alex van Stipriaan referred to this avoidance of Dutch slavery and the slave trade in the Netherlands as a "deafening silence".[20] Van Stipriaan demonstrates that in Dutch educational materials up to 2000 slavery was primarily associated with "America and the negro-cabin of Uncle Tom".[21] In others words, Dutch children were versed in the tragedy of slavery in the American South, but Dutch slavery was no part of public consciousness and moral discourse. The outward projection of slavery was reflected in the landscape of public memory and commemoration—official monuments commemorating the abolition of transatlantic slavery existed in the former Dutch Caribbean colonies of Suriname and Curaçao, but not in the motherland that was constitutionally responsible for the phenomenon.[22] Slavery had turned into "an accepted part of national history" in independent Suriname, but this was much less the case in the Dutch Antilles,[23] and the history of slavery was entirely absent in metropolitan Dutch consciousness. Glenn Willemsen, the first director of the Nationaal Instituut Nederlands slavernijverleden en erfenis (NiNsee, National

Institute for the history and heritage of Dutch slavery), concluded that "until the end of the 20th century, slavery and its legacies were non-issues in both the public domain and the collective consciousness of Dutch society".[24]

The silencing of slavery in Dutch culture was accompanied by complex political subjectivities among Caribbean Dutch diasporic communities. While some Caribbean Dutch citizens openly engaged with slavery, for many others it was not the norm to speak freely about slavery and the slave trade in the Dutch public sphere.[25] These were not fashionable subjects of *public* discussion, especially among privileged members of the Caribbean Dutch diaspora. Slavery was privately recognized by many as a significant history of pain (its cruelty is a part of subaltern historical consciousness and cultural repertoire), but it was also regarded as a history of shame. Humphrey Lamur observed a "taboo" associated with publicly discussing slavery until the end of the 1980s.[26]

These complex subjectivities need a brief explanation. Privately, and within Caribbean Dutch diaspora organizations, slavery was actively commemorated.[27] In the case of the Surinamese Dutch, these commemorations were inspired by older anti-colonial thinkers, such as Anton De Kom, who published his seminal work, *Wij Slaven van Suriname* (We Slaves of Suriname), in 1934 and explicitly self-identified as a "descendant of enslaved" therein. This anti-colonial work (part of broader cultural, religious and social critiques developed in response to Dutch hegemony)[28] exposes the dehumanizing and exploitative nature of Dutch colonialism, slavery and indentured labour in Suriname and served as inspiration for later generations and their multifold expressions of decolonial thought and practice.

In contrast, in the Dutch public sphere in the Netherlands slavery has long been subjected to hesitant articulation and is surrounded by political ambiguity. Until around the end of the 1990s it would have been uncommon publicly to claim genealogical connections with enslaved people as part of a politics of public recognition, especially if one was relatively well-off socio-economically. Even today, some people are deeply disturbed by cinematographic representations of slavery.[29] Contemporary Dutch society may remind Caribbean Dutch citizens that racialized hierarchies (everyday racism, racism on the labour market, racialized traditions and ethnic profiling) are not phenomena of the past, which perhaps accounts for why some are deeply affected by representations of slavery. Degrading events and systemic racism in the present may "ignite" the past as a metaphor for talking about the present. Perhaps the continuation of racialized exclusions

and hierarchies in contemporary Dutch society is what makes Trans-Atlantic slavery a particularly resonant history for Caribbean Dutch citizens.

Whatever the case, the idea of "rising above" slavery and its afterlives through 'forgetting' until the end of the 1990s still held currency as a relatively viable ethos and politics (and this is possibly still true for many today).[30] Perhaps the attitude could be summed up as: Yes, we know about the Dutch involvement in slavery and its present-day racialized legacies, but we should rise above it, work hard, and only fight when it is absolutely necessary. In any case, demanding public recognition of slavery as Dutch heritage, publicly discussing its racialized afterlives, or openly identifying as a descendant of the enslaved did not occupy a central place in Caribbean Dutch politics of identity and citizenship at the time.[31] Memories of and critical perspectives on slavery travelled with Caribbean Dutch communities to the metropole and were kept alive among them, but it took a while for commemorators in the diaspora to succeed in "breaking down the taboo on *public discussions* of slavery".[32] Partly in response to majoritarian Dutch politics of citizenship shortly before and after the Independence of Suriname in 1975—in which the relocation of a significant part of the population of the former colony to the Netherlands and their Dutch citizenship status were contested—Surinamese Dutch organizations focused on legal, social and socio-economic dimensions of citizenship in the 1970s and 1980s.[33] The "subaltern" memories of slavery among the Caribbean Dutch were not yet connected with a politics of equal citizenship.

The public absence of the Dutch role in Indian Ocean slavery was even more striking—nobody in the motherland or former colonies seemed openly to take an interest in the trauma of slavery in the "Dutch East Indies". While Caribbean slavery was practically non-existent in public culture and consciousness in the motherland, it received partial recognition in the Dutch Caribbean and lived on as a "subaltern history" among the Caribbean Dutch diaspora in the Netherlands. In contrast, slavery during the Dutch colonial rule in Indonesia was (and still is) non-existent in public culture and consciousness in the Netherlands *and* is absent from the Indonesian public sphere. This is not to suggest, however, that Indian Ocean slavery (and the Dutch role in it) is generally absent from practices of memory and commemoration in Indian Ocean colonial societies. In South Africa there is a cultural memory of Indian Ocean slavery through songs, as Anne Marieke van der Wal discusses in this book; public commemorations and exhibitionary practices also exist.[34] But slavery under Dutch colonial rule in

Indonesia was (and still is) essentially a "non-event". It is as if slavery never happened there. To date, no monuments commemorating the abolition of slavery exist in the Netherlands or post-colonial Indonesia.[35] While many were affected by slavery in Indonesia, there is (to my knowledge) no official engagement with this history, nor are there people identifying as "descendants" of the enslaved. The existence of a subaltern community identifying as "descendants" has been an important condition of possibility for the partial de-silencing of transatlantic slavery. However, technically speaking, people who could trace their lineage back to enslaved ancestors in Indian Ocean slavery exist in Indonesia and the Netherlands. In fact, Reggie Baay's *De njai* reveals that, through the female ancestral line, slavery (as it intersected with gender-based sexual exploitation and racism previously silenced or even romanticised) was part of the family histories of a considerable number of Dutch citizens of "Eurasian" background (the so-called Indische or Indo-Europese Nederlanders).[36] But tracing the lineage back to enslaved ancestors and keeping their memories alive have not been done in connection with slavery in colonial Indonesia. Unlike transatlantic slavery, slavery in colonial Indonesia has *not* been memorialized by people identifying as descendants of the enslaved in Indonesia and the Netherlands. This bifurcation once more illustrates that these politics of memory and identity are not inherently determined by the existence of lineages tracing back to enslaved ancestors ('the facts of the lineage'), but conditioned by evolving dynamics, questions and politics in the present.

In short, until the 1990s the consensus in the Netherlands was that slavery left no significant mark on Dutch society. Dominant representations of the Netherlands centred on the idea of an entrepreneurial and innocent nation, prone to justice, human rights and the rule of law. Scholars and activists who dared to connect slavery to the systemic racism in Dutch society and culture were often ridiculed, verbally attacked, physically threatened and symbolically excluded from the Dutch nation.

## De-silencing transatlantic slavery

The public recognition of slavery in the Netherlands has been a complex and uneven process. In the last two decades (1998–2018), slavery has transformed from a particularized sub-memory among parts of Caribbean Dutch communities to an issue of public debate and national Dutch concern.

Slavery has become an important issue among parts of the Caribbean Dutch diaspora, and a matter of cultural heritage for which people have sought public recognition.[37] In conjunction with a reconfigured politics of identity, in which forerunners began to self-identify as "Afro-European Dutch" and other variations with the prefix "Afro" while resolutely rejecting the commonly used "negers" (negroes) because of its colonial connotation, transatlantic slavery has become a part of discussions on equal citizenship and inclusion in the Dutch nation. "We are here to stay. We have a stake in Dutch history too, and slavery and its racialised legacies are a part of it." Inclusion was no longer simply defined as an improvement in people's socio-economic and legal status (residence and citizenship status), but also as a public recognition of slavery and its racialized afterlives. This Caribbean Dutch politics of citizenship was often connected with an epistemological orientation in which social inequalities in Dutch society were *not* explained by referring to intra-ethnic particularities (as in dominant Dutch cultures of scholarship). Instead, it emphasized the detrimental impact on Caribbean Dutch citizens of the racialized afterlives of slavery in Dutch society. In other words, the relationship between historic dominance and contemporary racism and exclusion from Dutch society received central attention in these public interventions. Hence, it is no coincidence that forerunners who pleaded for the public recognition of slavery simultaneously criticized the coloniality of certain Dutch traditions (for instance, the Black Pete figure in the Saint Nicholas tradition and colonial representations of the Golden Coach and group slurs (e.g., "neger", "negerin" or "negerzoenen")).

At the end of the 1990s, Caribbean Dutch organizations began to advocate harder for the public recognition of transatlantic slavery in the Netherlands.[38] This culminated in eighteen Dutch Caribbean organizations cooperating to form the Foundation National Monument for the history of Dutch slavery, chaired by Barryl Biekman. The foundation's aim was to erect a national monument and establish an institution (NiNsee). The centre-left government recognized the foundation, and on 1 July 2002 Queen Beatrix unveiled the National Slavery Monument in Amsterdam's Oosterpark. The monument commemorates the abolition of transatlantic slavery.[39] Other monuments in Amsterdam—the Monument of Awareness (2003), Middelburg (2005) and Rotterdam (2013)—soon followed. These monuments primarily commemorate the abolition of transatlantic slavery on 1 July 1863. In addition, the 1795 revolt by 2,000 enslaved people, led by Tula in Curaçao, is commemorated on 17 August in Amsterdam and in the form

of the slavery monument in Rotterdam. The number of municipalities that commemorate the abolition of transatlantic slavery has grown. Apart from those in Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Middelburg, public commemorations are organized in Utrecht, Almere, Tilburg and The Hague.[40]

The events leading up to the monumentalization of transatlantic slavery did not happen in discursive and national isolation. While a subaltern Caribbean Dutch memory of transatlantic slavery has long existed, the politics that accompanied the plea for public recognition of slavery was also inspired by African-American identity politics. Furthermore, forerunners who advocated for the official monumentalization and commemoration of Dutch slavery discursively connected their pleas with the wider Dutch public memory and commemoration culture centred on World War II. They argued that public commemoration of slavery is as important for descendants of the enslaved as public commemoration of World War II victims is for their relatives and offspring.[41]

After the establishment of the National Slavery Monument and the creation of a tradition of official annual commemorations, even general Dutch museums—such as The National Maritime Museum (Scheepvaartmuseum) in Amsterdam (2013) and the Amsterdam Museum (2013)—incorporated transatlantic slavery into their (temporary) exhibitions. As of 2017, the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam has a permanent exhibition on slavery. Even the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, which represents archetypical Dutch mainstream art par excellence, is planning a temporary exhibition on slavery in 2020–2021.

Transatlantic slavery has been made the subject of media productions. In 2011, a fiercely debated five-episode television series, *De Slavernij*, was broadcasted on national Dutch television. In 2013, *Tula: The Revolt*, a film based on similar historic figures and the revolt in Curaçao, was released. Another example is the documentary, *Drie Vrouwen* (Three Women), which portrays Ellen-Rose Kambel, Valika Smeulders and Marian Markelo, and their role in promoting the public recognition of transatlantic slavery and its present-day heritage. Important heritage work has also been done by the Mapping Slavery team, which traces buildings, locations and historical figures in Dutch cities that have connections with slavery and records them on (digital) maps and in books. Heritage tours, in which tourists visit locations that have connections with slavery, are being organized—for instance, by Jennifer Tosch and Valika Smeulders. Publicly claiming a genealogical link with slavery is now accepted among the Caribbean Dutch.

Advocating for public recognition of slavery is about demanding inclusion in national history and the nation, but its "economics", broadly speaking, are undeterminable. Engaging with public recognition of transatlantic slavery has not been an easy process and people sometimes pay a substantial price for it. As Markus Balkenhol demonstrates, there is an affective politics of engagement and disengagement with slavery—one aimed at public recognition and the other at repression.[42] While the former strives for emancipation and inclusion in the Dutch nation, the latter defends the status quo and dominant constructions of Dutchness. Furthermore, the de-silencing of slavery in the public sphere over the last two decades is not necessarily irreversible. The public recognition of transatlantic slavery has been highly contested—the visibility of slavery is fragile and contingent upon power dynamics in the Netherlands. While the centre-left Dutch Government that was in power at the beginning of the new millennium granted funding for the erection of the National Slavery Monument and the establishment of the associated institution (NiNsee), the right-wing Dutch government that was ruling in 2013 stopped supporting NiNsee.[43] While "austerity" was the "neutral" justification given for the retraction of the subsidy, the move aligned with the wishes of the far-right PVV (Party for Freedom), which provided parliamentary support to the government at the time. Ethno-nationalist populist parties like the PVV and the Forum for Democracy, which tend to describe transatlantic slavery and Caribbean Dutch citizens as non-Dutch, have gained increasing support from the electorate and there are no signs of this changing. The monument and annual commemoration at Oosterpark are ostensibly "national", but their official status in the Dutch heritage landscape is conditional.[44] The recently developed public heritage of slavery may be undone, even obliterated, if the powers that be deem those parts of the citizenry that strongly identify with it (or are strongly identified with it) as not belonging to the nation. In this regard, the electoral rise of far-right parties like the Forum for Democracy, which explicitly articulate nativist and racist ideologies, is an ominous sign.

Dutch slavery reveals multiple modalities of "silencing", in which the "unconscious" influence of dominant paradigms and intentional exclusion operate in unison. To be sure, silences on slavery and its racialized afterlives have been produced by the compartmentalization of colonial and national history. But, in addition, the violent responses to those who have advocated for the public recognition of slavery and its racialized afterlives also show a conscious investment in maintaining the status quo. The history of transatlantic slavery has been instrumental in demands for equal citizenship, but

the backlash against its public acceptance has revealed the hierarchies of racialized belonging in the Netherlands. Advocating the public recognition of Dutch slavery is an expression of "active citizenship"—it is about occupying symbolic and social space, but it also exposes advocates of recognition to the wrath of those who self-identify as "real" members of the Dutch nation. Souls may be freed and minds liberated in public engagements with slavery, but the impact of the backlash against these engagements on those who identify with transatlantic slavery should not be overlooked. Given the cost of such critical public engagements with slavery and its afterlives, a politics of assimilation is understandable and perhaps beneficial to some, but such a politics does not solve the problem of hierarchical citizenship.

Public recognition of transatlantic slavery has been politically and symbolically significant, even when its outcomes in terms of substantive equality are uncertain; however, slavery in colonial Indonesia has not been incorporated into these dynamics. Strikingly, the slavery monuments that were erected in the last two decades, whether they commemorate the abolition of slavery or the revolt of the enslaved people, are all dedicated to transatlantic slavery, not Dutch slavery in colonial Indonesia. Even the National Slavery Monument in Amsterdam's Oosterpark commemorates the 1863 abolition of transatlantic slavery, but not the 1860 abolition of slavery in colonial Indonesia. The politics of recognition of slavery—anchored as it was in Caribbean Dutch activism—and the proliferation of monuments dedicated to transatlantic slavery in the last two decades have all unintentionally rendered Dutch involvement in slavery in colonial Indonesia even less visible in public memory and culture. The deeply uneven representation of transatlantic and Indian Ocean slavery is reflected in the entire Dutch cultural and epistemological landscape,[45] and the heritage dynamics in the last six years (manifesting itself in new monuments, exhibitions and documentaries) have made this bifurcation even more prominent.

## Genealogies of slavery

As I write in February 2019, some younger members of post-colonial diasporic communities with family links to colonial Indonesia—while recognizing the longstanding struggle of Dutch Caribbean communities in de-silencing transatlantic slavery—have started positioning post-colonial communities "from the East" (Dutch citizens of Moluccan, "Indische", Papuan

and Indonesian background) as descendants of enslaved people. Contrary to what the silencing of slavery in colonial Indonesia in public culture and politics of memory suggests, they express the view that the racialized afterlives of slavery have deeply impacted on later generations. They aim to raise awareness of the Dutch role in Indian Ocean slavery to ensure its inclusion in public histories of the nation, and advocate for solidarity among different post-colonial diasporas as a key element of decolonization. These young commemorators of slavery in "the East", who have not yet entered the public sphere,[46] express a novel political subjectivity that involves establishing a genealogical link with Indian Ocean slavery, and are actively working towards propagating Indian Ocean slavery (and its afterlives) in public culture.

Political engagements and practices of memory and commemoration by members of earlier generations with genealogical links to colonial Indonesia were primarily informed by experiences during World War II (especially when Japan took control over the Indonesian archipelago between 1942–1945) and the decolonization wars between the Dutch colonial army and the forces of the emerging Republic of Indonesia.[47] As earlier generations were assigned and occupied an intermediary position in the Dutch colonial hierarchy, they were deeply impacted upon by these developments, which is evident in the politics of recognition and practices of memory and commemoration in the Netherlands. Post-war generations of colour from the East (of Eurasian, Moluccan and Papuan background) were represented as "loyal" to the Netherlands in dominant discourse, but in the years immediately after their relocation to the Netherlands majoritarian politicians symbolically excluded them from the Dutch nation.[48] Notwithstanding, no essential political subject from the East exists. A multitude of orientations, ranging from apologizing for Dutch colonialism to manifold critiques of colonialism and its afterlives, are being articulated. While recently the structural and systematic nature of Dutch war crimes during the decolonization wars in Indonesia have become part of public and historiographical scrutiny, the violence of Indian Ocean slavery has not (yet) become a part of the politics of recognition.

The different epistemological and public genealogies of Indian Ocean and transatlantic slavery in the Netherlands demonstrate the dynamic relationships between events, historiography and heritage. How can we make sense of the differentiated genealogies? While no easy answers exist, certain possibilities come to the fore. First, those identifying as descendants of the enslaved have always kept memories and histories of transatlantic slavery alive, which has been one of the conditions that made possible a politics of public recognition

of transatlantic slavery in the Netherlands in the past two decades. More importantly, these politics of memory have become closely intertwined with combatting racism and claiming equal citizenship and belonging in the Dutch nation. Second, Dutch involvement in the formation of colonial Suriname and the Dutch Antilles centred around slavery, which perhaps made its memory harder to repress following decolonization. Third, there seems to be a mutually constitutive relationship between knowledge production, memorial practices and the politics of recognition of transatlantic slavery which may also have contributed to its public visibility and political efficacy.

In contrast, the Dutch role in Indian Ocean slavery has not seen similar involvement of commemorators and descendants in the post-slavery period. Awareness of genealogical links with enslaved individuals has not been culturally nurtured by a living memory of slavery among earlier generations with links to colonial Indonesia. Politics of memory and articulations of equal citizenship were deeply informed by the violent and often traumatic decolonization processes in which post-colonial communities from "the East" were complicatedly entangled. For older generations, the direct impact of these "recent histories" has not been conducive to claiming genealogical links with the "earlier history" of slavery. This is not a necessity, however; some members of the younger generation, self-identifying as "descendants" and inspired by decolonial thinking, are making genealogical connections with the "earlier history" of slavery in colonial Indonesia. Simultaneously, they are pleading for the inclusion of Indian Ocean slavery in public Dutch culture, while critically tracing its racialized afterlives in Dutch society.

## 'Inclusion' and loss

The emerging heritage of transatlantic slavery in Dutch society is not a sign of widespread acceptance of this history (and the people who are identified with it) as integral to Dutch history. It is highly contested and constantly at risk of being obliterated. Broadening the public heritage field of slavery in the Netherlands to include both transatlantic and Indian Ocean slavery would further testify to the centrality of slavery to Dutch history; it could also enable the expansion of the political community of commemorators needed to contest the multiplicity of racialized exclusion in Dutch society. From this perspective, recognizing that diasporas with genealogical links to colonial Indonesia and the Caribbean are differentially racialized subjects is not an

argument against broadening the framework of the knowledge production and public memory of slavery, but one in favour of it. A more inclusive public culture of slavery could create the space to discuss the similarities and differences among racialized oppressions in the past and present, and to explore how post-colonial communities with genealogical links to different parts of the Dutch empire are differentially impacted upon by the afterlives of Dutch colonialism in the present. Heritage is dynamic and the public (material and symbolic) culture of slavery can easily be made more inclusive and encompassing. New institutions, such as the as yet to be established National Slavery Museum, should use the novel opportunity to include transatlantic and Indian Ocean slavery in their exhibitions.

There are a few benefits of ensuring a more integrated history of Dutch slavery. Comparative historiographical analyses would provide a deeper understanding of the different modalities of Dutch slavery in colonial Indonesia and the Caribbean. Second, new light would be shed on the premise that slavery has been crucial to the rise of capitalist wealth in the metropoles. Recently, as mentioned, a pioneering study authored by Pepijn Brandon and Ulbe Bosma has quantified the importance of Transatlantic slavery for the economy of Holland in the eighteenth century, thereby invalidating earlier claims of its insignificance. What would it mean for our understanding of the genesis of Dutch capitalism and wealth if both the profits (direct and indirect) of transatlantic *and* Indian Ocean slavery were carefully traced and researched? Furthermore, including transatlantic and Indian Ocean slavery could help to develop a more elaborate framework within which to analyse the varied nature of historical racism and the racialized afterlives of slavery in the Netherlands. If we include transatlantic and Indian Ocean slavery in trying to make sense of how the cultural archive of Dutch colonialism informs hierarchies and inequalities within Dutch society, this archive may suddenly become much more multisided.

But we should not be blinded by hope. We should also critically reflect upon the impact of knowledge production and heritage dynamics concerning (the afterlives of) slavery for those groups which cannot, in a narrow sense, trace a colonial connection with the Netherlands. If slavery and its racialized afterlives are (contested) vessels for claiming equal citizenship and inclusion in the nation, where would those residents whose memories and colonial histories that do not easily fit into this framework be left? Perhaps we should consider redefining existing slavery monuments as "monuments for the victims of slavery and colonial and capitalist exploitation"? Moreover,

we should keep in mind that "recognition" always produces shadows and losses. As Lisa Lowe puts it:

> I try to interpret, from the slave trader's disinterest in the slave's pain, those social conditions within which there was no possible political resolution to that pain. I try to imagine what could have been. The *past conditional temporality* of the "what could have been", symbolizes aptly the space of a different kind of thinking, a space of productive attention to the scene of loss, a thinking with twofold attention that seeks to encompass at once the positive objects and methods of history and social sciences, and also the matters absent, entangled, and unavailable by its methods.[49]

Lowe's words are wonderfully insightful. I recognize "the positive objects and methods", but I am particularly drawn to "the scene of loss". Impactful, horrific stories of many millions have disappeared into black holes of epistemological nothingness, and there is no way to retrieve them. Perhaps "recognition" from this perspective is also about epistemological and political humility—realizing that the stories of millions are lost forever, regardless of the paradigm or "method" we apply.

## Notes

1. I am grateful to Nira Wickramasinghe and Alicia Schrikker for the insightful comments and suggestions on the draft versions of this chapter.

2. I thank Alicia Schrikker and Nira Wickramasinghe for pinpointing the actual date and newspaper of the advertisement and for making the point about the continuities with the history of slavery. Here is the advertisement: "De Sumatra Post," Delpher, accessed 6 April 2019, https://www.delpher.nl/nl/kranten/view?coll=ddd&query=%28Leeksma+soerabaja+slagers%29&facets%5Bspatial%5D%5B%5D=Nederlands-Indi%C3%AB+%7C+Indonesi%C3%AB&identifier=ddd%3A010320873%3Ampeg21%3Aa0015&resultsidentifier=ddd%3A010320873%3Ampeg21%3Aa0015.
   For advertisements on slavery see, for instance, "Slavernij in de Oost: Een Beetje Vergeten," Arkhamarchivaris, accessed 6 April 2019, http://arkhamarchivaris.blogspot.com/2014/02/slavernij-in-de-oost-een-beetje-vergeten.html.

3. Paul Bijl, "Colonial Memory and Forgetting in the Netherlands and Indonesia," *Journal of Genocide Research* 14, nos. 3–4 (2012): 441.

4. See for an interesting analysis of the recent epistemological shifts in the study of Dutch colonialism Matthijs Kuipers, "De Strijd om Het Koloniale Verleden. Trauma, Herinnering, en de 'Imperial History Wars' in Nederland," *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 131, no. 4 (2018): 657-676.
5. Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Boston MA: Beacon Press, 1995.
6. Reggie Baay, *Daar Werd Wat Gruwelijks Verricht. Slavernij in Nederlands-Indië*, 255. Amsterdam: Athenaeum-Polak & Van Gennep, 2015, quotation translated by the author.
7. See Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*.
8. Guno Jones, "De Slavernij is Onze Geschiedenis (Niet). Over de Discursieve Strijd om de Betekenis van de NTR-Televisie-Serie De Slavernij," *BMGN Low Countries Historical Review* 127, no. 4 (2012): 56-82.
9. Ann Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*. Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1995, cited in Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence. Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race*, 25. Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2016.
10. Wekker, *White Innocence*, 25.
11. See, for instance, Karwan Fatah-Black, *Eigendomsstrijd: De Geschiedenis Van Slavernij en Emancipatie in Suriname*. Amsterdam: Ambo|Anthos, 2018; Ellen Neslo, *Een Ongekende Elite. De Opkomst van Een Gekleurde Elite in Koloniaal Suriname 1800–1863*. De Bilt: Haes Producties, 2017; Markus Balkenhol, *Tracing Slavery. An Ethnography of Diaspora, Affect and Cultural Heritage in Amsterdam*. Amsterdam: Ridderprint, 2014; Valika Smeulders, *Slavernij in Perspectief. Mondialisering en Erfgoed in Suriname, Ghana, Zuid-Afrika en Curaçao*. Enschede: Ipskamp Drukkers BV, 2012; Lucia Nankoe and Jules Rijssen, *De Slaaf Vliegt Weg. Beeldvorming Over Slavernij in de Kunsten*. Arnhem: LM Publishers, 2013; Aspha Bijnaar, *Kind Aan de Ketting. Opgroeien in Slavernij Toen en nu*. Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 2010; Leo Balai, *Het Slavenschip Leusden. Slavenschepen en de West-Indische Compagnie, 1720–1738*. Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2011; Alex van Stipriaan, "De Achterkant van Vrijheid, Gelijkheid, Broederschap," *Tijdschrift over Cultuur & Criminaliteit* 4, no. 3 (2014): 68; Alex van Stipriaan, *Surinaams Contrast. Roofbouw en Overleven in Een Caraïbische Plantagekolonie, 1750–1863*. Amsterdam: KITLV, 1993; Alex van Stipriaan, Waldo Heilbron, Aspha Bijnaar and Valika Smeulders, *Op Zoek Naar de Stilte. Sporen van Het Slavernijverleden in Nederland*. Amsterdam: KITLV, 2007; Glenn Willemsen, *Dagen van Gejuich en Gejubel. Viering en Herdenking van de Afschaffing van de Slavernij in Nederland, Suriname en de Nederlandse Antillen*. The Hague/Amsterdam: Amrit, 2006; Rosemary Allen, "In Search for Identity: An Analysis of the Commemoration of the Slave-revolt of 17th of August 1795

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Some two decades ago, the knowledge field on plantation slavery in Suriname was already substantial, as Ramsoedh demonstrates: see Hans Ramsoedh, "Surinamistiek 1975-2000," *OSO, tijdschrift voor Surinaamse taalkunde, letterkunde, cultuur en geschiedenis* 20 (2001), 137-139.

12. See Pepijn Brandon, "Slavernijgeschiedenis zonder polderen: observaties over een debat vol contrast," *Beleid en Maatschappij*, 46, no. 2 (2019): 258-264.
13. See Jones, "De Slavernij is Onze Geschiedenis (Niet)," 56–82.
14. The Mapping Slavery team currently consists of Dienke Hondius, Nancy Jouwe, Wim Manuhutu, Jennifer Tosch and Dineke Stam.
15. Pepijn Brandon and Ulbe Bosma, "De betekenis van de Atlantische slavernij voor de Nederlandse economie in de tweede helft van de achttiende eeuw," *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis*, 16, no. 2 (2019): 5-45. The research team that gathered the data for this publication consisted of Pepijn Brandon, Tamira Combrink, Gerhard de Kok and Karin Lurvink.
16. See, for instance, Harry Hoetink, *Het Patroon van de Oude Curaçaose Samenleving: een Sociologische Studie*. Assen: Van Gorcum, 1958; Wim Klooster, "Subordinate but Proud: Curaçao's Free Blacks and Mulattoes in the Eighteenth Century," *New West Indian Guide*, 68, nos. 304 (1994): 283-300; Nolda Kenepa-Römer, "Curaçaose Vrouwen in de Slavenmaatschappij," in *Womanhood in Curaçau*, edited by Richenel Ansano, Joceline Clemencia, Jeanette Cook and Eithel Martis, 21-42. Willemstad; Fundashon Publikashon Curaçao, 1992; Rosemary Allen, "In Search for Identity: An Analysis of the Commemoration of the Slave-revolt of 17th of August 1795 in Curaçao. Paper presented at the Conference of Culture". Jamaica, 1996; Rosemary Allen, *Di Ki Manera? A Social History of Afro-Curaçaoans, 1863-1917*. Amsterdam: SWP Publishers, 2007.
17. Angela Roe, *The Sound of Silence: Ideology of National Identity and Racial Inequality in Contemporary Curaçao* (PhD thesis, Florida International University, 2016), 61.
18. Such as duration, extent of slave trade, conditions on slave ships, number of enslaved people, racist ideologies, ferocity of the regime, and involvement of Dutch law and of state-sanctioned Dutch companies.
19. Baay, *Daar Werd Wat Gruwelijks Verricht*, 255; Matthias van Rossum, *Kleurrijke Tragiek. De Geschiedenis van Slavernij in Azië Onder de VOC*. Hilversum: Verloren, 2015.

20. Alex van Stipriaan, "Slavernijonderzoek en Debat in Nederland: Een Stand van Zaken" (public lecture 2011).
21. Ibid., 2011.
22. Jones, "De Slavernij is Onze Geschiedenis (Niet)," 56–82; Nimako and Willemsen, *The Dutch Atlantic*, 158.
23. Smeulders, *Slavernij in Perspectief*. 53
24. Willemsen, *Dagen van Gejuich en Gejubel,* 143–153 and back cover.
25. Lamur, "The Evolution of Afro-Surinamese National Movements," 17–27; Jones, "De Slavernij is Onze Geschiedenis (Niet)," 56–82.
26. Lamur, "The Evolution of Afro-Surinamese National Movements," 17–27. Humphrey Lamur is an emeritus professor at the University of Amsterdam. He conducted extensive research on Dutch Caribbean slavery long before the subject became fashionable.
27. Nimako and Willemsen, *The Dutch Atlantic*, 158–62. See Balkenhol, *Tracing Slavery*.
28. See Johan F. Jones, *Kwakoe en Christus. Een Beschouwing Over de Ontmoeting van de Afro-Amerikaanse Cultuur en Religie Met de Hernhutter Zending in Suriname*. Brussels: Universitaire Protestantse Faculteit te Brussel, 1981.
29. Personal observation.
30. See Lamur, "The Evolution of Afro-Surinamese National Movements," 17–27; Nimako and Willemsen, *The Dutch Atlantic*, 157.
31. Lamur, "The Evolution of Afro-Surinamese National Movements," 17–27; Jones, "De Slavernij is Onze Geschiedenis (Niet)," 56–82.
32. Lamur, "The Evolution of Afro-Surinamese National Movements," 17, italics added by the author; Jones, "De Slavernij is Onze Geschiedenis (Niet)," 65; Balkenhol, *Tracing Slavery*.
33. Jones, "De Slavernij is Onze Geschiedenis (Niet)," 56–82; Guno Jones, *Tussen Onderdanen, Rijksgenoten en Nederlanders: Nederlandse Politici Over Burgers Uit Oost en West en Nederland, 1945–2005*. Amsterdam: Rozenberg Publishers, 2007.
34. See Smeulders, *Slavernij in Perspectief*.
35. Baay, *Daar Werd Wat Gruwelijks Verricht*, 255.
36. Reggie Baay, *De Njai. Het Concubinaat in Nederlands-Indië*. Amsterdam: Athenaeum-Polak & Van Gennep, 2008.
37. Balkenhol, *Tracing Slavery;* Jones, "De Slavernij is Onze Geschiedenis (Niet)," 56–82.
38. Ibid., 56–82; Guno Jones, "Het Belang van Een Gedenkteken. De Discussie Over Het Nationaal Monument Nederlands Slavernijverleden," *Kleio* 42, no. 5

(2001): 9–13; Nimako and Willemsen, *The Dutch Atlantic*, 158–164; Balkenhol, *Tracing Slavery*.

39. The ways in which the monument is referred to in the media have shifted. While the platform set out to erect the *Nationaal Monument Nederlands Slavernijverleden* (National Slavery Monument of the Netherlands), it is now mostly referred to in the media as the *Nationaal Monument Slavernijverleden*.
40. Natasja Gibbs, "Steeds meer gemeenten organiseren een officiële slavernijherdenking," *Caribisch Network* (Nederland), 26 June 2018, https://caribischnetwerk.ntr.nl/2018/06/26/steeds-meer-gemeenten-organiseren-een-officiele-slavernijherdenking/.
41. Jones, "De Slavernij is Onze Geschiedenis (Niet)," 66.
42. Balkenhol, *Tracing Slavery*.
43. The NiNsee was responsible for organizing the annual commemoration at the national monument, conducting research on slavery and its afterlives, and providing educational materials to schools. It had almost become defunct after the withdrawal of a government subsidy (almost all employees lost their jobs), but luckily the municipality of Amsterdam provided financial support for the commemoration.
44. In 2018, the majority of the parliament voted in favour of a motion that called upon the Dutch Government to enquire into providing a structural subsidy for the annual commemoration of slavery at the National Slavery Monument. The far-right ethno-nationalists (consisting of PVV and Forum For Democracy), the orthodox Christians and the liberals (VVD) (the biggest party in the government coalition that provides the prime minister) voted against the motion.
45. Jones, "De Slavernij is Onze Geschiedenis (Niet)," 56–82.
46. I received an interesting draft of an open letter from a network of members of the younger generation of diasporic communities from "the East". Unfortunately, it was retracted and is, thus, officially non-existent.
47. See Esther Captain, *Achter Het Kawat Was Nederland. Indische Oorlogservaringen en Herinneringen 1942–1945*. Kampen: Kok Kampen, 2002, and Esther Captain, "Geen Spoortje Indisch, Geen Bamboe, Geen Prikkeldraad. Het Tweesporenbeleid van Indische Zelforganisaties (1946–2000)," in *Binnenskamers. Terugkeer en Opvang na de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, edited by Conny Kristel, 325-355. Bakker: Amsterdam, 2002b.
48. Jones, *Tussen Onderdanen*.
49. Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham NC and London: Duke University Press, 2015), 40–41.

# Afterword

*Robert Ross*

In the southern summer of 1862-1863, Lucie Duff Gordon, an Englishwoman who moved in the highest literary circles of Victorian London, found herself in Caledon, a small town some hundred kilometres east of Cape Town. She had come there to gain some relief for her tuberculosis. There she met a man called Klein,[1] the postmaster of the town. Klein regaled Duff Gordon with numerous anecdotes, which she in her turn relayed to her daughter in London. Some of them related to Rosina, who had been enslaved to Klein. She had had two children by Klein, in addition to several others by another free man, and also, after emancipation, by her successive manumitted husbands. Rosina was a woman of spirit. As Klein described it, she had the habit of reading the Statute of Emancipation under his window every First of December.[2] In addition, when they encountered each other in the streets of Caledon, she would forcibly kiss him. On those occasions, she is reported to have exclaimed, "Aha! When I young and pretty slave-girl you make kiss me then: now I ugly drunk dirty old devil, and free woman, I kiss you."[3]

There are three things that need to be said about this exchange. The first is that Rosina's speech was undoubtedly bowdlerized, somewhere in its transmission from Klein to the publication of Duff Gordon's letters to her just-married daughter. Secondly, Rosina was no longer alive, and while there is no evidence of foul play, one wonders whether she had been punished by the ex-slave owners taking matters into their own hands. Thirdly, however translated, and perhaps relieved of its grammar and infantilized, Rosina's speech may be in the form Duff Gordon recorded, and its survival brings into focus a very rare phenomenon. This is the reasonably authentic and unfiltered comment by enslaved people on their bondage, either during slavery or after their manumission. There are very few instances in which the words of the enslaved have been recorded, except in circumstances in which free men and women controlled the transmission—and Rosina's

outburst was not one of them. Historians have to deal with texts which are heavily biased towards those expressions which would have seemed acceptable to members of the master class.[4] In order to understand the processes at work, it is as well to remember one of the exchanges between Captain Robert Fitzroy and his travelling companion, Charles Darwin. It occurred when the *Beagle* was docked in Bahia. Fitzroy, an aristocratic defender of slavery, had been on a visit to the planation, where he had heard the slaves say, when asked by their master, if any wished to be free. When he recounted this question and its answer—unanimously negative—to Darwin, the latter, a fervent abolitionist, asked the Captain "if the answers of slaves in the presence of their master [were] worth anything".[5] The result was a rupture between the two men which threatened Darwin's continued voyage on the ship, and thus the development in later years of the theory of Natural Selection. Darwin of course was right. Even when we know what the enslaved said, which is seldom enough, we still have to try to envisage the pressures that the enslaved were under at that moment. Paradoxically, it is generally the case that, in order to make some estimation of what the enslaved thought, it is more enlightening to look at what they did rather than what they said.

Even working out what slaves did, let alone why, can be difficult. As before, the descriptions and events are produced with a filter imposed by the slave owners or the political authorities. In colonial situations, particularly those where the Dutch were in control, there is often a large cache of records deriving from the law courts. The transcripts of criminal, and indeed civil, trials have provided historians of Batavia, Sri Lanka, parts of India and the Cape Colony with information in detail about the lives of the enslaved which is rarely to be equalled. Nevertheless, court records have their grave limitations. They can provide detailed descriptions of what the enslaved were doing at a given time and place.[6] Often the people who gave testimony in a case may have been present at the moment in question just by chance, and not by design. The result is that such sources can provide extremely valuable descriptions of the lives of the enslaved—at least for the day, or night, when a crime may have been committed. Against this, however, there is one great problem. The testimony given by the enslaved in criminal cases was often made by men and women who were in fear of their lives, with good reason. Colonial courts rarely found someone not guilty of the crimes with which he or she was accused. The punishment imposed thereafter was horrific, in the literal sense as well as in the normal

usage. Creating horror among the population of the enslaved was generally the goal of the prosecutors, even more than they were concerned to uphold the principles of the rule of law. In general, those who came to court had already confessed to the crime. Their appearance in court was merely to occasion the passing of a sentence, very often in some dishonourable and very painful way. Moreover, the confession on the basis of which the court made its decision may well have been extracted by, at least, the threat of torture. Historians thus have to be very careful in their critical use of slave testimony. It can be enormously interesting, but it is nonetheless necessarily extracted under duress. Even those whose statements were in cases where they were not themselves in the dock may well have been attempting to protect their fellow enslaved.

In addition, crime is invariably in some sense exceptional. Even if those acts which are considered crimes are part of the regular way of life of some group, there remains the question why in this particular case individuals were caught and tried. This may have little to do with the precise nature of the deed committed. Historians have to make hypotheses about the decision-making process of the political authorities, as well as about the behaviour and values of the enslaved, in order evaluate and understand what has transpired and how it can be interpreted.

Similar strictures to those which apply to the use of criminal records are, mutatis mutandis, valid for most other windows through which historians have attempted to gain insight into the lives of the enslaved. Within this book authors have used their knowledge, and indeed their intuition, to reconstruct something of how the enslaved managed to endure their bondage. In a sense, though, it is those who failed to endure who are the most poignant in the archival record. Suicide and infanticide were among the social facts of slavery and its aftermath which demonstrate most clearly what it is to have been enslaved, and particularly, perhaps, an enslaved woman. They give an insight into the pressures, and the sheer terror, which slavery entailed, and of how some at least considered death to be the only protection against the monopolizing world of the slave owners.

At this point, it is necessary to state an obvious fact which permeates all of the writing of history about slavery. Modern historians have themselves never been enslaved. We have to rely on the sources which have come down to us, partial and limited though they may be, and on the skill and imagination that we have managed to develop and, just as importantly, to discipline. By using these skills, the authors in this book have provided major insights

into the lives of the enslaved across the Indian Ocean. This has been done through the reconstruction of what may have been no more than minutes in the life of one of the enslaved. This micro-historical work, requiring as it does the drudgery and the excitement of detailed archival research, cannot simply be scaled up to give a view of society as a whole, but it can be used to fuel a greater understanding of the lives of that great majority of the enslaved who have disappeared into anonymity, leaving no trace except perhaps as a constituent unit of some statistical description.

It may seem a pessimistic conclusion to argue that it is impossible for us fully to envisage the horrors of being enslaved, but perhaps it is not. John Dunn once memorably wrote that "it takes a real historian to extract intellectual *excitement* from the thought that one can fail to understand someone else".[7] In other words, people who are separated from us by time, by culture and by thought, and who thus acted in ways which we cannot retrospectively predict, and are therefore continually surprised by. We can learn to make our predictions of what we will find in the archive steadily more accurate, but we can never hope to fully succeed in this endeavour.

Nevertheless there may be one exception to the rule that historians can never fully rethink the thoughts of the enslaved, and thus convincingly reconstruct their actions. As Anne Marieke van der Wal has pointed out,[8] in many societies, not least in the Cape Colony, that which cannot be said can often be sung.

## Notes

1. Very possibly Willem Hendrik Kleyn, who married Anna Frauenfelder in 1816.
2. The date of the emancipation of slaves in the Cape Colony, somewhat later than in Britain's West Indian Colonies.
3. Lucie Duff Gordon, *Letters from the Cape,* edited by John Purves, 99-100. London, Humphrey Milford: 1921.
4. This is, for instance, also the case with the autobiographies of successful fugitives from slavery in the southern states of the US, which were generally published by abolitionists, and probably even in the oral interviews conducted by the Federal Writers Project in the 1930s. For Indian Ocean slavery, moreover, there is very little which in any way approximates to these two sets of sources.
5. Adrian Desmond and James Moore, *Darwin's Sacred Cause: Race, Slavery and the Quest for Human Origins,* 76. London: Allen Lane, 2009.

6. See, for instance, the chapters by Kate Ekama and Geelen et al. in this volume.
7. John Dunn, "What is Living and What is Dead in the Political Theory of John Locke?", in his *Interpreting Political Responsibility: Essays 1981 – 1989*, 9-25, 10. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014.
8. See the contribution by Anne Marieke van der Wal in this volume, above; cf. Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*. New York: Vintage Books, 1972.

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CRITICAL, CONNECTED HISTORIES

*Being a Slave* brings together scholars and writers who try to come to terms with the histories and legacies of European slavery in the Indian Ocean. This volume discusses a variety of qualitative data on the experience of being a slave in order to recover ordinary lives and, crucially, to place this experience in its Asian local context. Building on the rich scholarship on the slave trade, this volume offers a unique perspective that embraces the origin and afterlife of enslavement as well as the imaginaries and representations of slaves rather than the trade in slaves itself.

From Cape to Batavia, slavery is understood as a diffuse practice. This approach helps unearth 18th and 19th century experiences of being a slave in the Indian Ocean world, but also sheds light on continuities in bondage into the present. Contributors force an often hostile archive to extract traces of the lived experience of slavery in court records, petitions or private letters. They also listen to local voices by prying unexplored primary sources such as oral histories, memories and objects.

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