

The Economics of the Indian Ocean Slave Trade

in the Nineteenth Century

Edited by
**William Gervase
Clarence-Smith**



**THE ECONOMICS OF THE INDIAN OCEAN SLAVE
TRADE IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY**

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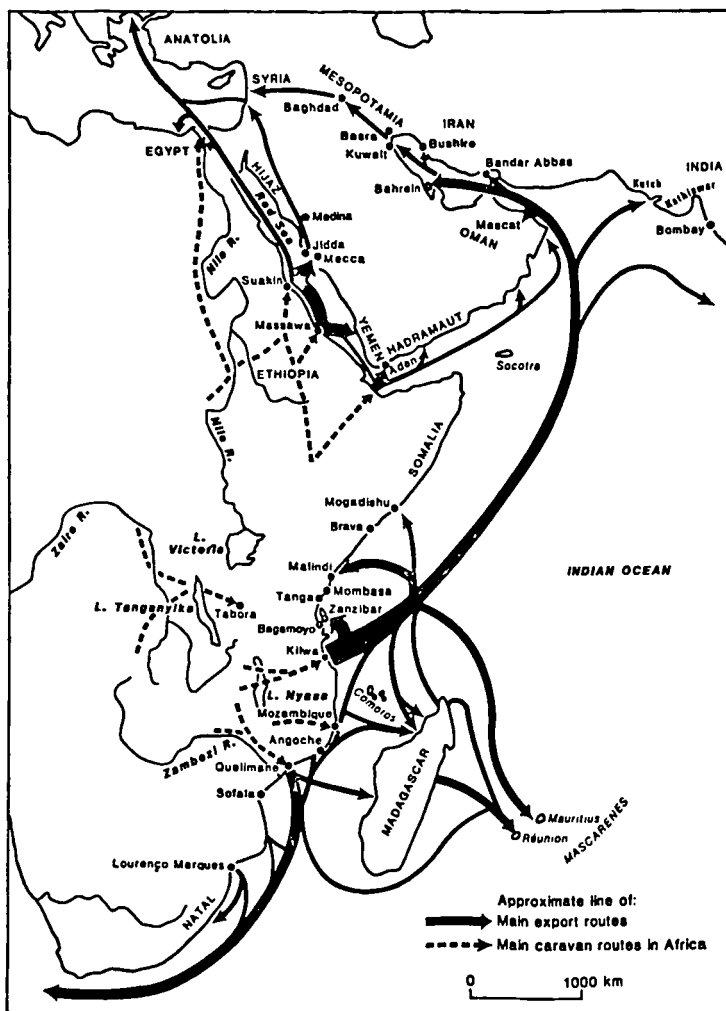
The Economics of the Indian Ocean and Red Sea Slave Trades in the 19th Century: An Overview

William Gervase Clarence-Smith

Well over a million slaves were exported from Indian Ocean and Red Sea ports in Eastern Africa during the nineteenth century, and millions more were shifted around the interior of the continent and along the coast of East Africa. And yet we still know remarkably little about this great movement of people, particularly from an economic point of view.¹ The contrast with our knowledge of the Atlantic slave trade is striking after the recent publication of David Eltis' major work.² The study of slavery and the slave trade has become one of the fastest growing areas of academic research into the economic and social history of the 'Third World', but the 'Eastern' slave trade has not received its due share of attention. At the International Congresses on slavery and the slave trade, held in Nantes in 1985 and São Paulo in 1988, the focus was almost exclusively on the Atlantic trade.³ This collection attempts to begin to right the balance by presenting a selection of revised papers from a workshop organised at the School of Oriental and African Studies (London) in December 1987.⁴

Nothing has created so much controversy in the history of the slave trade as the disputes over the total number of slaves exported, and nowhere has this problem been harder to solve than for the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea. Sources in the importing areas are generally poor and difficult of access, especially in comparison to the New World. The considerable coastal trade in slaves complicates matters and makes it especially hard to work out the balance between retained and exported labourers.⁵ And the general economic history of the area is as yet poorly explored.

One thing which does seem clear is that the 'Eastern' slave trade expanded considerably in the nineteenth century. The export boom in the western Indian Ocean, especially marked from about the 1840s to the 1880s, created a strong demand for slaves.⁶ Radically improved maritime security helped to compensate for the problems springing from the naval measures taken by Britain to suppress the slave trade.⁷ On the supply side, there was the generation of vast numbers of cheap captives



as a by-product or as a direct goal of the expansion of the Egyptian, Ethiopian, Omani and Merina empires. Numerous slaves were also 'produced' by the *Mfecane* invasions spreading up from Zululand, by the penetration of the Mozambican *senhores dos prazos* along the Zambezi, and by other disruptive forms of military expansion.⁸

Sub-Saharan Eastern Africa itself absorbed more slaves than has been allowed for in the past, and the export trade was in many ways a mere by-product of a flourishing internal trade. Earlier estimates have to be revised upwards. Well over a million slaves were probably obtained by the 'Swahili world' alone in the nineteenth century.⁹ How many more were incorporated into the Egyptian or Mahdist Sudan, Ethiopia, the Merina and other kingdoms of Madagascar, the *prazos* and the various Nguni or Nguni-derived states, it is difficult to estimate.¹⁰ It will probably always be impossible even to make estimates of the numbers of slaves acquired in dribs and drabs by vast numbers of small communal or lineage societies. But one is clearly talking of millions of slaves absorbed within Sub-Saharan Eastern Africa in the nineteenth century.

There was a certain demand in the large polities for 'luxury' slaves, eunuchs, concubines and administrators, but this was never very great in numerical terms and it varied from one society to another. Renault reports that the Arabs in the interior of Central Africa did not own eunuchs.¹¹ However, the Omani Sultans of Zanzibar had small numbers of eunuchs, and the kings of Buganda were said to have introduced the practice in the nineteenth century under Arab influence. There are also reports of highly placed eunuchs in Darfur and Ethiopia in this period.¹² The use of administrative and military slaves probably reached its most developed form not in Muslim states, but rather in the *prazos* of Mozambique, where they were also employed as traders on their masters' behalf.¹³

Slave concubines were more commonly found, especially in Muslim states, but not in numbers commensurate with the great harems and palaces of the Middle East and North India.¹⁴ For matrilineal peoples (including many African Islamised groups), concubines were a way for powerful men to get round the problems involved in accumulating dependents only through the procreative capacities of their sisters and other female kin.¹⁵

There were far more slave labourers within Sub-Saharan Eastern African societies, but in the non-Muslim polities it can be argued that slavery was largely a system of forced colonisation. Slavery coexisted with serfdom, corvée obligations, kin recruitment and other forms of tied labour, in areas characterised by high land to population ratios. Some slaves were absorbed over time into the social categories of serfs, subjects, age-grade members, or junior kin.¹⁶ Even where this

did not happen, as in the Merina empire of Madagascar where over half the population may have consisted of slaves by the end of the nineteenth century, the economic role of slaves was often hard to distinguish from that of poor peasants.¹⁷ One can then understand the apparent paradox that the large numbers of captives retained by these societies did not correlate with the production of a correspondingly large volume of commodities for the internal or the export market. This was often a kind of 'subsistence servitude' far removed from the slavery of the New World.

The states ruled by Arabs and Islamised Africans in Eastern Africa had social systems approximating more closely to New World slavery. The clove plantations of Zanzibar and Pemba, at the heart of the Omani empire, are the *locus classicus* of this phenomenon. Plantations using slave labour were also dotted along the coast and off-shore islands, and existed inland, in the Omani empire of the Eastern Zaire basin and in the central part of the modern Republic of Sudan. The principal crops were cereals and oilseeds, followed by sugar and cotton. Slaves also dug up gum copal and collected orchilia dye lichen in the coastal strip of East Africa. Copal, orchilia and oilseeds were chiefly for export to the West, while cereals, sugar and cotton were consumed within the regional economies of the western Indian Ocean and the Nile valley.¹⁸

Slaves were also employed in the urban economy which was characteristic of these Islamic societies. Thus, large-scale weaving in the Somali town of Mogadishu for export within the western Indian Ocean was performed by Oromo slaves.¹⁹ Such metropolises as Zanzibar and Omdurman were heavily dependent on slave labour, especially for transport and construction purposes, and in artisanal occupations.²⁰ In the Comoros, masons and carpenters took on many slave apprentices, as the wealth brought by slave trading led to a boom in the construction of fine houses. Slaves were also preferred for dirty and smelly work, such as the tanning of leather and fishing.²¹

Nevertheless, when all is said and done, this did not add up to a system of slavery strictly comparable to that of the New World, or indeed to that of the European plantation systems of the Mascarenes and South Africa. Forty per cent of the population of the Comoro islands outside French control in the 1860s was estimated to consist of slaves, and yet commercial exports were on a very small scale.²² Even the clove exports of Zanzibar and Pemba remained quite small compared to the flood of sugar coming out of the European plantations of Mauritius, Réunion and Natal. The number of slaves required to produce a given value of cloves appears to have been far higher than the labourers needed for an equivalent value of sugar output.²³

The indications are that slave labour was employed relatively inefficiently, and that large numbers of slaves were kept as domestics and

retainers of every kind, for the provision of leisure and prestige. In the Comoro islands a French resident of the 1860s has left us a vivid picture of slaves, women and children toiling away while 'The men sit on mats on the outer verandah all day long, smoking hashish, chatting and playing draughts or cards'.²⁴ The male élite of the Comoros also employed their leisure time more austere in prayer, meditation and scholarship, to become some of the most famous Muslim scholars of the region.²⁵

Many of the factors governing demand in the wider Muslim world may appear to be the same at first sight as those operating in Islamised areas of Sub-Saharan Eastern Africa, but there were significant differences. The number of slaves exported to the Middle East and India was considerably smaller than the number retained in Africa. Moreover, the prices were higher in the wider Muslim world, the demand for luxury slaves was greater, and the mix of servile and non-servile labour in direct production was different.

Austen is now prepared to scale down earlier estimates and accept a figure of a little over 300,000 exported to Middle Eastern and Indian destinations from the 'Swahili Coast' and a little under 500,000 across the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden in the nineteenth century. The Persian Gulf, the Yemen and the Hijaz were the main destinations for the slaves, with re-exports going to Egypt, Syria, Anatolia and north-western India. Exports of African slaves to places further East than India virtually ceased, and even those to India were small and scarcely lasted beyond the 1840s.²⁶

In part, this is simply explained by prices. In 1850, a slave sold in Zanzibar for 5 to 10 dollars would fetch 25 in Muscat, 40 in Bushire on the Iranian coast, and up to 100 in the Kathiawar peninsula of north-western India.²⁷ This gives an indication of the 'price gradient' for slaves, which has to be borne in mind in all that follows. The relative price of slave and free labour was especially important in determining the economics of the employment of slaves in productive tasks. Luxury slaves were different, in that there were few or no alternative sources of supply, so that the income elasticity of demand was the key factor.

The emphasis placed upon 'luxury' slaves has often been exaggerated (and riddled with 'Orientalist' and voyeuristic connotations), but if one gets away from the evaluation of mere numbers, a few luxury slaves could be worth as much as many ordinary labourers. It is unfortunate that we as yet have no real breakdown between different categories of slave exports, but luxury slaves do seem to have been important in the overall economics of the trade to Middle Eastern and Indian destinations. The rise in real incomes and the expansion in the numbers of the wealthy élite contributed to greater demand. Indeed, during

the fabulous cotton boom of the 1860s in Egypt, even peasants were attempting to acquire expensive white Circassian slave concubines.²⁸

Eunuchs were the most valuable of all slaves, fetching prices ten times or more those of ordinary males.²⁹ The purchase of eunuchs was generally restricted to very wealthy Turkish-speaking and Iranian-speaking families, particularly in Istanbul, Lower Egypt, Iran and parts of North India. British pressures had more or less stamped out the use of eunuchs in Egypt and India by the end of the nineteenth century, but the market was still buoyant in Iran.³⁰ And castrated slaves were still being clandestinely exported from the Gulf of Aden and northern Mozambique in the first decade of the twentieth century.³¹ Arabic-speakers appear to have been less prone to own eunuchs, and to have frowned upon the custom, although the Omani sultans owned a few.³²

Istanbul undoubtedly had the greatest concentration of eunuchs, even though the days of the 'Sultanate of the African eunuchs' had come to an end by the later eighteenth century. It is hard to judge the evolution of this market, although it does seem clear that all castrated slaves by the nineteenth century were black Africans, and that there were no longer white Circassian eunuchs. The penetration of Western ideas, the general reform of administration and British pressures acted against the use of eunuchs. But the prestige and 'demonstration effect' of the imperial court remained very great, and two eunuchs were given major administrative positions in the reign of the last sultan before the 1908 revolution. Moreover, the imperial household was actually acquiring castrated slaves at an increasing rate in the last decades of the century.³³ However, this may have been to 'stock up', as the days of this trade were seen to be doomed.

Concubines accounted for a larger number of luxury slaves, and there is at least one report of a whole slave cargo consisting of 112 women destined for the harems.³⁴ They fetched a lower price than eunuchs, and were owned by a wider stratum of society. Indeed, in Egypt and in Istanbul the men who owned African eunuchs generally had white slave concubines (Circassians, Georgians and Greeks). It was the 'middling sort' who acquired black concubines, especially Ethiopians, but also women from certain reputed ethnic groups, such as the Mangbetu.³⁵ In a relative backwater such as Oman, white concubines were rare and Ethiopians predominated.³⁶ In India, it was reported that both Muslim and Hindu men sometimes found it cheaper to acquire slave wives than free wives.³⁷ However, in the beduinised society of Mesopotamia, the practice of concubinage was frowned upon and was uncommon.³⁸

Domestic servants formed another significant aspect of this trade. As with concubines, rising incomes led to higher imports. In Egypt, even quite modest families bought a few domestic slaves until late in the century. Although servants were usually women, they were clearly

demarcated from concubines, and there were significant social barriers to masters sexually abusing such slaves. Considerable prestige was attached to owning slaves, particularly in the case of women employers. This would seem to explain why slave servants were preferred to free servants in Egypt, although the latter would almost certainly have been cheaper.³⁹ Oman and Kuwait were also characterised by a plethora of slave domestics, although there were fewer in Basra.⁴⁰

Imports of slaves for military and administrative purposes, for centuries a major feature of Islamic slavery, declined sharply in many traditional markets, notably India, Oman and the Ottoman Empire.⁴¹ A temporary exception to this rule was Egypt under Muhammad 'Ali. However, by the late 1830s he had abandoned his plans for a great black slave army to aid him in expanding into the Middle East, owing to the high mortality of the Sudanese troops. Peasant conscription became the basis of the Egyptian army, and military slavery came to be almost entirely confined to fuelling Egyptian expansion in the Sudan itself.⁴² The other exception was that the independent rulers of south-western Arabia and some of the Gulf sheikhs continued to rely to a considerable extent on a black slave soldiery, although this was not a phenomenon of great significance in numerical terms.⁴³ Some powerful sheikhs in Mesopotamia also employed black slaves as agents and revenue collectors.⁴⁴

When one turns to directly productive labour, one enters the heart of the controversy about slave imports into the Middle East and India in the nineteenth century. The revisionists have argued that the economies of the region could not have absorbed so much slave labour. Exports of commodities to the world market were not large enough, slave prices were too high, and cheap free labour was too abundant to make anything like New World slavery viable.⁴⁵ Moreover, some would argue that there were considerable non-economic barriers of a legal and customary nature to the employment of slaves in productive activities.⁴⁶

However, it may be that these revisionist arguments have concentrated too much on the agricultural sector (perhaps because of the New World model), and not enough on maritime and urban occupations, especially the former. Pearl fishing prospered in the nineteenth century, as incomes rose in the West. And the Persian Gulf was the largest centre in the world for this occupation. Although the pearl exports of the Gulf fluctuated considerably, the general trend was up and up. They stood at around £100,000 a year at the turn of the century, rose to £300,000 in the early 1830s, reached around £700,000 by the 1870s, and went over £1,000,000 in the 1900s. In this last decade, the Gulf was responsible for about half of total world production by value. By this time, significant quantities of much less valuable mother-of-pearl for buttons and so forth were also being exported. The pearl production of the Red Sea, Gulf of

Aden and East African coast was only about a tenth of that of the Gulf at the end of the nineteenth century, but mother-of-pearl production in the 1900s was slightly higher than that of the Gulf.⁴⁷

The labour employed in the Gulf pearl fisheries rose from around 30,000 in the 1820s to some 75,000 by the 1900s, with a particularly sharp rise concentrated at the end of this period.⁴⁸ However, by no means all of these pearl divers were slaves. In 1831, one third of the divers were said to be slaves in Bahrain, the major pearling centre of the Gulf.⁴⁹ In the 1900s, there were many poor indebted Arabs and free blacks diving for pearls in the Gulf, together with black slaves, but the proportions are not specified. Skilled slave divers were ardently sought after, and could change hands for over 1,000 Rupees.⁵⁰ In the smaller pearl fisheries of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, the majority of the several thousand pearl divers were slaves until the end of the nineteenth century, and possibly even into the 1900s.⁵¹ The number of slaves absorbed by the pearling industry was inflated by the high rates of mortality and infirmity in this activity, with a working life for slaves as low as three to four years reported for the Red Sea.⁵²

In addition to slaves employed in the pearl fisheries, numerous sources testify to the predominance of slaves or ex-slaves among the mariners crewing the sailing ships of the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea.⁵³ Although steam ships provided increasingly severe competition on major routes, the general expansion of commerce in the Indian Ocean was such that the number of dhows probably grew rather than fell, at least until the last decade of the century.⁵⁴ Certainly sailing ships for the Indian Ocean trade continued to be built on quite a scale in many centres in Arabia and India right into the twentieth century.⁵⁵ But in the absence of any figures, it remains hard even to estimate how many slaves were absorbed into this sector of the economy.

The use of slaves in the urban economy varied considerably. Basra employed very few slaves in non-domestic capacities, while they were fairly numerous in neighbouring Kuwait.⁵⁶ The port towns of the Gulf and the sacred towns of the Hijaz were clearly large employers of servile labour in the nineteenth century. In the case of the Gulf, this was a spin-off from the prosperity brought by pearling. As for the Hijaz, the pilgrimage boom in and around Mecca in the latter part of the nineteenth century, generated by greater security and new means of transportation, sucked in large numbers of slaves for construction and transportation purposes, as well as for artisanal and even industrial jobs.⁵⁷

As for the employment of servile labour in agrarian tasks, it seems that it has been exaggerated in many existing estimates of slave demand, partly because of a lack of clear understanding of social and cultural norms. In Mesopotamia, pre-Islamic and tribal laws and customs relating to land and labour were of great significance, imposing almost insurmountable

barriers to the utilisation of slaves. Tilling the soil and bringing new land into cultivation were a mark of freedom, and therefore by definition were not open to slaves.⁵⁸ Similarly strong barriers to slave employment did not appear to exist in other Islamic agricultural centres in the region during the nineteenth century. However, large-scale cultivation by gangs of slaves was confined to the lands of major political figures, such as the sugar plantations of the Khedival family in Upper Egypt or the date plantations of the Sultans of Oman. It seems as though slave labour may have been employed more in the building and maintenance of irrigation facilities than in actual cultivation.⁵⁹ The prevalence of malaria in parts of south-western Arabia may also have encouraged the use of partially immune African slaves.⁶⁰

However, more specifically economic factors were also in play. The existence of a landless or partially landless peasant stratum in Lower Egypt usually made the employment of slaves in agriculture uneconomic. But when the cotton boom engulfed the Nile valley in the 1860s and early 1870s, as a consequence of the American Civil War, free labour resources proved insufficient, and the utilisation of slave labour in agriculture in Lower Egypt rose sharply, although only temporarily. Similarly, free labour was cheap and abundant enough in Anatolia to preclude the use of slaves in agriculture.⁶¹ In Mesopotamia, a combination of natural disasters and political problems led skilled date growers from the Middle Euphrates to move down to the rapidly expanding Basra date groves as tenants, while migrant casual labourers were always available in large numbers for seasonal work, such as date harvesting and the weaving of the palm fibre sacks in which dates were exported.⁶² In India, the existence of millions of cheap local praedial slaves and other subordinate groups made it quite uneconomic to employ expensive Africans in agriculture in most cases.⁶³

The vexed problems of mortality and reproduction also affected the rates of slave replacement, and therefore total imports. In addition to high mortality in risky activities such as diving for pearls, epidemics like the cholera outbreak of 1869–70 carried off so many slaves that demand rose sharply for a number of years in the Persian Gulf.⁶⁴ And in Cairo, the slave population was marked by astonishingly low birth rates and very high death rates.⁶⁵ But more systematic work is needed to assess the impact of these phenomena on the level of exports to the Middle East.

The traffic in slaves to the European plantations of the western Indian Ocean is much simpler and better known, and it declined earlier and quicker than that to the Middle East. Although the plantations of Mauritius were considerably more dynamic economically than those of the Middle East and Eastern Africa, slavery and the slave trade were also far more energetically repressed there. To be sure, the British were

initially reluctant to alienate the French planters of Mauritius, which was wrested from France during the Napoleonic Wars, and therefore tolerated illegal slave imports. However, this did not last long, and a solution was found by allowing the planters to turn to Indian indentured labour as an alternative to slaves.⁶⁶ The flourishing slave system of South Africa was suppressed even more rapidly by the British than that of Mauritius. And when sugar plantations developed in Natal, the planters were given almost immediate recourse to Indian indentured labour, so that the covert slave trade from Mozambique to this plantation area was nipped in the bud.⁶⁷

It was the French plantations which thus provided the major European market for slaves within the Indian Ocean. The French disposed of no more than small *comptoirs* in India, and were only grudgingly and temporarily given access to the British Indian labour market. Moreover, they were less zealous than their British counterparts in repressing slavery and the slave trade. It is thus not surprising to find Réunion (Bourbon), and to a lesser extent Mayotte and Nossi-Bé, as the main clandestine importers of slaves in the nineteenth century, employing elaborate stratagems to outwit the Royal Navy. However, the collapse of sugar prices in the mid-1880s precluded any major resurgence of the trade after recruitment from British India was suspended in 1882.⁶⁸

All in all, some 200,000 slaves were probably dispatched to the European plantations of the western Indian Ocean in the nineteenth century.⁶⁹ Madagascar, northern Mozambique and what is today southern Tanzania were the main sources of these slaves during most of the century. However, a small proportion of slaves came from the Dutch East Indies and from West Africa in the early decades of the nineteenth century, and some of the slavers were bound up with the wider Atlantic trade.⁷⁰

Even better known is the illegal trade to Brazil and Cuba, which Eltis has recently calculated accounted for just over 385,000 exported slaves for the years 1811–67.⁷¹ Demand was especially strong until the enforcement of the ban on imports into Brazil in 1850. The trade continued till the late 1860s, at which point the Spaniards finally stopped imports into Cuba. East African slaves were not particularly popular with Brazilian and Cuban planters, and mortality rates on board ship tended to be high because of the great length of the voyage to the New World. However, the East African coast was generally less effectively patrolled than that of West Africa. Central and southern Mozambique were especially important sources, but Spanish traders ventured up into present day southern Tanzania and beyond.⁷² Although this branch of the trade is not strictly within the remit of the present volume, its existence affected some aspects of the organisation of the Indian Ocean trade.

Finance is perhaps the biggest 'black hole' in our knowledge of the organisation of the trade, although it is clear that different forms of slave trading required different credit structures. Wherever distances were short, government interference minimal, and security tolerable, the slave trade could be run on a shoe-string. Quick occasional trips across the narrow Red Sea were made by captains of pearling or fishing boats, with no need for special equipment or provisions, and with little delay in return on their investment.⁷³ Inland, in the Sudan, in southern Ethiopia, or in the area round Lake Nyasa (Malawi), slaves could pass from one small intermediary to another over long distances and with little in the way of extended credit, as long as the authorities did not try too hard to either tax or repress the trade. One man and a donkey sufficed in many cases.⁷⁴

However, other forms of slave trading required more capital. Once the slaves were moved into Northern Ethiopia in large caravans, the traffic became the specialised business of a handful of wealthy Muslim merchants.⁷⁵ Similarly, the Arab caravans penetrating deep into East Africa operated a system of large loans in money and trade goods, which were not repaid for two years or more, although the Arabs were more interested in ivory than in slaves. The big dhows on the long haul from East Africa to the Persian Gulf also required considerable initial capital. This said, there was clearly a significant element of self-financing in the trade, with profits from one voyage being invested in further voyages. Moreover, the slave trade was only one part of a much wider network of trade and credit.⁷⁶ And funds did not always come from the commercial classes: according to Abdussamad Ahmad, Ethiopian nobles frequently invested some of their landed revenues in the slave trade, employing merchants as agents.⁷⁷

A major and largely unacknowledged role was played by Indian capital in financing the slave trade of the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea in this century. Sir Bartle Frere in 1873 estimated that about half the trade from Somalia to Madagascar was financed by Indians, overwhelmingly from Gujarat, with most of the rest dependent on credit from American and European firms. Given Frere's apparent wish to minimise Indian involvement, this was probably a conservative estimate. The Indians' position as British subjects usually made it difficult for them to actually own or ship slaves, thus confining them, like their Western rivals, to the role of providing money or trade goods on credit.⁷⁸ The Gujarati may have preferred to keep it that way, in order to avoid the greater risks involved in owning and shipping slaves, but there are occasional references to more direct Indian participation in the trade.⁷⁹ The Gujarati resident in East Africa and hailing from the Princely State of Kutch fought long and hard to reject the legal status of British subjects, and this is usually analysed in terms of their desire to participate more fully

as slave-owners in the clove economy of Zanzibar.⁸⁰ But it may also have been related to their desire to be able to ship slaves legally within the area still permitted by the British.

The importance of the slave trade to different groups of Indian financiers appears to have varied considerably over time and space. The rise of the Bohora and Khoja Ismaili Muslim communities in western and northern Madagascar in these years is alleged to have rested largely on their control of the Indian Ocean slave trade. It was also a significant economic activity for the Bhatia and Vania Hindus of northern Mozambique. Access to cheap credit and trade goods in Bombay was a key ingredient in both cases.⁸¹ The Indians of Mozambique, including Goans as well as Gujarati, also played a significant part in the Atlantic slave trade, by acting as brokers for the Portuguese and Spanish shippers.⁸²

Further north, the much wealthier Bhatia and Khoja Ismaili communities of Zanzibar were more dependent on ivory and cloves than on slaves for their profits.⁸³ But they and their colleagues in Oman also invested important sums in the slave trade.⁸⁴ Frere suggested in the early 1870s that the Muslims were more heavily involved than the Hindus in the slave trade, whereas Hamerton in the 1840s reported the reverse.⁸⁵ This probably reflected the growing challenge by the Khoja to the Bhatia's established position in the trade of Zanzibar.⁸⁶ Further north again, the Indians of the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea were investing quite heavily in the slave trade, in an area where alternative commercial activities were less developed than in the Zanzibar region.⁸⁷

However, Indian merchants came up against increasing competition from Middle Eastern financiers, especially in the Red Sea. Hadhrami and other Arabs, together with some Iranians, were ousting the Indians from their participation in the Red Sea slave trade by the last decades of the century.⁸⁸ Support from the Ottomans and other Muslim rulers was crucial in this process, and some governors were themselves using the profits of their offices to fuel the slave trade.⁸⁹ Muslim Ethiopians from Gondar and Adua acted in concert with Egyptian and Ottoman merchants, and within a network of family relations, to finance much of the long-distance trade out of Ethiopia.⁹⁰ In Egypt, where Indian merchants do not appear to have penetrated at all, both Arabs and Iranians were active in the trade.⁹¹

The Indians maintained their position better in the Indian Ocean, though not without difficulties. The Comoros were one region where the Arabs always dominated the financing of the trade in this century.⁹² In the Persian Gulf, Iranian and Arab participation in credit networks was expanding at the expense of Indians from roughly the middle of the century, most notably in the pearling business, but probably in the slave trade as well.⁹³ Arabs from the ports of Trucial Oman were especially

active in the Gulf, re-investing the proceeds of piracy, pearling and the date trade into the slave traffic.⁹⁴ But in Oman and Zanzibar, the local Arab merchants were rather giving way to the continued penetration of Indian capital.⁹⁵

The level of profits remains shadowy. The average rates of slave trade profits in Ethiopia, Madagascar and Oman were said to be fairly modest, not over 20 per cent and often much below, which would be in line with recent research on the Atlantic trade. Reported profits of 50 per cent for the northern end of the Persian Gulf may not take into account the higher mortality. The large numbers of political intermediaries exacting tolls and payments all along the journey to the coast posed problems, and there were high risks and long delays before repayment. Profits on luxury slaves were said to be higher than on labourers, given relatively fixed costs of transport and distribution, underscoring the significance of this branch of the trade.⁹⁶

Much more needs to be known about the closely related topic of the price of slaves, in both exporting and importing areas. One of the best series we have is for Zanzibar, where prices rose to an all-time high of 40 Maria Teresa dollars (MT\$) per slave in the 1780s, as strong demand from the French in the Mascarenes and from the Omani coincided with a low level of supplies in East Africa. In the nineteenth century, Zanzibar prices sank fairly steadily to under MT\$ 10 in the early 1860s, but rallied to nearly MT\$ 30 by 1871, although this does not take into account the depreciation of the Maria Teresa dollar.⁹⁷ The evidence for other importing areas is fragmentary, but it seems to conform to a pattern of gradually falling prices until abolition measures began really to bite, followed by a marked rise as supplies contracted, and then by a collapse when the institution of slavery itself was threatened.⁹⁸

Commodity price levels were also an important factor in receiving areas, and affected relative prices between importing zones and between groups of buyers on the coast. Poor and declining clove markets depressed the price of slaves at Zanzibar in the 1840s and 1850s.⁹⁹ In contrast, buoyant sugar prices in the mid-nineteenth century drove up the price of slaves in Réunion and Cuba. In the 1850s, the agents of the French planters from Réunion could afford to pay three times the price offered by the Arabs, but were themselves outbid by the Spaniards purchasing for the Cuban market.¹⁰⁰

Prices in exporting areas appear to have been governed mainly by supply factors. Eltis argues that generally low prices in the nineteenth century indicate that Africa was unable profitably to employ the labour not exported overseas, for strong demand in Africa should have pushed up the cost of slaves.¹⁰¹ However, this does not fit well with the evidence for rising African demand noted above. Supply-side phenomena may rather have been responsible for keeping prices low. In other words,

the number of slaves on offer may have been boosted above the absorption capacity of African and international markets, as a side-effect of widespread military activity. As military activity gradually subsided in the second half of the century, prices should have risen. Ethiopian prices at first sight appear to support this, but the depreciation of the Maria Teresa dollar more or less accounts for the nominal price rise.¹⁰² Stagnation in real terms may have been caused by more effective abolition measures creating a glut of slaves, as occurred in Mozambique.¹⁰³

Sex ratios are another contentious issue. Young men were at a premium for the plantation economies of the Mascarenes and the New World, but the common assumption that there was a high preponderance of female slaves exported to Islamic destinations appears dubious. Zanzibar imports were evenly balanced, for women and children were preferred for the delicate work of clove stemming and picking.¹⁰⁴ Captures in the Indian Ocean reveal roughly equal sex ratios, with large numbers of male juveniles.¹⁰⁵ This was almost certainly related to the preference for boys in the pearl fisheries.¹⁰⁶ The Arab-Swahili traders of Eastern Zaire took more male than female slaves, to labour in plantations producing foodstuffs to service the ivory trade.¹⁰⁷ Only in Egypt and the Ottoman heartland does there appear to have been a clear predominance of females over males.¹⁰⁸

Major changes were effected to routes and ports by British attempts to abolish the trade. While the Royal Navy managed to do little more for many decades than to contain the numbers exported, it did gradually force traders out of the main emporia and into smaller, more remote, and generally poorer areas.¹⁰⁹ Simultaneously, the slave trade appears to have become a more specialised traffic, whereas earlier it had been inseparable from the general commerce of the Indian Ocean.¹¹⁰ Moreover, there was a marked shift southward in the trade towards Mozambique and Madagascar. Initially, this was because Western slavers were responding to demand from the Americas, in a context of naval patrols in Western Africa, and preferred to obtain slaves from as close to the Cape as possible, given the marked increase in slave mortality which occurred with longer voyages.¹¹¹ In the latter part of the century, the southern emphasis resulted partly from an 'invasion' of Arab traders, who found it easier to pursue the trade towards the Persian Gulf from areas not directly under British influence. By this time, almost all the carrying of slaves in the Indian Ocean, even to the Mascarenes, had passed out of Western hands and into those of the Arabs.¹¹²

No word appears to exist in Arabic, Persian, Swahili or Gujarati which would correspond to 'middle passage', and we know relatively little about the conditions of transport of slaves by sea. Clearly some voyages were very short, notably across the Red Sea, and would not require water, provisions or special equipment.¹¹³ But the big dhows could carry

some 200 slaves to the Persian Gulf, usually stopping for provisions and water at a few points along the coast, and reaching the Gulf from Zanzibar in about twenty days with a good wind. These were smaller loads than were common in the Atlantic trade, and the voyage time was also less than the shortest Atlantic crossing of about 35 days, but clearly considerable provisioning and equipment would have been required. Information on provisioning suggests that serious shortfalls were quite frequent, though it is not clear why that should have been the case. The physical space allotted per slave appears to have been roughly similar to that on the Atlantic run, with about 2.5 tons per slave.¹¹⁴

The origins of the shipping employed in the slave trade are another obscurity in this whole process. Old and small sailing vessels were at times employed, on the grounds that it would be less of a capital loss if old ships were captured by the British patrols, but this was clearly not always the case. The great American clippers, taking up to a thousand slaves to Cuba, dwarfed the sailing vessels of the Indian Ocean, although these could reach 350 tons.¹¹⁵ Steamers came to be employed late in the century in the Red Sea trade, as a kind of spin-off of the modernisation of the pilgrimage traffic to Mecca. Steamers hardly ever ferried slaves across the Red Sea from West to East, but rather took slaves North and South as far as Istanbul and the Persian Gulf.¹¹⁶

Although mortality figures are few, vary widely and need to be standardised for voyage duration before anything approaching an 'average' figure can be reached, mortality appears to have been high in the Indian Ocean by Atlantic standards, though possibly falling on the Gulf route over the century. Paradoxically, deaths were most frequent on short coastal trips, when no food was carried, and, in one case, not even any water.¹¹⁷ Average mortality on the ships taking slaves to Réunion from Africa and the Comoros in the 1850s was said to have been 25 per cent, even though the voyage was far shorter than that to the New World, for which mortality rates were roughly comparable.¹¹⁸ Further deaths resulted for the many slaves who were sent on from their initial destination in Oman to new destinations in the Middle East and India, especially as the pattern of monsoon winds brought slaves into the Gulf at the most unhealthy time of year.¹¹⁹ Tremendous mortality occurred in Africa itself on the way to the coast and in the baracoons.¹²⁰ The trek from the interior and conditions in coastal baracoons were probably two of the major determinants of later mortality at sea.

To find out more about the great gaps in our knowledge of the Indian Ocean slave trade, it is essential to move beyond the sources generated by the British attempts at abolition, although more systematic statistical analysis could still be done on the FO 84 series.¹²¹ Abundant records in other European languages have not been used to the full, especially those in French and Portuguese,¹²² but also those in German and Italian for the

later part of the century. Even more urgent is a greater use of indigenous sources in Arabic, Iranian, Turkish and Gujarati.¹²³ Only then will we obtain a better picture of the great 'forced migration' of the nineteenth century out of Eastern and Southern Africa.

NOTES

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8. Roland Oliver and Anthony Atmore, *Africa since 1800*, 3d ed., Cambridge 1981, Chs.5-7, for an overview accompanied by numerous maps.
9. Chapters by Austen and Renault; Sheriff, *Slaves*, ch.2; Cooper, *Plantation slavery*, passim.
10. See chapters by Ahmad, Fernyhough, Ewald and Campbell, and December 1987 workshop papers by Dennis Hickey and Stephen Ellis, for some indications as to scale.
11. Chapter by Renault.
12. Beachey, *The slave trade* pp.38, 52, 169-72, 287 (n.76); Sheriff, *Slaves*, pp.50-1.

13. Malyn Newitt, *Portuguese settlement on the Zambezi*, London 1973, passim; Allen Isaacman, *Mozambique, the Africanisation of a European institution, the Zambezi prazos, 1750-1902*, Madison 1972, passim.
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15. Gill Shepherd, 'The Comorians and the East African slave trade', in James L. Watson, ed., *Asian and African systems of slavery*, Oxford 1980, pp.81-2, 89-91.
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18. Cooper, *Plantation slavery*; Sheriff, *Slaves*, pp.49-50, 67-73, 164; Beachey, *The slave trade*, pp.153, 211; Shepherd, 'The Comorians', p.83; Vail and White, *Capitalism*, p.86; Giorgio Cattelani, *L'avvenire coloniale d'Italia nel Benadir*, Naples 1897, p.96; Henry de Monfreid, *Les secrets de la Mer Rouge*, 2nd ed., Paris 1968, p.149; chapters by Renault and Ewald.
19. Cattelani, *L'avvenire*, p.67.
20. Sheriff, *Slaves*, pp.138, 149-50; Beachey, *The slave trade*, p.141.
21. Shepherd, 'The Comorians', pp.80, 91.
22. *Ibid.*, p.80; for the Mascarenes, chapter by Gerbeau and Carter; for South Africa chapter by Robert Ross.
23. My thanks go to David Eltis for drawing my attention to this fact; for clove export figures, Sheriff, *Slaves*, pp.62-3; for Mauritius, Allen, 'Creoles'.
24. Shepherd, 'The Comorians', p.86.
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26. Chapter by Austen. For other positions in the controversy on numbers exported, see Sheriff, *Slaves*, ch.2; E.B. Martin and T. Ryan, 'A quantitative assessment of the Arab slave trade of East Africa, 1770-1896', *Kenya Historical Review*, 5, 1977, pp.71-91; Pankhurst, *Economic history*, passim.
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29. Beachey, *The Slave trade*, p.174, for Shiraz prices 1895.
30. Gordon, *L'esclavage*, pp.93-100; Beachey, *The Slave trade*, pp.39, 45, 122, 135, 140, 155, 164, 170-4.
31. Leroy Vail, 'Mozambique's chartered companies: the rule of the feeble', *Journal of African History*, 17, 1976, p.401 (n.55); Beachey, *The Slave trade*, p.174.
32. Personal communication, Albertine Jwaideh. For Sultan's eunuchs in Zanzibar, Sheriff, *Slaves*, pp.50-1; Beachey, *The Slave trade*, pp.52, 287 (n.76).
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34. Beachey, *The Slave trade*, p.85.
35. Baer, *Studies*, pp.162-3; Toledano, 'The imperial eunuchs', pp.379-81; Beachey, *The Slave trade*, pp.127, 130, 138, 148-9.
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40. Cooper, *Plantation slavery*, p.34; Kelly, *Britain*, p.412; chapter by Jwaideh and Cox.
41. Chapter by Austen; Sheriff, *Slaves*, p.37.
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46. Chapter by Jwaideh and Cox.
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62. Personal communication by Albertine Jwaideh and J. Cox.
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 92. 'Memorandum by Sir Bartle Frere', passim; Shepherd, 'The Comorians'.
 93. Point made by Ricks during the December 1987 workshop discussions; Lorimer, *Gazeteer*, Vol.I–2, p.2236.
 94. Toledano, *The Ottoman slave trade*, p.38.
 95. Allen, 'Sayyids', passim; Sheriff, *Slaves*, passim.
 96. Chapters by Fernyhough and Campbell; Toledano, *The Ottoman slave trade*, p.77. For the Atlantic trade, see Eltis, *Economic growth*, Appendix E.
 97. Sheriff, *Slaves*, pp.68–9, and passim.
 98. Toledano, *The Ottoman slave trade*, pp.64–5; Landen, *Oman*, p.149; Beachey, *The Slave trade*, p.143.
 99. Sheriff, *Slaves*, p.64.
 100. Renault, *Libération d'esclaves*, p.90; Vail and White, *Capitalism*, pp.30–1.
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 102. Chapter by Fernyhough.
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 108. Baer, *Studies*, pp.166–8; Toledano, *The Ottoman slave trade*, passim.
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 110. Beachey, *The Slave trade*, pp.55, 76.
 111. Vail and White, *Capitalism*, ch.1.
 112. Chapter by Campbell and December 1987 workshop paper by Capela.
 113. Chapter by Ewald.
 114. Chapters by Sheriff and Carter and Gerbeau; Eltis, *Economic growth*, for comparative material.
 115. Chapters by Campbell and Carter and Gerbeau; Toledano, *The Ottoman slave trade*, pp.34–8; Beachey, *The Slave trade*, p.22.
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119. Point made at the December 1987 workshop by Ricks.
120. Chapters by Renault and Sheriff.
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122. See chapters by Renault, Campbell and Carter & Gerbeau, and December 1987 workshop papers by Capela, White and Ellis.
123. Chapters by Jwaideh & Cox and Ricks, and Toledano, *The Ottoman slave trade*, for Arabic, Iranian and Turkish sources. Allen, 'Sayyids', and forthcoming work by Chizuko Tominaga for Gujarati records.

The 19th Century Islamic Slave Trade from East Africa (Swahili and Red Sea Coasts): A Tentative Census¹

Ralph A. Austen

Efforts to estimate the number of slaves taken by Muslims out of the various regions of East Africa began during the nineteenth century as part of an evangelical and colonialist assault upon Islam by contemporary Europeans. The endeavour has continued, in more recent and restrained scholarly writings, to produce considerable controversy.² Clearly no definitive census of this trade is possible, since any research must depend to a large extent upon the same suspect observations which are the subject of the initial dispute.

The present study attempts to minimize such problems by laying out its evidence in detailed tabular form (see Table I).³ Thus the sources can be subjected to critical analysis and re-evaluation. A second set of basic tables (see Table V) present data on slave demography and deployment in the areas of Arabia, the Persian Gulf and South Asia to which East African slaves were sent. While this material is even less numerically precise than the direct slave trade documentation, it independently provides a scale of possible African presence in these receiving zones against which calculations of the trade can be checked.

None of these efforts can fully overcome the difficulties inherent in Islamic slave trade assessments. The individual observations remain questionable, not only on ideological grounds but also because even the most dispassionate ones tend to be less real statistical statements than what Philip Curtin has called 'capacity estimates', i.e. figures reflecting only the levels possible under optimal trading conditions instead of the average over a normal range of time.

Some of the observations are based upon customs reports, which represent the closest evidence we have to the working records from which the best economic history statistics (including studies of the Atlantic slave trade) are derived. However, unlike the accounts of merchants themselves, customs records only reflect that portion of a trade visible to government officials and we are dealing here with regions where governments had only limited control over private-sector activities. Moreover, for the best set of customs figures in these tables, those from the Swahili Coast in the mid-nineteenth century, we only learn about that portion of the trade which was legal and this, after

1846, excluded all exports outside of East Africa i.e. the very subject of the present study. The Red Sea evidence is not as reliable, but it is also less problematic for present purposes and thus subject to less historiographic controversy.⁴

1. THE SWAHILI COAST

The African area usually labelled 'Swahili Coast' extends from Southern Tanzania to Northern Kenya, encompassing both mainland and off-shore islands. This zone, with its nineteenth-century commercial centre of Zanzibar, will be the focus of the present analysis, but the term will also be extended to northern Mozambique and Madagascar to the south, and to southeastern Somalia (the Brava Coast) to the north.

For the nineteenth century Islamic slave trade in this area the most reliable information available to us deals with the traffic from Kilwa to Zanzibar and (either directly or via Zanzibar) the Kenya-Brava coasts. These data are critical for indicating the general level of slave commerce in the region, but do not immediately reveal anything about exports to the external Islamic zones. This last trade was clearly smaller than that involved in supplying servile labour within East Africa, and was only a residual of the latter. Indeed there seems to have been no extensive movement of slaves to Arabia, the Persian Gulf and India from the points of direct access to the East African interior (Kilwa and northern Mozambique) but only a secondary (and for most of the period clandestine) shipment from Zanzibar, the Kenya-Brava coasts, and Madagascar. Nonetheless, the main coastal slave trade of the nineteenth century was quite large, so that its overflow out of the region could still have been quite significant. To estimate this external trade we must both look for direct evidence concerning it and also determine the probable residuals from the various local trades.

Europeans made many estimates of slave exports from the Swahili coast to the Persian Gulf during the nineteenth century but most of them are quite obviously out of the range of plausibility. Even the figures retained here (I/A/8-11) have to be treated as exaggerations; their value is rather to indicate that some external trade, on a yet undetermined scale, was taking place. For the middle and later part of our period, the few observations which can be taken more literally (I/A/6, 7, 17) suggest where we may look for the trade but do not provide a basis for any serious calculations.

We can attempt our own estimates of the export trade from the accounts of the Kilwa and Zanzibar slave trade for the first three decades of the nineteenth century, before clove plantations in Zanzibar and Pemba and other commercial crops on the Kenya and Brava coasts had begun to absorb very large numbers of slaves for local use.⁵ Alpers

TABLE I. SELECTED SLAVE TRADE OBSERVATIONS

Date	Quantity	Comments	Original Source	Reference
<u>A. Swahili Coast</u>				
1. 1811		Zanzibar exports 6-10,000 slaves p.a. to Muscat, India, Isle de France	See, British Naval Officer	Burton, 1872, II, p. 493
2. 1812	2,000	calculations from Kilwa customs data; formerly exported "many thousands" now Arabs "do not take many"	Prior, British naval officer	Freeman-Brenville, 1962, pp. 210-11
3. 1817-19	25,000	Zanzibar imports; 13,000 from Kilwa; some scepticism	Albrand, French scholar, official	Nicholls, 1971, p. 213
4. 1822	8,000	Zanzibar imports; seen as decline	Moresby, British India official	Nicholls, 1971, p. 207
5. 1826		export from Zanzibar domains "very trifling"	British official report	Sheriff, 1987, p. 35
6. 1833		20 Arab ships seen at Mogadishu smuggling slaves to Arabia	Krapf, German missionary	Krapf, 1860, p. 112
7. 1861	400	350-450 slaves from Zanzibar to Red Sea	Oldfield, British naval officer	PP 1863, p. 173
8. 1861	10,000	estimate of no. of slaves shipped north (includes Kenya, Somalia)	Walker, British admiral	PP 1863, p. 172
9. 1865	6,000	Zanzibar exports 5-7,000 to Arabia, Red Sea	Ropes, U.S. consul	Bennett/Brooks, 1965, p. 54
10. 1866	6,000	40 dhows leave for Gulf, estimated to hold 150 slaves each	Pasley, British naval officer	PP 1867-68, (A) C. 4000 no. 81
11. 1868	9,000	6,000 from Zanzibar, Pemba, 1,000 from M. coast, 2,000 stolen, all to Arabia	Churchill, British consul, Zanzibar	PP 1868-69, (B), no. 85
12. 1873-74	7,000	slaves seen Dec. 1873-March 1874 on land route from Kilwa	Elton, British vice-consul	Elton, 1879, pp. 98, 104
13. 1874	40,000	overland exports from Kilwa (high mortality, most to northern coast)	Holwood, British vice-consul	PP 1876, LXI p. 7
14. 1875	12,000	1,500 p.a. north to Kilwa; 1,000 continue north	Ward, British naval officer	PP 1877, LXVIII, pp. 31-32
15. 1876	24,000	overland exports north	Kirk, British consul	PP 1877, LXVIII, pp. 251-52

Date	Quantity	Comments	Original Source	Reference
16. 1877		overland slave trade from Kilua suppressed	Kirk, British consul	PP 1878, LIVIII pp. 271-72
17. 1902	700	Sur ships take on slaves at Mozambique, captured by Portuguese	British official reports	Busch, 1967, p. 171
<u>B. Persian Gulf</u>				
1. 1830	1,550	Muscat customs records 1,400-1,700 3/4 Swahili; 1/4 Ethiopian	Wilson, British Gulf official	Sheriff, 1987, pp. 38-39
2. 1841	1,337	Kharq ships recorded plus Sheriff projection	Keenball, British Gulf official	Sheriff, 1987, p. 39
3. 1841	2,887	estimate of slaves to upper Persian Gulf, based on no. 2 above	Robertson, British official, Kharq	Kelly, 1968, p. 416
4. 1847	3,488	Total Upper Gulf imports seen as low	Keenball, British Gulf official	FD 84/692
5. 1852	435	landed on Trucial Coast; probably undercounted	British agent, Sharjah	Kelly, 1968, p. 610
6. 1852	1,200	imported into one region of Trucial Coast	Keenball, British Gulf Agent	Kelly, 1968, p. 610
7. 1865	1,400	Estimate for various small Omani ports	British agents, Muscat	PP 1867-68, LXIV, No. 124
8. 1866	900	small M. Omani ports import 700-1,100 Swahili slaves for local date cultivation	Disbrow, British agent, Muscat	PP 1867-68, LXIV, pp. 787-88
9. 1896		100 Suri dhows fly French flag, presumably slavers	British naval report	Beachey, 1976, p. 239
<u>C. West Arabian Ports</u>				
1. 1856	8,650	total W. Arabian ports; includes 2,500 Swahili	Lambert, French consul, Jiddah	Ewald, 1987, p. 11
2. 1859	5,000	1,900 p.a. via Najj, etc. to Jiddah, 3,000+ to other Arabian ports	Rosseau, French consul, Jiddah	MAE, Turquie: Djedda, 2, p. 358
3. 1864	5,000	total for all Arabian ports based on "active research"	Pelessier, French consul, Jiddah	MAE, Turquie: Djedda, 3, pp. 118-19
4. 1869	4,250	total for all West Arabian ports	Raby, British consul, Jiddah	FD 84/1305a, fol. 271
5. 1878	2,000	minimum total of Red Sea trade to Arabia	Malcolm, British official	FD 541/22, p. 17
6. 1880	700	slaves seen at one time at Mcdeidah	Burrell, British official	Ewald, 1987, p. 10
7. 1880	3,000	imports into Mejaz	Burrell	Ewald, 1987, p. 10

and Sheriff have argued that the Asian demand for Swahili coast slaves was always low; that a rise in demand was created by French initiatives in the later eighteenth century, first at Mozambique and then Kilwa; and that with the withdrawal of the French during the Napoleonic wars the demand for slaves again declined until the growth of coastal plantations (as well as further traffic to the French Mascarenes and new Mozambique-Brazil trade) revived the system.⁶ The problem with this argument lies not in its explanation of the greatly expanded general East African slave trade of the nineteenth century, but rather in its perspective on the continuity of the more modest external Islamic element within this trade. This lesser trade is described directly in a few early nineteenth-century documents but these must also be linked to the evidence for pre-nineteenth century slave exports from the region.

The reports in I/A/1-5 describe a slave trade from Kilwa and Zanzibar during the interim between French and local plantation demands. All observers but one state that the trade is small, declining, or less than reported. As indicated by the various quantitative references in Prior (I/A/2), however, the concepts of scale in these comments ('many thousands') seem to be based upon the Atlantic or earlier and later European exports from East Africa, and could minimize a quite substantial trade in Islamic terms. The figures actually given for local trade are indeed probably too high (except possibly for Prior, whose customs revenue coefficient of \$8 per slave is unusually large, thus reducing what may be the actual number of individuals sold) but they suggest a very substantial export to the Persian Gulf and India of several thousand.

If we also consider the figures and descriptions of the Muslim East African slave trade during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (not presented here), we can assume that such a level would be normal even without the stimulus of France's eighteenth century intervention. Moreover the emphasis in these earlier data on exports from Madagascar suggests a pattern which has to be sought again in the nineteenth century, when the local Islamic slave trade to Madagascar became especially active.⁷

For the major portion of the nineteenth century, we can estimate the external Islamic slave trade only as a residual of local trades. In the case of Madagascar, this cannot presently be done with any precision, since the data presented in the other papers of this collection do not provide the necessary documentation. We may safely assume such a trade, of modest but steady proportions, from both earlier precedent, the continuing Persian Gulf connections of Arabs engaged in the Mozambique-Madagascar slave trade,⁸ and one piece of substantial direct evidence for such trade at the beginning of the twentieth century (I/A/17).⁹ Finally, what all the evidence about sailing routes and the use of Portuguese and French flags suggests is that illegal Arab slave

traders could most easily have evaded British naval patrols by taking the route from Madagascar to the Persian Gulf.

The more precise customs data on the legal Kilwa-Zanzibar-northern coast slave trade during the nineteenth century provide a potential basis for calculating exports out of East Africa from the demography of local slave retention. In the previous work of Ryan and Martin and Sheriff, most of this effort has been concentrated on Zanzibar and Pemba, which had both the best recorded slave imports and the largest slave populations. However, once the exaggerated figures of nineteenth-century abolitionists have been discredited, this effort does not yield very specific results. The number of slaves leaving Zanzibar directly for the north was obviously not very large and thus cannot be linked closely to the quite substantial resident slave population. The figures for Zanzibar slave imports and Kilwa exports to Zanzibar are thus important only to demonstrate that a sufficiently large renewal of the resident slave population was taking place for the illegal exports recorded in such documents as I/A/10, 11 to be plausible. Dhows from the Gulf did come regularly to Zanzibar and even so sceptical an analyst as Sheriff assigns a rounded (and reduced from the British estimates) number of 1,000 per year to their slave smuggling.

We can, I think, get more mileage out of the smaller customs figures for Kilwa trade to points other than Zanzibar and Zanzibar legal exports, since these must be correlated with the absorptive capacities of the smaller urban and agricultural centres along the coast. I have made such correlations in rough form and presented their results in Table II, although they suffer particularly from lack of attention to temporal variants within the larger period under question. However, my calculations do provide a basis for determining how much of the coastal slave trade might eventually have leaked out to the external Islamic world. This trade appears to be smaller than the Kilwa non-Zanzibar exports but, nevertheless, remains significant.

Table II represents the calculations for the period during which the slave trade within the Swahili coast region was still legal. Items I/A/12-16 describe a final overland surge of the Kilwa export trade after Britain outlawed all maritime carriage of slaves within the region. While one cannot treat any of these figures as literally accurate, they are based upon enough direct observations to indicate at least a large continuing traffic. Some proportion of these northbound slave caravans would again enter external channels, although at a reduced rate given the more urgent needs of coastal plantations, including a sugar-plantation sector just developing around Pangani in northern Tanzania.¹⁰

By 1877, after Britain imposed further abolitionist measures on the Sultan of Zanzibar and interior slave traders realized that their coastal market was no longer what it had been, the flow of slaves through Kilwa

seems to have ended. After that time only small and sporadic supplies of slaves are reported coming to the coastal plantations, usually from local Tanzanian and Kenyan sources.¹¹ Exports from this part of the coast must thus have been reduced to a trickle.¹² For the last quarter of the nineteenth century, only Madagascar and Mozambique could continue to provide any significant supply of slaves to the Persian Gulf.

2. THE PERSIAN GULF AND SOUTH ASIA

The most solid evidence we have for slave exports from East Africa to the Persian Gulf and India comes not from the Swahili Coast but rather the receiving points. By far the most significant of these is the Persian Gulf where, as will be shown below, there was a major, possibly even a growing, demand for African labour in the nineteenth century.

Sheriff bases much of his argument for a very low slave trade out of East Africa on the scrutiny of two fairly precise reports of slave imports into the Persian Gulf (I/B/1, 2). As with all of Sheriff's work, the evidence presented by these documents forces us to deflate many of the larger figures given by British and other observers of Persian Gulf imports, but it does not define the full scale of slave intake into this region. For the Lower Gulf (Oman and Trucial Oman [present day United Arab Emirates]) we must double Sheriff's figure of 500 because it is based only on southern Oman (see I/B/5-8). For the Upper Gulf (the only destination of boats passing Kharq Island) Sheriff's figures are also probably too low, since not all shipping for this region could be observed from Kharq.¹³ The calculations in I/B/3, 4 also have to be given consideration and even if only the lower one is accepted and treated as an upper limit capacity estimate, we still have an import level which, if adjusted for the various items in the conclusion of Table II, provides confirmation of the export figures used for the coast. There is no more quantitative evidence from the Gulf for the period after the maritime trade in East Africa became illegal (1873) but items I/A/17, B/9, even when allowances are made for British ideological distortions of the latter, provide some evidence for the continuation of such slave movements. It has further been argued that the commitment of Persian Gulf shipping to slave trading and other contraband activities was increased during this period because of the loss of 'legitimate' cargo to British steam vessel competition.¹⁴

I have also included in Table II/F a brief analysis of Gulf shipping capacity to indicate that even at the lowest level derived from Royal Navy capture data, enough shipping would have been available to take 4,000 slaves per annum from East Africa. The bottom limits of this scale do not, in any case, describe most of the relevant shipping since larger vessels, capable of dealing with rougher open seas, also appeared

TABLE II. SWAHILI COAST SLAVE TRADE CALCULATIONS

	per annum
A. Coastal Exports	
1. Kilwa Exports, non-Zanzibar,	
1859-1870	4,000 ¹
2. Zanzibar exports to northern coast	
1861-1873	7,403
3. Northern coastal retention (1860's-'70's)	
Pemba	2,180
Mrima/Pangani	500 ²
Mombasa	1,000 ³
Malindi	1,000
Lamu	2,000 ⁴
Benadir	2,175 ⁵
total	8,855

¹the computed average for the figures in this column of Table II is 3,813; however the figure of 3,000 for the last three years appears stereotyped; assuming that it is indicative of a decline for the first year and a return to almost normal previous levels (average 4,300) for subsequent years, the total average would be around 4,000.

²J. Glassman reveals that extensive use of slave labor for commercial agriculture did not begin in this area until the mid-1870's.

³Mombasa and Malindi retention from Cooper, 1977, p. 88.

⁴Martin and Ryan, 1980, p. 112.

⁵ibid, p. 114.

5. Exports out of Africa	per annum	total
Zanzibar/Kilwa 1800-1846 (legal)	4,000	188,000
Zanzibar, 1847-74 (smuggling)	1,000	28,000
residual ex Kilwa, 1847-1874 (legal)		
total p.a. exports	4,000	
coastal absorption	1,500 ^a	
residual export	2,500	70,000
Kilwa, Mozambique, 1847-74 (smuggling)	500	14,000
[total exports 1847-74	4,000]	
General smuggling, 1875-1899	500	12,500
Total for nineteenth century		313,000

B. Persian Gulf Imports (1830-1866)

1. Oman, Lower Gulf retention	1,000
2. Muscat exports to Upper Gulf	1,500-2,000
3. Sur exports to Upper Gulf	500
subtotal	3,000-3,500
adjusted total ⁷	2,700-3,100

C. Red Sea Imports 500^a

D. South Asia Imports 500

E. Total Imports 3,700-4,100

F. Slave Shipping Capacities

^asurplus of total coastal absorption over Zanzibar export

⁷down 20% for Red Sea slaves; up 10% for mortality at sea.

^abased on Table I/A/7 (and other evidence not cited here).

	vessels	average cargo	no. vessels for 4,000 slaves
1. Leaving Zanzibar 1867-70 (for N. Swahili coast) ⁹	551	56	71
2. Captured 1868-70 (en route to E. Af., Arabia) ¹⁰	109	29	138
3. Captured 1873-96 (en route to E. Af., Arabia) ¹¹	600	14.5	276
4. Shipping of 2 small N. Oman ports, 1866 ¹²	19-24	6.5-11	364-615

⁹British report based on customs records in Sheriff, 1987, p. 241.

¹⁰Lloyd, 1949, p. 278.

¹¹C. Glassman (see endnote 10), p. 9.

¹²Disbrow, British Agent, Muscat, PP 1867-68, XIV, pp. 787-88.

TABLE III. COMPETING SWAHILI COAST SLAVE TRADE ESTIMATES

	per annum	subtotal	total
A. Martin and Ryan, 1977			
1800-1829	2,500	75,000	
1830-1839	3,500	35,000	
1840-1849	4,000	40,000	
1850-1873	6,500	156,000	
1874-1896	400	9,200	
		<hr/>	314,200
B. Sheriff, 1987			
1800-1874	3,000	225,000	
[1875-1899	400	12,500] ¹	
		<hr/>	237,500

¹Sheriff's study ends in 1873 but in order to compare his results with the others, I have extended his main period by one year and assigned him the lower of the two projections for the post-abolition period.

better able to elude British patrols by keeping farther away from East African coastal watch points.¹⁵ The very small Gulf boats in II/F/4 also played an important role in the slave trade, but they were so numerous that their capacity does not limit the scale of aggregate slave imports into the region.

South Asia (especially its northwest coast) played a minor although steady role in the Indian Ocean slave trade during the first five decades of the century. By the mid-1840s, however, the very British scrutiny indicated by the extensive documentation of this traffic seems to have brought the import of East Africans to a virtual end. As will be seen below, this evidence matches that for black slave demand within South Asia.

3. THE RED SEA

The evidence on slaves leaving Africa via the Red Sea during the nineteenth century is less complicated than that for the Swahili coast. Slave cargoes at the maritime ports of the Nilotic Sudan (Suakin), Ethiopia (Massawa, Northern Danakil) or northern Somalia (the Gulf of Aden) were not bound for some other point on the continent but rather destined directly for Arabia. Some of these data come from customs records but most of them are based upon anecdotal 'literary' observations. We are thus forced to arbitrate between the probable understatement of the former figures and the tendency towards exaggeration and capacity estimates of the latter. The method for calculating the scale of this trade is thus relatively simple although incapable of producing anything like exact results. As shown in Table IV, I have broken down the trade for each port or set of ports into sub-periods where uniform conditions seemed to prevail, established plausible annual averages for these smallest units, multiplied them into subtotals for each, and added together the results. Whatever the shortcomings in these calculations (and I find it difficult to specify a margin of error), they represent the results of considerable refinements as well as augmentation¹⁶ of observations previously used and at least on this basis are more reliable.

The Gulf of Aden was the most important source of Red Sea slaves during the course of the nineteenth century, largely because it was closest to the sources of Somali and Oromo slaves as well as to the Ethiopian Shoa state which so successfully expanded in this era. The official figures from this area indicate extremes in this trade, while the numerous capacity estimates do not place such polar indications in mutually separate periods. The figure of 3,000 which I have assigned to the slave trade from this area for the period up to 1885 may be just a little too high, so I have lowered the resulting subtotal by 20,000.

TABLE IV. RED SEA SLAVE TRADE ESTIMATES

	per annum	subtotal	total
A. Gulf of Aden			
1800-1884	3,000-	235,000	
1885-1890	1,500	9,000	
1891-1899	500	4,500	
total			250,000
B. Massawa			
1800-1810	1,000	11,000	
1811-1875	1,500	97,500	
1876-1899	100	2,500	
total			111,000
C. Northern Danakil			
1877-1888	2,000	24,000	24,000
D. Suakin			
1800-1859	1,200	72,000	
1860-1879	1,000	20,000	
1880-1899	500	5,000	
total			107,000
<u>Grand Total</u>			<u>492,000</u>

E. Correlation with West Arabian Imports

	import Arabia	export Suakin	export Massawa	export Aden Gulf	export Danakil	export total
1856	8,659	1,500	1,500	3,000		(6,000)
1859	5,000	1,500	500	3,000		(5,000)
1864	5,000	1,000	1,200	3,000		(5,200)
1869	4,250	1,000	1,200	3,000		(5,200)
1878	2,000	1,000	100	3,000	2,000	(6,100)
1880	4,000	500	100	1,500	1,000	(3,600)

The Northern coastal ports of Massawa and Suakin (particularly the latter) drew on a population which was also exploited by the flourishing Nile Valley slave trade. Janet Ewald has argued that with the decline of the trade into Egypt during the 1870s, the number of slaves entering the Red Sea via Massawa and Suakin should have increased.¹⁷ However I am not convinced by specific evidence for the two ports during this decade that such a diversion occurred on any significant scale.

The documentation for Massawa is actually quite complex, because both official and capacity estimate reports indicate periodic fluctuations in its slave trade during the course of the nineteenth century. I have been somewhat more conservative here than with the Gulf of Aden, especially for the period after 1875, because the sudden emergence of the Northern Danakil as a major export area implies a long-term decline in Massawa's role. Finally, for Suakin, which faced very active competition from the lower Nile (both Egypt and the Northern Sudan) during the periods when it is reported as most actively exporting slaves, I have also been conservative in my calculations.

The final result of just under half a million slaves exported via the Red Sea is over 50 per cent lower than the only other estimate, that of Pankhurst. However, Pankhurst does not pretend to the kind of precision or thoroughness attempted in Martin and Ryan or Sheriff's Swahili Coast quantifications, and himself confesses that the figure he arrives at is improbably high.

It is impossible to correlate this overall result with a similar figure for the West Arabian coast, since most of the direct observations for this region deal only with fragments of total annual imports. The more general figures upon which Ewald has placed perhaps too much reliance tend to the same kind of exaggerations found in estimates of the Swahili Coast external trade. For the six years where reliable aggregate figures are available (see I/C), I have made comparisons (IV/E) with the relevant African export projections. In half of these years the figures match reasonably closely. The discrepancy for 1856 indicates a typical, if relatively moderate, exaggeration by a Jiddah consul; his figure of 2,500 for Swahili Coast imports is clearly off by at least 2,000 (cf. I/A/7). The 1869 difference goes in the other direction but not by enough for it not to be explained by, for instance, the omission of slaves sent from the Red Sea to the Persian Gulf. In 1878 the Jiddah count really seems too low; perhaps the official prohibition of the slave trade by the Ottoman Sultan made imports into Arabia so clandestine as to escape the scrutiny of European consuls.

In any case both the 1880 estimate and the observations of Hurgronje (who entered Mecca disguised as a Muslim pilgrim)¹⁸ suggest that the decline had not been as precipitous as perceived in the late 1870s. Ewald has also described the various ways in which the demand for slaves in and

through western Arabia continued during the late 1870s and 1880s. At the same time, contrary to Ewald's implications, there was decline: the suppression of the Egyptian slave imports seems to have been paralleled, rather than compensated for, by the Red Sea trade in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.¹⁹

4. DEPLOYMENT OF EAST AFRICAN SLAVES

In the absence of really hard statistical information on slave exports from Eastern Africa, much of the argument concerning their quantity has centred around questions of deployment. Sheriff as well as Jwaideh and Cox²⁰ have noted the incompatibility of the absorptive capacity of the receiving Islamic areas with the huge scale sometimes projected for the Indian Ocean slave trade. Information of this kind does not provide a firm demographic base for slave trade statistics; it can, however, establish boundaries of plausibility for such a trade and may also indicate whether established niches for black slaves within external Islamic economies and societies were expanding or contracting during the nineteenth century.

The demographic observations in Table V/A contain very little in the way of real census data. I have included here references where the only occupational indication was domestic service, which Sheriff very reasonably argues created a limited demand in an area with such low urban concentrations as the Persian Gulf.²¹ Entry V/A/1 does, however, remind us that a major factor in the Islamic slave trade was the constant need to replace existing black slaves of all kinds, who did not reproduce themselves either biologically or socially in the countries where they entered the general population.²²

For Arabia, the figures here provided no precision, but the trend is strong enough to suggest that in the southern portion of the Peninsula blacks were considerably more evident than in the areas surveyed by Jwaideh and Cox. South Asia is again a minor factor, with most of the observations referring to slaves imported before the nineteenth century.²³

The Persian Gulf offers the best demographic data for both the medieval period and the nineteenth century. While such British estimates as V/A/2, 3 are clearly exaggerations, the judgements of Landen (A/4) and especially the survey by Lorimer (A/5) must be taken seriously. The 10 per cent-plus projection for Lorimer's total Gulf population is conservative, since it falls below the percentage of black population calculated in several areas (and even these did not include slaves living in their masters' homes and listed as 'uncounted'). A black population of this size would need a significant slave trade to reach and maintain it. Indeed, if we follow Sheriff's 10 per cent replacement rule, the

TABLE V. SELECTED DATA ON BLACKS AND SLAVES IN RECEIVING AREAS

Date	Quantity	Comments	Original Source	Reference
<u>A. General Population</u>				
1. 950-1500		African slaves common in core Islamic world but climate causes ill health	various medieval slave manuals	Mueller, 1980, passim
2. 1831		Bahrain population 50% slave or slave descent	Wilson, British Gulf official	PP 1837-38, LI, 8697, p. 10
3. 1835		Oman more than 1/3 African	not given	Coupland, 1958, p. 31
4. 1870's	33,000	15-50,000 Africans in Oman	various British, French sources	Landen, 1967, p. 151
5. c. 1904		survey of Persian Gulf	Eyewitness and various reports	Lorimer, 1908, pp. 241-1,537
		Basra: blacks "fairly numerous; total pop. = 58,000		p. 276
	11,000+	Bahrain: 6,000 slaves, 5,000 free blacks, plus others uncounted; total pop. = 100,000		p. 241
		Masa: blacks fairly numerous; total pop. = 67,000		p. 645
	4,000	Kuwait: 4,000 blacks; total pop. = 35,000		p. 1,051
	1,500	Lingeh Town: 1,500 blacks; total pop. = 12,000		p. 1,097
		Oman: "large" black pop. total pop. = 471,000		p. 1,391
	3,500+	Basra: 4,000 slaves, 1,500 blacks, plus others uncounted; total pop. = 27,000		p. 1,531
		Trucial Oman: blacks "exceptionally numerous" on coast; total pop. = 72,000		p. 1,537
	90,000	Approximate total black pop. of Gulf (total pop. of areas mentioned = 868,000; black pop. = 10%)		

Date	Quantity	Comments	Original Source	Reference
<u>B. Labor Force</u>				
1. 1821		Muscat has many slaves, employed on coastal plantations	Fraser, British traveller	Fraser, 1825, pp. 4-18
2. 1870-1904		Slaves brought to main cultivation areas of Oman	British, French reports	Landen, 1967, pp. 151-52
3. 1876		slaves in date, coffee cultivation, Hijaz and Yemen	Wylde, British consul, Jiddah	FO 341/21, fol. 6
4. 1960's		M. Yemen and S. Saudi: large landowners employ numerous black slaves	Serjeant, British Arabist/traveller	Serjeant, 1987, p. 3
5. 1970's		Abid, dark-skinned descendants of slaves, in Yemen coffee area	Berholm, Swedish anthropologist	Berholm, 1977, p. 132
6. c. 1825		2,000 boats in Arabian Gulf ports plus Persians; slaves crews; unhealthy	Buckingham, British traveller	Buckingham, 1830, II, pp. 299-301
7. 1830's		Total Persian Gulf pearl fleet 4,300 boats, c. 30,000 men	Mellsted, British naval officer	Mellsted, 1842, p. 182
8. 1831		Bahrain pearl fishers 1/3 slaves plus freeborn Swahilis	Wilson, British Gulf official	PP 1837-38, LI, p. 9
9. 1856		Total Persian Gulf pearl fleet 3,000 boats, c. 27,000 men	Bombay govt. report	Fryer, 1909, p. 364
10. 1863-768		"considerable numbers" of black slaves among Quesvir, Jiddah, etc. crews (100's)	Klunzinger, German resident, Oussier	Klunzinger, 1878, pp. 311-15
11. 18788		High slave mortality in Red Sea pearl fishing	Malcolm, British AST agent, Egypt	FO 341/22, p. 48
12. 1880's8		widespread use of slaves as divers (3-4 per boat) in Red Sea	Wylde, British consul, Jiddah	Wylde, 1888, pp. 247-48
13. 1882-838		Several Sudani pearl divers among slaves seeking protection	Moncrieff, British consul, Jiddah	FO 341/23, pp. 79-85
14. 1890's		High slave mortality in Persian Gulf pearl fishing	Prideaux, British Gulf official	Harris, 1971, pp. 37-38

Date	Quantity	Comments	Original Source	Reference
15. 1905-07		Total Persian Gulf pearl fleet, 4,500 boats, 74,000 men ("mainly poor Arabs and free negroes or negro slaves") Bahrain: 917 boats, 17,633 men Kuwait: 461 boats, 9,200 men Lingeh Town: 72 boats, 1,306 men Qatar: 815 boats, 12,890 men Trucial Coast, 1,215 boats, 22,045 men	observations and British reports	Lorimer, 1913, I, pp. 2,220-61
16. 1832		Malabar, Cochin elite use Abyssinians for personal service, navigation	Naber, British administrator	PP 1834, ILIV, p. 181
17. 1833		Handavi (Kutch) fleet of 20 ships manned by Africans	Tod, British traveller	Tod, 1839, p. 450
18. 1860's		African "domestic slaves" as major element in dhow crews	British naval reports	Lloyd, 1949, p. 195

C. Military and Political Service

1. 1806	600	1,000-man Yemeni army mainly black	Valentia, British traveller	Valentia, 1809, III, p. 328
2. 1809	1,500	"Abada" (presumably black slaves) mobilized by Yemeni slave sultan	Salt, British traveller	Salt, 1814, p. 127
3. 1880's		Sherif of Mecca recruits soldiery from Ethiopia	Doughty, British traveller	Doughty, 1923, p. 71
4. late 1920'		Bedouin chiefs maintain black slave troops; self-reproducing	Rasman, German traveller	Rasman, 1934, pp. 143, 152
5. 1931		black slave soldiers throughout Madrasaut, Yemen; 100 in one village	Dutch, German travellers	Neulen/Missmann, 1932, pp. 19-150, <i>passim</i>
6. 1756	500	Muscat black military now 500, formerly 4,000	Dutch EIC report	Floor, 1979, pp. 178-79

trade would be far larger than any plausible direct evidence allows us to believe. However, much of the black population described here was free and presumably locally born, while the trade had been considerably reduced by the time the observations were made, so we cannot establish any precise ratio of population to immigration or imports.

It will also be noted when we turn to V/B that the areas of the Gulf in which blacks were most concentrated were also those with economic activities which would require African labour. Finally, the absence of reference in this or the following tables to inland Iran should be balanced against the argument of Ricks, that the Iranian plateau did receive a significant black servile population from the nineteenth century Gulf trade.²⁴

At the centre of the arguments about demand for African slaves in Arabia and the Persian Gulf is the question of their role as economically productive labourers. The Muslim areas in question contained no large-scale plantation systems rivalling those of the New World or even those of Muslims and Europeans in the Western Indian Ocean where, as already shown, the most intensive regional demand for slaves existed. However, as indicated in V/B, agriculture and pearl fishing on both sides of the Arabian peninsula did employ significant bodies of African labour during the nineteenth century.

Agriculture in the receiving areas never regained the brief peak of the ninth century which is conventionally cited as the 'exception that proves the rule' of non-economic Muslim slavery. However, the date plantations of the Persian Gulf are consistently reported (V/B/1, 2) as employing slave labour – although it also has to be noted that indigenous Arabs themselves did the work of maintaining irrigation systems in the less commercialized interior oasis zones. The reports by Lorimer (V/A/5) of major black populations in Hasa and Trucial Oman (United Arab Emirates) can only be explained by agriculture since these were not urbanized or pearl fishing centres. The potential high point for slave use in western Arabian agriculture would have been the era of the Yemen coffee boom in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries but we presently have no data on labour relations in this region. However, the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries do provide some indications (V/B/3–5) that slaves were active here as well as in other local agriculture. Given the sex ratios and price differentials of slave cargoes in all of the areas, it would be important to know whether female slaves were employed alongside, or even instead of, males in agricultural labour.

We may assume that agriculture in most regions of Arabia and Iran grew during the nineteenth century as a general response to the expansion of trade in the region and the Pax Britannica. However, there is no precise evidence at present to challenge Sheriff's belief that the departure of the Omani Sultan for Zanzibar led to economic

decline in his home region.²⁵ For pearl fishing, on the other hand, there are definite indications of growth. The Persian Gulf fleets described in V/B/6-9, 14, 15 become increasingly larger over time, while Red Sea pearl fishing on a noticeable scale appears to be an innovation of the later nineteenth century. Pearl fishing demands might account for some of the young males found in Sheriff's evaluation of Persian Gulf slave cargoes, since this was a skilled profession to which workers needed to be trained from a young age. It is likely that black slaves were a less significant portion of pearling crews in earlier times when the labour demand was not as great. Again, we need more studies of this industry as a particularly sensitive indicator of the integration between sectors of the greater Indian Ocean economy.

Not much can be said about the few reports on slaves in nineteenth century seafaring contained in V/B. In South Asia, this was again mainly a residue of past slave trading. For the Gulf one may argue that increased demands in this occupation, which do seem to have occurred, would place a further premium on younger male slaves, who could be more easily trained than adults to the necessary skills.

As revealed by Table V/C, military and political service was one form of slave deployment which had clearly declined well before the beginning of the nineteenth century. The only place where black *abid* still provided Muslim elites with major public support was in Arabia. But even here, the bands of servile retainers around local chiefs did not match the Abyssinian armies of medieval Yemeni dynasties. In India, where Habshi troops, commanders and ministers had played such an important role in early Muslim regimes, the rise of the Mughal hegemony in the seventeenth century had reduced them to a very minor position which motivated no new recruitment in the 1800s. Despite the extensive importation of both Swahili and Abyssinian slaves into the Persian Gulf, military forces built around them (never very large even in their heyday) seem entirely absent. Instead, the Omani rulers brought Baluchi mercenaries from the Gulf to support their newly established position in East Africa! Despite (or perhaps because of, given its outcome) Muhammad Ali's massive recruitment of Sudanese slaves into his modernized Egyptian army, the nineteenth century Middle East no longer seems to have had a major role for the black servile soldier. Other forces of European-inspired change, particularly economic ones, stimulated increased demand for slaves; but the state, often seen as the most recalcitrant institution in the Muslim world, had shifted its base of support to its own subjects. The effect on demand for slaves from Africa was more than offset by the increasing urban wealth and rural production which did require more involuntary migration of African men, women, and children.

5. CONCLUSION

My progress in the study of Islamic slave trades out of Africa has been marked by two contradictory tendencies: the discovery of additional data and the awareness of greater limitations in the type of data available. For the Swahili Coast trade, the second tendency has been stronger, as it is now clear that the part of the trade which we can best estimate is that remaining within East Africa and its off-shore islands. For the Red Sea trade, the increased data come mainly from the Arabian receiving areas and are thus without precision, but nevertheless helpful in pulling together irregular, if better, observations from the export centres.

The effect of this new research on my bottom line estimates for the two trades has also varied. In the case of the Swahili Coast I am coming down somewhat closer to the figures of Sheriff, with whom I was originally in dispute. On the Red Sea exports, I remain basically with my original figures despite the arguments of Ewald and others. In any case, the work establishes the reasonableness of a certain range of estimates shared by most scholars working on this topic. What may be at least as valuable as the quantitative results of such work is the reflection it stimulates upon the role of the slave trade and slavery in the development of, and connections between, African and external Islamic societies.

NOTES

1. The present essay represents an advanced but not yet final stage of work initiated in several earlier papers: Ralph A. Austen, 'The Islamic Slave Trade out of Africa (Red Sea and Indian Ocean): An Effort at Quantification', Conference on 'Islamic Africa: Slavery and Related Institutions', Princeton University, 14 June, 1977; *ibid.*, 'The Islamic Red Sea Slave Trade: An Effort at Quantification,' *Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference on Ethiopian Studies* (Chicago: U. of Illinois, 1979), pp.443-67; and 'From the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean: European Abolition, African Slave Trade and Asian Economic Structures', in David Eltis and James Walvin, *The Slave Trade and Abolition: Impacts on Africa, the Americas and Europe* (Madison: U. of Wisconsin, 1981), pp.117-39. I hope eventually to combine these Indian Ocean studies with a refined version of earlier research on the Mediterranean Islamic slave trade out of Africa 'The Transsaharan Slave Trade: A Tentative Census', in H. Gemery and J. Hogendorn, *The Uncommon Market: Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (New York: Academic, 1979), pp.23-76 to produce a general book on this subject.
2. My own estimates cited above have challenged and/or been challenged by Richard Pankhurst, 'The Ethiopian Slave Trade in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries: A Statistical Inquiry', *Journal of Semitic Studies*, Vol.9 (1964), 220-2; Esmond B. Martin and T.C.I. Ryan 'A Quantitative Assessment of the Arab Slave Trade of East Africa, 1770-1896', *Kenya Historical Review*, 5,1 (1977), 71-91; and especially Abdul Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices & Ivory: Integration of an East African Commercial Empire into the World Economy* (London, 1987); for a comparison of findings, see Table III.
3. Considerations of space do not allow complete tables to be published here; the present tables only display observations specifically referred to in the text.

4. It is perhaps revealing that at the 1987 SOAS conference, Swahili Coast specialists continued to argue that I had overestimated the external slave trade while Red Sea experts believed that my then figures were too low.
5. For the beginnings of the Zanzibar and Pemba plantations see Sheriff, pp.45-54.
6. Edward A. Alpers, *Ivory and Slaves: Changing Patterns of International Trade in East Africa to the Later Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, 1975), pp.151, 185-6; Sheriff, pp.41f.
7. José Capela, 'The "Mujojos" Slave Trade in Moçambique', SOAS Conference, 1987; see also, José Capela and Eduardo Medeiros *O tráfico de escravos de Moçambique para as ilhas do Índico, 1770-1902* (Maputo, 1987).
8. José Capela, p.1; see also interviews in 1876 with such slave traders by British consul James Frederick Elton, *Travels and Researches* (London, 1879), pp.170-2.
9. See also Portuguese naval documents on this incident cited in José Capela, p.4 and unspecified references to a small Madagascar-Persian Gulf trade in Stephen Ellis, 'Madagascar's Place in the International Slave Trade in the Nineteenth Century', 1987 SOAS Conference, p.13.
10. Jonathan Glassman, 'The Development of Plantation Slavery on the Northern Mrima', unpublished dissertation chapter.
11. Carla Glassman, 'The Illegal Seagoing East African Slave Trade, 1873-1900: a Strategic Approach', unpublished paper, Trinity College, Cambridge, n.d.; J. Glassman, pp.34-5; Frederic Rodger Morton, 'Fugitives and Freedom on the Kenya Coast, 1873-1903', unpublished dissertation, University of Syracuse, 1976, pp.12-18.
12. Slaving vessels captured by the British navy after 1873 were overwhelmingly involved in local rather than long-distance trade, C. Glassman, pp.14-15; for examples of Omani Slave smuggling from Zanzibar under the French flag in this period, see R.W. Beachey, *The Slave Trade of Eastern Africa* (N.Y., 1976), pp.238-41.
13. This critique of Sheriff was already made in Cooper, 1977, p.43.
14. Robert Geran Landen, *Oman since 1856* (Princeton, 1967), p.150.
15. C. Glassman, pp.8-9.
16. Total observations: Austen, 1977 = 55; Austen, 1979 = 71; Austen, 1988 = 102.
17. Janet Ewald, 'The Nile Valley System and the Red Sea Slave Trade, 1820-1880', 1987 SOAS Conference; in response to the critique which follows, Ewald has revised her argument as reflected in the version of her paper which appears in this volume.
18. C. Snouck Hurgronje, *Mekka* (The Hague, 1889), II, pp.12-24.
19. Ewald, pp.16f.; cf. William Ochsenwald, 'Muslim-European Conflict in the Hijaz: the Slave Trade Controversy', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 16,1 (1980), pp.115-26.
20. Albertine Jwaideh and J.W. Cox, 'The Black Slaves of Turkish Arabia and the North Arabian Desert during the Nineteenth Century', 1987 SOAS Conference (in this volume).
21. Abdul Sheriff, 'Localisation and Social Composition of the East African Slave Trade', 1987 SOAS Conference (in this volume).
22. This point has been specified for the Nile Valley slave trade in Terence Walz, 'Black Slavery in Egypt during the Nineteenth Century as Reflected in the Makhama Archives of Cairo', in John Ralph Willis (ed.), *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa*, II, (London, Cass, 1985), pp.137-60.
23. However it should be noted that in the midst of the 1987 SOAS Conference, BBC reports of Benazir Bhutto's wedding celebrations in Pakistan singled out the role of local African-descended communities.
24. Thomas M. Ricks, 'Slaves and Slave Traders in the Persian Gulf, 18th and 19th Centuries: an Assessment', 1987 SOAS Conference (in this volume); this paper is largely undocumented but Ricks elaborated his arguments in oral presentation.
25. There is reference to a decline in trade at this time, but also a good deal of conflicting evidence (unfortunately not well-documented) about expanding commercial date production from the 1840s in Calvin H. Allen Jr., 'Sayyids, Shets, and Sultans: Politics and Trade in Masqat under the al-Busaidis, 1785-1914', unpublished dissertation, University of Washington, passim.

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MAE Ministère des Affaires Etrangères,
Affaires Politiques (France), archival files

PP Parliamentary Papers (Great Britain,
House of Commons)

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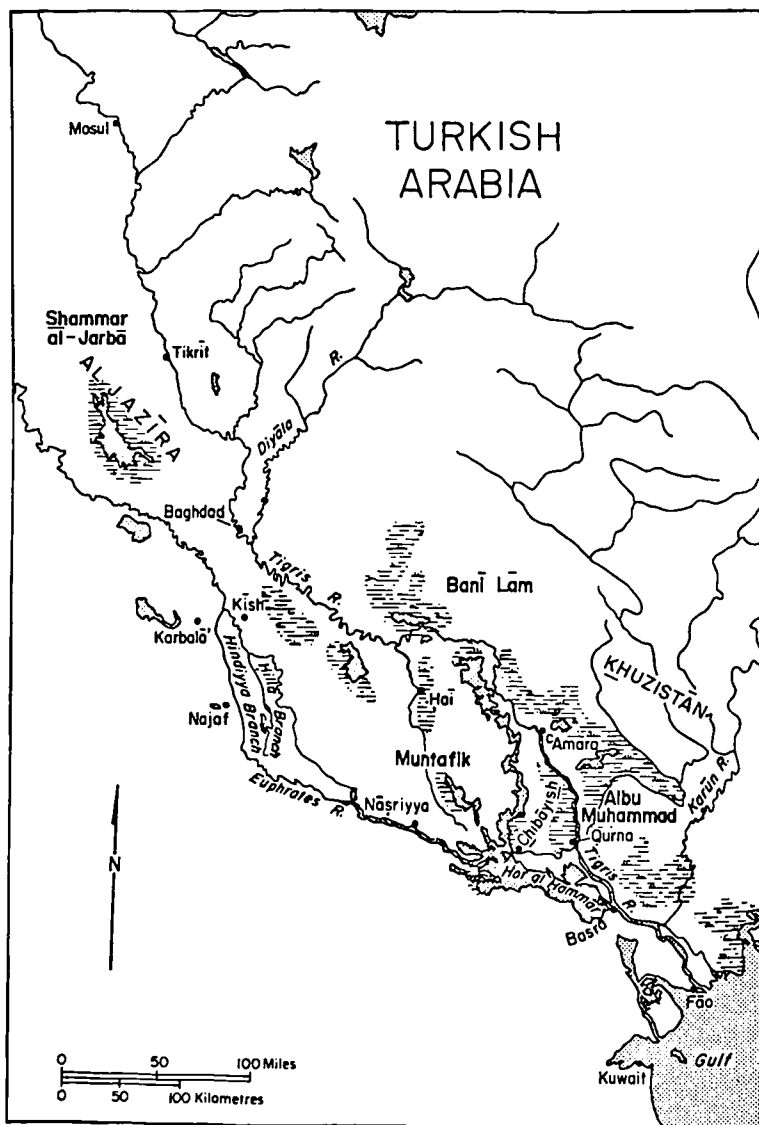
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The Black Slaves of Turkish Arabia during the 19th Century

Albertine Jwaideh and J.W. Cox

Given the ready accessibility of the requisite sources, Western scholarship has tended to make Muslim jurisprudence the basis for the study of slavery in the Islamic world. All too often, however, what has emerged has been a composite model, inferentially derived and monolithic in nature, which purports to embody the sum and substance of Islamic slavery as such and which, subject to slight variations, is deemed suitable for the depiction and assessment of this phenomenon at any time or place within the world of Islam. In regard to the study of the phenomenon in the Arab East during the nineteenth century, the focus has been on the scale and pattern of the trade in slaves and the role of Great Britain in its suppression. The grist for such study has largely derived from the accounts of British Government officials resident in the region during the time, which have the merit of relative abundance, ease of access, and susceptibility to quantification, but which have also tended to set the agenda and to impose the interpretative framework of studies dependent on them. In contrast, the study of slavery in ancient Babylonia has centred on the functional role of slaves within the society of the time.¹ The major impediment to emulating this more empirical approach in the study of the phenomenon in nineteenth-century Mesopotamia, has been the paucity of information. Nevertheless, this study will examine such information as we have from the time in regard to the black slaves of Turkish Arabia, a large marketing area of the Persian Gulf trade, and will draw certain conclusions from them.

Turkish Arabia closely approximated the combined regions of the Iraq and Kuwait of today. The character of the inhabitants of this region partook 'more of that of the Desert Arab than . . . elsewhere found in towns and cultivated lands'.² Therefore, the social role of slaves in the countryside will be examined before their role in the cities. Indeed, most of the cultivated areas during this period were farmed by Arab tribesmen, settled and semi-settled, organized similarly to the beduin model, but united more by their corporately held tribal *dira* (land) than by any alleged kinship ties. This tribal structure had been characteristic of Mesopotamian rural society since antiquity and met the need for collective effort essential to the defence of the integrity of tribal lands and the requirements of irrigation. It also provided the flexibility to adapt to



changing fortunes arising from the importunities of Ottoman rule and fluctuations in water supply. Tribes easily shifted back and forth from nomadic, semi-nomadic, and settled modes or any combination thereof, and throughout the nineteenth century all these modes could be found.

Fundamental to an understanding of the social role of black slaves in Turkish Arabia was the nature of the household, which conformed substantially to the beduin model. The household, in Arabic *al bayt*, generally translated as house, may be defined as all those who shared the same kitchen and were dependent on one another for their livelihood. While it designated the habitat, whether a tent, a hut, or a grand edifice, it was the notion of a bonded existence which was the essential element. Economic enterprise was a corporate and not an individual matter, all income and property being pooled and shared. Autonomous and intensely private, internal affairs and disputes were resolved by its own means and instrumentality, features jealously guarded, and respected by the rest of society, only those disputes involving and threatening wider well-being ever being referred to some higher authority. Male members were collectively responsible for protecting its integrity and redeeming its honour, and hence also were collectively answerable for any action of its members against those external to it. Female members, whose quintessential role was the preservation of the line, were especially private, not to be touched by any alien man, and exempted from the laws of retribution and from spoil in time of war. All these elements – corporateness, autonomy, privacy, and honour – were inward in orientation. To this must be added the public dimension with its traditions of hospitality, its rituals and obligations, and its connotations of alliance. But the distinction between the two spheres was maintained and, even in the humblest of abodes, was signified by a curtain or partition which separated the public from the private side, and it was to the latter that female members appropriately retired when male guests were entertained.³

Also significant to an understanding of the social role of slaves were tribal notions of freedom. The survival and comfort of *bays* depended on affiliation in larger tribal units defined in terms of *ahl*, kinship ties. To be free was to exercise a claim on the tribe. It was the enjoyment of a birthright conferred by tribal membership; and all tribesmen, however poor or despised, were deemed to be *hurr*, free.⁴ In contrast, an '*abd*, slave, was one whose identity was dependent on a master and therefore when named was called '*abd* of his master in the same way that a freeborn Arab was identified *ibn*, son, of his father. Rather than having purely legal and economic connotations, '*abd* denoted a social category and very little else. But the distinction between *hurr* and '*abd* was binding and unalterable. It was a case of once an '*abd* always an '*abd*, whether manumitted or not. And while

not all '*abid* were black, the terms for negro and slave were used interchangeably.⁵

Among the tribes and villages of northern Iraq slavery was never a significant factor, except for certain sections of the great Shammar tribal grouping among whom a negro element has existed since the eighteenth century. The latter, entirely beduin, roamed the *jazira*, the steppe-land between the Tigris and Euphrates above Baghdad. Slave possession was generally confined to prominent shaykhly families. Slaves acted as servitors and armed men, conferring a measure of the shaykh's prestige, facilitating a level of hospitality commensurate with his dignity, and providing greater personal security. They acquired enhanced utility during the nineteenth century, however, when certain of the great shaykhs became Ottoman officials and tax collectors, and especially after the early 1870s when large numbers of the Shammar al-Jarba settled on lands along the west bank of the Tigris between Mosul and Tikrit. Freeborn tribesmen were reluctant to collect taxes from their peers and, ever mindful of the danger to their *ahl* of future retribution, would only obey the commands of their shaykhs which they deemed to be either prudent or in the interests of their *bayts*. '*Abid*, on the other hand, were only indirectly related to the tribe through their masters, but, as an integral part of his household, could acquire status, honour, and sometimes wealth by serving its interests. Hence, '*abid* were valued agents in the conduct of the shaykh's affairs and in enforcing compliance to his will, sometimes sacrificing themselves on his behalf; but, reflecting attitudes of shaykhly households, would be neither hewers of wood nor drawers of water. The most significant departure from the former beduin mode, therefore, was that during the harvest the shaykh appointed one negro as his personal representative in each village; and at the beginning of each season, approximately one hundred negroes were sent to settle disputes and to establish the quantity of grain harvested, on the basis of which taxes were levied. These estimates were then compared with the figures submitted by the headman of each village. But beduin prohibitions against intermarriage between blacks and tribeswomen continued to be observed, though anthropometric data indicate that small traces of negro blood had permeated every large encampment.⁶

Nineteenth-century accounts say little about slaves along the Middle Euphrates. There is only the occasional reference to the odd slave in the familiar roles of coffee-maker, escort, and bodyguard.⁷ Indeed, Henry Field found that the shaykhs of the settled tribes of this region were 'insignificant in power and wealth compared with the great Beduin sheikhs of the North Arabian and Syrian deserts'.⁸ There are two reasons for this. First, the waters of the Euphrates were shifting, as they periodically have throughout history, from the Hilla to the Hindiyya branch, dispossessing some tribesmen by denying them water supplies

and wreaking vengeance on others through a superabundance. Second, the Ottomans ruthlessly exploited this situation in the vain hope of replacing the authority of the shaykhs with that of their own.⁹ However, anthropometric data have shown that 1.8 per cent of the Arabs at Kish had some negroid blood. A similar study of 227 Iraqi soldiers stationed in the vicinity (probably reflecting a wider population base) found three with negroid features, one of whom was Sudanese. This works out at 1.3 per cent if the Sudanese is included in the calculations and a scant 0.9 per cent if not.¹⁰ Such findings clearly indicate a very low rate of absorption of negroid blood and a minimal black population for some time past.

Along both banks of the Lower Euphrates and on most of the lands between the two rivers below Hai was a populous and assorted grouping of tribes collectively known as Muntafik. They were united only by a common homage to their al-Sa'dun Emirs, whose dominions sometimes extended along the Shatt al-Arab to Fao at the head of the Gulf, while certain of the tribes roamed deeply into the Arabian desert. It was here that black slaves were to be found in greatest numbers in Mesopotamia, and the al-Sa'dun Emirs were second to none as slaveholders. Yet the data are lacking to establish figures. Al-Sa'dun adhered to the lifestyle of the beduin, moving their encampments about their domains and using their slaves in ways similar to that described in regard to the Shammar.¹¹ A measure of the scale of their holdings is indicated by a description of how in the early 1830s their Emir, Shaykh 'Ajil, 'kept daily an open table for probably not less than three or four hundred people, and not less than thirty or forty slaves were constantly employed in pounding Coffee'.¹² Even allowing for exaggeration, the al-Sa'dun establishment was large. However, that was at the height of their power, and for the next half century they were a primary object of Ottoman policies to break tribal autonomy, until, in 1881, they were defeated at the battle of al-Ra'is, dispersed, and fled into Persian exile. They subsequently filtered back in greatly reduced circumstances, though some slaves continued in their service until the 1920s and after.¹³ Therefore, while their slaveholdings were great, after 1831 new acquisitions by al-Sa'dun were probably limited, and, after 1881, nonexistent.

A considerable and densely populated part of Muntafik was marsh, scarcely penetrated by outsiders until recent times. Among the most powerful of the marsh tribes were the Bani Asad, whose al-Khayyun shaykhs resided at the large village of al Chibayish strategically situated on the Euphrates upstream from Qurna. All black slaves either belonged to al-Khayyun households or had in fact come from them. Their social roles, apart from certain adaptations to the marsh environment, were remarkably similar to those of the desert beduin, as were also conventions pertaining to racial purity, though the latter were not so stringently enforced. Moreover, on the basis of estimates at the time

of the abolition of the al-Khayyun shaykhdom in the 1920s, negroes constituted approximately 1.5 per cent of the Bani Asad population, strikingly similar to the findings at Kish.¹⁴

Significant numbers of slaves were also to be found among the Albu Muhammad, a large confederation of tribes which held rice lands and marshes along the Tigris from 'Amara southwards. During the middle decades of the last century they threw off the yoke of their former overlords, the Bani Lam, and subsequently three of their shaykhs and the family of a fourth acquired the leasehold to most of the Albu Muhammad lands. They probably added significantly to their slaveholdings during this period. They resided in fortresses, with their large families of from 40 to 50 children, and were tended by a bevy of domestic slaves. But this lifestyle was confined to reigning shaykhs, other members of the ruling house coming into the inheritance only on accession to the shaykhship.¹⁵ These few shaykhs and their heirs retained their ex-slaves in undiminished numbers and in ways little changed until recent memory, largely through an ancient practice known as *hoshiyya* whereby those belonging to the shaykh's suite and bodyguard were either paid a salary in kind, in this case rice, or were granted tax-exempt and expense-free plots of land, known as *kabayl*. These plots were not cultivated by *hoshis*, but rather by freeborn cultivator tribesmen. In the early 1940s, Shaykh Muhammad al-'Uraibi had a total of 552 *hoshis*. By no means all were black, though many were. This practice was detrimental to shaykhs and tribesmen alike. *Hoshis* remained behind living lazily off the fat of the land, diminishing the income of the shaykhs, while the cultivator tribesmen, whose life became increasingly intolerable, fled to the cities, first in the 1920s to Basra and Kuwait and then to Baghdad.¹⁶

Although unmentioned in the sources, slaves were probably held by shaykhs of the powerful, mostly pastoral, Bani Lam, who inhabited the region between the Tigris and the Persian frontier from 'Amara northwards to the vicinity of Baghdad. However, owing to the loss during the middle decades of the century of the revenues previously enjoyed as overlords of the Albu Muhammad, and dissension within the ruling house, they would have been an insignificant factor in the generation of demand within the nineteenth-century Mesopotamian slave market.¹⁷

From the data so far examined the involvement of blacks in nineteenth-century Mesopotamian agriculture was minimal and incidental at most, and in no instance did they actually work the land. There were, however, two tribal septs, both called 'Abid and consisting of negro members, who were engaged in agriculture. One formed a section of the al-Ghazzi tribe of Muntafik and was located on the right bank of the Euphrates 11 miles north by northwest of Nasriyya. At the turn of the century it had about 180 families, 30 of which were Persian, and the remainder negroes. All negro sub-sections were listed as cultivators. The other, apparently

smaller sept, formed a sub-section of the Albu Salih tribe. It was located northeast of the Hor al-Hammar along the Bad'a canal. The number of its households is unknown, but from the locations they would have been cultivators, or possibly fishermen.¹⁸ In the absence of any further information about either of these septs, one can only conjecture about their origins, but they had become fully integrated into their respective tribes, except that local Arabs would not intermarry with them. None of these negro tribesmen, however, could be categorized as slave labourers.

Yet the notion persists that African slaves were extensively used in Mesopotamian agriculture. It has been conjectured that they were employed in the cotton and sugar-cane plantations of Khuzistan since pre-Islamic times¹⁹ and that the Zanj rebellion in the ninth century was a manifestation of a 'protoplantation system'.²⁰ Such conjectures have little by way of evidential support and ignore much which suggests otherwise. It is from such inferential reasoning that much of the prevailing misperception in regard to slavery and Mesopotamian agriculture derives. Thus, one writer has asserted without qualification that 'we know that African slaves worked on date and coconut plantations around Basra'.²¹ At least so far as the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are concerned, a thorough review of thousands of documents pertaining to land tenure and tribal administration in Lower Iraq to be found in the Ottoman and Iraq Government Archives and a search through the libraries of prominent Baghdad and Basra landowners failed to turn up a single instance of black slave labour being used in agriculture, whether on sugar-cane and date plantations or in cereal farming.

There are two probable explanations of this lack of empirical evidence. First, it was uneconomic. Even in antiquity when slaves were extensively involved in working the agricultural lands of Mesopotamia, 'real latifundia' did not develop.²² Owing to problems associated with irrigation and the increased expenditures constant supervision of slave labour entailed, large landowners preferred to lease their lands to tenant farmers. Indeed, wherever slaves were engaged in agriculture it was generally as lease-holders.²³ How matters developed in the centuries after clay tablets went out of style is problematic, since little of a documentary nature has survived.

But already by late antiquity another factor had emerged, social and legal in nature, which militated against the development of latifundia or the use of slaves in Mesopotamian agriculture. Most of the cultivated delta lands were acquired by tribes and tribal practice prevailed in the disposition of such lands. While the land of a tribe could be vast, it was apportioned in small plots to individual households whose entitlement derived from their membership in the tribe. The devolution of these plots was strictly circumscribed in order to preserve the integrity of the tribal *dira* (land). Therefore, slaves were prohibited by the

tribal code from cultivating such lands, since in doing so they would acquire a heritable right to its use.²⁴ Indeed, unlike the provisions of Islamic jurisprudence, tribal law similarly prohibited the inheritance of tribal land by tribeswomen.²⁵ Since long before the nineteenth century, therefore, most of the Iraqi delta land was worked exclusively by freeborn tribesmen.

A third factor inhibiting the use of slaves on date plantations was a tenure right of ancient derivation known as *ta'ba* (occupancy tenancy). Because of the special skills required in the cultivation of the date palm, those tending them were accorded a heritable right to a share of the yield and to the produce of the land underneath. An endeavour was made in the nineteenth century to dispense with the services of the *ta'ab* (those having such rights) and to use instead cheaper, supervised labour, but with the result that those groves which were beyond the reach of the supervision of Basra owners, and continued to be tilled by *ta'ab*, produced superior dates and yields.²⁶

The same elements of corporateness, autonomy, and privacy found in the beduin household governed the conduct and shape of that of the towns. The houses with their windowless exterior walls, large teak doors, secretive and uncompromising, faced inward into their own private domain; the very architecture bespoke a private world, unaccountable to that outside its confines. Within was the same division of private and public spaces.²⁷ Whereas beduin womenfolk could move about freely and uncovered, protected by desert distances, their town cousins were more vulnerable and hence went veiled, not permitted in some households to leave their quarters unaccompanied. The idle womenfolk of the rich particularly, therefore, sought more commodious quarters within which they could move about and find entertainment. If settlement made possible such grander establishments, commerce and industry supplied the wherewithal. But the felicity of this miniature world of the wealthy was dependent on domestic servants without whom their large establishments could not be maintained and the quality of life enhanced.

It is not surprising, therefore, that these private little worlds and the slaves who figured in them remained unseen by outside observers, except for the occasional glimpse. Within the town household, the duties of the male slave were legion, but all honourable. He was doorkeeper, looked after stores and household supplies, held positions of trust, kept account of the house when they went out, generally did his master's bidding, and saw that all was in order. On him devolved the marketing for the household. When the occasion demanded it, he took charge and saw that the womenfolk were looked after, and generally tended to be stricter than the master in maintaining the proprieties. During prolonged absences by the master, a trusted slave conducted his affairs. In the better families the lot of the female domestic slave was an easy and privileged one. She

looked after her mistress and her robes, always helped to dress her, was often the cook, or seamstress, assisted the younger women of the house in the washing, and accompanied her mistress when she went calling.²⁸

The relationship between the town domestic slave and the family of the master was close and intimate. Slaves were an integral part of the household, no alien element, slave or free, being lightly admitted to its ranks. Hence well-to-do families only rarely acquired *mamluk*, or bought slaves, who, when they did, were generally assigned the more onerous chores, were more readily sold, and had to serve an apprenticeship, as it were, before full incorporation within the household. Hence it was that a domestic slave was as a general rule a *muwallad*, one who had been born from those within the household, and commonly came from stock which had been with the family for many generations. Hence also they were called '*iyal* (family); were assigned positions of trust, sometimes superseding blood members. The progeny of domestic slaves played and grew up with the children of the master on terms of affection and equality, and it was not uncommon for the lady of the house to treat them with more apparent affection and care than her own. Whenever a son or daughter married it was common for the *muwallad* companion of their youth to accompany them to their new home. As much interest was evinced in the marriage of a domestic slave as in that of one of the family, the master and mistress often assuming the initiative in finding a suitable mate, acting the part of the parents of the bridegroom in marriage ceremonies just as for the freeborn.²⁹ There were, of course, the rare instances of slave abuse, but they were similar in incidence and kind to child abuse.

Except for Kuwait, there is little evidence of the use of slaves for purposes other than as domestics in the towns of Turkish Arabia. Opulent citizens of Basra might maintain a negro crew for their *bellems* (boats), while Sayyid Talib Pasha had his retainers to enforce his will on recalcitrant citizens.³⁰ In the cafés of Baghdad, the wants of the male customers were supplied by negro attendants, whether the bought slaves of the proprietors or manumitted blacks doing for pay what they knew best. In Kuwait substantial numbers of blacks were used in the pearling industry and as crewmen aboard native ships, though apparently not nearly to the same extent as in the Gulf ports to the south.³¹ The latter raise questions which cannot be addressed here, however, since they properly belong to an investigation into the uses of slaves in the Gulf pearling and shipping industries at large.

In Kuwait slaves formed a conspicuous element of the population. There one was more apt to see 'an Arab of the Gulf dark-skinned with slave blood'³² and to find evidence of concubinage. Kuwait had a small, distinct negro community with its own club and peculiar sky-signs, where they frenetically danced to their own music through the night. Also

visible were old and decrepit negroes who, no longer of use, freed and discharged from the service of their masters, were forced to go on the streets and beg a precarious living. Some became procurers or fell into some other vice.³³ In 1904-7 out of a total estimated population of 35,000, 4,000 were negroes, one-third of whom were emancipated and the remainder defined as *mamluk* or enslaved.³⁴ The Persian Gulf Resident in 1897 alleged that Kuwait had become a great slave emporium, for which there is some evidence.³⁵ The buoyance in the pearling industry and the prosperity of the merchant community, largely fuelled by trade in British arms with the interior of Arabia and the tribes of lower Iraq, probably generated a demand for slaves.

In Basra and Baghdad negroes were not nearly so visible. At the beginning of the present century the British were able to assess how Basra's population of 48,000 or less was divided into its various racial and religious groupings, but could only say that 'negroes of a servile origin are fairly numerous'.³⁶ Apart from domestics, there was a tiny community of negroes consisting of a few huts located on the approach to a bridge over a canal, the latter appropriately named *jisr al-'abid*. Until 1950 the negro community, joined by domestics, continued to celebrate twice each year their own festivals, dancing in the streets to the beat of drums of their own distinctive making, but the total number of the celebrants hardly exceeded 40. Indeed, knowledgeable persons have estimated that the negro component of the population amounted to less than one per cent.³⁷ The estimated population of Baghdad was 140,000. The British calculated each element of Baghdad's polyglot and cosmopolitan population, but the negro component went unnoticed.³⁸ Blacks were so few, in fact, that the appearance of a Basra negress was a curiosity to Baghdad street urchins. In Mosul negroes were probably even more scant. In all the accounts dating from the nineteenth century examined, mention was made only of one Mosul household in which there were slaves.³⁹ Thus, the proportion of blacks in the town populations in Turkish Arabia decreased as one moved from south to north.

While the political and economic turbulence of modern Iraq has taken its toll, a few Baghdad and Basra notables continued until recently to maintain their faithful *muwallad* as an integral part of their household establishments. This was done without coercion, but through a coincidence of wills and by mutual advantage, trust, and affection. It is clear from these survivals that while most well-to-do urban households in past times had one or two families of *muwallad*, only rarely did they have more. Nor was the number of those embodying this lifestyle ever very great. In those which did survive, the children of both the master and the domestics continued to grow up together, to play together, and to attend school together. The final demise of this household mode has occurred through no act of abolition or in consequence

of any other reason than the desire to emulate the modern nuclear family.⁴⁰

The evidence herein adduced, while not permitting precise figures, indicates that the nineteenth-century marketing area of Mesopotamia had a low absorptive capacity. It is against this low demand of slaves that estimates as to the scale of the traffic in slaves for this region should be judged. In 1842, the British Resident in Baghdad reported a lively trade in slaves carried along the Euphrates, that the slaves originated in the bazaars of Mecca and other Arabian cities, and that they came via either Basra or Kuwait. But one needs to be cautious in deriving inferences from this report. This was the time ibn Rashid was reimposing order on Central Arabia and reestablishing commercial links following the turbulent decades of Egyptian occupation. Quite possibly, therefore, there was an accumulated demand in 1842 which had built up as a result of three decades of disruptions in normal trading patterns, but which even so must have been modest at most. And even if it be admitted that demand was brisk along the Euphrates at this time, it would have been curtailed shortly thereafter by the economic decline which had already begun following from the disruptions in water supplies and the repressive tribal policies of the Ottomans. Another report by the Baghdad Resident in 1861 asserted that 3,000 to 4,000 slaves were imported to Basra that year, and it has been inferred that most of these were sold by Basra brokers from their homes, any surplus remaining being sent on to Baghdad.⁴¹ Such estimates must be deemed grossly inflated, since sales of such magnitude would have more than quadrupled in one year the likely negro population of Basra at any time in the century and could not have been absorbed unnoticed in Baghdad and the tribal areas of lower Iraq.

Estimates as to the demand for slaves in Turkish Arabia during the nineteenth century have apparently been excessive and the social and economic functions of slaves have been misunderstood. By way of an unscientific postscript certain of these misapprehensions may be enumerated. First, the notion that the economy was dependent on a regular supply of African slaves is without foundation.⁴² While they were of utility to some shaykhs, very rarely were they employed in economically productive ways. Consequently, the numbers were never very great, prices were little affected by declining supplies, and there was no social or economic disruption following the prohibition of sales in 1879.

Furthermore, notions as to the prevalence of concubines and eunuchs have been exaggerated and have received undue prominence.⁴³ Neither were to be found among the beduin, since the one offended their sexual codes and the other their sensibilities in regard to mutilation and the obligation of every male to procreate. Carsten Niebuhr rightly noted:

We imagine in Europe, that the inhabitants of the East keep Eunuchs for the guardians of their harems; yet Eunuchs are not common through the East, and in Arabia there are none. The Turkish Monarch keeps more Eunuchs in his seraglio at Constantinople than are in all the rest of his dominions. The Pacha of Aleppo had two, and he of Mosul one, whom he kept, because he had belonged to his father. It is wrong, therefore, to regard Arabia as the seat of Eunuchism. . . . The Arabians abhor the cruel operation which is requisite to render a man a fit guardian of the chastity of a harem.⁴⁴

There indeed were instances of an odd town notable or tribal shaykh who kept a concubine, but, while tolerated, it was not entirely condoned, was relatively rare, scarcely ever involved more than one at any given time, and never amounted to the trains of concubines some have imagined.

When viewed in its social and economic context, the practice of slavery was largely governed by attitudes and precepts which were essentially beduin in nature. The culture of the beduin and beduinized Mesopotamians derived from the uniqueness of their environment, was of pre-Islamic origin, and in some of its aspects departed from the norms of Islamic and Ottoman jurisprudence. This points to the need to study slavery in terms of the distinctive features of each of the various cultures which collectively form the larger Islamic world and not to take as normative some abstract model of Islamic slavery which is derived from Islamic jurisprudence or is culturally eclectic in nature.

Finally, much has been written in regard to the problem of the black diaspora and of imagined calamities which beset Africans in the alien environment of the Middle East, in an attempt to reconcile high rates of importation with the lack of evidence of a residuum.⁴⁵ In fact, east Africans were greatly valued precisely because they could endure the rigours of the climate in the hot seasons better than the indigenous Arabs.⁴⁶ A more likely explanation is that the numbers of black slaves which were imported into this region have been grossly overestimated.

NOTES

The material for this chapter derives from Government Archives, published reports, unpublished MSS from Iraqi private libraries, *Al-Zawra*, the official newspaper of the Ottoman Province of Baghdad (referred to under the heading 'Zawra', followed by the issue number), and travel accounts. Owing to space constraints, citations have been selective and abbreviated. Documents from the Ottoman Archives in Istanbul are referred to under the heading 'O.A.', followed by the name of the Ministry or Department concerned; those from the archives of the Land Settlement Department of the Iraqi Ministry of the Interior under the heading 'I.A.'; Iraqi government documents

deposited in the Centre of National Archives, Baghdad, under the heading of 'C.N.A.'; consular reports from the Foreign Office documents in the Public Record Office under the heading 'F.O.'; records of the Baghdad Embassy of Great Britain deposited in the Indian National Archives in New Delhi, India under the heading 'B.E.R.'; and in each case the heading is followed by the file number and such other detailed references as necessary.

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19. See M. Lombard, *The Golden Age of Islam* (New York, 1975), pp. 25, 122, 167; H. Gerbeau, 'The Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean: problems facing the historian and research to be undertaken', in *The African Slave Trade from the Fifteenth to the Nineteenth Century &c.* (Paris, 1979), p. 190; W.D. Phillips, *Slavery from Roman Times to the Early Transatlantic Trade* (Minneapolis, 1985), pp. 67–8, 76, 79–81. Cp. J. Walvin, *Slavery and the Slave Trade* (Jackson, Miss., 1983), p. 41. None of these writers cites evidence to support this claim. For an account which adheres to the evidence, see A.M. Watson, *Agricultural innovation in the early Islamic world: The diffusion of crops and farming techniques, 700–1100* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 26, 40, 116, 160 n12, 198, n28.
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23. See *ibid.*, pp. 649–50.
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26. *Revenue, Basra Wilayat, May 1918* (Basra, 1918), p. 35; I.A. 33/I/5, Reg. No. 22; 30/E/19, Reg. No. 15, Memo. No. 6218; 30/10, Reg. No. 4, Ref. No. C/3773/16/4.
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28. H.R.P. Dickson, *The Arab of the Desert* (London, 1949), pp. 501, 502; J.S. Buckingham, *Travels in Mesopotamia, &c.* (London, 1827), II, p. 46; Van Ess, *op. cit.*, pp. 70, 92.
29. Dickson, *op. cit.*, pp. 37–8, 143, 497: equates *muwallad* with domestic slave, which is not strictly correct, though practically so.

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31. Bishop, *op. cit.*, p.30; Dickson, *op. cit.*, p.499.
32. F. Stark, *Baghdad Sketches* (London, 1939), p.201.
33. R. Bidwell (ed.), *The Affairs of Kuwait, 1896-1905* (London, 1971), I, p.xxvii; Stark, *op. cit.*, pp.208-12; J.G. Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman, and Central Arabia*, IIB, p.1051; Dickson, *op. cit.*, pp.176, 204, 246, 500. Cp. M. Izzard, *The Gulf, Arabia's Western Approaches* (London, 1979), pp.245-7; E. Rutter, 'Slavery in Arabia', *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, XX (July 1933), p.322; Maxwell, *op. cit.*, p.13.
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37. Information supplied by knowledgeable persons. Cp. H. al-Bazi, *al-Basra fi al-fatra al-Muzlima* (Baghdad, 1969), pp.119, 173: lists *jisr al-'abid* as a major district in Basra, but stresses that its population was mostly Arab.
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39. Van Ess, *op. cit.*, p.68; Buckingham, *Travels in Mesopotamia*, I, pp.33, 94, 101, 181; II, p.46.
40. From personal knowledge and substantiated by other knowledgeable persons.
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42. E.g., see R. Hewins, *A Golden Dream: The Miracle of Kuwait* (London, 1963), p.58; J.R. Willis, 'Islamic Africa: Reflections on the Servile Estate', *Studia Islamica* (Paris, 1980), pp.183-4.
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Slaves and Slave Traders in the Persian Gulf, 18th and 19th Centuries: An Assessment

Thomas M. Ricks

For historians of Iran and the Persian Gulf, the subject of slaves and slave traders is a relatively new field of research. Except for a few works that have focused on the issues of piracy, anti-slave patrols and the policies of British imperial rule, little research has appeared on slaves and the slave trade in the Persian Gulf. The extensive research by African and Asian historians has stimulated Middle East historians to re-evaluate the societies and economies of the region in terms of slaves and slave trading as important issues in Middle Eastern social and economic historiography.¹

Slave trading to the Persian Gulf began well before the eighteenth century. Medieval accounts refer sporadically to slaves as household servants and bodyguards, and as militia men and seamen in Southern Iran and the Persian Gulf. In addition, slaves were both white and black. Prior to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, slaves in Iranian and Gulf societies and economies were marginal to the Persian, Arab and Indian population functioning out of the public eye in the homes and workshops of the wealthy merchant, landlord or administrator. Only in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did slaves and slave trading assume any significance for Iran and the Persian Gulf. The reasons for the rise in slaves and slave trading, particularly slaves from East Africa and trading through Oman, were threefold:

1. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were periods of wide-ranging economic, social and political changes within Southern Iran and the Persian Gulf region due to the collapse of regional imperial rule, the rise of petty lords and the dominance of Britain within the world economy.
2. The Southern Iranian and Persian Gulf import/export trade underwent a mercantile 'renaissance', particularly in the export of pearls, dates, cotton, wool, and opium in exchange for the imports of foodstuffs, dyes, manufactured goods and arms.
3. Labour shortages occurred within the Southern Iranian and Persian Gulf region during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries resulting in fresh demands for imported labour to work in the Gulf

ports, in the coastal villages and in local militia. The East African slave trade provided the temporary labour force until the First World War.

The first part of the paper focuses on the social and economic changes within the Iranian and Persian Gulf regions during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The second part of the paper will investigate the differences between eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Persian Gulf slaves and slave traders, the shifts in the slave trading 'systems' and the incorporation of slave labour into nineteenth-century Persian Gulf coastal and hinterland economies and societies. There will remain a number of important questions, however. How important was the rise and fall of slave trading to the other changes within the Gulf region? What long-term social and economic impact did the nineteenth-century surge of slave labour have for the region? How did the slave trade overall affect the foreign trade of the Persian Gulf peoples? In what sense did the increase of East African slave trading 'internationalize' the Southern Iranian or Gulf economies and societies?

I

Trade and politics in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Iran and the Persian Gulf were not dull times. The overall period witnessed a number of significant changes in both the economic and social realms. Indeed, it is important to sketch the major trends in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Iranian and Gulf social and economic history.

Following the collapse of the Safavid family's central rule in 1722, Iran underwent a period of decentralization, dividing itself into two major regions – Northern Iran and Southern Iran. Both regions witnessed the emergence of independent-minded regional lords (*khans*) backed by local merchants and European trading companies in their rival bids for control over the land, the markets and the trade of each region. Between 1722 and 1782, Northern Iran was dominated first by the Afshars and then the Qajars while Southern Iran was controlled by the Zands.

Administratively based in Tabriz, Mashhad and then in Tehran, the Northern region was tied to the Russian and Ottoman trading zones linked by overland and sea trade routes, by merchant communities and by agricultural, industrial and commercial needs. By 1736, the emergence of Nadir Shah and the Afshar military elite severely challenged the neighbouring regions of Ottoman imperial rule to Iran's west (Eastern Anatolia and the Mesopotamian regions) and the Mughul rule in Afghanistan and India to the east. The military challenges were essentially challenges to Ottoman and Mughul domination over the overland and sea trade routes, over the markets and activities of the merchant

communities, and over the domestic agricultural and artisanal products. Merchant capital, long tied to central Iranian imperial demands, now found new life in the post-Safavid period, particularly with the growing importance of the European trading companies. With the revival and expansion of Iran's Northern trade came new demands of increased production, a need for a larger labour (military and agricultural) force and greater demands by the *khans* for luxury goods. The population distribution in Northern Iran was favourable for the 'renaissance' in Iranian products, markets and trade. Labour was abundant on either side of the Iranian-Russian borders and labour migrations accelerated from the last decades of the eighteenth century to the late nineteenth century. Cotton as a valuable cash crop was increasingly introduced into the Northern Iranian economy with considerable financial support and commercial success from Russia.²

Iranian merchants began to buy land, introduce new products and industries, and engage in joint trade ventures by the early nineteenth century. The location of the nineteenth-century capital in Tehran greatly facilitated the new directions of Northern Iranian merchant capital 'investments'. Indeed, the very emergence of vigorous capital accumulation as a result of the decentralization of the Safavid political order and Russian commercial 'invasion' soon attracted the attentions of the Qajar rulers in Tehran. From the mid-nineteenth century to the First World War, old landlord and merchant lands were seized by Tehran's Qajar lords and by the local notables in Tabriz and Mashhad while farming surpluses were appropriated through revised tax systems and market restrictions. Foreigners began to lease and even to own lands for cash crop production. The 1872 Reuter Concession is thought to be the watershed between the post-Safavid merchant 'renaissance' and the emergence of the modern state system following the First World War.³

Southern Iran experienced a similar transformation. After 1722, Southern Iranian merchants began to seek new ways of utilizing capital without the impositions of empire. From 1752 to 1782, Southern Iran's Zand family created Shiraz as the regional capital and, with the merchants' support, enthusiastically challenged all local hegemony within the Gulf region. The Zands occupied Basra, the major Ottoman port at the headwaters of the Gulf (1776-79), seized the Bahrayn Islands (1763-83) from Northern Arabian chiefs and dominated the lower Gulf zone (1763-85).⁴

The military expeditions followed the trade routes to the major trading centres. Merchants who had once fled Iran in the early eighteenth century, frightened by the political instability of the late Safavid era, were persuaded to return to Iran from their Mesopotamian, Punjabi and Indian exiles. Construction of roadhouses (*manazil*), bridges and covered markets were begun, and irrigation systems (*qanat*) so necessary

for the semi-arid Southern Iranian agriculture were rebuilt or more rigorously maintained.

The scarcity of labour, however, was a major obstacle to any long-term expansion of cultivation or increase in artisanal production. At the same time, the number of domestic and foreign contenders for control over rural and urban surpluses, greater than in Northern Iran, necessitated the maintenance of larger military forces. Finally, in the wake of the mid-eighteenth-century decline of the Dutch and French trade, England had no further European competition for the shipping, markets or ports of the Persian Gulf. Only the escalating conflicts between the rival powers of Iran, the Ottoman Empire and Oman created major social, economic or political problems in Southern Iran and in the Persian Gulf.

For the region to expand its accumulation of merchant capital, it was necessary to import labour in quantities greater than ever before. The shift in the slave labour practices of previous centuries from marginal imported labour for domestic and agricultural work to slave labour for a wide range of activities was financed by the Gulf brokers and merchants (Indian, Jewish, Persian, Arab and Turkish), organized by the Arab, Persian and Turkish Gulf sea captains (*nakhuda*) and protected by the Gulf Arab, Persian and Turkish rulers. The need for more crew members for trans-Gulf crafts or for the ocean-going dhows, for more military foot soldiers on land, for more porters in the markets and dock labour in the ports, and for more field labour in the irrigated croplands meant cheap imported labour from the Indian Ocean. The East African slave trade was the answer to the growing labour shortages.

The fall of Karim Khan Zand in 1779 and the ensuing demise of Zand family control over Southern Iran during the 1780s allowed the Omanis to assert their hegemony over both Indian and Persian Gulf trade. From the 1780s to 1872, it is possible to maintain that the Omani rulers and merchants shaped the direction, and in the end, the transformation of the Gulf.⁵ Nearly all trade tables for the 1870s to the First World War indicate a sharp escalation of trade to the region, new uses of land, and an internationalization of Iran's merchant community.⁶ The results of Oman's role with British support in the 'opening up of the Persian Gulf' in the final decades of the nineteenth century are well-documented; the importance of slaves and slave traders to the role has only begun to be researched.⁷

Chief among the various steps that Oman's merchants and rulers took during the 1780s to the 1870s was a vigorous escalation of imported labour into the Iranian, Ottoman and Arabian lands via Oman's major towns and, then, overland and by sea to the Gulf's coastal villages and port-towns. The profits from the importation of slave labour from East Africa to the Persian Gulf via the Omani towns of Masqat and Sur⁸ directly benefited the Omani merchants. They had also benefited from

the new ties with Persian Gulf merchants and brokers who increasingly became dependent on Oman's commercial interests via loans, debt transfers and credit arrangements. The principal purchasers of the imported Omani slave labourers were the Iranian, Arab, Indian, and Turkish merchants of the Gulf ports and hinterland towns who continued to look for ways of expanding the pearl trade and increasing the production of cotton, Kirmani wool, and opium through expanded labour forces, land and sea fighting units, and improved irrigation systems.

II

During the eighteenth century, slave trading to the Persian Gulf was relatively marginal in scope, but included a wide variety of peoples from East Africa, Ethiopia, Somalia and Baluchistan. The major entrepôts of the region were Ras al-Khaymah (Julfa), Bandar 'Abbas, Bandar Lingeh, Bushire and Basra. Slaves were generally used in the following ways:

- As soldiers in Southern Iran (Dashtistan, Tangistan, Dashti and the Abbasi coast), in the Gulf ports (Basra, Bushire, Bandar Rig, Bandar Lingeh and Bandar Abbas, Dubai, and Ras al-Khaymah) and on the islands (Kharg, Qishm and Bahrayn).
- As sailors and dock hands in the major Gulf ports.
- As household servants in port-towns of the Gulf and in the towns of Southern Iran.
- As pearl divers (Bahrayn Island, Bandar Lingeh and Bandar 'Abbas).

In the eighteenth century, therefore, slaves were used in the households of the wealthy, in the pearl beds of the Gulf, and in the local militia and maritime activities. The English East India Company (EIC) agents recorded a lively trafficking in slaves from within the Gulf region. In 1747, the EIC agent at Bandar 'Abbas wrote that a man came to town who had been taken as a slave from Bandar 'Abbas 25 years ago and was still with the Baluchis, saying 'they [Baluchis] have got a very rich booty in slaves, which they brought from the Cold Countries [Shiraz and Kirman], being chiefly of the ancient Persian families their sons & daughters'.⁹ In 1751, the EIC agent in Basra reported that Sulaiman Pasha's general punished the headmen or *aghas* of Basra by destroying their ship, the *Menoy*, and by taking the 'old men, women and children sold as slaves'.¹⁰ Slaves used as farm hands in the date plantations of the Bahrayn Islands and Bandar Lingeh, or on Kharg Island, were exceptional cases.¹¹ While only estimates can be offered, it appears that imported labour between 1722 and 1822 from East Africa to the Persian Gulf averaged no more than 500–600 slaves annually, with the

greater portion of slave importations coming in the last two decades of the eighteenth century.¹²

The slave traders, or 'slave peddlers',¹³ moved the African slave cargo from port to port in the course of their seasonal shipping obligations. The sea captains (*nakhodah*), usually Arab or Indian, utilized the slaves as shipping crews during the voyage and then sold them at ports known for their slave markets. The buyers frequently were brokers and port authorities (*shahbandar*) who acted both as merchants for themselves and as local administrators for the ruling hinterland family.¹⁴

The East India Company (EIC) was itself an eighteenth-century participant in the Indian Ocean slave trade. In the 1763 Royal Grant from Karim Khan Zand, Iran's ruler located in the Southern Iranian town of Shiraz, to the EIC 'for trading at Bushire', the Ninth Provision states that 'all soldiers, sailors or slaves of the East India Company must be returned without punishment'.¹⁵ Again, in 1766, the EIC Directors instructed the Bushire resident to take great care in leaving 'any considerable amount' of goods at Masqat 'in the hands of the Black broker' for any length of time, or taking unnecessary risks with interlopers, 'usually private British merchants', and with 'Black merchants or natives'.¹⁶ Finally, in anticipation of a possible EIC attack in 1777 upon Basra to break the Iranian occupation of that town, a British Admiralty communication estimated that 8 ships with 180 guns, 900 Europeans and '600 slaves from Madagascar' would be necessary for a successful operation.¹⁷

In the nineteenth century, slaves came primarily from East Africa via the Omani ports of Sur and Masqat, or overland to the small Arabian ports of Sharjah, Dubai or Ras al-Khaymah. In addition, direct slave trading between the Persian Gulf ports of Bandar 'Abbas, Lingeh, Ras al-Khaymah and Basra, and East Africa continued according to the eighteenth-century practices. The slave labour was, however, used in a greater variety of ways than in the eighteenth century:

- As soldiers in local or regional forces in Shiraz, Kirman, Basra, Bushire, Bandar 'Abbas, Masqat or Bahrayn Islands.
- As farm labourers in the Bahrayn Islands, Basra and Masqat, or as cash crop workers in Southern Iran and in the Gulf coastal villages.
- As irrigation canal workers in Fars and Kirman (Southern Iran) and in Oman.
- As pearl divers, fishermen, maritime sailors, dock workers and porters.
- As domestic servants in the towns and villages in the Gulf region and the Southern Iranian foothills.

The slave brokers, only incidentally involved in the eighteenth-century trade, became far more important in the nineteenth century, particularly as the anti-slave patrols increased. The nineteenth-century trade altered little the role of the imported female slave labourers, who continued to function within wealthy urban Iranian, Turkish or Arab homes as domestic servants or concubines. It was the male slave whose role in nineteenth-century Southern Iran and the Gulf was so greatly altered. Previously sold to urban and rural lords and administrators as house servants, handymen, pearl divers or bodyguards, in the nineteenth century the functions of the male slave were noticeably expanded to include a variety of farming and fishing tasks including cultivation, irrigation and harvesting activities.

Just as the activities of the imported labour expanded over the two centuries, involving the slave in work usually carried out by the peasantry or urban unskilled labour, so too the slave trader changed in the nineteenth century. Traders or 'slave peddlers' increasingly included sea captains, local port brokers, local merchants and administrators.¹⁸ The nineteenth-century slave trade brought more and more East Africans into the larger labour market of the Gulf both in agriculture and in industry. Traders were more often than not distinguished as 'long-distance' traders and 'short-distance' traders in terms of whether the peddler participated in the oceanic labour peddling or primarily in the movement of slaves from the coast to hinterland regions of the Gulf. In either case, the slave labourer was forced to serve as a crew member, a temporary domestic servant or a caravaner for the peddler before being 'dropped off' at Omani ports and Gulf towns.

The records for accurate recording of slave importations into the Gulf do not exist. However, a reasonable idea of the volume of the mid-nineteenth-century trade can be drawn from the British reports. Between 1852 and 1858, some accounting of the slave ships entering major Gulf ports was attempted. In July 1852, 8 ships with 435 slaves from Zanzibar were reported at the Gulf port of Ras al-Khaymah with an average of 55 slaves per ship. The ships were owned by the Qawasim chiefs of the coastal region. The report added that 150 of the slaves continued on to the Iranian port of Lingeh, and that ships destined for Sharjah dropped off part of the slave cargo in the Omani ports along the Batinah Coast.¹⁹ While H.J. Disbrowe, Assistant Political Resident for the Persian Gulf, reported the capture of 202 slaves, male and female, at Sharjah, Lingeh, Maghu, Charak, Bushire, Bahrayn and Basra over a seven-year period, he added that the 'slave trade was in its full vigour'.²⁰

The 'system' as such did not operate outside the usual trading routes or practices. Like the usual commercial trade routes, the slave trade

shifted from town to town or region to region, depending on natural or human obstacles, indirectly creating difficulties for the British patrols.²¹ In the eighteenth century, the major port-towns of the Persian Gulf served as entry points and collection centres for the few labourers imported from East Africa. The town of destination for the African slave was rarely the port-town itself, but rather the distant hinterland towns, such as Kirmantown, Shiraz or Baghdad. In the nineteenth century, however, slaves were sent to a variety of locations including relatively small towns along the Gulf littoral and into the villages of the Iranian hinterland.²²

The table gives an estimate of the numbers of slaves imported into the Persian Gulf region between 1722 and 1902:

	ANNUAL IMPORTS		TOTAL IMPORTS*		% INCREASE
1722-1782	500-600	slaves	30,000-36,000	slaves	0
1782-1842	800-1,000	slaves	48,000-60,000	slaves	60-66
1842-1872	2,000-3,000	slaves	60,000-90,000	slaves	300-400
1872-1902	50-100	slaves	1,500-3,000	slaves	-90-84

* Total imports are equal to the annual imports times the total number of years (e.g., in 1722-1782, 500 slaves \times 60 years)

The annual average number of slaves imported into the Gulf region was approximately 920 to 1,240 slaves. If the importations occurred at every one of the Gulf ports (*ca.* 50), each port may have taken approximately 19 to 25 slaves each year, or 1 to 2 slaves per month. Remembering that the estimates of slave importations dramatically increased between 1722 and 1872, annual importations undoubtedly were greater in the nineteenth than in the eighteenth century, with considerably more impact on Southern Iranian and Persian Gulf societies and economies in the later years. Historians have yet to research the social or political impact of a larger population in a traditionally sparse region, such as the Persian Gulf coasts and immediate hinterland. The effect on land and water usage, both of which were scarce in much of the Gulf region, has not been studied, nor has any research investigated the cultural impact of the nineteenth-century slave trade on the small and closed rural societies of the Gulf.

Although the available data is weak, it is possible to estimate that 80-90 per cent of the imported slaves were transhipped from the Gulf into the Ottoman and Iranian hinterlands. Keeping in mind the illnesses and deaths that occur during the 'middle passage', the 10-20 per cent who survived the 'middle passage' and worked a normal lifetime within the societies of the region represent an insignificant number in comparison to the total population. If 20 per cent of the

overall importations between 1722 and 1902 brought 28,000–38,000 East Africans into the Gulf region, then 4,667 to 6,333 East Africans were living in the region at any one time, given a 30-year age lifetime average for six generations of slaves over 180 years of slave trading. The total population of the Persian Gulf region, which included Southern Iran in the 1722 to 1902 period, varied between 80,000 and 100,000 so that, in any one decade between 1722 and 1902, the East African slave represented on the average no more than 6.3 per cent of the total population.

A number of important questions still remain unanswered. Although the data is weak, some information does exist in a variety of historical sources. From those sources, it is clear that the nineteenth century witnessed a dramatic rise in slave trading into the Persian Gulf region from East Africa by way of the pilgrimage trade from the Red Sea and by way of Oman. The rise was primarily due to the unfreezing of the Iranian and Omani political and social systems in the eighteenth century, and to the vigorous emergence of Persian, Arab, Indian and Turkish merchant capital, land seizures and cash crop/plantation production. Limitations to merchant capital development already existed within the Southern Iranian and Persian Gulf economies. The integration of the economies into the larger Indian Ocean economy that occurred during the same period further limited the growth of domestic capital. Nonetheless, the increased wealth within Iran and Oman between 1722 and 1872 increased the demand for slave labour for the prosperous merchant, landlord and administrator families in the capital cities and regional towns of Southern Iran and the Persian Gulf. Used in many of the same ways as prior to the nineteenth century, slave labour nonetheless also became involved in new fields of activity, such as agricultural labour in cotton fields and date groves, subterranean irrigation construction, and the port and cabotage trade.

The increase in slave trading was, however, a relatively brief episode in Southern Iranian and Persian Gulf history. Following the First World War, Britain's expanded rule in the Persian Gulf region, the emergence of 'modern states' and the movement of European capital towards oil explorations, mining activities and processing industries redirected the demands for regional labour and the allocation of indigenous capital. Not only did new governmental intervention in the region's economies and societies mean that slaves and slave traders were no longer possible. Because of restrictions on merchant capital, and new priorities for the recently-established national economies, they were no longer needed.

NOTES

1. See Tim Niblock, ed., *Social and Economic Development in the Arab Gulf*, New York, 1980; Daniel Pipes, *Slave Soldiers and Islam*, New Haven, 1981; and Ehud R. Toledano, *The Ottoman Slave Trade and Its Suppression: 1840-1890*, Princeton, 1982.
2. See Marvin Entner, *Russo-Persian Commercial Relations, 1828-1914*, Gainesville, Fla., 1965 and Charles Issawi, ed., *The Economic History of Iran, 1800-1914* (Chicago, 1971), pp.50-2.
3. Vahid Nowshirvani, 'The Beginnings of Commercialized Agriculture in Iran', in *The Islamic Middle East, 700-1900: Studies in Economic and Social History*, edited by A.L. Udovitch (Princeton, 1981), pp.547-91.
4. See John R. Perry, *Karim Khan Zand, 1747-1779*, Chicago, 1979 and Thomas M. Ricks, 'Politics and Trade in Southern Iran and the Gulf, 1745-1765', Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, 1975.
5. See Calvin H. Allen, Jr., 'The State of Masqat in the Gulf and East Africa, 1785-1829', *IJMES*, XIV, 2 (May, 1982), pp.117-27.
6. See Ahmad Ashraf and Hamid Hekmat, 'Merchants and Artisans and the Development Processes of Nineteenth-Century Iran', *The Islamic Middle East, 700-1900*, edited by A.L. Udovitch (Princeton, 1981), pp.733-4.
7. See Robert G. Landen, *Oman Since 1856*, Princeton, 1967.
8. Arnold Wilson, *The Persian Gulf* (Oxford, 1929), pp.215-16. See Calvin H. Allen, Jr., 'Sayyids, Shets and Sultans: Politics and Trade in Masqat Under the Al Bu Sa'id, 1785-1914', Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington, Seattle, Wa, 1978.
9. India Office, *Factory Records*, 'Gombroon', Vol.VI, 26 Nov. 1747, p.45. In the India Office, *Factory Records*, 'Letters', Vol.XIV, 22 Dec. 1747, p.567, the EIC agent in Bandar 'Abbas recorded that Baluchi 'runaway slaves' reported the movements of Baluchi tribesmen in that region of the Gulf.
10. India Office, *Factory Records*, 'Letters', Vol.XV, 7 March 1751, p.737.
11. India Office, *Factory Records*, 'Letters', Vol.XVI, William Shaw, Basra, 1 April, 1754 reported that the Dutch East India Company (OIC) was 'going to Masqat to purchase Coffree Slaves'. In India Office, *Factory Records*, 'Gombroon', the EIC agent Wood, Bandar Rig, 26 May, 1756 visited Kharg Island and reported seeing 80 families of Chinese farmers while armed 'Coffree slaves' are posted in each pearl-fishing boat to collect all the oyster shells. He further reported that 'above one hundred Coffree slaves' well-armed, well-fed and housed with African female slaves are used to punish the Arabs or 'country people'. See Abdul Amir Amin, *British Interests in the Persian Gulf* (Leiden, 1967), pp.147-8.
12. The European accounts of 18th- and 19th-century Southern Iran and the Persian Gulf must be handled with care when using them for figures of slave imports. See A.H.M. Sheriff, 'The Slave Mode of Production along the East African coast, 1810-1873' (paper presented at the Conference on Islamic Africa: Slavery and Related Institutions, Princeton University, 1977), p.162 where he enumerates 3,000 slaves sent from Mozambique to the Arabian Peninsula and to the Persian Gulf in the 1770s, and 9,000 slaves from Mozambique to the same region in the 1780s, but, in the 1830s, he notes that 1,200 arrived at Oman and in the Persian Gulf from East Africa. See also C. Issawi, ed., *The Economic History of Iran* (Chicago, 1971), p.125 where he compiles figures for the ten-year period between 1832 and 1842; the average imports into the Gulf ports of Basra and Bushire were 300-400 slaves while the figures were much greater for Oman and the Red Sea (10,000-12,000).
13. See Toledano, *The Ottoman Slave Trade*, p.75 where the author speaks of 'transport dealers' who convey slaves from market to market.
14. Mulla Ali Shah of Bandar 'Abbas (1747-1763) is an excellent example of the administrator-merchant active in buying and selling goods, and, on occasion importing slaves (see India Office, *Factory Records*, 'Gombroon', Vols.VI-VIII).
15. India Office, *Factory Records*, 'Letters', Vol.XVI, 2 July, 1763 copy.

16. India Office, *Persian Gulf Territories*, 'Bushire Letters', R/15, Vol.II, 12 March, 1766, pp.3 and 9-10.
17. Foreign Office, 'Admiralty - Communications: 1777 to 1805', 83/2, p.15. Estimates for taking Basra by Major McCleod, Major Campbell, 'an Engineer in the East India Company's Service', and Capt. Waugh.
18. See the Persian chronicler, Hasan Fasa'i, *History of Persia Under Qajar Rule*, trans. by H. Busse (New York, 1972), p.31 where he states that a female slave worked in the household of Ja'far Khan Zand, the principal ruler in Shiraz in 1789. Again, in 1814, Fasa'i records the story of a 'black slave', the servant of Mir Shams al-Din, who revenged his master's death by killing Mulla Shah Muhammad at the doorway of the 'New Mosque' in Shiraz (p.148); in 1832, the leading notable of Dashtistan and Bushire, Abdul Rasul Khan, the captain (*daryabegi*) of the Iranian fleet at Bushire, was served by a 'black Swahili slave' (p.211), and, in 1834, a black slave named Khosrow was part of the household of Mortaza Quli Khan, the Ilbegi of the Qashqa'i tribe in Fars (p.224).
19. J.A. Saldanha, *The Persian Gulf Précis: Vol.III, Précis on Slave Trade in the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf, 1873-1905* (London, 1986), p.90.
20. *Ibid.*, pp.98-100 and 109.
21. F.O., *Confidential Papers*, 'Persia', No.4337, 23 Nov. 1880 where William Gore Jones states that 'for political reasons, best known to the Indian officials . . . the slave question has been allowed to remain very much in abeyance and our cruisers, acting under the advice of the Political Residents, have refrained from active interference with the Gulf Slave Trade.'
22. In 1851, the British Consul, Keith E. Abbott, reported that, in the southwestern region of Sistan, 'the cultivators of the soil are, for the most part, slaves both black and white' (quoted in Abbass Amanat, ed., *Cities and Trade: Consul Abbott on the Economy and Society of Iran, 1847-1866*, London, 1983, p.172). In 1907, a Russian consul who had served in Sistan wrote: 'In Sistan, they sell slaves, white and black, delivered openly in Baluchistan and other regions. Almost every village headman in Sistan has a male or female slave' (quoted in C. Issawi, *Economic History of Iran*, p.126). See Ghulamhusayn Sa'idi, *Ahl-i Hava* (The People of the Wind) (Tehran, 1344/1965), pp.ix, 5-6, 14, 16 and 23 where his research in the villages of Bandar Lingeh, Bandar Kung and Bandar 'Abbas reveals the extensive East African physical and cultural impact on the region.

The Nile Valley System and the Red Sea Slave Trade 1820–1880

Janet J. Ewald

A journey across the Red Sea, the biblical image of escape from bondage, delivered nineteenth-century Africans into slavery in Egypt and Arabia.¹ Some of these people came from the upper Sudanese Nile valley, territory claimed by Egypt's Ottoman government. Other people fell into captivity in the conquests of imperial Ethiopia. Gathered at the Red Sea ports of the Sudan and Ethiopia, these Africans were embarked for Arabia. They continued to make the Red Sea journeys even as abolitionists intensified their campaign against the slave trade and as the Suez Canal brought the Red Sea more closely into the European economic sphere.²

What sustained the Red Sea slave trade in the nineteenth century? In this paper, I explore how the trade continued through the participation of three groups of people: those drawn into the trade against their will, the slaves; those who trafficked in slaves, buying them in Africa and transporting them across the Red Sea; and those who profited in Arabia from either putting slaves to work or reselling them. The experiences of these three parties to the slave trade remain obscure to various degrees because of the limits of available evidence. This paper thus does not aim at presenting final conclusions. Instead it suggests further questions for research by placing participants in their historical and regional contexts.

Slaves and those exploiting them by sale or labour linked two commercial systems – one based in the Red Sea, the other in the greater Nile valley – each of which flourished in the nineteenth century. The ancient Red Sea trading system enjoyed a revival eventually involving changes in commercial structure and transportation.³ During this revival, older and established Indian merchants lost economic power to new Arab rivals. Many of these new traders found scope for investment in the slave trade. At the same time, the Suez Canal and steamship trade – those supposed harbingers of modernization and, thus, wage labour – created in the cities of the Hijaz a fresh demand for slave labour. And it was the Nile valley system that supplied many of the slaves. Sparked by the 1820 Egyptian invasion of the south, the Nile valley system expanded violently and rapidly to include most of the vast territory that is now the Republic of the Sudan. Nile valley raiders, first government soldiers then bands financed and often led by traders, captured slaves on the moving

frontiers of the Egyptian Sudan. But even people enslaved in Ethiopia, outside the greater Nile valley system, found themselves channelled along Nile valley trade routes to destinations in the Sudan, Egypt, and – for some of them – the Arabian Peninsula and even beyond.

THE SLAVES AND THEIR JOURNEY IN THE GREATER NILE VALLEY

Nineteenth-century Africans were only the most recent of the slaves who travelled from the upper Nile valley to distant markets. From the sixteenth through to the eighteenth centuries, the rulers of Sudanese kingdoms supervised exports of slaves via both overland routes to Egypt and Red Sea crossings to the Arabian Peninsula or other Asian destinations. Some evidence indicates that the Red Sea trade expanded or contracted in inverse proportion to the overland trade to Egypt. In the early nineteenth century, when political instability disrupted overland routes along the Nile valley to Egypt, caravans increasingly headed to Suakin on the Red Sea.⁴

The Red Sea trade continued to prosper, although its Sudanese entrepôts shifted to the south, for perhaps a decade after 1820. In that year the Egyptian Viceroy, seeking slave recruits as well as minerals and trade routes, invaded the Sudan and established over it his conquest regime or *Turkiyya*. During the first years of the *Turkiyya*, some Sudanese seem to have been eager to exchange their gold for non-Egyptian foreign goods. In the Blue Nile market town of al-Masallamiyya, merchants from the Red Sea port of Suakin supplied dollars, Indian cotton, spices, and perfume in return for the gold which they sent to India. The wealthiest merchants of al-Masallamiyya trafficked in slaves as well as gold. But only some of the slaves came from local Sudanese sources. Others originated in the highlands of Ethiopia or entered al-Masallamiyya along established trade routes from the west.⁵ That the al-Masallamiyya merchants traded in high value goods indicates that Ethiopian slaves, who brought higher prices in external markets, probably formed most of their slave inventory.⁶

By the 1830s, however, thousands of newly enslaved Sudanese entered markets in the Turkish Sudan and Egypt. Originating and expanding independently of both the Red Sea and Egyptian commercial networks, a system of slave raiding and trading had become self-sustaining. 'Slavery ever reproduces slavery,' the observation of a later traveller, applied to the Nile valley system from the beginning.⁷ The army that had invaded the Sudan in order to procure slaves soon developed its own voracious appetite for captives. Mortality rates in the Sudanese garrisons were high; moreover, soldiers needed food and provisions. The *Turkiyya* shifted the burden of reproducing its army to the troops themselves. The occupying

forces, increasingly composed of Sudanese slave-recruits, replenished their ranks and supported themselves by their own productive activities: raiding. Long after Muhammad 'Ali had abandoned his plans of filling his Egypt-based army with Sudanese slave-soldiers, his garrisons in the Sudan launched huge annual slave-raiding expeditions or *ghazwas* against the Blue Nile highlands and Nuba hills. In the early years of the Turkiyya, before highland villages had either been depopulated or developed effective defences, these *ghazwas* took perhaps 10,000 captives yearly from the Nuba hills alone.⁸

After the late 1820s, slaves taken in *ghazwas* increasingly passed into the hands of traders rather than into military service. Not all captives were suitable for military recruitment; many were women and children.⁹ Moreover, as soldiers often received the slaves whom they had captured in place of money wages, they sought to convert their booty into currency. Competing with each other as slave vendors, they glutted the market.¹⁰ Inexpensive and plentiful slaves, as well as low tariffs on slaves imported into Egypt and government monopolies over other imports, encouraged Sudanese and Egyptian traders with limited capital resources to engage in the Sudanese slave trade.¹¹ In the 1830s traders, many of them itinerant *jallaba*, brought into Egypt possibly as many as 10,000 to 12,000 Sudanese slaves who represented perhaps two-thirds of all captives.¹²

The overland trade to Egypt and *jallaba* operating on limited capital superseded Red Sea exports and wealthier merchants. Although I have not yet found much information about Sudanese slave exports across the Red Sea, references to Suakin – the only port where a substantial portion of exported slaves originated in the Sudan – indicate that the slaves produced by government soldiers did not cross the Red Sea in large numbers during the first decades of the Turkiyya. In 1840, the French consul at Jidda reported that 500 slaves entered that city from Suakin.¹³ And Suakin's slave trade appears to have declined with an overall decline in slave exports during the 1840s and 1850s. In 1856, Suakin was estimated to supply only 300 of the 8,550 slaves annually imported into the Hijaz and Yemen.¹⁴

By the end of the 1830s, Sudanese slaves no longer entered Egypt in such great numbers. During the 1840s and 1850s, the flow of Sudanese slaves into Egypt decreased to about 5,000 or less annually.¹⁵ The slave influx of the previous decade had satiated the demand for slaves as servants in Egyptian households. Moreover, increasing rural inequality in both Egypt and the northern Sudan created a body of landless peasants who, hiring themselves out cheaply as servants or agricultural labourers, probably filled the demand for labour. Increased tariffs on imported slaves after 1842 and a ban on slave imports in 1852 made the trade more difficult for small traders.¹⁶ And the massive annual *ghazwas* in

the Sudan gradually came to an end between 1845 and 1850. Soldiers no longer supplied cheap slaves for traders.

Although the government ghazwas ended, people continued to fall victim to slave raiders. The ghazwas had created their own replacements. As early as 1825 herders in the central Sudan had used their hunting and cavalry skills to capture slaves, often joining the ghazwas as ancillaries or irregulars.¹⁷ As the large-scale, cumbersome ghazwas became less productive, the government demanded slaves as tribute from herders. Pastoralists throughout the central Sudan, including those who lived on the plains along the trade routes to the Red Sea, raided for slaves. Some slaves they handed over to the government, others they sold to traders. By the early 1840s, the Rufa 'a pastoralists, who pastured their cattle between the Dinder river and the Blue Nile, integrated raiding and trading into their seasonal transhumance. Neighbouring Shukriyya pastoralists likewise sold their captives to merchants on the Blue Nile.¹⁸

Men and women captured in the greater Nile valley increasingly laboured in the Turkish Sudan rather than Egypt. Partly because of the closing of external markets for slaves, both herders and farmers on the rainlands of the central Sudan began themselves to exploit slave labour. In the middle years of the Turkiyya, from about 1840 to 1860, slaves became essential to production in the central Sudan. In addition to cultivating crops, slaves dug and maintained wells and water storage tanks especially on the clay plains and alluvial fields along seasonal streams. On the plains near the Nuba hills, herders opened new lands for farming by putting slaves to work at water storage tanks and then on the fields.¹⁹ In 1852 along the route from Kassala to Suakin, one traveller noted 'black men' working and 'naked men' singing as they filled water tanks in a dry streambed.²⁰ The food that slaves produced not only fed herders, but supported the new towns of the central rainlands. By the early 1860s, Shukriyya grain – probably grown by slaves – supplied Khartoum.²¹ Slave labour in agriculture thus allowed pastoralist slave masters to engage more intensely in their favoured activities of herding, raiding, and trading.

Slaves who worked in fields and households unknowingly and indirectly reproduced slavery, helping to build commercial networks in the central Sudanese rainlands. The transhumance paths of slave-owning herders became trade routes. On these routes both from the Nuba hills to the White Nile and from the Blue Nile to the Red Sea, herders' settlements became market centres. Perhaps the largest of these market settlements was Suq Abu Sin, also known as Qadarif after its province, on the way from the Blue Nile hills to the two Red Sea ports of Suakin and Massawa. The Shukriyya shaykh Ahmad Abu Sin, whose raiders sold slaves to Sinnar merchants in the 1840s, had allied himself with the Turkiyya and in return had received from the government tracts

of land between the Rahad river and the Atbara. The settlement where he lived became a trade centre named after him: Suq (Arabic, 'market') Abu Sin.²²

Increasing commercialization in the central Sudan provided capital for expansion further south, and increasing stratification in the northern Sudanese river valley impelled both prosperous merchants and landless farmers to seek their fortunes in the south. From the plains surrounding the Nuba hills, traders and herders looked to the upper White Nile. From the area between the Blue Nile and the Red Sea, they turned to the gold-producing headwaters of the Blue Nile known as the *Sa'id*. Located on the Sudan-Ethiopia hinterlands, the *Sa'id* flourished during the Turkiyya as a free transit and trade zone where merchants exchanged gold for salt. Sudanese and Ethiopian traders entered the *Sa'id* by way of Qallabat on the Sudanese border. They brought not only rock salt from the Eritrean coast, which served as the main currency of Ethiopia, but also cloth and beads. In return they carried back gold, ivory, cattle and other livestock, honey, coffee, civet, musk – and slaves.²³ At Qallabat, too, herders from as far west as Kordofan bought the horses that made them effective hunters and feared raiders.²⁴

Immigrant Sudanese traders in the *Sa'id* became merchant-shaykhs who both controlled trade and interfered with local production of food and gold. Forcing local people to work in gold fields, the merchant-shaykhs prevented them from devoting time to their fields. The resulting decline in food production made it necessary for villages of the *Sa'id* to buy grain that the merchant-shaykhs imported from the central rainlands.²⁵ Labouring in central rainland fields, slaves perhaps produced that grain.

Slaves from new slave-raiding grounds along the Blue and White Niles flooded into the towns of the central rainlands after about 1860. That year, observers in Khartoum reported an influx of slaves from the White Nile.²⁶ Four years later they reported that the slave trade in captives from the White Nile exceeded that of any previous year.²⁷ In 1866, British sources noted an increase in the flow of slaves from the Blue Nile hinterland. Although the White Nile continued as the main source of slaves, captives from the Ethiopian Blue Nile entered the Sudan at Matamma near Qallabat. In 1865 on a journey from Qallabat to Qadarif, the German traveller Georg Schweinfurth reported seeing gangs of slaves crossing the Gendua River, on their way to Matamma.²⁸ In the next year, as many as 10,000 slaves may have entered Egyptian-governed territory from Ethiopia at Matamma.²⁹ Ethiopian customs collectors themselves reported that 18,000 slaves passed through Matamma in 1865.³⁰

Through most of the 1860s, more slaves travelled on the overland routes to Egypt than across the Red Sea to Arabia. The influx of slaves

from the White and Blue Niles coincided with a renewed demand for slaves in Egypt. The enormously expanded Egyptian cotton cultivation during the American Civil War needed fast inputs of new labour. According to some estimates, slave imports in the 1860s may have reached 25,000 to 30,000 annually.³¹ Even if exaggerated, these figures nonetheless indicate a substantial increase over the 5,000 or fewer slaves judged to have entered Egypt in the 1840s and 1850s.

Although less important than the Egyptian trade, commerce along the Nile valley system to the Red Sea also increased. Merchants not only from Cairo, but also from Suakin and Massawa, bought White Nile captives in Khartoum's slave market in 1864.³² The route from Matamma to the Red Sea ports, which crossed Shukriyya territory, rose to special prominence. The increasing security of communications after 1860 resulted in a brisk trade between the Blue Nile, Qallabat (Matamma), Qadarif, Kassala and the Red Sea.³³ Local port conditions determined whether the slaves proceeded from Kassala to either Massawa or Suakin. In 1863, traders preferred to send their Ethiopian slaves to Suakin rather than Massawa.³⁴ Two years later, the slave traffic at Massawa and Suakin was substantial enough to allow the Khedive Isma'il to wrest control of those ports from the Ottoman Sultan on the basis of his promises to suppress the slave exports. But, as in other parts of the Turkish Sudan, official promises did little to end the traffic. Greater numbers of slaves probably travelled to the Red Sea ports. It appears exaggerated to assert, as a British observer did, that as many slaves – perhaps some 10–15,000 – went to Suakin as travelled to Cairo down the Nile river in 1867.³⁵ Yet this statement does express a sense that the Red Sea slave trade increased as the supply of slaves grew.

In the 1860s, slavery began to reproduce slavery along yet another slave raiding and trading frontier. Merchants and their private armies, composed of slaves as well as northern river valley mercenaries, expanded along the western tributary system of the White Nile, the Bahr al-Ghazal. This region south of Kordofan and Dar Fur replaced the White Nile – which itself had replaced the Blue Nile highlands and Nuba hills – as the main source of slaves for the Nile valley system. Some of the slaves never left the Bahr al-Ghazal but were absorbed into the *zaribas*, large fortified communities whose economic and social life depended on slavery. Other slaves – perhaps some 12,000 to 14,000 in 1871 – left the Bahr al-Ghazal.³⁶

Captives from the new Bahr al-Ghazal sources formed one of two streams of the slaves, often converging in entrepôts on or east of the Nile, who moved along greater Nile valley routes toward the Red Sea ports. From the Bahr al-Ghazal, slaves trekked north to Kordofan. There they divided into two branches, one leading further north to Berber and

the other proceeding east to al-Massallamiyya. From al-Massallamiyya slaves sometimes went directly east or northeast to the Red Sea and sometimes north, to the markets of Khartoum and Berber. Slaves who entered Berber by any route often then crossed due east to the Red Sea.³⁷ The second stream of slaves originated not in the Nile valley system but in the western part of Galla country in Ethiopia. (In eastern Galla country, slaves passed through Shoa to the Danakil coast or Gulf of Aden.) Some Ethiopian slaves followed a route leading directly through the Sa'id to Fazogli on the Sudanese Blue Nile and thence to al-Massallamiyya. Another Nile valley route took slaves into the Sudan at Matamma or Qallabat, and thence to the Red Sea ports of Suakin or Massawa.³⁸ At Massawa, Sudanese Arab traders joined the Ethiopian Muslim and Christian merchants who had brought slaves along other, older routes.³⁹ The Matamma-Qadarif-Kassala route which had become active in the 1860s flourished in the 1870s.⁴⁰ Passing through the rich, slave-cultivated fields of the Shukriyya, it offered the best watered route leading to both Suakin and Massawa.⁴¹

What impact did the Bahr al-Ghazal slaves, the unwilling products of the last great expansion of the Nile valley system, have on the Red Sea slave trade? Almost certainly, the substantial number of newly captured slaves contributed to a larger pool of potential slave exports. But we do not yet know whether, much less to what extent, the number of slaves crossing the Red Sea increased because of the opening of new slave raiding grounds in the southern Sudan. Statistics do not yet tell us how many of the slaves embarking from Suakin and Massawa came from the southern Sudan, and how many from Ethiopia; moreover, estimates for exports from the African Red Sea coast and imports in the west Arabian ports remain extremely problematic. We do not possess the most reliable statistics, customs records, because slave traders operated clandestinely – often with the collusion of authorities.⁴² European observers both occasionally sighted certain numbers of slaves, or people they believed to be slaves, and ventured extrapolations of the likely dimensions of the trade. Sightings probably reflect only a portion of slaves; more slaves would be successfully hidden. On the other hand, many extrapolations seem to be groundless exaggerations.

The resulting wide fluctuation of estimates over even a narrow time period makes it all the more difficult to suggest long-term trends. One report, for example, estimated that only 300 slaves left Suakin in 1856.⁴³ In 1859, another report related that between 1,000 and 1,500 slaves left that port.⁴⁴ In the 1860s, Suakin's exports were said to be negligible.⁴⁵ But in March, 1878, an official observer saw 2,000 to 3,000 Africans encamped outside the port. The observer estimated that only about 1,000 of these people could be engaged in Suakin's legal trade; the remaining 1,000–2,000 were probably slaves and agents.⁴⁶

Estimates of the numbers of slaves arriving in the Arabian peninsula during the 1870s alone fluctuated even more drastically, from 1,500 to 30,000 people imported annually.⁴⁷ Other figures ranged between those two extremes, estimating that from 2,000 to 20,000 or 25,000 slaves entered the western ports of Arabia, with perhaps 3,000 disembarking at Jidda or its vicinity.⁴⁸ Figures at either end of the scale of estimates appear inaccurate. Observers at the time doubted that as many as 30,000 slaves entered Arabia's Red Sea ports in a year.⁴⁹ But the official who, from his inspection of the African coast, estimated that 2,000 slaves were sent to Arabia himself suggested that figure as a minimum. He mentioned reports from Arabia in 1878 pointing to many more than 2,000 slaves arriving annually from both the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.⁵⁰ Actual sightings also indicate that more than 1,500 or 2,000 slaves arrived. The British Consul based his over-estimation of 30,000 slaves imported annually on 1,500 slaves whom he actually saw, apparently during a short time, in Mecca alone.⁵¹ In Hodeida, along with Jidda a major port for slave entry, officers estimated that they saw between 700 and several thousands of newly arrived slaves at one time.⁵² Other observers reported that during two periods of one month each, in different years, more than 700 slaves entered Jidda. Over 700 slaves in the first instance, as well as 300 slaves in the second, came from a single Red Sea port, Suakin.⁵³

Only future research will permit firm quantitative links between the cycles of the greater Nile valley system and the Red Sea slave trade. That research may yield more, and more reliable, import and export statistics. In addition, we may gain knowledge about the Red Sea slave trade that will enable us more accurately to interpret available statistics. The figure of 700 slaves entering Jidda in the month of March, for example, would assume more meaning in the context of the trade's possible seasonality. Did more or fewer slaves make the crossing in that month? Did the trade vary according to maritime or other conditions? More information on the structure of the trade will enlighten us about the frustrating fluctuations of the statistics. It is possible that the trade, perhaps because of the flow of information and relative ease of travel across the Red Sea, was so sensitive to certain market or other conditions that the extreme range of statistics over short periods reflects real variations instead of inaccurate reporting.

Whether slaves from the Sudan, or travelling along Sudanese Nile valley routes, crossed the Red Sea may have depended in part on changes in the flow of slaves from other parts of north and east Africa. In the 1850s, the Swahili coast sent substantial numbers of slaves to the Red Sea as well as to South Arabia and the Persian Gulf.⁵⁴ After 1873, however, British ships successfully blocked the sea routes exporting slaves from Zanzibar. By 1876, neither Zanzibar nor the southern Somali coast sent

slaves into the Red Sea.⁵⁵ Given the increase in the supply of slaves in the greater Nile valley, the ports of Suakin and Massawa possibly sent more slaves in order to compensate Arabia for the loss of slaves from the Somali and Swahili coasts. While Arabia may have demanded more slaves from Red Sea ports, the Egyptian market for Nile valley slaves declined. Although we await future work on Egyptian slave imports, fewer slaves appear to have travelled to Egypt after the end of the cotton boom. In the 1870s, according to one estimate, Egypt's slave imports decreased to 4,000 annually.⁵⁶ Further research might ask whether slaves who would have gone to Egypt went to Arabia instead, or whether they never left the Sudan.

THE TRADERS AND THE RED SEA CROSSING

We do not yet know whether the decline of Egyptian slave imports made Arabia an alternate market for slaves; however, evidence suggests that the increasing expense of Egyptian commerce made the Red Sea trade a profitable area of investment for small traders. The costs of exporting slaves to Egypt rose steadily after 1840. Slave traders first faced higher tariffs, then a series of legal obstacles that impeded the slave trade for merchants who could not call on government allies. Itinerant jallaba with modest capital resources flocked to the zaribas in the Bahr al-Ghazal; but they probably no longer found opportunities in the Egypt-Sudan slave trade as their counterparts had in the first two decades of the Turkiyya. Instead by the 1860s and 1870s merchants with extensive organizations, close ties to the Egyptian government, and investments in finance and real estate dominated the Sudan-Egypt trade. The commercial house of the al-Aqqad family, for example, maintained branches in both Khartoum and Cairo where its prominent merchants also became officials in the Turkiyya. In the 1860s, the house financed the boats and zaribas that moved the slave raiding frontier down the White Nile and along the Bahr al-Ghazal. In Khartoum, a member of the al-Aqqad family loaned money to the Governor; in Egypt, the family increasingly invested in landed property.⁵⁷

Dominated by wealthy merchants who moved their capital among large-scale and highly profitable ventures, the export trade to Egypt probably offered little prospect for slave traders involved in less lucrative, smaller-scale exchanges. In the local and regional trade of the southern riverain savanna, some of these traders nonetheless expanded and enriched themselves, surpassing in this realm even the al-'Aqqad firm.⁵⁸ Other Sudanese and Arab traders applied their limited amounts of capital to the export of slaves via the Red Sea. In the 1870s the Red Sea slave traffic demanded, like the overland Egypt-Sudan slave trade in the 1830s, fairly minimal investment. Traders did not have to pay

much for the goods that they exchanged for slaves. Cloth, in particular, was cheap. Sometimes merchants imported Manchester cloth directly into Jidda where, with the cooperation of the customs officials, they avoided paying duties. The Jidda-based traders then re-exported the cloth to the Red Sea coast of the Sudan. Again, they paid no duties. From the coast, the cloth travelled to agents of the Jidda merchants who stationed themselves in the commercial towns of the rainland and riverain Sudan: al-Ubayyid in the western rainlands; Berber and Shendi above the confluence of the two Niles; Khartoum at the confluence; Qallabat and Kassala in the eastern rainlands.⁵⁹ There the cloth entered the hands of petty traders. Trekking south these jallaba exchanged a few bolts of cloth for two or three slaves, victims of that new wave of raiding in the Nile valley system.⁶⁰

Moving the slaves back along the greater Nile valley routes to the Red Sea ports also posed few great expenses. Unlike inanimate goods, slaves forced to march moved themselves. The costs of food and maintenance also remained low if a trading agent travelled with only a few slaves. Sometimes, one man accompanied only two slaves. Seldom did an agent convey more than twenty slaves, although occasionally traders banded together in groups of 50 to 100 for protection.⁶¹

Traders also sent slaves cheaply across the Red Sea. The maritime crossing did not require traders to buy and equip special vessels, or invest in extra supplies for slaves. Few boats specialized in the slave trade.⁶² Instead shipowners added carrying slaves to their primary occupations of transporting salt or fishing for mother-of-pearl, activities that took them near the ports of Suakin and Massawa.⁶³ Just north of Suakin lay the salt flats of Cape Ruwaya, while the islands off Massawa were bases for pearl fishing. The pearl-fishing boats in particular already possessed the facilities for transporting slaves. They routinely carried provisions and water casks to sustain divers who sometimes stayed for several days on a rich pearl-fishing bank.⁶⁴ The short length of the Red Sea voyage also reduced the need for supplies; slaves and crew did not require food very long. One boat embarked from the vicinity of Suakin and arrived in Jidda, a distance of about 170 miles, in under 24 hours.⁶⁵ Overnight journeys also took slaves from other parts of the African coast to Arabia.⁶⁶ As in the overland trip, traders kept costs and risks down by often embarking small numbers of slaves. Parties of only six to 20 slaves embarked on some of the smaller pearl-fishing boats.⁶⁷ Other boats carried more slaves: from perhaps 70 to as many as 300.⁶⁸

Leaving Africa from several different points, the boats tended to converge at a few ports on the Arabian coast.⁶⁹ Most slaves who had embarked on the coast along Suakin usually went to Jidda, while those from the vicinity of Massawa often sailed to Hodeidah and other Yemeni ports.⁷⁰

Both the sea crossings and the landings in Arabia evaded the official anti-slave trade measures as they grew stricter in the 1870s. Maritime conditions of the Red Sea aided the slave trading boats. The islands of the Red Sea, centres for pearl fishing, served to harbour slaves who were then sent on to the Arabian coast.⁷¹ Boats manned by knowledgeable local sailors also took refuge inside the shoals running parallel to the coast. These shoals, as well as dangerous winds and currents, posed dangers for the British ships sent to patrol the Red Sea.⁷² That the Red Sea slave boats were both numerous and indistinguishable from ordinary fishing or trading boats, also helped them escape the surveillance of the British ships. Officers probably found it impractical to detain and search very many of the ordinary boats cruising along the shore that fell under suspicion of carrying slaves.

Lading and landing took place clandestinely. European agents tried to supervise the main ports; but small boats, able to take on cargo at many points on the coast, seldom left the harbours of Suakin and Massawa with slaves. Instead, they would leave the harbour with ballast. Then they doubled back to points on the coast, pre-arranged with the agents and traders, where they picked up slaves.⁷³ On the Arabian coast, the boats similarly evaded hostile notice. Since about 1860, slave boats landed not in the Jidda harbour but in isolated spots along the coast during the night.⁷⁴ Some slaves set off from their coastal embarkation directly on the overland trip to Mecca.⁷⁵ Small groups of slaves also entered Jidda. There, they often went to private houses, especially after 1874 when the local authorities, under pressure from a British consul to enforce the decree banning slave imports in Ottoman-controlled ports, closed the slave market in Jidda.⁷⁶

Who were the traders participating in the various stages of the Red Sea slave trade? On the slave-raiding frontiers of the Nile valley system, many *jallaba* came from the northern riverain Sudan. Agricultural depression and growing rural inequality had forced them out of their homelands.⁷⁷ The identities of trade agents in the market towns of the central Sudan remain an enigma. Isolated information in the available records reveals that at least one Jidda resident and trader, named 'Abd al-Rahman 'Yebair', journeyed to the markets of Kassala and Qallabat.⁷⁸ At Suakin two traders of apparently Hadrami origin engaged in the wholesale trade. Other slave dealers at Suakin were 'Egyptian subjects', perhaps local Sudanese men as well as Egyptians, or came from Jidda. One important trader bore the name 'Mughraby', perhaps indicating Moroccan origin.⁷⁹ Some Sudanese traders accompanied slaves from Suakin to Jidda and even Mecca; at least one maintained a house in Jidda. At that port in March, 1878, authorities seized 15 enslaved children, most of them from the southern Sudan, at a house belonging to one Suakin trader. Another Suakin trader, discovered in the same house,

had brought over 12 of the children from the African port. The children belonged to a much larger group of slaves in Jidda whom authorities could not seize. They blamed their failure on Hajj Musa al-Baghdadi.⁸⁰ Persian-born, Hajj Musa was perhaps the wealthiest of the six slave dealers and 14 brokers who lived in Mecca.⁸¹ A little over one year later, the two Suakin traders along with another pair of their countrymen again were arrested for bringing 38 slaves, mostly children, from Suakin.⁸²

At ports on both sides of the Red Sea, the slave traffic attracted merchants from the Sudan, Arabia, and elsewhere who probably commanded relatively modest capital resources. These were men who had entered the revived nineteenth-century Red Sea commerce, both depending on and competing with the more established and wealthier Indian merchants who dominated the area's export trade. The sources of slaves and trade networks of the Nile valley system enriched these new traders; however, their rise had begun earlier as a part of general shifts in the Indian Ocean-Red Sea trade.

Traders from South Arabia gained particular prominence in the nineteenth century. Based on the south-eastern corner of the Arabian Peninsula, Omani Arab commerce flourished from the mid-eighteenth century. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, Omani ships sailed the routes to India, the East African coast, and Arabia.⁸³ From the Red Sea, Arab boats based both in the Omani port of Muscat and in Jidda carried increasing proportions of the export cargo. Often, capital from Indian commercial houses funded the Arab boats.⁸⁴ Even after Omani commerce declined in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean in the mid-nineteenth century, Arab commercial activity grew in the Hijaz and Red Sea ports. By the 1880s, Hadramawti emigrants from south Arabia competed with Indian merchants as money-lenders in Mecca.⁸⁵ And in Suakin at the end of the century, Arabs from Jidda and the Hadramawt commanded more wealth than the Egyptian, Sudanese, Ethiopian, or Indian townsmen.⁸⁶

Arab traders owed their prosperity in part to the policies of Ottoman and Arab authorities that favoured local traders over the Indian merchants. In 1858, for example, an official monopoly over Jidda's valuable salt exports went to a local resident, making it extremely difficult for Indian merchants to obtain a return cargo for their boats.⁸⁷ Four years later, the Ottoman government prohibited the importation of Indian tobacco into Turkish ports on the Red Sea.⁸⁸ And in the 1870s Indian traders in Aden complained that official policies had aided Arab merchants on the Somali coast to the detriment of their Indian counterparts.⁸⁹ British attempts to protect their Indian subjects aroused local resistance. British authorities, acting on behalf of an Indian ship-owner, seized a boat that had hoisted the Turkish flag in place of its Union Jack. Hadramawti and other Arab residents of Jidda responded by attacking

Europeans and European protégés, as well as the warehouses where Indian goods lay in storage.⁹⁰

The new group of Arab traders gained their initial capital through trade within and among the lands of the Red Sea.⁹¹ The Hadramawtis who became financiers in Mecca, for example, often began their careers in the portage business on the overland routes between Jidda and Mecca.⁹² On the maritime Red Sea routes, Arab-owned boats had always carried cargoes.⁹³ As slaves became more available, thanks to the greater Nile valley system, Arab boat-owners found them a relatively cheap and risk-free investment. If the boat-owners did not profit from selling the slaves, they might put them to work on the boats. Almost all of the Arab slave traders in Jidda owned sailboats that plied the Red Sea.⁹⁴

The Arab boat-owners and other traders often used as sources of capital the very Indian merchants whom they eventually superseded. One Gujarati merchant, for example, bought most of the produce of the pearl-fishing boats that employed slaves and himself fell under suspicion of slave dealing.⁹⁵ Slave dealers sometimes bought from Indian merchants in Jidda the goods they used in purchasing slaves.⁹⁶ Other Arabs entered business first as agents for or employees of Indian merchants, then traded African slaves on their own accounts. Local traders found this field of commerce relatively open. Indian merchants who sought to stay in the good graces of their British protectors needed to avoid too blatant participation in the slave trade. In 1858 a certain Ali Ba-Genit, apparently a Hadramawti, acted as an agent for 'Farah Gesser' who was 'the first merchant at Jeddah' and – as a British subject – was probably an Indian. Stationed in Massawa, Ali Ba-Genit sent at least three Ethiopian slaves to their owner, his brother Muhammad Ba-Genit, in Jidda.⁹⁷

THE PROFITEERS IN ARABIA

In Arabia, slaves offered two kinds of profits; they could be exploited through sale and labour. Some slaves were sold to new masters in the Hijaz for whom they went to work. Other slaves discovered that their sea voyages had not yet ended. At Arabia's Red Sea ports they again boarded ships – but this time, steamships rather than sailboats – for other, more distant destinations. While the names of the dealers who sold slaves sometimes entered European records, the identities of masters who exploited slave labour remain largely unknown. But both types of profiteers aggrandized themselves as the Hijaz grew increasingly commercialized.

Slaves offered new kinds of profits as the economy of the western Arabian peninsula became more closely linked to wider commercial

networks. The Suez Canal allowed a more efficient mode of ocean transport, steamships, to enter the Red Sea from the Mediterranean in addition to established routes from the Indian Ocean. These steamships carried commodities, Muslim pilgrims, and slaves. Some masters, whether the traders who had brought slaves over from Africa or new masters who had purchased slaves in Arabia, enriched themselves by re-exporting their slaves on these steamships. Other masters used their slaves to produce export commodities or to service both pilgrims and the new means of transport.

Seldom did steamers carry slaves from the African to the Arabian coast of the Red Sea. This crossing remained the domain of local sailing ships.⁹⁸ But by 1864, a newly active Egyptian-owned steamship line began to transport slaves from the southern Red Sea coasts north to Egypt. In 1865, some steamers stopping at the African ports of the Red Sea picked up slaves and conveyed them directly to Suez. This steamship slave traffic seems to have grown more important by the late 1870s, perhaps with the development of Suakin and Massawa as slave markets.⁹⁹

The Hijaz and Yemen also became centres of a steamship-borne transit slave trade, as African slaves disembarked from sailing boats and re-embarked on steamers for the Mediterranean or Indian Ocean. In 1864, during a probable period of increase in Egyptian slave imports, the British Consul at Jidda reported that local boats previously had taken newly arrived slaves from the vicinity of Jidda to Suez. But at the time of his writing, the transit trade in slaves had gained greater impetus, partly because a line of Egyptian steamers were now carrying slaves from Jidda to Egypt. Each of these Suez-bound steamers reportedly took slaves, many of them children, as deck passengers. Local officials in both ports cooperated. Jidda authorities presumably received payments for the slaves who passed through the customs house. They also gave – for a price – papers of emancipation to the slave merchants who then claimed to the consul that their slaves had been liberated.¹⁰⁰ On this pretext, one steamship reportedly carried several hundred slaves from Jidda to Suez; another took a batch of 50 to 60 slaves.¹⁰¹ By 1869, perhaps 500 or 600 of some estimated 2,000 to 2,500 slaves entering Jidda continued on to Egypt via steamships owned by an Egyptian company.¹⁰²

The destination of Red Sea slaves moved beyond the northern coast of the Red Sea in the 1870s as Egypt imported fewer slaves, transport improved, and East African sources of slaves closed. After the Suez canal linked the Mediterranean with the Red Sea, a steamship could travel directly from Jidda to Constantinople. And some of these steamers, owned by British and Austrian companies, carried slaves.¹⁰³ An unknown number of slaves from the Red Sea trade also finished their journey in South Arabia or the Persian Gulf. Steamships probably began to carry slaves south out of the Red Sea after 1873, when

Zanzibar and nearby slave ports no longer supplied south-western Asia. In 1877, a British official felt almost certain that an Austrian steamer had disembarked slaves at two Persian Gulf ports. His suspicions aroused, he ordered searches of two British-flagged steamships in Muscat and Bushire. One boat was found to be carrying seven slaves, three of them children and all of whom had crossed from Suakin to Jidda where they re-embarked on the steamer. The other boat had on board 12 slaves. The free passengers on the boats were pilgrims returning from Mecca.¹⁰⁴

The probably increasing numbers of pilgrims carried by steamships further stimulated the maritime slave trade out of the Red Sea. Nineteenth-century pilgrims continued the practice of buying and selling goods, including slaves, to finance or profit from their journeys.¹⁰⁵ And those journeys increasingly took place on steamships. In 1878, 19 steamboats waited in the Jidda harbour, ready to board from 400 to over 2,000 pilgrims each.¹⁰⁶ Seeking to defray their steamship expenses in the 1870s, some pilgrims purchased slaves in Mecca or Jidda and turned them over to the ship's captain and crew.¹⁰⁷ Other pilgrims took slaves away with them from the Hijaz to use themselves, give as presents, or sell in markets in their homelands. Buyers in Constantinople took the opportunity of steamers carrying pilgrims home to have their agents forward slaves from Jidda.¹⁰⁸ Boats returning from the pilgrimage thus carried slaves – most of them newly imported into the Hijaz – to Egypt, Turkey, Persia and India.¹⁰⁹ It is difficult to estimate the extent of this re-export trade out of the Red Sea. Perhaps hundreds of slaves, wrote the British consul at Jidda, left the port with Persian pilgrims in 1881.¹¹⁰ Pilgrims bought enough slaves to influence the structure of the Jidda market, for the time of greatest demand for slaves occurred during the annual pilgrimage.¹¹¹

Even masters who did not re-sell their slaves, but kept them in the Hijaz or Yemen, often exploited slaves for commercial ends. Denying that most slaves in the Hijaz were bought for 'domestic purposes', a British consul in Jidda maintained that masters purchased slaves in order to make cash profits. Masters sent their slaves out on the labour market, collecting the five, eight, or ten piastres that their bondsmen earned.¹¹² Other masters used slaves to produce commodities for the market. As slaves produced grain in the Sudan, so too slaves worked on Hijazi date gardens and Yemeni coffee plantations.¹¹³ Perhaps stimulated by an increased European market for mother-of-pearl, pearl fisheries became one of the main Red Sea consumers of slaves in the nineteenth century.¹¹⁴ Arab masters of pearl-fishing boats not only transported slaves, but also exploited them as divers and crewmen.¹¹⁵ One boat owner and pearl fisher used ten male slaves, between the ages of ten and 24, as divers on one of his boats. The boat master and at least one of the crewmen were the owner's ex-slaves.¹¹⁶

The increased pilgrimage and steamship traffic itself created new demands for slave labour in the Hijaz. In Mecca, local inhabitants gained much income from renting parts of their own houses to pilgrims. An influx of pilgrims perhaps resulted in the local building boom, as well as architectural innovations, as people built new houses and added on to their old ones. Slaves quarried stone, mixed the cement that was coming into greater use, and put up the buildings.¹¹⁷ In Jidda, the topography of the Arabian Red Sea coast perhaps required a great deal of labour to accommodate the new steamship traffic. Navigators relied on man-made markers to guide them into the complicated patterns of channels between the shoals and sunken rocks.¹¹⁸ Slaves may have performed the work of piling up the stones for markers. Certainly slaves, including a young man named Murjan, loaded boats in the Jidda harbour with cargo, passengers, and ballast.¹¹⁹ In addition to labour that directly served pilgrims and steamboats, slaves probably performed the many other tasks that supported both the cities' inhabitants and visitors. Faraj, a young slave in Jidda, for example, worked at a local flour mill.¹²⁰ Like many of the slaves who built houses or did heavy labour in Mecca, Faraj and Murjan had been enslaved on the raiding and trading frontier of the greater Nile valley system.¹²¹

* * *

Enslaved Africans making the Red Sea passage in the late nineteenth century testify to the tenacity of slavery in modern times. Why did slavery, often considered an expensive form of labour, continue into the age of the steamship? Some answers have begun to emerge by retracing the stages in the Africans' journey into bondage.

Cycles of extreme violence and coercion, rather than high profits, sustained slave raiding and trading. People falling into slavery bore the most brutal form of violence in the Nile valley system. But coercion also impelled some men to capture slaves and others to trade them. Armed men – often slave soldiers, first commanded by officers of the Turkiyya then by private merchants – sought not great wealth but a means of survival by raiding slaves. These slaves then passed into the hands of itinerant jallaba who carried their small stocks of trade goods to the slave-raiding frontiers because they could not make a living in their northern river valley homelands. The jallaba, in turn, handed slaves over to the agents of merchants who were challenging Indian dominance in Arabia's commerce. Looking for a branch of that commerce not requiring large capital outlays, these predominantly Arab merchants funded the passage of cheaply purchased slaves across the Red Sea. Once in Arabia, the slaves worked in an increasingly commercialized economy or re-embarked on steamships taking them to other destinations.

This narrative suggests several insights about the tenacity of slavery in this part of the world. First, slave raiding and trading financed

themselves in the greater Nile valley. Slave labour on plantations or in other productive activities did not generate large amounts of capital that merchants re-invested in a quest for new slaves. Instead soldiers produced slaves cheaply, and jallaba transported them, independently of a great demand for productive slave labour. The cities of the Hijaz then availed themselves of this new source of imported labour.

Slavery thus did not exist simply as an isolated economic venture, a result of the profits to be made from slave labour. Nor did the Red Sea slave trade continue because of any supposed inherent and universal bias toward slavery in Islamic societies. Rather, the slave trade in this part of the world endured because of a combination of economic, social, and political dynamics: the conditions of the Turkiyya in the Sudanese Nile valley; the rise of Arab traders in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean; and, although this remains obscure, the relationship of slavery to other forms of labour in the Arabian Peninsula. A very specific set of regional and local contexts thus sustained slavery. Elsewhere in this volume Jwaideh and Cox have argued that we must study slavery not in terms of some 'abstract model of Islamic slavery', but rather as a manifestation of the various local cultures forming part of the Islamic world. That slaves in the cities of the Hijaz led very different lives than slaves in the Bedouin societies studied by Jwaideh and Cox reinforces their argument, adding the point that particular political and economic relations – as well as distinctive cultural characteristics – also shaped slavery.

NOTES

1. This paper does not discuss the slave trade in the Gulf of Aden, outside the Straits of Perim (Bab al-Mandab).
2. For abolition attempts, see Suzanne Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade* (New York, 1975), esp. pp.40–117; Ehud T. Toledano, *The Ottoman Slave Trade and Its Suppression* (Princeton, 1982), pp.91–147, 192–278; William Ochsenwald, 'Muslim-European conflict in the Hijaz: The Slave Trade Controversy, 1840–1895', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 16:1 (1980), 115–126.
3. Mordecai Abir, 'The Ethiopian Slave Trade and Its Relation to the Islamic World', *Slaves and Slavery In Muslim Africa, Volume Two: The Servile Estate*, John Ralph Willis, ed. (Cass, London and Totowa, New Jersey, 1985), p.128.
4. R.S. O'Fahey and J.L. Spaulding, *Kingdoms of the Sudan* (London, 1974), p.79. For a description of the trade between the northern river valley market of Shendi and Suakin, see John Lewis Burckhardt, *Travels in Nubia*, second edition (London, 1822), pp.262, 269, 276, 285.
5. Lord Prudhoe, 'Extracts from a Trip to Sennar', *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, 5 (1835), 45–7.
6. Before the Egyptian conquest, Ethiopian slaves represented the highest – and presumably the most expensive – class of slaves. Burckhardt, *Travels*, p.278.
7. Georg Schweinfurth, *The Heart of Africa: Three Years' Travels and Adventures in the Unexplored Regions of Central Africa from 1868 to 1871*, 2 vols. (London, 1873), 2:416.
8. John Bowring, 'Report on Egypt and Candia', *Parliamentary Papers*, 21 (1840), 88, 90. Ignatius Pallme, *Travels in Kordofan* (London, 1844), pp.306–7.

9. In the late 1830s, for example, one ghazwa captured 2,187 slaves; but only 50 of them were suitable for military recruitment. Bowring, 'Report', 83.
10. Pallme, *Travels*, pp.205–6, 271, 324–5. Bowring, 'Report', 84. Joseph Russegger, *Reisen in Europa, Asien, und Afrika: Band 2, Reise in Egypten, Nubien, und Ost-Sudan, Theil 2, Reise in Ost-Sudan* (Stuttgart, 1843), p.164. Arthur T. Holroyd, 'Notes on a Journey to Kordofan in 1836–7', *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, 9 (1839), 177.
11. For the Egyptian end of the slave trade, see Terence Walz, *Trade Between Egypt and the Bilad as-Sudan* (Cairo, 1978), pp.236–8, 241, 246.
12. Bowring, 'Report', 100.
13. Georges Douin, *Histoire du Règne du Khedive Ismail*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1936–39), 3, i, 262–6, cited in Austen, 'The Islamic Red Sea Slave Trade', p.446.
14. R20/A/142, Extract of a letter from Lambert to Coghlan, 20 May 1856, enclosed in Coghlan to Anderson, 22 May 1856.
15. Gabriel Baer, *Studies in the Social History of Modern Egypt* (Chicago and London), 1969, p.171.
16. Bowring, 'Report', 85, 87–8. FO 84/974, Bruce to Clarendon, 17 Jan. 1855.
17. Pallme, *Travels*, p.309. E. Ruppell, *Reisen in Nubien, Kordofan und dem petraischen Arabien* (Frankfurt, 1829), pp.144–7.
18. Richard Hill, *On the Frontiers of Islam: Two Manuscripts Concerning the Sudan Under Turco-Egyptian Rule, 1822–1845*, (Oxford, 1970), pp.34, 41–2.
19. The clay plains had remained uncultivated because they did not contain wells or naturally hold surface water supplies that would support people or animals. Roland Wood, 'Agricultural Systems in the Nuba Mountains, Sudan', (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1971) 216, 219; Interviews with 'Abd al-Qadir Muhammad, 17 and 18 Oct. and 1 Dec. 1978, Karmouqia; 'Ali Inqliz, 19 March 1979, al-'Abbasiyya; 'Abd al-Khayr Ahmad Shakir and Zaynab Ahya, 24 and 28 Sept. 1978, al-'Abbasiyya.
20. J.A. Vayssière, 'From Sawakin to Kasala', in Richard Hill, ed., *The Europeans in the Sudan, 1834–1878: Some Manuscripts, mostly unpublished, written by Traders, Christian Missionaries, Officials, and Others* (Oxford, 1980), p.112.
21. John Petherick and Katherine Petherick, *Travels in Central Africa and Explorations of the Western Nile Tributaries*, 2 vols. (London, 1869), 1:67.
22. Wilhelm Junker, *Travels in Africa during the Years 1874–1878*, 3 vols. (London, 1890; reprint, New York and London, 1971), 1:127–8.
23. Alessandro Triulzi, *Salt, Gold, and Legitimacy: Prelude to the History of a No-Man's Land, Bela Shanqul, Wallagga, Ethiopia (1800–1898)* (Naples, 1981), p.128.
24. George Schweinfurth, *The Heart of Africa: Three Years' Travels and Adventures in the Unexplored Regions of Central Africa, from 1868 to 1871*, 2 vols. (London, 1873), 1:60.
25. Triulzi, *Salt, Gold, and Legitimacy*, pp.131, 135–6, 138.
26. FO 84/1120, Translation of a Report by Dr. J. Natterer, Consular Agent of Austria at Khartoum, 5 April 1860 and Report on the Slave Trade in Upper Egypt by Mr Coulthard, enclosed in Colquhoun to Russell, 8 June 1860.
27. FO 84/1246, Joyce to Lindon, 10 Nov. 1864, enclosed in Stanley to Bulwer, 12 Jan. 1865, itself enclosed in Bulwer to Russell, 10 Feb. 1865.
28. Junker, *Travels*, 1:144, citing Schweinfurth in *Zeitschrift für Allgemeine Erdkunde*, 1865.
29. FO 84/1260, Stanton to Clarendon, 9 May 1866.
30. Schweinfurth, *Heart of Africa*, 2:428–9.
31. Baer, *Studies in the Social History*, p.171.
32. FO 84/1246, Joyce to Lindon, 10 Nov. 1864, enclosed in Stanley to Bulwer, 12 Jan. 1865, itself enclosed in Bulwer to Russell, 10 Feb. 1865.
33. Junker, *Travels*, 1:104.
34. R20/A/263, Cameron to Coghlan, 3 Jan. 1863.
35. FO 84/1277, Reade to Stanley, 9 Aug. 1867. Even though Jidda did not absorb all Red Sea slave exports – some slaves sailed to other parts of the Hijaz and Yemen or north to Egypt – the figure of 10,000 slaves arriving at the Red Sea appears

- doubtful in light of the 1869 estimate that only five to six hundred slaves entered Jidda from Suakin and Massawa. FO 84/1305, Report on the slave trade existing in the consular district of Jidda, enclosed in Raby to Clarendon, 10 Dec. 1869.
36. Schweinfurth, *Heart of Africa*, 2:429-31.
 37. Schweinfurth, *Heart of Africa*, 2:431.
 38. Schweinfurth, *Heart of Africa*, 2:428; FO 84/1371, Vivian to Sharif Pasha, 10 July 1873, enclosed in Vivian to Granville, 10 July 1873; FO 84/1472, Morice to Khairey Pasha, 18 March 1877, enclosed in Vivian to Derby, 26 May 1877; R20/A/415, Pridcaux to Political Resident, Aden, 19 Feb. 1873.
 39. Abir, 'The Ethiopian Slave Trade', 130-1; R20/A/180, Barroni to Coghlan, 8 July 1858 and 20 Sept. 1858; R20/A/233, Barroni to Playfair, 31 Aug. 1861 and 15 Sept. 1861.
 40. FO 84/1572, Extract of a letter from Pennazzi to Dutrieux, 30 August 1880, enclosed in Malet to Granville, 5 Nov. 1880.
 41. Junker, *Travels*, 1:112, 120, 127-8, 131-2, 144; FO 84/1618, 'Memorandum on the requirements of the consul at Suakin', enclosed in Moncrieff to Granville, 15 April 1882.
 42. Malcolm, for example, complained that the authorities gave him no help in determining the numbers of slaves exported from Africa's Red Sea coast to Arabia. FO 881/3829, Malcolm to Salisbury, 22 July 1878.
 43. R20/A/142, Extract of a letter from Lambert to Coghlan, 20 May 1856, enclosed in Coghlan to Anderson, 22 May 1856.
 44. Austin, 'The Nineteenth Century Islamic Slave Trade', citing Georges Douin, *Histoire du Règne du Khedive Isma'il*, 1936, III:1, 265-6.
 45. *Ibid.*, citing Guillaume Lejean, 'La traite des esclaves en Egypte et en Turquie', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1870:88 (Aug.), 906-9.
 46. FO 84/1472, Morice to Khairey Pasha, 9 March 1877, enclosed in Vivian to Derby, 26 May 1877.
 47. FO 84/1511, Vivian to Derby, 22 March 1878; FO 84/1450, 'Memorandum on the Red Sea slave trade', A.B. Wylde, 25 Nov. 1876.
 48. FO 195/1098, Derby to Elliot, 14 Jan. 1876; FO 84/1412, Extract from Captain Beyts' letter, 18 April 1875; FO 84/1571, Burrell to Goschen, 25 Sept. 1880; FO 881/3829, Malcolm to Salisbury, 22 July 1878.
 49. FO 84/1510, 'Extract of Consul Beyts' Reports on Jeddah trade for the year ending 31st March 1878', 27 March 1878; ADM 1/6452, Powlett to Bosanquet, 17 Jan. 1878, enclosed in Corbett to Secretary of the Admiralty, 9 Feb. 1878; R20/A/491, Instructions to Capt. McKillop, enclosed in Vivian to Derby, 13 Jan. 1877.
 50. FO 881/3829, Malcolm to Salisbury, 22 July 1878.
 51. FO 84/1450, 'Memorandum on the Red Sea slave trade', A.B. Wylde, 25 Nov. 1876.
 52. FO 84/1571, Burrell to Granville, 23 Aug. 1880. Many slaves at Hodeida, however, probably arrived not from Africa's Red Sea coast but from the Gulf of Aden. See, for example, FO 84/1482, Wylde to Beyts, 1 May 1877; R20/A/491, Political Resident Aden to Secretary to the Government at Bombay, 27 March 1877, and 'Notes on the Slave Trade' by Hunter, enclosed in Lock to Secretary of State for India, 16 Nov. 1877.
 53. FO 84/1510, 'Extract of Consul Beyts report'; FO 84/1544, Zohrab to Salisbury, 14 May 1879.
 54. R20/A/142, Extract of a letter from Lambert to Coghlan, 20 May 1856, enclosed in Coghlan to Anderson, 22 May 1856.
 55. Frederick Cooper, *Plantation Slavery on the East Coast of Africa*, (New Haven, 1977), p.122; FO 195/1098, Extract from a despatch from HM Agent and Consul at Zanzibar, 16 Aug. 1876, enclosed in Pauncefort to Derby, 28 Sept. 1876.
 56. Baer, *Studies in the Social History*, p.171-2.
 57. FO 84/1144, 'Report', John Petherick, 25 Nov. 1861; T. von Heuglin, 'Die Tinne'sche Expedition im westlichen Nil-Quellegebiet, 1863-4,' *Petermanns Mittheilungen*, *Erganzungsheft* 15 (1865), 6; Romolo Gessi, *Seven Years in the Soudan* (London, 1892), p.15; Schweinfurth, *The Heart of Africa*, 2:349; Richard Hill, *A Biographical Dictionary of the Sudan*, 2nd edition, (London, 1967), pp.246,

- 274-5; Scholch, *Egypt for the Egyptians: The Socio-Political Crisis in Egypt, 1878-1882* (London, 1981), p.32; Anders Bjorkelo, *From King to Kashif: Shendi in the Nineteenth Century* (Bergen, 1984), p.176.
58. Bjorkelo, *From King to Kashif*, p.193.
 59. FO 881/3780, 'Memorandum regarding the slave trade in the Soudan and Red Sea Coast', A.B. Wylde, 25 Sept. 1878.
 60. Schweinfurth, *Heart of Africa*, 1:175-6, 2:412, 2:417-19, 2:429.
 61. FO 881/3829, Malcolm to Salisbury, 22 July 1878. It is ambiguous whether the figure of 50 to 100 included both agents and slaves, or only agents.
 62. FO 881/3829, Malcolm to Salisbury, 22 July 1878; ADM 1/6452, Powlett to Bosanquet, 17 Jan. 1878, enclosed in Corbett to Secretary of Admiralty, 9 Feb. 1878.
 63. FO 881/3829, Malcolm to Salisbury, 22 July 1878; ADM 1/6453 Powlett to Bosanquet, enclosed in Corbett to Secretary of Admiralty, 17 Jan. 1878.
 64. FO 881/3780, 'Memorandum regarding slave trade in the Soudan and its Red Sea Coast', Wylde, 25 Sept. 1878.
 65. FO 84/1450, Wylde to Derby, 26 March 1876.
 66. ADM 1/6412, Bosanquet to Corbett, 25 Jan. 1878, enclosed in Corbett to Secretary of Admiralty, 8 Feb. 1878; ADM 1/6452, Memo by Bosanquet, enclosed in Corbett to Secretary of Admiralty, 20 April 1878.
 67. FO 84/1510, Copy of a petition to the Sharif of Mecca, enclosed in Sharif of Mecca to Governor-General of Hijaz, itself enclosed in Beyts to Salisbury, 31 Dec. 1878.
 68. FO 84/1450, Wylde to Derby, 26 March 1876. FO 84/1510, Beyts to Layard, 5 May 1878, and Wylde to Derby, 8 April 1878.
 69. ADM 1/6452, Bosanquet to Corbett, 22 Jan. 1878, enclosed in Corbett to Secretary of Admiralty, 4 Feb. 1878.
 70. FO 84/1472, Morice to Khairy Pasha, 8 March and 18 March 1877.
 71. ADM 1/6452, Powlett to Corbett, 20 Dec. 1877, enclosed in Corbett to Secretary of Admiralty, 9 Jan. 1878. ADM 1/6452, Memo by Captain Bosanquet, 12 April 1878, enclosed in Corbett to Secretary of Admiralty, 20 April 1878.
 72. ADM 1/6452, Powlett to Bosanquet, 17 Jan. 1878, enclosed in Corbett to Secretary of Admiralty, 9 Feb. 1878 and Memo by Bosanquet, 12 April 1878, enclosed in Corbett to Secretary of Admiralty, 20 April 1878.
 73. FO 881/3829, Malcolm to Salisbury, 22 July 1878. FO 84/1472, Morice to Khairy Pasha, 9 March and 18 March 1877.
 74. FO 84/1371, Stanley to Vivian, 7 Aug. 1873, enclosed in Vivian to Granville, 9 Aug. 1873. ADM 1/6452, Powlett to Corbett, 20 Dec. 1877, enclosed in Corbett to Secretary of Admiralty, 9 Jan. 1878.
 75. FO 84/1545, Vivian to Sharif Pasha, 4 June 1879, enclosed in Vivian to Salisbury, 8 June 1879.
 76. FO 84/1412, Beyts to Derby, 15 Jan. 1874. FO 84/1450, Wylde to Derby, 26 March 1876 and 'Memorandum on Red Sea slave trade', Wylde, 25 Nov. 1876.
 77. Schweinfurth, *Heart of Africa*, 1:41-2, 2:415; von Heuglin, 'Die Tinné'sche Expedition', 19; Bjorkelo, *From King to Kashif*, pp.137-8, 140, 167; J.L. Spaulding, 'Slavery, Land Tenure and Social Class in the Northern Turkish Sudan', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 15:1 (1982), 2-21.
 78. ADM 1/6452, Memo enclosed in Powlett to Corbett, 16 April 1878, enclosed in Corbett to Secretary of Admiralty, 20 April 1878.
 79. FO 84/1472, Morice to Khairy Pasha, 9 March 1877, enclosed in Vivian to Derby, 26 May 1877.
 80. FO 141/119, Beyts to Vivian, 22 April 1878, and enclosure, Wylde to Beyts, 21 April 1878; FO 84/1510, Wylde to Caimacam of Hijaz, 31 March 1878, Wylde to Derby, 8 April, 'Memorandum regarding visit to Jeddah jail' by Wylde, 18 April 1878, enclosed in Beyts to Salisbury, 15 May 1878.
 81. ADM 1/6452, 'Memorandum: Names of brokers and slave dealers resident in Jiddah', enclosed in Powlett to Corbett, 16 April 1878, itself enclosed in Corbett to Secretary of Admiralty, 20 April 1878.

82. FO 84/1544, Zohrab to Gordon, 8 May 1879, enclosed in Zohrab to Salisbury, 17 May 1879.
83. Cooper, *Plantation Slavery*, pp.31-2.
84. G/17/6, Popham to Wellesley, 26 July 1802.
85. C. Snouck Hurgronje, *Mekka in the Latter Part of the Nineteenth Century: Daily Life, Customs, and Learning*, trans. J.H. Monohan (London and Leyden, 1931), p.5.
86. Mss. Brit. Emp., S22, G29, Notes of Dr. Harpur on his 'Report on Work at Suakin', 16 Oct. 1890.
87. FO 195/579, Pullen to Secretary of Admiralty, 25 June 1858, enclosed in Green to Alison, 8 July 1858; Page to Pullen, 2 April 1858, enclosed in Pullen to Secretary of Admiralty, 25 June 1858.
88. R20/A/263, Barroni to Playfair, 19 Jan. 1862; Playfair to Stewart, 21 March 1862.
89. R20/A/439, Schneider to Secretary to the Government, Bombay, 24 Feb. 1875.
90. FO 195/579, Pullen to Secretary of Admiralty, 19 June 1858 and 25 June 1858, enclosed in Green to Alison, 8 July 1858; Adams to HMS Ambassador at the Sublime Porte, 4 Sept. 1858, enclosed in Green to Bulwer, 25 Sept. 1858; William Ochsenwald, 'The Jidda Massacre of 1858', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 13:3 (1977), 314-26.
91. The British consul in Jidda reported that it was Arab merchants from the Hijaz, supported by their agents in the Sudan, who carried on the slave trade. FO 881/3780, 'Memorandum regarding the slave trade in the Red Sea and Soudan', Wylde, 25 Sept. 1878.
92. Hurgronje, *Mekka*, p.5.
93. FO 881/3780, 'Memoranda regarding slave trade in the Soudan and its Red Sea Coast', by Wylde, 20 Oct. 1878.
94. G/17/6, Popham to Wellesley, 26 July 1802.
95. R20/A/491, Acting Consul at Jidda to Lock, 3 July 1877. FO 84/1510, Beyts to Derby, 5 March 1878.
96. FO 84/1571, Zohrab to Salisbury, 13 March 1880.
97. FO 195/579, Barroni to HBM's Agent and Consul-General in Egypt, 1 May 1858; Barroni to Page, 24 Jan. 1858 and 6 Feb. 1858; all enclosed in Green to Alison, 5 June 1858.
98. FO 84/1305, 'Report on the slave trade existing in the consular district of Jedda', enclosed in Raby to Clarendon, 10 Dec. 1869.
99. FO 84/1246, Stevens to Bulwer, 7 Jan. 1865, enclosed in Bulwer to Russell, 6 Jan. 1865; FO 84/1544, Zohrab to Salisbury, 14 May 1879.
100. R20/A/308, Calvert to Merewether, 13 Dec. 1864.
101. FO 84/1246, Stuart to 'Ali Pasha, 28 Dec. 1864; FO 84/1246, Calvert to Treade, 30 Nov. 1865, enclosed in Colquhoun to Russell, 23 Jan. 1865.
102. FO 84/1305, 'Report on the slave trade existing in the consular district of Jedda', enclosed in Raby to Clarendon, 10 Dec. 1869.
103. FO 84/1412, 'Remarks on the Red Sea slave trade', by Wood, enclosed in Wylde to Beyts, 28 May 1875 forwarded in Beyts to Derby, 10 June 1875; Beyts to Derby, 30 December 1875; 'Extracts from Captain Beyts' Commercial Report, 1875'. FO 84/1450, Beyts to Derby, 17 March 1876, Wylde to Derby, 26 March 1876; ADM 1/6452, Powlett to Corbett, 20 Dec. 1877, enclosed in Corbett to Secretary of Admiralty, 8 Jan. 1878.
104. R20/A/491, Prideaux to Political Resident, Aden, 28 April 1877. FO 84/1482, Nixon to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 26 March and 6 April 1877; Prideaux to Nixon, 28 March 1877; ADM 1/6412, Clayton to MacDonald, 17 and 21 March 1877, enclosed in MacDonald to Secretary of Admiralty, 1 April 1877.
105. FO 84/1305, Herbert to Clarendon, 26 Nov. 1869. FO 84/1341, Cumberbatch to Granville, 1871. FO 84/1397, Stanton to Derby, 9 Sept. 1874.
106. ADM 1/6452, Powlett to Corbett, 28 Jan. 1878, enclosed in Corbett to Secretary of Admiralty, 9 Feb. 1878.
107. FO 84/1412, Cumberbatch to Elliot, 19 Feb. 1875, enclosed in Cumberbatch to Derby, 20 Feb. 1875.

108. ADM 1/6452, Powlett to Corbett, enclosed in Corbett to Secretary of Admiralty, 9 Jan. 1878.
109. R20/A/382, Pridcaux to Secretary of the Government, Bombay, 18 May 1871 and enclosed Examination of Saadah Ali Khan, 18 May 1871. FO 84/1412, Cumberbatch to Elliot, 19 Feb. 1875, enclosed in Cumberbatch to Derby, 20 Feb. 1875. FO 84/1450, Beyts to Derby, 17 March 1876. FO 84/1482, Wylde to Derby, 29 May 1877. FO 84/1510, Wylde to Derby, 16 Feb. 1878, and Deposition of the chief clerk of the Persian Consulate, 25 Feb. 1878, enclosed in Wylde to Derby, 26 Feb. 1878. FO 84/1597, Zohrab to Granville, 27 Jan. 1881.
110. FO 84/1597, Zohrab to Granville, 7 March 1881.
111. ADM 1/6452, Memorandum by Captain Bosanquet, 12 April 1878, enclosed in Corbett to Secretary of Admiralty, 20 April 1878.
112. FO 84/1570, Zohrab to Layard, 13 March 1880, enclosed in Layard to Salisbury, 2 April 1880.
113. FO 84/1450, Wylde to Derby, 26 March 1876 and 'Memorandum on Red Sea slave trade', by Wylde, 25 Nov. 1876.
114. Austen, 'The Islamic Red Sea Slave Trade', 458. FO 84/1450, 'Memorandum on Red Sea Slave Trade', by Wylde, 25 Nov. 1876; ADM 1/6452, Powlett to Corbett, 20 Dec. 1877, enclosed in Corbett to Secretary of Admiralty, 9 Jan. 1878. FO 881/3829, Malcolm to Salisbury, 22 July 1878. FO 881/3780, 'Memoranda regarding slave trade in the Soudan and its Red Sea coast', by Wylde, 20 Oct. 1878.
115. FO 84/1510, Beyts to Derby, 5 March 1878.
116. L/P&S/54, Lock to Secretary of Government, Bombay, 21 Sept. 1878, enclosed in Lock to Secretary of State for India, 23 Sept. 1878.
117. Hurgonje, *Mekka*, pp. 11, 31, 32, 37.
118. James Bruce, *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile*, 6 vols., (Edinburgh, 1806), 1:229, 275.
119. FO 84/1482, Deposition of Murjan, 11 Dec. 1877, enclosed in Wylde to Derby, 17 Feb. 1877.
120. FO 84/1482, Memorandum on Beyts to Derby, 3 Oct. 1877.
121. Hurgonje, *Mekka*, p. 11; FO 84/1482, Deposition of Murjan, 11 Dec. 1877, enclosed in Wylde to Derby, 17 Feb. 1877, and Memorandum on Beyts to Derby, 3 Oct. 1877.

Ethiopian Slave Exports at Matamma, Massawa and Tajura c. 1830 to 1885¹

Abdussamad H. Ahmad

Ethiopian slaves under the name *Habash* (Abyssinian or Ethiopian) had a high demand in the markets of Arabia and the Middle East in the second half of the nineteenth century. Male slaves from Ethiopia served as bodyguards, servants and treasurers to rulers, *Sheikhs* and rich merchants of Arabia. The demand for female Ethiopian slaves who were bright-yellow or dark-brown was even higher, as the well-to-do made them wives and concubines.²

The principal sources of slaves, all of whom passed through Matamma, the inland port on the Ethio-Sudanese border, and Massawa and Tajura on the Red Sea, were the south-western parts of Ethiopia. Slaves came mainly from Kaffa, Maji, Gamu, Gimira, Gofa, Wallayta, Kullo and Konta. Most slaves, therefore, originated from the Oromo and Sidama country.³

In south-western Ethiopia, Hirmata in Jimma was an important slave market in the nineteenth century.⁴ Jimma exported slaves, probably the largest export item in terms of value.⁵ Trade routes for slave merchandise ran from Jiren in Jimma to Saqa in Limmu, Billo in Leqa-Naqamite, Assandabo in Horro-Gudru and across the Blue Nile to Baso in Gojjam.⁶ From Baso, merchants drove their slaves in thousands to the ports of Matamma, Massawa and Tajura.⁷

The French explorer Antoine d'Abbadie, who visited Ethiopia in the nineteenth century, gave an excellent description of the trade routes from Saqa to Baso and then to Massawa. He mentioned 91 *manahariyas* (halting places) from Saqa to Massawa.⁸

The Italian traveller, Antonio Cecchi, visiting Ethiopia in the nineteenth century, estimated slave exports of Jimma to be 3-4,000 annually.⁹ Although it is difficult to assess how many of those slaves marketed at Jimma reached Baso, undoubtedly Oromo merchants from Assandabo brought their slave merchandise to the weekly market of Baso.¹⁰ Slaves brought from south-western Ethiopia to Baso were mostly children. A great number of them were pagan. A few among them were Muslims and Christians.¹¹ To add to this, the western lowlands of Gojjam furnished Gumuz slaves to the market of Gondar in Bagemidir-Samen.¹²

Brokers at Baso facilitated the sale of slaves in the town of Yajjube

near the market of Baso. Brokers received four bars of *amole* (salt bars) or nearly one-quarter of a Maria Teresa Thaler, both from the buyer and seller of a slave.¹³ Bargaining between buyers and sellers of slaves took some time. The Amhara buyers at Baso would decry the slave merchandise, saying it was old and might be sick. The Oromo sellers, who equally mastered the intricacies inherent in the transaction of slaves, hid any physical defect of their slaves.¹⁴ Nonetheless, buyers selected and examined slaves in the following way.

[During the nights] the slave was brought into the [broker's] house. The buyers looked at the teeth and counted the number of teeth the slave had grown. They examined the eyes, checked the hands and the legs. A male slave was made to walk, run and lift weights. A girl slave was examined for her beauty. The yardstick for examining the beauty of a slave girl was . . . nice appearance and a straight nose and being light coloured. Some male and female slaves were bought for special skills.¹⁵

Some slaves reaching Yajjube were taken to the houses of the brokers for sale. Others, who were to be driven to the ports of Matamma, Massawa and Tajura, stayed in the merchant encampment in the open air.¹⁶ The *Nagadras* (customs official) at Baso collected taxes on each slave.¹⁷ The tax was two to three salt bars per slave.¹⁸ Besides Yajjube, there were customs officials at Darita, Dabarq and Gondar in Bagemidir-Samen, Saqota in Lasta and Adwa in Tigray. The officials collected tolls from passing slave merchants. However, Walter Plowden, who mentioned the six customs posts in Ethiopia in the second half of the nineteenth century, did not specify the amount merchants paid at each of these customs houses.¹⁹

Charles T. Beke wrote that female slaves 'are clothed in new gowns and their hair is dressed and well besmeared with butter. They are adorned with bead necklaces and with ear and finger rings, everything being done to show them off to advantage.'²⁰ The majority of slaves brought to Baso were Oromo. The exceptionally beautiful female slaves were called *wosif* (handmaiden or concubine) and the male slave was called *gurbe* (boy or lad).²¹

At Baso, each slave boy cost 4-8 Thalers. The price of a girl slave was 8-12 Thalers. An exceptionally beautiful girl fetched 16 Thalers. The price of a Gumuz woman was generally low. A Gumuz woman cost 4-6 Thalers.²²

Slave merchants from Darita and Gondar in Bagemidir-Samen and Warra-Himanu in Wollo would arrive at Yajjube during the month of *Tiqimit* (11 October to 9 November). Beke estimated that these northern merchants who visited Yajjube took 7,000 slaves every year.²³

He also estimated that one-third of the slaves reaching Baso found their way to Massawa. The remaining two-thirds were sent to Matamma and Tajura.²⁴

It was in the interest of slave merchants to treat their slaves well. One merchant told Beke at Yajjube that '[slaves] are our property [*kabt*, literally cattle (wealth)], and we cannot afford to lose them'.²⁵ However, for the safety of their merchandise, merchants tied strong slaves in pairs with straps. Young slaves were unbound and carried small loads of food and merchandise.²⁶

On 29 May 1842, Beke saw a group of slave merchants proceeding northwards from Baso to Matamma and the coasts of the Red Sea.²⁷ He described the ways in which the slaves were driven in the following manner.

The slaves go along without the least restraint, singing and chatting, and apparently perfectly happy. They are generally treated with attention, stopping frequently on the road to rest and feed. They are mostly well dressed, and many of them wear conical caps of plantain-leaves to protect them from the sun.²⁸

From Baso the trade routes branched into two. One route went through Darita and then Gondar. Gondar, in its turn, served as a route which led to Matamma to its west and Massawa to its north. The second route from Baso proceeded to Dawe in Wollo and then to Tajura.²⁹

In the province of Bagemidir-Samen, Darita, Yifag and Gondar were entrepôts for slaves. In the 1830s, the French travellers Combes and Tamié estimated that 2,000 slaves left Gondar to the ports of Matamma and Massawa annually.³⁰ Mordechai Abir, writing on trade activities for the period 1830 to 1855, stated that about 3,000 slaves left Darita, Yifag and Gondar to Matamma and Massawa.³¹ This did not include the slaves sent to Tajura. Abir also estimated the price of each male and female slave at Gondar to be 15–18 and 20–25 Thalers respectively. An exceptionally beautiful girl fetched 50–80 Thalers at Gondar.³²

As has been seen, the tax per slave at Baso was nearly a quarter of a Thaler. At Gondar, the toll was higher, and the customs official collected one Thaler for every slave leaving the town. At Adwa in Tigray the tax was still higher and merchants paid two Thalers per slave.³³ Customs dues amounting to a quarter or one half of a Thaler per slave were collected at small customs houses.³⁴

Merchants of Gondar bound to Matamma proceeded via Cilga.³⁵ Having reached Matamma, slave merchants sold their slaves on the weekly markets of the town, which were held on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.³⁶ Matamma lay in a small river valley surrounded by hills.³⁷ Ethiopian merchants built their camp and pitched their tents to the

east of a small stream called Khor Abinaheir and provided shelter for themselves and their slaves. Sudanese merchants had their residence to the west of the stream, and would cross the stream to buy slaves from Ethiopian merchants. Then they would take their slave merchandise to Khartoum and to the Sudanese port of Suakin on the Red Sea. Some of the Ethiopian slaves arriving at Khartoum were retained there, and the rest were sent to Egypt. Those slaves heading to Suakin were shipped to Jidda in Arabia across the Red Sea.³⁸

Hormuzd Rassam, the British envoy to the court of Emperor Tewodros (1855–1868) reported that he was told about 3,000 boys and girls from the Oromo and Gumuz country were sold at Matamma annually.³⁹ Although Tewodros and Emperor Yohannis IV (1872–89) began to oppose the slave trade rhetorically, neither took effective action against it, and hence it continued unabated.⁴⁰

At Matamma, Sudanese as well as Europeans bought slaves. European missionaries residing at Matamma bought their human merchandise for the purpose of manumitting them and making them Christians.⁴¹ Most slaves sold at Matamma were young girls ranging from nine to seventeen years. Sir Samuel W. Baker noted that each one of the beautiful slaves reaching Matamma cost 25–40 Thalers.⁴²

Merchants of Hijaz in Arabia had their agents who bought slaves on their behalf at Matamma. These merchants also bought other Ethiopian products such as gold, civet and ivory. The slaves transported the gold, civet and ivory to Suakin, and in this way, slave labour covered the transportation cost of other merchandise for Sudanese merchants. Sudanese slave merchants like their Ethiopian counterparts cared for the safety of their slaves and used to transport food and water for their slaves and themselves.⁴³

The most important outlet for Ethiopian slaves was undoubtedly Massawa. Trade routes from Gondar led to Massawa via Adwa. Slave drovers from Gondar took 100–200 slaves in a single trip to Massawa. The majority of the Ethiopian slaves reaching Massawa were female; the ratio of female to male slaves was 2:1.⁴⁴ Eunuchs, castrated in the Ethiopian interior, also found their way to the port of Massawa. Producing eunuchs was the most dehumanizing aspect of trade in slaves.⁴⁵ The annual shipment of eunuchs from Massawa to the Gulf of Aden amounted to 100 in the period 1830–1855.⁴⁶

As has already been indicated, most slaves exported from Massawa to Arabian markets were of Oromo–Sidama origin. These slaves were in high demand in Arabia. A small proportion of eunuchs of Gumuz origin reached Arabia and the Middle East as well. Occasionally, slave raiders from northern Ethiopia kidnapped Amhara boys and girls and sold them to merchants, who in turn took them together with their slaves from the south to the Red Sea market.⁴⁷

Before reaching Massawa, merchants passing through Arkiko paid dues to the Naib of Arkiko, of one Thaler per slave. Although we do not know the actual amount the Naib received for eunuchs, merchants certainly paid exorbitant customs fees for their eunuch merchandise. The customs authority at Massawa collected an even higher duty from slave merchants. On each slave, the *Diwan* (inspector of slaves) at Massawa charged merchants five Thalers. After paying their dues, merchants were given receipts with the stamp of the *Diwan* on it.⁴⁸ At Massawa male slaves of Oromo-Sidama origin cost 35–50 Thalers, while female slaves cost 50–66 Thalers. The price of Gumuz slaves was quite low, 25 Thalers male or female. The price for a eunuch, on the other hand, was 80–120 Thalers. After the exchange formalities had been properly carried out, Arab merchants stationed at Massawa shipped their slave merchandise to the port of Jidda.⁴⁹

In addition to Matamma and Massawa, the port of Tajura on the Red Sea coast served as an outlet for slave merchandise from Ethiopia to Arabia. As stated earlier, some of the slaves reaching Baso in Gojjam were driven to Dawe in Wollo by merchants of Wollo. These merchants were mainly from Warra-Himanu and Qallu.⁵⁰ The slave trade from Dawe across Aussaland to Tajura was dominated by the Afar.⁵¹ Afar merchant groups who took slaves to Tajura numbered 30–50 men on average, and they drove slaves numbering up to 200.⁵²

The Sultan of Lohaita levied a tax on merchants who drove slaves across his sultanate. However, our sources do not indicate the amount the Sultan collected on each slave. However, our sources clearly suggest that the Sultan of Lohaita handed the collected revenue to the *Sheikh* of Aussa.⁵³ The Sultan of Raheita also levied taxes on slaves embarking at Ras Dumeira on the Red Sea.⁵⁴ In the second quarter of the nineteenth century, the port of Tajura exported between 1,500 and 3,000 slaves annually.⁵⁵ From Tajura or Ras Dumeira slaves embarked by night in dhows to Jebel Zukur island and then crept up the coast to places like Kunfuda, Lith and Ras El Aswad to the south of the port of Jidda. The slaves were then driven to the market in Jidda.⁵⁶

The slave trade was profitable to merchants of the Oromo lands, Gojjam, Bagemidir-Samen, Tigray and Wollo. However, there were a number of factors which made the slave trade a risky economic enterprise in Ethiopia itself and along the coasts of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. Merchants lost their slave merchandise through exhaustion and exposure, hunger and thirst, disease and robbery.⁵⁷ A slave merchant had to have at least ten to fifteen slaves to distinguish himself as a wealthy merchant. Thirty to fifty merchants could organize themselves as a caravan group called *jamma*. They hired ten to fifteen servants to help them drive slaves from the interior to the coast.⁵⁸ Merchants themselves and their servants carried matchlocks⁵⁹ and swords to help

them protect their slave merchandise from bandits. However, some of the time, merchants gave bandits a fairly modest sum of money. After receiving money, bandits would even help traders to drive their slave caravans from one halting place to another.⁶⁰ It is interesting to note also that the number of matchlocks and swords merchants carried reflected their wealth and the size of the caravan group.⁶¹

Most of the time slave merchants travelled for about six hours each day. They stopped at halting places where they could get shelter for their slaves and for themselves. The halting places were near springs and merchants camped under shade of trees.⁶² In the main, merchants got modest profit and accumulation of capital was very low.

Ethiopian merchants, Muslims as well as Christians, brought their slave merchandise to the coast.⁶³ Some Muslim merchants took a number of slaves to help them transport their goods and services to Mecca on their pilgrimage. At Mecca, these merchants used some of their slaves as a form of 'travellers cheque' and sold them to finance their trip back home.⁶⁴

The sale of a slave at Mecca was conducted in a very similar manner to that at Baso in Gojjam.⁶⁵ C. Snouck Hurgronje, writing on the slave trade at Mecca in the latter part of the nineteenth century, noted that 'the broker charged with the sale of [a] boy calls him up and shows the [buyer] his hair, his legs, his arms; makes the boy show his tongue and teeth . . .'.⁶⁶

At Jidda, it was not difficult to obtain slaves. The well-to-do in Arabia bought male slaves and used their labour as carpenters, masons, coolies, boatmen, divers and business employees. Male slaves also built houses and quarried stone and sand.⁶⁷ In addition, there were field slaves employed in the date and fruit gardens.⁶⁸ Female Ethiopian slaves who crossed the Red Sea became concubines to Arabs, as their West African counterparts who crossed the Atlantic Ocean became mistresses and wives to Portuguese planters in Brazil.⁶⁹ Female slaves also worked as servants in the kitchen and living rooms.⁷⁰ To add to the number of male and female slaves exported from Ethiopia to Arabia, there were eunuchs. Fisher and Fisher noted that 'the best known early source of eunuchs in Africa was in Ethiopia'.⁷¹ Ethiopian eunuchs worked as doorkeepers of the mosques in Arabia and as guards for Arabian harems.⁷²

The volume of Ethiopian slave exports through the ports of Matamma, Massawa and Tajura in the second half of the nineteenth century needs to be established. In 1968, Richard Pankhurst, assuming that 25,000 slaves left the various Ethiopian ports per year, computed that two and a half million slaves were exported to Arabia, Sudan and Egypt in the nineteenth century.⁷³ Pankhurst himself admits that his estimate of two and a half million slaves being exported from Ethiopia is an

exaggeration, considering that the population was only about nine million in the nineteenth century.⁷⁴ To add to this, economic and political factors affected the trade in slaves. For example, during the Great Famine in Ethiopia (1888–1892) exports, including slaves, came to a standstill. Preceding this calamity, the French conquest of Obock on the Red Sea coast in 1884, the British occupation of Zeila on the Somali coast in 1884, and the Italian seizure of Massawa in 1885 made it difficult, if not impossible, for merchants to export slaves.⁷⁵

In 1978, ten years after Pankhurst's measurement of the Red Sea slave trade, Ralph A. Austen made a painstaking effort at quantifying Ethiopian slave exports in the nineteenth century. Austen, having calculated figures from various sources, estimated Ethiopian slave exports through the ports of Matamma, Massawa, Tajura, Berbera and Zeila to have been between 450,000 and 500,000 slaves during the nineteenth century.⁷⁶ Although Austen tried to reach at a fair assessment of Ethiopian slave exports from official figures, it was difficult for him and for that matter for any researcher to estimate the number of slaves illegally exported from Ethiopia. Hence, it is difficult to achieve statistical precision regarding the slave trade along the coasts of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

NOTES

1. The date c. 1830 has been chosen for the simple reason that a number of European missionaries, travellers and political agents came to Ethiopia and gave a coherent picture on the slave trade in the interior of the country in this period. I have thought it wise to conclude at 1885, as this date witnessed the Italian invasion of Massawa, which restricted the slave trade, although it did not totally abolish the trade on the Red Sea littoral. I am grateful to Professor Donald Crummey for his careful reading and comments.
2. C. Snouck Hurgronje (trans. J.H. Monahan), *Mekka in the Latter Part of the 19th Century*. London and Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970, p.13. Mordechai Abir, 'Trade and Politics in the Ethiopian Region 1830–1855', Ph.D. thesis, School of Oriental and African Studies, London, 1964, p.4. See also Allan G.B. Fisher and Humphrey J. Fisher, *Slavery and Muslim Society in Africa*. New York: Doubleday, 1971, p.116.
3. Richard Pankhurst, *Economic History of Ethiopia 1800–1935*. Addis Ababa: Haile Selassie I University Press, 1968, p.74.
4. Herbert S. Lewis, *A Galla Monarchy: Jimma Abba Jifar, Ethiopia 1830–1932*. Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1965, p.66.
5. Jules Borelli, *Ethiopie Méridionale*. Paris: 1890, p.347. Haile Mariam Goshu, 'The kingdom of Abba Jifar II (1861–1934)', B.A. thesis, Addis Ababa University, June 1970, p.14.
6. Lewis, p.66. Alessandro Triulzi, 'The Gudru Oromo and Their Neighbours in the Two Generations Before the Battle of Embabo', *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. XIII, No. 1, Addis Ababa, Jan. 1975, p.55.
7. Abir, 'Trade and Politics . . .', *passim*.
8. Antoine d'Abbadie, *Géographie de L'Ethiopie*. Paris: Gustave Mesnil, 1890, pp.51–5.

9. Antonio Cecchi, *Da Zeila alle frontiere del Caffa*. Vol.1, Rome: Società Geografica Italiana, 1886, p.490.
10. Charles T. Beke, 'A Memoir on the Market of Baso' in his *Letters on the Commerce and Politics of Abyssinia and Other Parts of Eastern Africa*. London: 1852, p.16.
11. Charles T. Beke, 'Abyssinia - being a continuation of Routes on that Country', *Royal Geographical Society*, Vol.XIV, 1842, p.19.
12. *Ibid.*, p.9.
13. Beke, 'A Memoir . . .', p.18. In Gojjam, twenty *amole* were exchanged for a Thaler: see Mordechai Abir, 'Salt, Trade and Politics in Ethiopia in the Zamana Masafint', *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol.IV, No.2, Addis Ababa, July, 1966, p.4.
14. Abdussamad H. Ahmad, 'Trade and Politics in Gojjam 1882-1935', M.A. thesis, Addis Ababa University, Aug. 1980, p.66.
15. *Ibid.*
16. Beke, 'A Memoir . . .', pp.21-2.
17. *Ibid.*, p.22.
18. Abir, 'Trade and Politics . . .', p.92.
19. Walter C. Plowden, *Travels in Abyssinia and the Galla Country*. London: 1868, p.130.
20. Beke, 'A Memoir . . .', p.22.
21. *Ibid.*
22. Abir, 'Trade and Politics . . .', p.98.
23. Beke, 'A Memoir . . .', pp.25-6.
24. *Ibid.*, p.27.
25. Beke, 'Abyssinia . . .', p.20.
26. Mordechai Abir, *Ethiopia: The Era of the Princes: The Challenge of Islam and the Re-unification of the Christian Empire 1769-1855*. London: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., 1968, p.58.
27. Beke, 'Abyssinia . . .', p.20.
28. *Ibid.*
29. Abir, 'Trade and Politics . . .', p.99.
30. E. Combes and M. Tamsier, *Voyage en Abyssinie*, IV. Paris. Louis Desessart, 1838, p.95.
31. Abir, 'Trade and Politics . . .', p.43.
32. *Ibid.*
33. *Ibid.*, pp.36, 92.
34. *Ibid.*, p.36.
35. Informants Abba Garima Taffara and Hajji Yussuf Ahmad, interviewed on 19 Sept. 1979 at Gondar. Abba Garima was 67 years old and Hajji Yussuf 61 years at the time of interview.
36. E.A. De Cosson, *The Cradle of the Blue Nile: A Visit to The Court of King John of Ethiopia*, Vol.II. London: John Murray, 1877, p.167.
37. Samuel W. Baker, *The Nile Tributaries of Abyssinia*. London: Macmillan, 1868, p.476.
38. Informants Garima Taffara and Yussuf Ahmad, *cited supra*. My informants got the information from their grand-parents. Abdul Mcjid Hussein, 'The Ethiopian-Sudanese Boundary: A Study in Historical and Political Geography', Ph.D. thesis, University of London: 1981, p.157.
39. Hormuzd Rassam, *Narrative of the British Mission to Theodore King of Abyssinia*, Vol.1. London: John Murray, 1869, p.168.
40. F.O. 371/16096, J1260/3/1; S. Barton to J. Simon, 18 April 1932, p.2.
41. Rassam, p.288.
42. Baker, pp.490-1.
43. A.B. Wyld, '83 to '87 in the Sudan', Vol.II. London: Remington, 1888, p.245.
44. Abir, 'Trade and Politics . . .', pp.70-1. My informants Garima Taffar and Yussuf Ahmad *cited supra* also confirmed this fact.
45. Wyld, pp.250-1.
46. Abir, 'Trade and Politics . . .', p.70.

47. *Ibid.*
48. *Ibid.*, p.71.
49. *Ibid.*, p.72.
50. Informants Lamma Alame and Mangasha Wondimu interviewed at Baso, on 22 Aug. 1979.
51. F.O. 371/13104, J373/31/1; Bentinck, 'Slave Trade in Abyssinia and the Red Sea', 5 Jan. 1928.
52. Abir, *Ethiopia: The Era of the Princes*, p.63.
53. F.O. 371/13104, J373/31/1; Bentinck, 'Slave Trade . . .', 5 Jan. 1928.
54. *Ibid.*
55. Abir, *Ethiopia: The Era of the Princes*, p.65.
56. F.O. 371/13104, J373/31/1; Bentinck, 'Slave Trade . . .', 5 Jan. 1928.
57. Informants Garima Taffara, Lamma Alame, Mangasha Wandimu and Yussuf Ahmad, *cited supra*. Abir, 'Trade and Politics . . .', p.44.
58. Informants Lamma Alame and Mangasha Wandimu, *cited supra*.
59. Regarding the introduction of matchlocks into Ethiopia in the nineteenth century, see Abir, *Ethiopia: The Era of the Princes*, p.82.
60. Informants Lamma Alame and Mangasha Wandimu, *cited supra*.
61. Lamma Alame and Mangasha Wandimu, *cited supra*.
62. *Ibid.*
63. Baker, p.490.
64. Abir, 'Trade and Politics . . .', pp.5, 73. For a similar example, see Fisher and Fisher, p.146.
65. See note 15.
66. Hurgronje, p.14.
67. *Ibid.*, pp.11 and 13; Wylde, p.245.
68. Wylde, p.248.
69. *Ibid.*, p.249; Fisher and Fisher, p.116. Gilberto Freyre, *The Masters and the Slaves*. New York: Random House, 1968, p.309.
70. Hurgronje, p.13.
71. Fisher and Fisher, p.173. See also Wylde, p.250.
72. *Ibid.*
73. Pankhurst, *Economic History of Ethiopia 1800-1935*, p.84.
74. *Ibid.*
75. F.O. 371/8405, A.3991/142/1, M. de Coppet, 'A Historical Study of the Subject of Slavery in Abyssinia', 12 June 1923, p.20.
76. Ralph A. Austen, 'The Islamic Red Sea Slave Trade: An Effort at Quantification', in Robert Hess (ed.), *Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference on Ethiopian Studies*, Chicago, April 13-16 1978, p.451.

Slavery and the Slave Trade in Southern Ethiopia in the 19th Century

Timothy Fernyhough

Since antiquity Ethiopian rulers derived wealth from slavery and the slave trade, increasing reliance on these revenues from the thirteenth century as they expanded the Abyssinian state and the trade nexus.¹ Like their predecessors, Gondarine rulers after 1630 also raided, traded and taxed slaves, but as rival princes struggled for control of a defunct empire during the anarchic *Zamana Masafent* (1765–1855) large-scale state involvement in the acquisition and marketing of captives declined.² After 1855 Emperor Tewodros (r. 1855–68) and Yohannes (r. 1872–89) issued edicts against slaving, but an illicit trade persisted in their territories and occurred openly at southern markets beyond imperial control.³ Under Menilek (king of Shawa from 1865; emperor, 1889–1913) the state resumed discreet involvement in marketing captives from imperial campaigns in southern Ethiopia. However, the Italian defeat at Adwa in 1896 reduced the emperor's dependence on revenues from the slave trade. Henceforth, and with the notable exception of *Lej Iyasu's* reign (1913–16), Ethiopian governments attempted to eliminate the slave trade and bonded labour in society.⁴

This paper explores Ethiopian slavery and the commerce in captives from geographical, chronological and thematic perspectives. The regional focus lies beyond the historical frontiers of the Abyssinian state, to the south of the Gojjam massif and the Shawan plateau. By the nineteenth century centralised polities had emerged in the southwestern highlands; east of the Gibe (upper Omo) river acephalous societies predominated. Chronologically, this analysis embraces two periods: the first from 1800 to the early 1870s, which permits analysis of the south in the years before its incorporation into the Ethiopian empire; the second from the early 1870s to the turn of the century, which encompasses Menilek's southern conquests and his extension of Ethiopia to its modern frontiers. Within each period we assess briefly the role of slavery as a labour process and proceed to detailed examination of southern Ethiopia's involvement in the inter-regional and international slave trades. Analysis for the latter period also reflects Shawa's new ascendancy over the south from the 1870s.

Two developments concerning slavery and the trade in servile labour stand out in our first period. The first was the emergence of slave

Table 1. Ethiopian Slave Prices in Maria Theresa Dollars (thalers), c. 1830 - c. 1850

<u>Place</u>	<u>Price (where available also in amole)</u>
PERSIAN GULF	
Bushere, Bahrein and Rassul Khyma	200-600 (m), 300-1000 (f) [a]
GULF OF OMAN	
Muscat	35-100 (m), 35-150 (f) [b] 20-300 (eunuch) [b]
HEJAZ/YAMAN	
Jedda, Moqo, Hodeida	25-100 (m), 60-150 (f) [cdefg] 240 (teenage f) [c]
SUDAN	
Khartoum, Sennar	75-100 (teenage f) [k]
NORTHERN ETHIOPIA	
Massawa	15-40 (m), 55-60 (f) [hij]k 95 (eunuch) [k]
Qallabat	25-70 (m), 100-150 (f) [klm] (1860s)
AFAR AND SOMALI COASTS	
Bay of Tajurah	(23?) 40 (m&f) [in]
DANAKIL	4-5 (f) [o]
HARAR	30-50 (m), 33-150 (f) [p]
BAGEMDER	
Gondar	10-25 (m&f) [dy], 50-80 (teenage f) [y]
WALLO	15-25 (m&f) [q]
GOJJAM	
Basso	4-8 (m), 8-12 (f) [r] 16+ (teenage f) [r]
SHAWA	
Dabra Berhan	15 (<u>shangella</u> m) [v]
Aliyu Amba (Abdel Rassul)	9-16 (m), 12-25 (f) [efgstu]
Ankobar	14 (young m) [g]
Rogge	2-5 (young m) [egns]
SODDO	3-4+ (m&f) or 60 <u>amole</u> [egw]*
GUDRU	9-15 (teenage f) [rx]
LIMMU-ENARYA & GIBE STATES	
Saga	2-3 (m&f) or 30 <u>amole</u> [ew]*
NONO	
Megra	3 (m&f) or 40 <u>amole</u> [egw]*
GURAGE	2 (?) - 6 (m&f) or 30 <u>amole</u> [f]*
WALAMO	4 (m&f) or 20 <u>amole</u> [en]*
KAFFA	
Bonga	2 (?) - 6 (m&f) or 30 <u>amole</u> [f]*

Key:

• Maria Theresa dollar prices cited here are misleading, and reflect the increased value of the amole (salt bar) in the extreme south of Ethiopia. Merchants in the south rarely paid cash for slaves. Instead they exchanged measures of blue calico cloth (hindi or tekur) or most commonly amole. Many slave prices quoted in this table were originally reported in amole, converted here into Maria Theresa dollars at the approximate local exchange rate (see Table 5). As regional scarcity of salt greatly affected this exchange rate, increasing the value of the amole against the thaler, differences in slave prices are best observed in the original form of payment. By comparison, the 1840 value of the thaler in Shawa and Gojjam was approximately 20-30 amole.

Sources

- a] IOL, BSP, LG 192, 2762, para. 2, Kemball to Robertson, 8 July 1842.
- b] IOL, BSP, Range 387, vol. 10, 660, para. 11, Wilson, 28 January 1831.
- c] H. Salt, A Voyage to Abyssinia (London, 1841), p. 311.
- d] Combes and Tamisier, Voyage, IV, pp. 92-5, 192.
- e] Harris, Highlands, III, pp. 76, 303-8.
- f] J.M. Bernatz, Scenes in Ethiopia (London, 1852), text with plates III and XXIV.
- g] Krapf, Travels, pp. 50-3, 74.
- h] S. Gobat, Journal of a Three Years' Residence in Abyssinia (London, 1834, 1851; reprint, New York, 1969), pp. 419-21.
- i] Abir, Era of the Princes (Abbadie), pp. 65-8.
- j] G. Valentia, Voyages and Travels in India, Ceylon, the Red Sea, Abyssinia and Egypt (London, 1809), II, p. 62.
- k] G. Douin, Histoire du Regne du Khedive Ismail (Cairo, 1936-41), III, I, pp. 160, 263, 444.
- l] S. Baker, The Nile Tributaries of Abyssinia (London, 1868), p. 534.
- m] G. Lejean, Voyage aux Deux Nils (Paris, 1868), p. 130.
- n] Isenberg and Krapf, Journals, pp. 10, 217, 257.
- o] C. Johnston, Travels in Southern Abyssinia (London, 2 vols., 1884), p. 310.
- p] R. Burton, First Footsteps in East Africa (London, 1894 edn.), II, pp. 25-6.
- q] Harris, Highlands, I, p. 388.
- r] Beke, Commerce, pp. 19-23.
- s] IOL, BSP, LG 196, 3491, Slave Report (Harris), paras. 21 and 25.
- t] IOL, BSP, LG 189, Report on Trade, para. 42; IOL, BSP, LG 204, 1216, Harris to Willoughby, 15 November 1842; IOL, BSP, LG 185, 1440, Barker to Harris, 7 January 1842, para. 18.
- u] Pankhurst, Economic History, p. 85 (Rochet d'Hericourt and Beke).
- v] Harris, Highlands, II, p. 56.
- w] Beke, "Continuation of Routes", pp. 86-7.
- x] Massala, Trentacinque anni, Lavery trans., III, pp. 70-1, 202-9.
- y] Abdussamad H. Ahmad, "Ethiopian Slave Exports" in this volume, citing Abir, "Salt, Trade and Politics in Ethiopia in the Zamana Masafint", Journal of Ethiopian Studies, 4, 2 (July 1966), p. 43.

modes of production in parts of southern Ethiopia. The period offers the first substantial evidence of slaves as agrarian producers in the centralised Oromo states of the Didessa and Gibe valleys, notably Gudru, Jemma, Limmu-Enarya and Gera, and in the Omotic kingdoms, of which Kaffa was historically preeminent, in the Gojab and Omo river basins. As in northern Ethiopia at this time, we find slavery in these southwestern states concentrated initially in the households of kings and nobles. Within a palace or household setting thousands of slaves served as officials, guards, domestic servants, and concubines. Palace slaves in Jemma and Limmu-Enarya occasionally rose to become senior administrators and regional governors (*abba qoro*). In these states, as in Gera and Kaffa, rulers employed slave soldiers to guard their residences and harems. Within royal enclosures hundred of eunuchs, concubines and other female slaves attended their rulers, served at court, and performed menial domestic tasks. In all the southwestern states high nobles and the wealthy replicated royal retinues on a reduced scale, and even smallholders possessed slaves.⁵

In addition to household slavery, slaves in southwest Ethiopia were also directly involved in agricultural and industrial production. In Kaffa the primary role of servile labour was agrarian work and, as in Jemma, the king appointed royal overseers to supervise slaves on vast estates. Slaves in Gomma and Gera worked the lands of wealthy landowners; in Jemma poor farmers laboured in the fields with their male slaves.⁶ Throughout the southwest slaves also worked as craftsmen, usually for ruling elites, merchants, or for artisan castes who were themselves considered inferior or impure. Slaves were weavers, spinners, silversmiths, blacksmiths, tanners, bee and civet cat keepers, carpenters and tailors.⁷ Moreover, their role in agrarian and industrial production meant that percentages of slaves in southwestern populations greatly exceeded populations of servile labour in highland Abyssinia. In Jemma, Gera, Janjero, Kaffa, Kucha and Walamo, slaves constituted between one half and two thirds of total population.⁸ Indeed, the Kaffa state so feared its large bonded population that in the mid-nineteenth century it briefly sought to reduce the number of slaves.⁹

Their expanded economic role and a vigorous transit trade in servile labour maintained domestic demand for slaves in southwestern states, while proximity to slave-producing regions like Gemira ensured supply and low prices (Table 1). Southern Ethiopians obtained their slaves either by direct appropriation, through raids or tribute, or by purchase on the open market.¹⁰ These distinctions between modes of acquisition are clear, though they often overlapped. Thus southern elites captured thousands of prisoners, especially from Gurage.¹¹ Abba Bagibo of Limmu-Enarya (r. 1825–61) and successive rulers of Jemma, Abba Gomol (r. 1862–75) and Abba Jifar II (r. 1878–1932), also acquired slaves in expeditions in Nonno country, and against Garo and Janjero,

but it is unlikely that either state fought wars specifically to obtain captives.¹² By contrast, in Kaffa the state was actively involved in the harvesting of captives. As Kaffa expanded after 1800 skirmishes with other Omotic states like Kullo and Walamo, and raids on nearby subdued regions like Gemira, notably on the Na'o and the Bensh, proved primary sources of slave supply.¹³

Across the south slaves were highly marketable commodities and merchants acquired them in many ways. State-sponsored expeditions, raids and tribute, probably supplied most captives. After successful expeditions, Abba Bagibo sold his prisoners to merchants from Shawa and Gondar.¹⁴ In Kaffa royal promotion of slaving extended to a conscripted force of Na'o warriors used for slave procurement and to the appointment of officials to supervise the sale of servile labour.¹⁵ However, merchants and ruling elites also employed other expedients to enhance slave supply. Kidnapping, deceit, enslavement of the destitute, and deprivation of freedom through judicial procedure were most common. In Gurage and Arsi merchants and bandits often cooperated to seize and enslave unwary victims, while ambushes of young girls were common across southern Ethiopia.¹⁶ In Limmu-Enarya Abba Bagibo's heir connived with traders to lure whole families into captivity and in both the Gibe and Omotic states the penalties for serious crimes included enslavement of accused and family, a frequent recourse of king Abba Rebo of Gomma. In Kaffa the state readily extended the range of offences or their definition to regulate slave supply and prices.¹⁷ Kaffa also saw the only deliberate state effort to breed slaves on royal estates in the early nineteenth century, but maintenance costs during unproductive years meant that it was always easier and cheaper to obtain slaves from beyond the kingdom's borders.¹⁸ Even less fortunate than those deceived, condemned, or bred into slavery, were those forced by harvest failure and pestilence to surrender their children and themselves for servile labour. During agrarian crises the offspring of famine victims sold in public lots at southern markets.¹⁹

Whether obtained through direct appropriation or insertion into trade networks, the second factor which distinguished Ethiopian slavery in the nineteenth century was the increased scale of slave traffic.²⁰ As Table 2 reveals, total slave production in the first half of the nineteenth century probably exceeded 15,000 captives each year. Estimates for the volume of slave traffic through Basso, on the southern border of Gojjam, and for Hermata and Abdel Rassul, respectively major markets for Jemma and Shawa, indicate that annual slave exports from southern Ethiopia averaged around 12,000–13,000. The same figures suggest that domestic absorption of slaves in southern Ethiopia was probably 1,000 *per annum* for the Gibe states, while Kaffa and her neighbours retained at least 1,000 captives each year, a figure consistent with European reports of

high percentages of slaves to total population in this region. The difference between the same figure of 12,000–13,000 slaves exported through Gojjam, Jemma and Shawa and total annual Ethiopian slave exports of over 7,600 also offers insights to domestic consumption in northern Ethiopia. Tentative projections suggest that the historic Abbyssian provinces of Shawa, Gojjam, Wallo, Bagemder and Tegre absorbed at least 4,000 slaves each year by the 1830s, with Harar accounting for not less than another 500 annually.

Whatever the mode of their production and the numbers of captives involved, three essential conditions upheld the commodity value of slaves from southern Ethiopia. First, the trade in human cargoes flourished in Ethiopia because legal codes like the *Fetha Negast* and customary practices endorsed slavery and the slave trade, and domestic and international measures for abolition as yet had little impact. An early commitment to abolish slaving given by Ras Ali, *de facto* ruler of Ethiopia, in 1849 was a dead letter. Imperial edicts against the slave trade issued by Tewodros and Yohannes, in the latter case prompted by British emissary Hewett, were largely ineffective. Moreover, neither ruler attempted to abolish the institution of slavery within northern society.²¹ International efforts to restrict the slave trade also achieved little. Britain's primary interest in the region was the security of the route to India, which took precedence over abolition. Even when the British began to implement a vigorous policy against slaving in the 1860s, restrictions on navy rights to search suspected vessels and the ease with which dhows sailed under a variety of international auspices negated attempts to halt the Red Sea slave trade.²²

The second reason for the persistence of the slave trade in Ethiopia was an established commercial nexus supported by local and long-distance traders. The production and initial exchange of slaves was in the hands of small traders, known in the Gibe states as *afcala*, who often acted as agents for southern rulers.²³ Long-distance merchants and *afcala* were mutually interdependent. The former relied on the small trader's speed, versatility, and local knowledge, to extract southern Ethiopia's export commodities, primarily slaves, ivory, coffee and civet musk, from otherwise inaccessible local markets. Although a few *afcala* travelled into northern Ethiopia, particularly to Basso in Gojjam, the main points of articulation between long-distance caravans and local traders were Asandabo, Saqa, Hermata and Bonga, respectively primary markets for Gudru, Limmu-Enarya, Jemma and Kaffa.

Inter-regional and international trade required resources and connections which few *afcala* possessed, for southern Ethiopia was part of an elaborate network of trade routes across northeast Africa (see Table 2 for primary slave routes from southern Ethiopia). Only northern merchants from Gondar and Adwa had access to capital to equip the

Table 2. Domestic Slave Consumption in Ethiopia, 1830 - c. 1850

a) Annual Ethiopian Slave Exports		b) Annual Ethiopian Slave Traffic through Gojjam, Shawa, Jemima	
Local	Numbers		
Massawa	1,755 [a]	GOJJAM: Basso	7,000[h]
Gallabat	<u>1,600 [b]</u>	SHAWA: Abdel Rassul	3,000 [i]
		(Aliyu Amba) via Rogge	
NORTHERN ROUTES	3,355	JEMMA: Hermata	4,000 [j]
Tajurah	2,088 [c]	c) Annual Slave Production in Southern Ethiopia	
Zeyla	800 [d]		
Berbera	<u>1,400 [e]</u>		
SOUTHERN ROUTES	4,288 [f]	Kaffa, Kucha, Konta, and Kullo, approx.	11,000 [k]
TOTAL	<u>7,643 [g]</u>	Walamo	1,000 [l]
		Janjero	1,000 [l]
		Gurage	<u>2,000 [m]</u>
		Total Slave Production	15,000 [n]

Annual Projections - Domestic Slave Consumption

Slaves purchased and retained in:

Omotic states, approx.	1,000
Gibe states, approx.	1,000
Shawa	500+
Gojjam, Wallo, Bagemder and Tegre	3,500
Harar	500+
TOTAL	6,500

Total Slave Production:	15,000 p.a.
Total Slave Exports:	7,500 p.a.
Domestic Slave Consumption:	6,500 p.a.
Unaccounted for:	1,000 p.a.

Sources:

a) An average of E. Ruppel, *Reise in Abyssinien* (Frankfurt, 1835-40), pp. 193-4: 2,000 slaves from Massawa p.a.; Combes and Tamisier, *Voyage*, IV, pp. 91-2: 1,000 p.a.; Douin, *Histoire*, III, 1, pp. 262-3: 1,000 p.a. (Fresnel), 2,500 p.a. (Degoutin), 3,000 p.a. (Rolland); G. Lejean, *Theodore II* (1865), p. 261: 2,500 p.a. (Barroni); Austen, 'Red Sea Slave Trade', pp. 448-9: 800-1600 p.a. (Christopher); P.V. Ferret and J.G. Gallier, *Voyage en Abyssinie* (Paris, 1847-8), II, p. 429: 1,500 p.a. Austen's projection of annual slave exports for the period 1831-1854 is almost identical, i.e., 1,750 p.a..

b) Combes and Tamisier, *Voyage*, IV, p. 95: 2,000+ p.a.; Abir, *Era of the Princes*, p. 67: 1,200 p.a. (d'Hericourt). These figures match estimates by Garnier, Rassam and Lejean, for the 1850s and 1860s, of between 2-3,000 exported p.a. However, see Schweinfurth, *The Heart of Africa* (New York, 1874; reprinted Chicago, 1969, 2 vols.), II, pp. 428-9: 18,000 p.a.; Massata, *Trentacinque Anni*, Lavery trans., I, p.176: 20,000 p.a.; Salviac, *Les Galla*, p.264: 6-8,000 p.a. (de Jacobis); Pankhurst, *Economic History*, p. 84: 15,000-20,000 p.a. (de Sarzec), 10,000 p.a. (Haussman).

c) MAEF, *Mémoires et Documents, Afrique* 13, pp. 225-32, Combes, April and September 1841: 1,000-1,900 p.a.; Abir, *Era of the Princes*, pp. 65-6: 1,500-3,000 p.a.; Harris, *Highlands*, I, p.64: 3,000 p.a.; Douin, *Histoire*, III, II, p.179: 1,300 p.a. (Moresby); Austen, "Red Sea Slave Trade", pp. 449-50, for contemporary estimates ranging between 1,200-4,000 p.a.

d) Massala, *Trentacinque anni*, Lavery trans., VIII, p. 88: 300+ p.a.; R. Burton, *First Footsteps in East Africa* (London, 1966 edn.), p. 53: 600-1,000 p.a.

e) Abir's estimate from miscellaneous m.s. sources is 1,000-2,000 slaves exported from Berbera p.a. See also Austen, "Red Sea Slave Trade", p. 450: 1,700 p.a. (Arcangelo), and Burton who states that the last "slave" caravan leaving Harar for Berbera each year usually had 500 slaves and its predecessors several hundred each, *First Footsteps*, pp. 194-5, 250.

f) By treating Tajurah, Zeyla and Berbera together, and over a longer period, Austen reaches a much lower total projection for the Gulf of Aden ports of 2,500 p.a. (1800-1884).

g) This slightly exceeds Abir's estimates of Ethiopian slave exports in the second quarter of the nineteenth century at 6,000-7,000 slaves p.a. Note that Suakin is excluded. Its trade in slaves derived from the Ethiopian overland traffic are probably subsumed in exports via Gallaabat.

h) Beke, "Continuation of Routes", p. 19: *idem*, *Commerce*, pp. 4, 23, 26-7. See also his figure of 7,000 for Kararo, close to the Abay on the same route.

i) IOL, BSP, LG 189, 2060G (Harris), para. 16, and LG 185, 1440 (Barker), para. 18: 3,000-4,000; C.T. Beke, *Abyssinia: A Statement of Facts...* (London, 1845), p. 27: 2,500-3,000 p.a.; Krapf, *Travels*, p.46: 3,000-4,000 p.a. Massala *Trentacinque anni*, Lavery trans., I, p. 176) estimated the Shawan slave traffic at 2,000 p.a. in the 1870s, while Cecchi recorded the sale of 3,000-4,000 slaves at Rogge (*Da Zella*, I, p. 176). Harris' further calculation that 8,000-10,000 slaves passed through southern Shawa annually in the 1840s is higher than all other estimates for the same region in this period.

j) Cecchi notes that 4,000 slaves left Jemma and passed through Gabena and Soddo each year in the late 1870s (*Da Zella*, II, p. 538-9).

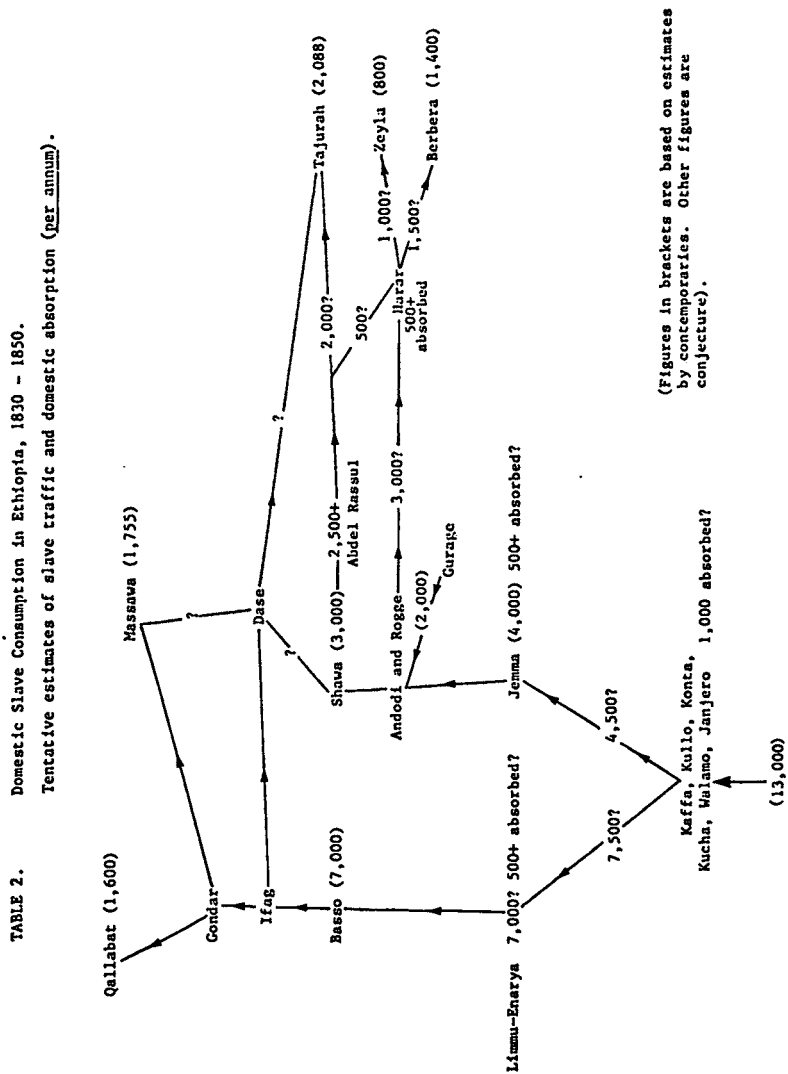
k) Massala, *Trentacinque anni*, Lavery trans. V, p.54: 7,000-8,000. Massala's figures, which are often exaggerated, are supported by Leon des Avanchers in Cecchi, *Da Zella*, II, p. 519: 7,000 p.a.; and in Salvat, *Les Galla*, p. 314: 8,000 p.a.

l) Harris and Krapf posit at least 1,000 each for Kucha, Walamo and Janjero, and also refer to substantial exports from Kullo, IOL, BSP, LG 196, 3491 (Harris), para. 19 and *Highlands*, II, pp. 54-6, III, pp. 71, 306, 318-9; Krapf, *Travels*, pp. 46-53, 69-70.

m) Krapf estimates that 3,000 captives left Gurage annually, *Travels* pp. 46-7. Gurage's position on the major trade route from southern Ethiopia to Shawa, Harar, and the coast, makes it difficult to separate local production from slave traffic. However, the presence of numerous Gurage slaves in both Shawa and Harar suggests substantial outputs, probably not less than 2,000 p.a.

n) There are no figures for slave production from Arsi, the Ogaden and the Danakil, although Burton (*First Footsteps*, p. 250) refers to Arsi slaves on the coast and Johnston, *Travels in Southern Abyssinia*, (London, 2 vols., 1844), I, p. 300) to Dankali captives.

table 2 diagram



large caravans which journeyed to southern Ethiopia and to overcome the perennial obstacles to trade in this region: warfare among rival Gibe and Omotic states; delays on caravans imposed by southern rulers while merchants negotiated onward passage and terms of official protection; and the onset of rains during which swollen rivers and deep mud halted regular commerce.²⁴ Moreover, familial, ethnic and religious bonds helped achieve vertical integration of commercial operations within trade networks, reinforced business confidence and eased access to credit. In Kaffa a leading slave merchant Hajj Muhammad Sale, maintained links with northern Ethiopia, Egypt and the Ottoman world, through elder brothers at Gondar and Cairo.²⁵ At major southern Ethiopian markets long-distance merchants also settled or operated in distinct ethnic communities, with separate compounds or discrete quarters housing traders from Tegre, Gondar, Gojjam, Wallo and Harar. Common religious conviction reinforced this segregation. Merchants who professed Islam held an initial advantage over their Christian counterparts in that they dealt with co-religionists at sources of long-distance commodities, especially in the Muslim Gibe states, and at the major points of articulation between Ethiopia, the Sudan, and the Red Sea basin, notably at Matamma and Massawa.²⁶

In the hands of long-distance merchants slaves faced considerable hardships, although recent descriptions of slaves in transit reflect the views of contemporary Europeans that slavery in Ethiopia was less inhuman than elsewhere in Africa.²⁷ Hostile climate, inhospitable terrain and *shefta* attacks took a regular toll. Many slaves perished on the arduous desert leg from Shawa to the Bay of Tajurah, and on the road north from Gondar to Sennar, especially the women and children who comprised most of the Ethiopian transit trade and the bulk of exports.²⁸ Their value usually mitigated against excessive brutality, but male slaves risked emasculation, while captive young women often served as concubines for slavers, though devalued by loss of virginity.²⁹ Many slaves made forced marches with little food, crossing rough terrain in shackles or wooden halters, barefoot and without clothes. Where slaves were plentiful, as in Kaffa, or on the route through northwest Ethiopia to the Sudan, slavers exhibited a callous disregard for human life.³⁰ Arrival at regional markets offered little relief, although traders often presented their human merchandise temporarily bejewelled and attired in fine clothes for public, and often intimate inspection.³¹ Girls held at Saqa in the 1870s were dirty and emaciated; at Lega merchants kept slaves in fetters and cowed. In northern Ethiopia even elderly slaves and young women lay for days bound hand and foot in filth and squalor in dealers' huts at Basso and Ifag. At Qallabat, where overseers confined captives in stifling booths, slave mortality was especially high, but the merchants rarely acknowledged sickness for fear of diminution in slave prices.³²

The third factor which made the traffic in servile labour feasible was that merchants who invested capital in slaves were able to realise their value through exchange. Ethnicity, sex, physique, health and age, were determinants of slave value, but distance from source of production was the decisive element, as Table 1 suggests. Between southern Ethiopia and coastal entrepôts like Massawa the price of a male slave quadrupled and could increase tenfold. A female slave cost ten to fifteen times more on the Red Sea coast than at the source of supply. Teenage girls (*wasef*) cost even more. In the Omotic and Gibe states slave prices averaged between 20 and 30 *amole* (salt bars), around four or five Maria Theresa dollars depending on local exchange rates for salt. Across the Abay (Blue Nile) at Basso slaves sold for 4–12 thalers, rising above 16 thalers for an attractive girl. At Massawa and Qallabat prices for southern Ethiopian slaves were usually 35 thalers, and nearer 70 thalers for a beautiful young woman. On the eastern route through Shawa to Tajurah in 1840 a male slave who cost three thalers in Kaffa or Walamo fetched five in Rogge, not less than nine at Abdel Rassul, at least 30 in Harar, and about 40 on the Bay of Tajurah. Between the African and Arabian coasts slaves usually doubled in value again, and prices rose even more dramatically in the Persian Gulf where buyers prized Ethiopian slaves.³³

For Ethiopian merchants there were financial outlays and costly delays in equipping caravans, purchasing captives, and in the return to the coast. Between Basso and Massawa brokerage fees and customs dues on a slaves were rarely less than 20 thalers. Brokers' fees at Basso and Gondar were not less than half a thaler, with customs duties of up to one thaler at Basso, Mota, Dambacha, Ifag and Gondar. Between Gondar and Massawa customs tolls were rarely less than three thalers, with a further 5–6 at Massawa itself. In addition to this, there was, for the merchant, the cost of the slave escort and caravan provisions for a journey of about 40 days between Gojjam and Massawa.³⁴

For a male slave purchased at Basso for 8 thalers and sold at Massawa for about 35 thalers gross profit rarely exceeded 10 thalers. After expenses for the caravan escort, for transport and food, the return on capital was probably no more than 20 per cent, and usually much less. Profit margins on *wasef* and eunuchs were larger, perhaps 30 to 40 per cent, but for optimum returns merchants had to extend their operations close to sources of supply and demand, where the greatest profits lay. Thus capital played a crucial role and only wealthy merchants who controlled the collection, overland passage, shipment and overseas sale of slaves stood to gain. The price differential for slaves between Saqa and Basso, a 15 day trip, was comparable to that for the much longer journey with higher tolls between Basso and Massawa. Though dividends were high, only slavers with substantial resources risked the protracted negotiations, potential delays, and effective *afscala* competition, involved in

venturing below the Abay. Likewise, merchants could make high profits between Massawa and Jedda at the northern end of the route, but trade beyond the African littoral required capital, commercial contacts and degrees of organisation which few Ethiopian traders possessed. Vertical integration of slave production, wholesaling and retailing, raised profits for the richest merchants, but for most traders slaving was a risky affair which yielded slender profits.³⁵

The poor prospects for capital accumulation from the slave trade indicates its limited role in an overwhelmingly subsistence economy. With Kaffa as a possible exception, no early nineteenth-century Ethiopian state relied heavily on slave sales for revenue, though in the southern kingdoms direct appropriation of captives sustained slave modes of production. The relatively limited extent to which duties on the slave trade contributed to incomes of southern Ethiopian rulers illuminates the value of the commercial traffic in slaves. Evidence for Shawa is typical. In the 1840s at Aliyu Amba (Abdel Rassul) annual customs dues were 3,000 thalers. Taxes on slaves in transit were four *amole*, with another four *amole* for captives sold in Shawa. Since 2,500–3,000 slaves passed through Abdel Rassul each year, taxes on them raised between 500 and 600 thalers, and no more than 1,200 thalers in the unlikely event that every imported slave sold in Shawa. Harris estimated *Negus Sahle Sellase's* (r. 1813–47) yearly levies on slaves for Shawa at 4,000 thalers, less than five per cent of total royal revenues from tribute and trade of 80,000 to 90,000 thalers annually.³⁶ Tekalign concludes similarly for Jemma, where annual toll revenues on slaves in the late nineteenth century were no more than ten per cent of Abba Jifar II's total customs dues, and an even smaller proportion of total royal income from land in this agriculturally rich region. In Kaffa taxes on the slave trade were probably less important for the state than the product of servile labour, but here, as in the Gibe kingdoms, slave production remained firmly subordinate to a primary mode of appropriation which rested on forms of feudal rent.³⁷

Yet, with gold and ivory, slaves offered the sole way for southern elites to purchase imported prestige goods, though the terms of trade were unfavourable. The value foreign buyers placed on slaves rarely matched the high prices charged for imports. Slaves at Massawa often cost no more than several metres of broad cloth of bright colour. In Gojjam, Gudru, Jemma and Qabena, they sold for strips of inferior calico, woollen or cotton cloth, glass beads or copper ingots.³⁸ Europeans described these imports as 'trinkets and finery', or more succinctly, as 'much rubbish', but value was largely a matter of perspective. While southern elites received no substantial compensation in manufactured goods or new technology for the loss of a slave's labour power for life, they acquired imported items unobtainable elsewhere. They exchanged

slaves because they were plentiful and cheap. In return they obtained 'luxury goods' and instruments of destruction, primarily matchlocks. Occasionally income from trade, including the traffic in slaves, helped powerful leaders like Abba Bagibo of Limmu-Enarya, Abba Jifar I of Jemma (r. 1830-55), and Gama Moras of Gudru (1850s), forge political unity.³⁹

However, the slave trade induced no profound structural changes in the economies of southern states and had little effect on the mass of peasant producers. Extraneous sources of supply diminished the internal impact of the slave traffic and caused no reduction in the output of other goods, for the supply of slave labour exceeded local needs. The domestic economy remained tied to the production and consumption of agricultural goods. Thus relatively low levels of productivity and the marginal importance of imported goods or of proceeds from the export trade in relation to total output ensured the domestic economy was resilient and relatively unaffected by slaving. Nonetheless, the existence of a commodity market in captives reaffirmed the marked disparity in the value of Ethiopian imports and exports. While the export sector remained small this had little impact, for external trade, and the slave traffic in particular, developed few productive links with the rest of the Ethiopian economy. Yet the marginal effects of external trade were a function of its limited size. Ethiopia's subordination to the capitalist world economy dates from around 1910 when coffee and hides became primary Ethiopian exports, but the early decades of the previous century established a structural pattern of unequal exchange and underdevelopment which was accentuated as the volume of goods in circulation increased.

Menilek's reign, first as king of Shawa, and later as emperor, marks a watershed in the history of servile labour and the slave traffic in Ethiopia. Before his accession degrees of state encouragement or toleration of slaving in the northern provinces of a fissured empire and in the independent kingdoms of southern Ethiopia often determined the dimensions of the slave sector and the slave traffic. Yet from the mid-1890s the prevalence of slavery and of commercial slaving was largely an inverse function of the strength of central government, especially in newly-incorporated southern peripheries.

From the outset Menilek's public attitudes towards servile labour and the slave trade reflected his sensitivity to renewed international pressure for abolition and to his own need for European allies as Egypt annexed Harar and major Shawan outlets to the Gulf of Aden. In 1876 Menilek reaffirmed imperial prohibitions on Christian participation in the slave trade, and prescribed arrest for Muslims who traded slaves across Shawa.⁴⁰ In correspondence with European rulers two years later and with the Anti-Slavery Society in Britain Menilek cast the Egyptians

as promoters of a slave trade which he deplored. Menilek also claimed to have liberated prisoners taken in his campaigns in the Gibe states, and to have upheld an imperial prohibition on the seizure of Gurage captives.⁴¹ As newly-crowned emperor in 1889 Menilek renewed imperial and Shawan edicts against slaving, a commitment reinforced that May by his signature on anti-slave trade provisions in the Ethio-Italian treaty of Wechale, and by his adherence a year later to the General Act of the 1889-90 Brussels Conference on Slavery.⁴² In the next decade Menilek promulgated a series of edicts, including one which decreed confiscation of property and physical mutilation for those who seized or traded Oromo slaves, and another in August 1907 which stipulated that those caught slaving would themselves become chattels of their captors and be branded on the forehead.⁴³

However, the Ethiopian milieu limited Menilek's commitment to the ideals of European abolitionists for two salient reasons. First, his southern campaigns yielded Menilek rich booty, including thousands of slaves. He used this plunder to sustain royal finances, especially between 1878 and 1882 when Menilek paid a punitive yearly tribute of 200,000 thalers to Emperor Yohannes.⁴⁴ In these years Menilek needed every available source of income, including revenues from the export of southern captives, to preserve Shawa from imperial invasion, to defeat *Negus* Takla Haymanot of Gojjam, his primary rival for control of the lucrative southwest, and to maintain his own aspirations to become emperor.⁴⁵ He used the proceeds of southern expansion to pay imperial tribute and to acquire firearms from European traders Soleillet, Chefniaux, Bremond and Labatat.⁴⁶ Even after his accession in 1889 Menilek still relied on southern exports to finance those arms purchases which finally ended Italian incursions into northern Ethiopia in 1896. With domestic and international rivals at bay and financial restraints eased by victory at Adwa and by the growth of new exports, primarily coffee and hides, Menilek could henceforth give positive support for action against slaving in Ethiopia, a policy which earned him increased European esteem.

Heavy financial commitments before the mid-1890s also elucidate the second reason for Menilek's reticence to end slaving. Menilek clearly believed that constraints on the Ethiopian slave traffic would lead to a general diminution of commerce from the south and southwest.⁴⁷ In the late 1880s customs duties on slaves, levied at one thaler as they entered Shawa and again when they left, probably raised 10,000 thalers each year. Even if indirect sales of captives brought additional revenue, this accounted for no more than five per cent of Menilek's total income in trade taxes and tribute from Shawa and his newly dependent southern territories, and perhaps 20 per cent of customs receipts.⁴⁸ However, Menilek feared not only the relatively marginal loss of taxes on slaves

in transit, but also a more substantial decrease in duties on legitimate goods marketed in Shawa or en route to the Red Sea coast. The most specific threat was to the trade in southern ivory. It became clear only later that regulations against the slave traffic would not cause traders to abandon southern markets which supplied a host of lucrative products besides slaves.

Moreover, before the mid-1890s Menilek was unlikely to suppress a trade in captives whose acquisition he promoted. In the context of southern expansion, from initial raids through invasion and conquest, Menilek and his commanders seized thousands of prisoners. Only military occupation of the south preserved the remaining population to serve as assigned labour (*gabbar*) on lands retained by the crown or estates granted to high Ethiopian officials, their soldiers and retainers. Thus conquest initially increased numbers of slaves reaching domestic and international markets, but the developments of the new political regime in the south eroded supply as Ethiopian *naftanna* (settlers) perceived the pivotal role of their new subjects as *gabbar*.

Menilek's expeditions into southern Ethiopia set a ferocious pattern. As Shawan forces razed entire districts, they usually killed male defenders and enslaved their wives and children.⁴⁹ Menilek gained half the plunder and captives; his generals and soldiers divided the rest according to rank. Despite an imperial edict forbidding the seizure and removal of Gurage, which Menilek claimed to uphold, he allowed his soldiers to take captives as slaves in Gurage in October 1876.⁵⁰ Shawan expeditions to Soddo and Lagamara in late 1878, the latter commanded by *Ras* Gobana, also yielded hundreds of captives. In January 1882, as Gojjame and Shawan forces struggled to control profitable trade routes from the southwest, *Ras* Daraso of Gojjam defeated the kings of Guma and Gera, but prisoners fell to Gobana when he clashed with Daraso's rearguard in Limmu.⁵¹ In renewed Shawan expeditions in the 1880s, *Dajazmach* Walda Giyorgis enslaved prisoners in a joint attack on Janjero with Abbar Jifar II of Jemma. Between 1882 and 1884 Menilek and *Ras* Darge took thousands of captives in sanguine campaigns to subdue Arsi, while Ethiopian attacks on the Ittu Oromo in 1885, which preceded the occupation of Harar, left tracts of their territory depopulated and ill-prepared for drought and rinderpest at the end of the decade.⁵² Even after Menilek's accession as emperor, territorial expansion continued to produce captives. In Walamo in 1894, Ethiopian forces seized 15,000–20,000 prisoners, of whom the emperor took 1,800 as slaves.⁵³ In the 1890s also *Ras* Makonnen carried off women and children from Bela Shangul, and his troops enslaved hundreds of captives in Borana and the Ogaden, selling their surplus to dealers in Harar and from the coast.⁵⁴

Raids persisted after 1900 because of the relative independence of new provincial governors in the south and their own limited control of distant

peripheries. Despite British protests, Ethiopian raiders ranged south over new colonial frontiers. On occasion they enslaved Turkana and marched them north in chains.⁵⁵ *Ras* Tasamma of Gore and *Ras* Walda Giyorgis, the two most important provincial governors in the south west, also acquired captives as they extended their rule southward. Between 1906 and 1908 Tasamma's soldiers enslaved thousands of prisoners in Gemira. On Walda Giyorgis' transfer from Kaffa in 1910, his officials removed large numbers of southern indigenes, either to work for them in Gondar or for sale as slaves.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, by comparison with the anarchic conditions which prevailed in the southwest from 1911, the two princes exercised a restraining influence, though they could not always check occasional raids by remote and unruly subordinates in districts long associated with slaving. Despite Walda Giyorgis' express orders against slave raids, these persisted in parts of Gemira, and an active slave market continued in Konta, Kucha, Kullo, Maji and Walamo.⁵⁷

Thus southern expansion and recurrent raids fuelled a national market for slaves, which despite his own edicts Menilek aided and abetted. Menilek occasionally followed Shawan custom by releasing war prisoners, but he also received regular slave tribute from regions like Qabena and Jemma, whose rulers tried to forestall annexation and preserve a measure of political autonomy.⁵⁸ Whether Menilek ever sold prisoners directly to traders is a moot point, but in practice he tolerated transactions between slave merchants at all major markets in Shawa until the mid-1890s.⁵⁹ Subject rulers and high officials followed suit. From the 1870s Omar Bosha of Qabena supplied captives to Afar and Somali merchants and negotiated with the slaver Abu Bakr of Zeyla. In addition to his tribute to Menilek, Abba Jifar II also marketed captives through Shawan outlets, while *Ras* Mikael of Wallo sent numerous slave caravans to the Red Sea coast.⁶⁰ Like his sovereign, *Ras* Gobana also feigned studied indifference to a trade which few high officials in Shawa had incentive to suppress while Menilek enjoyed duties on slaves in transit.⁶¹

Since large numbers of slaves from southern Ethiopia reached the Gulf of Aden Menilek clearly placed few obstacles in their path. Indeed, until the French opened an overland route from Shawa to Obok in mid-1884 he relied heavily on Abu Bakr of Zeyla for access to the coast. Until then it was impolitic of Menilek to oppose a slave traffic which Abu Bakr valued highly and which allowed the emperor and his soldiers to channel southern captives into the hands of Muslim intermediaries in exchange for imported goods. Between 1870 and 1895 between 1,500 and 2,000 slaves left Berbera, Zeyla, and the Bay of Tajurah annually, while slave harvests south of Kaffa still yielded 7,000-8,000 captives each year.⁶² Slave exports through Jemma's primary slave market at Hermata, and in Qumbi and Garo, reached a peak of 5,000 a year in the 1870s and

TABLE 3. SLAVE PRICES AT BASSO, GOJJAM, c. 1840, c. 1880

Slave	* Price in 1840 [a]	+ Price in 1880 [b]
Boy	4-8	20
Man (kadama)	10	40
Girl, young woman	8-12	60
Beautiful girl or virgin (wasef)	16	100
Adult woman	4	40-60
Man (shanqella)	4-6	-
Old man	-	10
Very old man	-	3

Sources[a] Beke, *Commerce*, p. 22.[b] Matteucci, *In Abissinia*, pp. 274-9.

* Original prices quoted in wagets, converted here at the contemporary rate in Gojjam into Maria Theresa dollars (thalers). The waget was worth about 2 thalers.

+ Original prices quoted in francs or amole, converted into Maria Theresa dollars.

TABLE 4. SLAVE PRICES IN SOUTHERN ETHIOPIA IN MARIA THERESA DOLLARS, c. 1870-1920

Place	Price (c. 1870-1895)	Price (c. 1895-1920)
HARAR		
Harar and Bubasso	30-40 (teenage m) [a] 60-100 (teenage f) [a]	60 (m) [j] 100 (teenage f) [k]
GOJJAM		
Basso	20-30 (m&f) [b] 50 (teenage f) [b]	40-60 (m&f) [l] 70 (child) [l]
SHAWA		
Addis Ababa	10 (boy) [c] 17 (girl) [c]	30 (child) [m], 25 (boy) [n] 50 (girl) [n], 40 (m) [j] 60-80 (teenage m&f) [o] 40-80 (teenage m) [p] 70-90 (teenage f) [pr] 100-150 (attractive teenage f) [p] 20-80 (m&f in 1919) [q]
Rogge	15-20 (m&f) [d]	
ILLUBABOR		
Gore		40-50 (m&f) [st]
LIMMU-ENARYA		
Saqa	15-25 (m&f) [e] 30 (?) (teenage f) [e]	

QABENA	10-15 (m&f) [f] 30-35 (teenage f) [f]	
JEMMA		
Jiren (Hermata)	5-15 (m&f) [g]	5-10 (young children) [uv] 30 (boy) [u]
	20-30 (teenage f) [g]	10/25-100 (m&f aged 10-50) [uv]
Omo	6-8 (teenage f) [h]	5-6 (teenage f) [u]
KAFFA		
	2-4 (m&f) [i]	10 (m) [j] 25 (m), 50 (f) [w]

Sources

- a] P. Paulitschke, Beiträge zur Ethnographie und Anthropologie der Somal, Galla und Harar (Leipzig, 1888), pp. 60-1.
- b] Matteucci, In Abyssinia, pp. 274-6.
- c] Vanderheyem, Expedition, p. 123, at Abba Jifar's camp in Addis Ababa.
- d] Cecchi, Da Zeila, I, pp. 490-1.
- e] *Ibid.*, II, pp. 194-5.
- f] *Ibid.*, II, pp. 59-60.
- g] Borelli, Ethiopie Meridionale, p. 289.
- h] *Ibid.*, p. 332.
- i] Soleillet, Voyages, p. 196.
- j] Pankhurst, Economic History, p. 85, citing F. Martini, Diario, I, p. 186, and II, p. 193.
- k] Salviac, Les Galla, p. 261.
- l] PRO, FO401/17, 16, Memorandum on the slave trade in N.W. Abyssinia, Home, Dangila, 22 March 1924.
- m] C.A. Hindlip, Sport and Travel: Abyssinia and British East Africa (London, 1906), pp. 74, 111.
- n] Pankhurst, Economic History, p. 85, citing A. Cipolla, Nell' Impero di Menelik (Milan, 1910), p. 98.
- o] Salviac, Les Galla, p. 20.
- p] Merab, Impressions, III, pp. 127-35.
- q] PRO, FO403/450, No. 188, Enc. 3, Memorandum by Walker on slave traffic in general in Abyssinia, Addis Ababa, September 1919.
- r] PRO, FO403/453, No. 39, Dodds to Curzon, Enc. 3, Slaves in possession of British Legation servants, Addis Ababa, 5 September, 1922.
- s] C.A.L. Bulpitt, A Picnic Party in Wildest Africa (London 1907), p. 105. However, a plentiful supply of slaves in 1919 caused prices to fall to 7 thalers for a male slave, see Southard, U.S. Consul in Aden, to Sec. of State, 20 April 1919, in B.G. Steffanson and R.K. Starrett (eds.), Documents on Ethiopian Politics (Salisbury, N.C., 3 vols., 1973), I, pp. 181-4.
- t] PRO, FO403/454, No. 55, Enc. 3, Annex, Memorandum by Walker on Slavery in Abyssinia, Gore, 30 September 1923, p. 59.
- u] G. Montandon, L'Esclavage en Abyssinie (Geneva, 1923), pp. 15, 24-25 (Shrenik).
- v] PRO, FO403/450, No. 188, Enc. 1, p. 181, Memorandum by Darley on slave question in Abyssinia, Addis Ababa, September 1919. See also Enc. 2, Memo. by Athill. In 1919 prices in Jemma fell to 5 thalers for a child, 10 for a grown boy.
- w] Pankhurst, Economic History, p. 85, citing A. Cipolla, Pagine Africane di un Esploratore (Milan, 1927), p. 265.

TABLE 5. RATE OF EXCHANGE OF *AMOLE* (SALT BAR) FOR MARIA THERESA DOLLAR (THALER) IN NINETEENTH CENTURY ETHIOPIA

	<u>1840s/1850s</u>	<u>1880s/1890s</u>
TEGRE		
Ficho (near Lake Taital Salt Plain)	80-120 [a]	100 [i]
Adwa	50-70 [ab]	25-30 [i]
LASTA		
Saqota	50-70 [ac]	25-30 [i]
BAGEMDER		
Gondar	30-40 [ac]	15 [i]
Dabra Tabor	-	13 [i]
WALLO		
Walaya	36-40 [d]	-
Warra-Ilu	30-35 [c]	15-20 [j] (10-13)
GOJJAM		
Basso	20-25 [b]	10-12 [k]
SHAWA		
Geddem	23-30 [cef]	-
Liche	-	10-11 [j]
Ankobar	-	8-10 [c]j]
Aliyu Amba (Abdel Rassul)	18-20 [dfg]	9-10 [c]
Rogge		9-10 [c]
LAGAMARA/GUDRU	14-22 [h]	-
LIMMU-ENARYA		
Saga	10-12 [ac]	4-7 [i], 12-13 [j]
GERA		
Challa	-	3-7 [d]
JEMMA		
Jiren (Hermata)	-	5-7 [ijlm]
Omo	-	6-8 [n]
KAFFA		
Bonga	5 [g]	5-7 [ijm]

Sources

- a) Abir, *Era of the Princes*, p. 48.
b) Beke, *Commerce*, p. 17.
c) Kofi Darkwah, *Shewa*, pp. 164-5.
d) Isenberg and Krapf, *Journals*, p. 443.
e) Harris, *Highlands*, I, p. 388.
f) Johnston, *Travels*, II, pp. 234-7.
g) Krapf, *Travels*, p. 58.
h) Massala, *Trentacinque anni*, Lavery trans., III, p. 71.
i) Franzoj, *Continente Nero*, p. 58.
j) Cecchi, *Da Zella*, I, p. 305, II, p. 298.
k) P. Matteucci, *In Abissinia, viaggio di Pellegrino Matteucci* (Milan, 1880), pp. 274-6.
l) Salviac, *Les Galla*, p. 214.
m) Soleillet, *Voyages*, pp. 172, 196.
n) Borelli, *Ethiopie Meridionale*, p. 332.
o) Asnake Ali, "Conditions in Wallo, 1872-1917", pp. 11-12.

TABLE 6. SLAVE PRICES AT QABENA, 1877-1881

<u>Slave</u>	<u>Price*(Maria Theresa dollars)®</u>
Boys and girls (mamul)	6-10
Teenage boy aged 12-16 (gurbe)	13-14
Teenage girl aged 12-16	12-14
Man aged 20-24 (kadama)	10-15
Woman aged 20-24 (konjo)	10-15
Young woman or virgin (wasef)	30-35
Old man	3+
Old woman	4-5

Source

Cecchi, *Da Zella*, II, p. 60.

* At Gabena most slaves came from Gurage.

® Original prices quoted in natter, converted here at the contemporary rate in Gabena into Maria Theresa dollars (thalers). According to Cecchi, *Da Zella*, II, p. 58, the thaler was worth 2 natter.

TABLE 7. SLAVE PRICES AT ROGGE, SHAWA, 1877-1881

<u>Slave</u>	<u>Price (Maria Theresa dollars)*</u>
Boys and girls aged under 10 (mamul)	7-15
Teenage boy aged 10-16 (gurbe)	15-20
Man aged 20-24 (kadama)	12-15
Woman aged 20-24 (konjo)	17-18
Young woman or virgin (wasef)	30-40
Old man	7-8
Old woman	4-5

Source

Cecchi, *Da Zella*, p. 490.

*MT\$1=4 shillings [20 pence] (sterling)

1880s. Slave markets in Walamo and Qabena remained active to the end of the latter decade.⁶³ In the late 1870s the slave markets of Andodi and Rogge still handled 4,000 slaves annually, and at least 2,000 of these probably left Shawa through Abdel Rassul.⁶⁴ Between June and July 1883 Adari slavers purchased 3,000 slaves at Abdel Rassul, while three separate caravans en route from Shawa to Aussa, Zeyla and the Bay of Tajurah in July 1884 contained 4,000 slaves altogether. Even in 1887 a single caravan at Rogge consisted of over 1,000 slaves.⁶⁵ Slave exports from Zeyla and the Gulf of Aden only declined after the First World War, though an illicit trade from Raheita, Assab and the Dankali coast persisted in the 1920s.⁶⁶

Examination of slave prices also suggests no diminution in the supply of captives before the 1890s, nor government intervention which increased costs. Slaves who reached Gojjame and Shawan markets more than doubled in price during the nineteenth century (see Table 3 and compare Table 1 and Table 4, first column and Tables 6 and 7), but the primary cause was secular inflation of the Maria Theresa dollar, which halved in value against sterling between the 1820s and 1910.⁶⁷ Moreover, as Table 5 reveals, the rate of the thaler against the *amole*, for which most slaves initially exchanged, fell sharply in the nineteenth century, especially when Shawa came under economic pressure from Emperor Yohannes. Hence, rising slave prices reflected a relative scarcity of salt in southern Ethiopia, especially after the mid-1870s. By the early twentieth century the value of salt had at least doubled against the thaler. In the same period the thaler fluctuated sharply against sterling, from between five and 20 thalers, largely because the thaler's high silver content made it responsive to the international price of this metal.

Two additional factors contributed to a further real as opposed to monetary rise in slave prices after 1895. The first was the physical reduction of former slave-producing regions as the imperial state expanded to incorporate these areas. Demarcation of Ethiopia's international borders further limited access to slaves as external sources of supply lay for the first time across new colonial frontiers.⁶⁸ The second factor which raised slave prices and reduced slaving was the increased efficacy of Menilek's edicts against the trade in human beings. From the mid-1890s slavers transferred captives by night or bribed customs officials at provincial frontiers.⁶⁹ Even soldiers returning to Addis Ababa from Kaffa and Walamo with slaves for sale now resorted to elaborate subterfuges to avoid detection.⁷⁰ In this decade also Menilek closed the public slave market at Rogge in Shawa, while the slave trade through Wallo diminished sharply.⁷¹ By 1900, imperial regulations ended marketing of slaves at important Gojjame centres like Dejen, Dabra Markos and Dambacha, and also at Bure. Five years later slaves had disappeared from Ifag in Bagemder.⁷² In southern Ethiopia Abba Jifar closed the

main slave market at Jiren and by 1907 even peripheral regions like Borana felt the impact of imperial decrees.⁷³ Reports from British naval vessels in the Red Sea indicate a temporary decline in slave exports in the first decade of the new century.⁷⁴

The final cause of a rise in slave prices and of a declining internal slave trade was more complex in origin. It derived from the erosion of slave modes of production in many parts of southern Ethiopia in the aftermath of incorporation into the imperial state. After the initial seizure of southern peoples as slaves, their allocation as *gabbar* for labour service and payment of tribute to Ethiopian settlers marked a transition away from the use of slaves in agriculture where this had occurred previously in the south.⁷⁵ For new settlers *gabbar* labour had neither the cost of production nor the cost of maintenance associated with slavery. For provincial officials, long familiar with forms of serfdom in northern Ethiopia, adscription of southern cultivators allowed a degree of political control which was both effective and decentralised. As Menilek and his officials perceived that the value of the southern population was greater as cultivators than as commodities for export and immediate profit, they issued a series of edicts to prevent their removal.⁷⁶ In Kaffa Ras Walda Giyorgis prohibited the export of the indigenous population. *Naftanna* even enchained *gabbar* in Gemira to enforce local proclamations and prevent their flight. In Kambata an order stipulated that runaway *gabbar* should be fetched back and punished.⁷⁷

Slave production survived only in regions which remained nominally independent or occasionally where local leaders (*balabbat*) retained real authority. In Jemma, Abba Jifar II and his nobles still retained thousands of slaves and an agrarian economy relied heavily on their labour. However, even in Jemma a slave plantation system for coffee production failed to develop after 1900, and periodic *corvée* obligations remained the primary source of labour on royal and noble lands. Elsewhere in the south, agrarian slave production survived in pockets, as in Leqa.⁷⁸ Thus by the early twentieth century the large-scale use of slaves for agricultural work in southern Ethiopia was rare and most slaves continued to work in a palace or household context.⁷⁹ Imperial edicts addressed the slave trade, but only affected household slavery within Ethiopia after 1924 when Ras Tafari took the first steps toward legal emancipation of slaves. In the 1880s and 1890s Menilek, Empress Taytu, and their immediate family, possessed thousands of palace slaves and they dispensed these occasionally as gifts.⁸⁰ Like his predecessors, Menilek had a slave bodyguard and occasionally raised slaves high in his government.⁸¹ After 1900 his leading nobles maintained large slaves retinues, while domestic slavery persisted at less exalted levels of Ethiopian society. Most households in Addis Ababa had numerous slaves in the early twentieth century, often to enhance status.⁸² Even in southern regions

incorporated directly by the Ethiopian state, provincial governors, their officials and soldiers, kept hundreds of slaves for domestic service.

Thus political and economic forces in Menilek's expanded empire determined two important changes. The first was the substitution of slave modes of production where they occurred in the south by forms of serfdom imposed by a new settler elite and embodied in the *naftanna* – *gabbar* system. The second was the decline in open trading and marketing of slaves. Political centralisation, the establishment of new forms of surplus extraction, and renewed international interest in abolition, were key dynamics in the demise of agrarian slave production and in the eventual elimination of the slave trade. In time the introduction of capitalist production relations made slavery a social anachronism and the slave trade unprofitable. However, in the short term Menilek's long illness after 1908 created governmental instability which lasted into the reign of his politically inept successor, *Lej Iyasu*, and through the early years of *Ras Tafari's* regency. From 1908 to the early 1920s, and especially in southwestern Ethiopia, there existed such insecurity of tenure for provincial governors, administrators and soldiers, that for an antinomian interlude southern indigenes were again more valuable as marketable commodities than for their agricultural labour. With the restoration of central authority under *Ras Tafari* cash crop production revived and coffee became the primary southern export. Their labour power at last ensured that southern populations regained a relative security denied them over two destructive decades.

NOTES

1. Y. Kobischanov, *Axum* (University Park and London, 1979), pp.150–8. For territorial expansion and slaving, Tadesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia 1270–1527* (Oxford, 1972), pp.85–8 and Merid Wolde Aregay, 'Southern Ethiopia and the Christian Kingdom, 1508–1708, with special reference to the Galla Migrations and their Consequences', University of London, Ph.D. thesis, 1971, pp.106–7, 278–9, 470–5.
2. R. Pankhurst, 'The History of the Bareya, Sanqella and other Ethiopian slaves from the borderlands of the Sudan', *Sudan Notes and Records* 63 (1977), pp.11–17, 23.
3. For Tewodros, W. Plowden, *Travels in Abyssinia and the Galla country with an account of a mission to Ras Ali in 1848* (London 1868), pp.476–7; H. Dufton, *Narrative of a Journey through Abyssinia in 1862–3* (London, 2nd edn., 1867), p.142. For references by Catholic missionaries to slave trade suppression under Tewodros see D. Crummey, 'Tewodros as Reformer and Modernizer', *Journal of African History* X, 3 (1969), pp.459–61. Note also R. Pankhurst, *Economic History of Ethiopia 1800–1935* (Addis Ababa, 1968), pp.92–3. For Yohannes, E.A. de Cosson, *The Cradle of the Blue Nile* (London, 2 vols., 1877), II, pp.35–40, 141–2. Primary sources for the Hewett Mission and Treaty are Public Records Office (PRO), Foreign Office (FO) 1/30 and PRO, FO1/31, PRO, FO93/2, No.2, and the Hewett correspondence in PRO, FO401/6.
4. For Menilek's efforts to suppress slaving see below.

5. G. Massaia, *I miei trentacinque anni di missione nell'Alta Etiopia* (Milan, 1885-95), trans. by Aurelian Lavery, 'My Thirty-Five Years of Missionary Work on the Ethiopian Plateau', Addis Ababa, 1975, held in the Kennedy Library, Addis Ababa University, IV, pp.186-7 and V, pp.15-16; A. Cecchi, *Da Zeila alla Frontiere del Caffa* (Rome, 3 vols., 1885), II, pp.152-66, 203-7, 436-7, 492-8, 517-18. See also E. Cerulli, *Etiopia Occidentale* (Rome, 2 vols.), pp.109-10 and 186-8; H.S. Lewis, *A Galla Monarchy. Jimma Abba Jifar, Ethiopia, 1830-1932* (Madison and Milwaukee, 1965), pp.66-67, 83-5; and M. Abir, *Ethiopia. The Era of the Princes. The Challenge of Islam and the Re-unification of the Christian Empire 1769-1855* (London, 1968), especially Ch.4.
6. For slaves in agriculture in Kaffa see Massaia, *Trentacinque anni* (Lavery trans.), V, p.56; Cecchi, *Da Zeila*, II, p.492. For Kaffa see also W.J. Lange, *History of the Southern Gonga (Southwestern Ethiopia)* (Wiesbaden, 1982), pp.268-9; and A. Orent, 'Refocussing on the History of Kafa prior to 1897: a discussion of political processes', *African Historical Studies* 3 (1970), 2, p.283. For Jemima, Lewis, *Galla Monarchy*, pp.66-7, 75-6; Tekalign Wolde Maryam, 'The Slave Trade in the Economy of Jemima', Eighth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Nov. 1984, unpublished paper, p.16; M. Borelli, *Ethiopie Méridionale, Journal de mon voyage aux pays Amhara, Oromo et Sidama* (Sept. 1885-Nov. 1888) (Paris, 1890), pp.282-9, 306-10, 347. For the other Gibe states, Cecchi, *Da Zeila*, II, pp.282-3.
7. Cecchi, *Da Zeila*, II, pp.288-9, 462-3, 512-15; Lewis, *Galla Monarchy*, pp.97-8.
8. L. Traversi, 'Escursione nel Gimma', *Bollettino della Società Geografica Italiana* 13 (1888), pp.901-2; P. Solcillet, *Voyages en Ethiopie (Janvier 1882-Octobre 1884)* (Rouen, 1886), p.169; Cecchi, *Da Zeila*, II, p.448; Massaia, *Trentacinque anni* (Lavery trans.), p.53; Ernesto Cerulli, 'Peoples of South-West Ethiopia and its Borderlands', in D. Forde (ed.), *Ethnographic Survey of Africa, North-Eastern Africa, Part III* (London, 1956), p.107; E. Haberland, *Untersuchungen zum Aethiopischen Koenigtum* (Wiesbaden, 1965), p.266.
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11. India Office Library (IOL), Bombay Secret Proceedings (BSP), Lantern Gallery (LG) 196, 3491, Harris to Willoughby, Slave Report, paras. 15 and 19; J.L. Krapf, *Travels Researches and Missionary Labours during an eighteen years' residence in Eastern Africa* (London, 1860), pp.46-7.
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13. Cecchi, *Da Zeila*, II, p.517-18; W.J. Lange, 'Gimira (Remnants of a Vanishing Culture)', Ph.D. thesis. Johann Wolfgang Goethe Universität zu Frankfurt/Main, 1975, pp.62-6.
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 26. Abdussamad, 'Muslims of Gondar', pp.4, 10. For merchants at Saqa, Hermata and Bonga see Soleillet, *Voyages*, pp.180, 190-6, 226-7; Cecchi, *Da Zeila*, II, pp.193-5; Massaia, *Trentacinque anni* (Lavery trans.), IV, pp.181-7, V, pp.51-2; Borelli, *Ethiopie Méridionale*, p.288.
 27. C.T. Beke, 'Abyssinia - being a continuation of routes in that country', *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, 14 (1844), p.20; IOL, BSP, LG 196, 3491, Slave Report, paras. 21 and 24, and LG 204, 1146, Harris, 14 April 1848, para. 4; W.C. Harris, *The Highlands of Aethiopia, being an account of eighteen months of a British Embassy to the Christian Court of Shoa* (London, 3 vols., 1844), I, pp.234-5, III, p.307. For recent accounts, Pankhurst, *Economic History*, pp.90-2, and Abir, *Era of the Princes*, pp.58-64.
 28. For the perils of the Tajurah route, Abir, *Era of the Princes*, pp.63-5. For a contemporary account for Shawa to Tajurah see also J.M. Bernatz, *Scenes in Ethiopia* (London, 1852), plates VIII and IX. For Gondar to Sennar, Combes and Tamisier, *Voyage*, IV, pp.95-6, and de Cosson, *Cradle of the Blue Nile*, II, p.169.
 29. Most eunuchs came from Koba in southern Gudru, Badi Folla in northeast Jemma, from Kaffa, or from the great slave station at Borzano near Zeyla: Massaia, *Trentacinque anni* (Lavery trans.), III, p.202, VIII, p.127; Antoine d'Abbadie, *Géographie de l'Ethiopie* (Paris, 1890), pp.79-80. For concubines, Abir, *Era of the Princes*, p.59.
 30. IOL, BSP, LG 196, 3491, Slave Report, paras. 21 and 24; Cecchi, *Da Zeila*, II, pp.518, 539-40; Soleillet, *Voyages*, pp.183-9, 205. For harsh treatment by slaves on the routes from Kaffa see P. Matteucci, *In Abissinia, Viaggio di Pellegrino Matteucci* (Milan, 1880), pp.273-4; on the Nile and north from Gondar, Combes and Tamisier, *Voyages*, IV, pp.95-6, and de Cosson, *Cradle of the Blue Nile*, II, p.169.
 31. For Abdel Rassul see IOL, BSP, LG 196, 3491, Slave Report, paras. 26 and LG 204, 1146, para. 3; for Basso, C.T. Beke, *Letters on the Commerce and Politics of Abyssinia addressed to the Foreign Office and Board of Trade* (London, 1852), pp.21-22, and Matteucci, *In Abissinia*, p.274; for Ifag and Zemye, Massaia, *Trentacinque anni* (Lavery trans.), II, pp.126-7, 176-7; for Hermata, Borelli, *Ethiopie Méridionale*, pp.288, 309.
 32. For Saqa and Leqa see Cecchi, *Da Zeila*, II, pp.195, and Salviac, *Les Galla*, p.245; for Basso and Ifag, Matteucci, *In Abissinia*, pp.276-9, and Massaia, *Trentacinque*

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33. See sources for Table 1.
34. Beke, *Commerce*, p. 21; Plowden, *Travels*, p. 130; Combes and Tamisier, *Voyage*, IV, p. 92; N. Pearce, *The Life and Adventures of Nathaniel Pearce written by himself during a residence in Abyssinia from the years 1810-1819* (London, 2 vols., 1813), II, pp. 12-13, 302; Matteucci, *In Abissinia*, p. 256. See also Abdussamad Ahmad, 'Ethiopian Slave Exports at Matamma, Massawa and Tadjurah, ca. 1830 to 1885', in this volume.
35. Shipping costs per slave across the Red Sea were 3 thalers; customs duties rarely exceeded 10 thalers: Combes and Tamisier, *Voyage*, IV, p. 93; Douin, *Histoire*, III, i, pp. 263, 267. See also Janet Ewald's chapter in this volume. Abir reaches a similar conclusion about profits for the Tadjurah route, *Era of the Princes*, pp. 65-6.
36. IOL, BSP, LG 185, 1440, Barker, paras. 15, 18; IOL, BSP, LG 189, 2060G, Report on trade, para. 40, and LG 196, 3491, Slave Report, para. 23; Harris, *Highlands*, III, p. 28.
37. Tekalign, 'Slave Trade in Jemna', pp. 11-12. For discussion of the feudal mode of production in southwest Ethiopia in the nineteenth century, see T. Fernyhough, 'Serfs, Slaves and Shefta: Modes of Production in Southern Ethiopia from the Late Nineteenth Century to 1941', University of Illinois Ph.D. thesis, 1986, see especially, Ch. 2, 'Serfs and the Feudal Order, ca. 1850-1941'.
38. Beke, *Commerce*, pp. 19-23; Massaia, *Trentacinque anni* (Lavery trans.), III, p. 71; IOL, BSP, LG 189, 2060G, Report on trade, para. 42; Cecchi, *Da Zeila*, I, p. 305, II, pp. 59-60; Borelli, *Ethiopie Méridionale*, p. 346.
39. The best summaries of this process are in Abir, *Era of the Princes*, pp. 77-9, and Lewis, *Galla Monarchy*, pp. 31-41.
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44. H. Marcus, *The Life and Times of Menelik II: Ethiopia 1844-1913* (Oxford, 1975), pp. 63-4; Darkwah, *Shewa*, pp. 178-9.
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46. Darkwah, *Shewa*, pp. 200-6.
47. Darkwah makes a forceful argument for Menilek's fears of a broad commercial decline should he attempt to end the slave trade across his territory, *Shewa*, pp. 170-2.
48. Cecchi, *Da Zeila*, I, p. 491; Darkwah, *Shewa*, pp. 178-9.
49. Cecchi, *Da Zeila*, I, p. 359; Salviac, *Les Galla*, pp. 296, 304.
50. Cecchi, *Da Zeila*, I, pp. 174, 271-2; Salviac, *Les Galla*, p. 304; Gabra Sellase, *Chronique*, I, p. 125. See also Darkwah, *Shewa*, p. 102.
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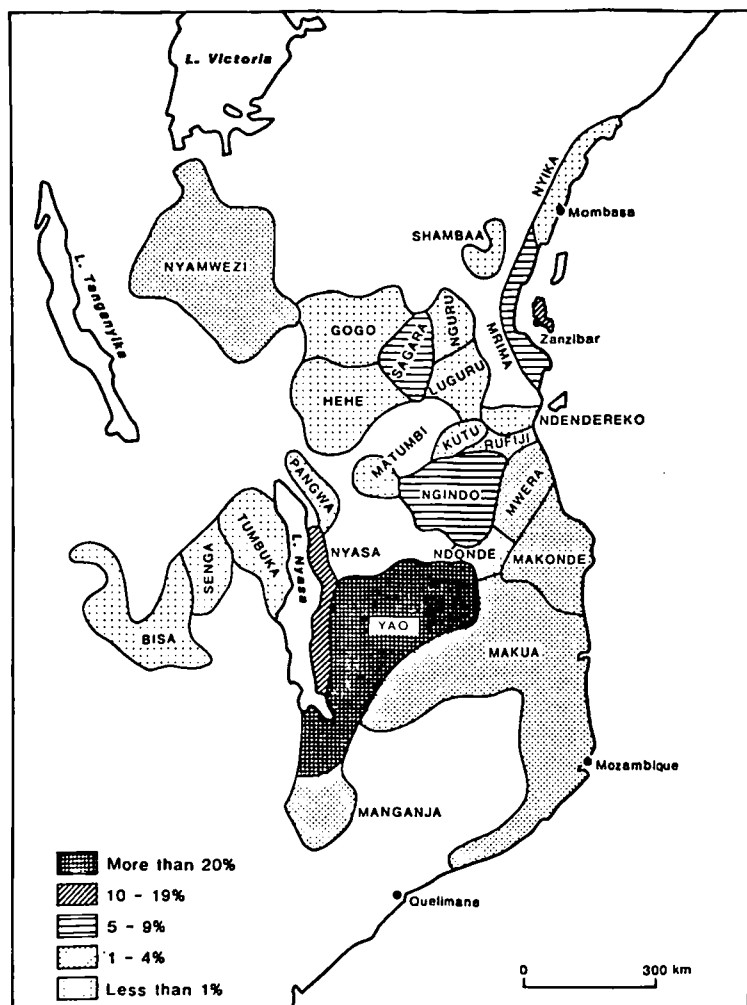
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79. Gabra Sellase, *Chronique*, II, pp.605-6; P. Merab, *Impressions d'Ethiopie: L'Abyssinie sous Menelik II* (Paris, 3 vols., 1921, 1922, 1929), I, p.367.
80. For the 1924 law, de Halpert papers, Mss. Afr. S. 1459 (3), Rhodes House, Bodleian Library, 'The law concerning the status and freedom of slaves', Addis Ababa, 22 Magabet 1916 (31 March 1924). For Menilek, Gabra Sellase, *Chronique*, I, pp.188, 271.
81. *Fitawrari* Habta Giyorgis, member of the triumvirate government after 1916, and *Dajazmach* Balcha of Sidamo were both originally taken as prisoners of war. *Azaj* Walda Sadeq, governor of Ankobar and advisor to Menilek, was a freed royal slave. See Soleillet, *Voyages*, p.273; Borelli, *Ethiopie Méridionale*, p.152; Cecchi, *Da Zeila*, I, pp.346-7.
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Localisation and Social Composition of the East African Slave Trade, 1858–1873

A. Sheriff

The renewed interest in the 'Eastern' slave trade out of Africa is very much to be welcomed since it should enable us to break out of the straitjacket of the nineteenth century British abolitionists which has hitherto hampered our understanding of the phenomenon. The precise quantification is also to be welcomed, although the temptation to stretch the limited data we have beyond their statistical capabilities, especially the temptation to project backwards centuries upon centuries from the few firm figures of the nineteenth century, must be resisted. The Eastern slave trade, as much as its Western counterpart, was a historical phenomenon tied up with the prevailing modes of production in different places and at different times, and its contours cannot merely be deduced statistically. One can go further and say that the rise and fall of the 18th–19th century East African slave trade was in many ways a new phenomenon tied up with capitalism, and it had its own characteristics which cannot be dragged beyond their historical depths.

A consensus has begun to emerge on the approximate dimensions of the East African slave trade in the nineteenth century.¹ Even more important perhaps is the realisation that the sector was undergoing a transformation from one that exported slaves to a local institution that consumed a large proportion of the slaves on the clove and grain plantations of Zanzibar and the coast of Kenya and Somalia to produce commodities for export.² The few reliable customs house records can now be corroborated and supplemented by an analysis of hundreds of dhows which were intercepted by British anti-slavery patrols. Apart from confirming the distinction between foreign and local slave trade in East Africa, these data have begun to yield further information on the character of the slave trade in terms of size of slave cargoes, mortality, and age and sex ratios of the slaves in the various sectors of the trade. Finally, a unique list of slaves emancipated in Zanzibar in 1860–61 will help us elaborate on the social composition and ethnic origins of the East African slaves, and the specificity of the Eastern slave trade compared to its Atlantic counterpart.



MAP 1. ETHNIC ORIGIN OF ZANZIBAR SLAVES, 1860

LOCAL VS. FOREIGN SLAVE TRADE

Customs statistics available for the 1860s show that an average of about 23,000 slaves were involved in the East African slave trade. From her study of 600 dhows captured by British naval vessels following the abolition of the slave trade in 1873, Glassman came to the conclusion that following the abolition of all slave trade by sea in 1873, slaving became increasingly localised and indigenised in East Africa.³ Although she represented this as a new development, the fact is that this process had begun much earlier in the century. Ironically, every attempt to restrict the export of slaves from East Africa, from the Moresby Treaty of 1822 which prohibited the export of slaves to the south, to the Hammerton Treaty of 1845 which forbade the export of slaves to the north, as well as the various restrictions imposed in the 1860s, had given an impetus to the localisation of the slave trade within East Africa. Moreover, the potential for the expansion of slavery was much greater within East Africa, with the rising world demand for spices and oleaginous grains, than in the more difficult environment of Arabia.

Glassman was mainly concerned 'with the slavers themselves rather than the slave trade as such'. Moreover, since all slave trade by sea had become illegal, she made no distinction as to the area of capture of the slave dhows. During the period under consideration, the pattern of trade was more complex since it was legal in certain areas and during certain months. This paper, therefore, attempts to define, from the nearly 300 dhows captured between 1858, when British anti-slavery patrols began to be more systematic, and 1873, the pattern of the trade, and highlight some of its characteristics during the period.⁴

The slave trade during this period was legal within the area defined by the Hammerton Treaty of 1845 between Kilwa in the south and Lamu in the north. Within this area it was made illegal during the first four months of the year by Sultan Majid of Zanzibar from 1864 in an effort to frustrate the export of slaves to Arabia by the 'Northern Arabs' who had become his political enemies after the partition of the Omani kingdom.⁵ During the remaining eight months of the year, the local slave trade was perfectly legal, and it was carried out on a large scale between Kilwa and Lamu through Zanzibar in what had become predominantly a local trade to supply the clove plantations of Zanzibar and Pemba and the grain plantations on the coast of Kenya.

A very large proportion of the slaves involved in the East African slave trade, varying between 70% and 90%, originated from Kilwa. The balance came from the mainland opposite in smaller numbers. The traffic from Kilwa was on a very large scale indeed. More than 100 dhows were involved, carrying an average of 167 slaves. Of these 41% carried more than 200 slaves each (13% carried more than 300 slaves

each), and another 30% carried more than 100 but less than 200 slaves each.⁶ Zanzibar was a major market for slaves to supply its own clove plantations which absorbed more than 60% of the slaves. The remaining number, more than 7,000 in the late 1860s, were re-distributed to the north. The re-export trade was less specialised. An average of 110 dhows were involved in this traffic, each carrying 64 slaves. Detailed statistics for 1866 show that only 8% of the dhows carried more than 200 slaves, and more than half carried less than 50 slaves. Thus slaves apparently formed only a part of the general trade to the north. However, there was a significant variation in cargo size according to destination. More than half the dhows to Lamu carried more than 100 slaves while most of the dhows going to Pemba and the Mrima coast carried less than 50.⁷

Although the trade was legal in this region, British ships captured a total of 100 dhows during the 15-year period of which 40 had no slaves at all. Using some internal evidence where it is available (such as site of capture and nationality of owner), it appears that of the 47 dhows for which we have data, 35 were involved in the local trade carrying an average of 27 slaves, whereas the 12 involved in the foreign trade to Arabia carried an average of 70 slaves, including one that had a cargo of 283 slaves.

The slave trade to the north of Lamu was illegal and the largest number of dhows were captured there, but there were developments on the Benadir coast of Somalia similar to those further south in Kenya. From the 1860s there was a substantial expansion of agricultural production for export to Europe, particularly of sesame and orchilla weed, using slave labour imported from the 'legal' area, especially through Lamu.⁷ This trade, although illegal, should properly be considered a local trade in East Africa, in contradistinction to the truly foreign trade to Arabia.

Ignoring the 16 dhows that had no slaves at all, and 30 from which they had allegedly escaped or for which there is no information, 82 dhows were captured during the period in this region. Of these, nearly half were captured along the Benadir coast, most of them in the harbours of Brava and Merka. These were probably engaged in supplying the grain plantations along the lower Shebelle in Somalia. Two of them had obtained passes for Lamu, while another had little food for its 196 slaves, suggesting that it was not contemplating a long voyage to Arabia, but rather a short journey of 4-5 days to the Benadir. While half of these dhows carried less than 10 slaves each, another fifth carried more than 100 slaves each, the largest with 267 slaves.

The remaining 42 dhows were captured north of the Benadir or along the Arabian coast, and were thus truly engaged in the foreign trade to the north. They carried an average of 53 slaves. Of these, 43% carried less than 10 slaves but 21% carried more than 100 slaves, the largest

cargo consisting of 236 slaves. Other dhows were captured in the legal area farther south, also involved in smuggling slaves to Arabia. The most notorious case was that of a dhow captured in 1865 belonging to Rubea b. Obaid b. Muhammad of 'remote African parentage' who identified himself with the Junaibi tribe at Sur in Oman. He managed to escape with the British prize crew of three, who were never heard of again.⁹ Another had 27-30 men fully armed and provided with nautical instruments, probably to enable it to sail out of sight of land and thus escape capture. A third was a small dhow of only 47 tons which carried 136 slaves destined for Oman.¹⁰

The slave trade to the south of Cape Delgado, which had been associated with the French and the Portuguese during the 18th century, was made illegal by the 1822 treaty. The 1845 treaty shifted the limit north to Kilwa, thus placing the smaller ports on the coast of southern Tanzania, which supplied slaves to the 'legal' area and were thus involved in the local trade, outside the pale of legality. During the period under consideration, excluding 35 dhows which had no slaves at all and two dhows from which slaves had allegedly escaped before capture, six dhows were captured which were essentially involved in the local trade carrying an average of 16 slaves. Four of these carried less than 10 slaves, while the largest carried 68 slaves.

On the other hand, there is evidence from the dhow captures of the 1860s that a substantial trade had developed to supply slaves to Madagascar probably from the coast of both Tanzania and Mozambique. Sixteen dhows (excluding seven from which the slaves had allegedly escaped or for which there is no information) were captured during the period carrying an average of 95 slaves. A quarter of the dhows had less than 10 slaves; on the other hand, indicative of the large-scale nature of this trade, half the dhows carried more than 100 slaves, the largest with 272 slaves.

A close examination of the 300 dhows captured during the 15-year period has thus exposed the existence of the internal and external dimension of the East African slave trade and their specific characteristics. Leaving aside the large-scale legal trade under recognised passes from Kilwa to Zanzibar and thence to the northern ports as far as Lamu, the analysis has shown that more than half of the captured dhows were engaged in the local trade, including that to Somalia. These dhows carried an average of 35 slaves, although more than half of them carried less than 10 slaves and only an eighth carried more than 100 slaves. On the other hand, the illegal foreign slave trade to Arabia and Madagascar had become more specialised because of the threat of capture. Thus the average slave cargo was nearly twice as large and nearly a third of the dhows carried more than 100 slaves while only a third carried less than 10 slaves (see Table 1).

TABLE 1. DHOW CAPTURES IN THE INDIAN OCEAN, 1858-1873

No. of slaves per dhow	Local		Foreign		Total	
	No. of dhows	No. of slaves	No. of dhows	No. of slaves	No. of dhows	No. of slaves
None	55		36		91	
1-9	45	179	24	70	69	249
10-49	21	533	13	269	34	802
50-99	5	365	13	919	18	1284
100-199	8	1159	16	2228	24	3387
200+	2	535	4	1007	6	1542
Escaped	28		18		46	
No info.	1		6		9	
Total	165	2771	130	4493	297	7264
Average*		35		64		47

* excluding dhows with no slaves, escaped or no information.
Source, IUP, *BPP*, Vols. 91 and 92.

These statistics cannot by themselves tell us how many slaves were involved in the different sectors of the trade per annum since we cannot be sure of the exact proportion of the dhows which were captured. Nevertheless, a clearer perception of the carrying capacity and the actual carriage of slaves by Indian Ocean dhows should help us arrive at a more informed judgement about the dimension of the East African slave trade.

SLAVE CARGOES

There was a significant contrast in terms of slave cargo size between this period, when the slave trade was legal in certain areas and periods, and the following period analysed by Glassman when all slave trade by sea was prohibited. The destruction of the clove plantations on Zanzibar and to some extent on Pemba by the hurricane of 1872 just before the abolition of the slave trade led to a serious attempt to smuggle slaves to Pemba to regenerate the clove economy. Many of these were smuggled in small numbers from Zanzibar and the Mrima coast, often in canoes. As a result 58% of the vessels captured in the post-abolition period carried five slaves or less compared to only 34% in the preceding period. On the other hand there was a general decrease in the number of larger cargoes with the abolition of the slave trade. Less than 4% of the vessels carried more than 100 slaves in the post-abolition period compared to 20% in the previous period (see Table 2).

TABLE 2. RELATIVE SLAVE CARGO SIZE, 1858-73 AND 1873-1900.

No. of slaves per dhow	No. of dhows 1858-73	Relative frequency	
		1858-73	1873-1900
1-5	51	33.8	58.1
6-10	18	11.9	13.1
11-20	17	11.3	8.5
21-50	17	11.3	11.9
51-100	18	11.9	4.4
101-150	14	9.3	1.4
151-200	10	6.6	0.9
200+	6	4.0	1.4

Source: IUP, *BPP*, vols. 91 and 92; Glassman: 9.

As in the post-abolition period, there was little correlation between dhow size and the size of slave cargoes. Nearly half the dhows captured, ranging in their tonnage from 30 to 384 tons, carried less than 10 slaves. In terms of sheer capacity, the smallest dhows (of less than 50 tons) were capable of carrying more than 100 slaves (a 31-ton dhow carried 156 slaves), although the largest cargoes (more than 200 slaves) were carried by the larger dhows of more than 100 tons. However, half of the largest dhows carried less than 10 slaves and only 8% carried more than 100 slaves. Proportionately, a larger percentage (29%) of the smallest dhows carried that many slaves, suggesting that the larger dhow owners did not wish to risk their valuable properties, and that there was a greater specialisation in the slave trade by small dhow owners (see Table 3).

TABLE 3. CARGO SIZE AND TONNAGE OF CAPTURED DHOWS, 1858-73

No. of slaves	Tonnage				Total Dhows	%
	1-49	50-99	100-199	200+		
1-9	7	21	18	12	58	47
10-49	2	7	10	7	26	21
50-99	1	5	4	3	13	11
100-199	4	7	10	1	22	18
200+			3	1	4	3
Total	14	40	45	24	123	100
%	11	33	37	20	101	

Source: IUP, *BPP*, Vols. 91 and 92.

Overall, the average tonnage of these dhows was 132 tons. In the foreign trade to Arabia where each dhow carried an average of 53 slaves, this meant 2.5 tons of shipping per slave transported. Thus for every 1,000 slaves exported 19 dhows directly involved in the slave trade were

required. Therefore any estimate of the trade to Arabia (such as mine of about 3,000 slaves) has to consider the availability of such shipping at the different ports along the Arabian coast, apart from the legal traders.¹¹

MORTALITY

With no logbooks of slave dhows it is difficult to get a precise idea about mortality among slaves in the East African slave trade. It is likely, however, that it was high along certain routes where slaves were transported in large numbers over short distances. In 1870 Kirk commented on the overcrowding of dhows coming from Kilwa which, as we have seen, carried an average of 167 slaves. He noted a particular case of a dhow with 277 slaves but no supply of food or water for the 3-day voyage. Ninety of the slaves died when cholera broke out on board.¹² Another such route was that to the Benadir where again no food was apparently provided for the 4-5-day voyage. The captors of a dhow carrying 196 slaves were surprised that despite horrible conditions only 7 slaves had died, although 21 more died soon after its capture in 1871. Another dhow on the same route lost 10 slaves out of 60 during the voyage, and 19 more died after capture, so that half the cargo was lost.¹³ These cases, however, may not have been typical. On the other hand, 28% of the male adults and 17% of the female adults died during a 7-week voyage of an eighteenth-century Dutch slaver from Zanzibar to Cape Town, and there were similarly high mortality rates among male (22%) and female (29%) children.¹⁴

SEX/AGE RATIOS

One of the most significant contrasts between the Atlantic slave trade in its heyday during the eighteenth century and the East African slave trade during the nineteenth century may be the sex and age ratios of the slaves involved. A common pattern of the Atlantic trade was a preponderance of adult males needed on the plantations. Evidence from Jamaica suggests a ratio of six to one among slaves shipped from the African coast and five to one on the plantations during the early part of the eighteenth century.¹⁵ During the eighteenth century European demand for slaves from East Africa appears to have been similarly skewed in terms of sex. In 1777 a Dutch slaver from Cape Town bought a total of 328 slaves at Zanzibar and its vicinity. Out of the total cargo, 70% were males, the majority of whom were adults, while only 27% were adult females. French traders engaged in the transportation of the so-called 'free labour' to the French islands in the Indian Ocean during the nineteenth century reported that they were required by French colonial authorities to carry at least 10% females.¹⁶

By the nineteenth century the situation in East Africa appears to have changed. All the evidence shows that there was a fair proportion of males and females in all branches of the trade, whether for export or for the internal plantation economy. Moreover, they were predominantly young. In 1856, 69 slaves were freed by the Indian naval squadron in the Persian Gulf and by government agents at Ras Al Khaimah, Umm Al Quwain and Lingah. Of these 29% were less than 10 years old, and another 36% were between 10 and 19 years, so that nearly two-thirds of the slaves were below 20. There was some disproportion in terms of sex in favour of males (57:43). However, when age and sex are taken together, the sample shows significant differences. The male slaves as a group were much younger: 38% were under 10 and none was older than 25, and the average age was only 13 years. On the other hand, only 17% of the female slaves were under 10, and as many were older than 25, the oldest being 40, and the average age was 19 years.¹⁷ Four dhows captured in 1869 and 1871 destined for the same market showed that their total cargo of 67 slaves consisted of 33% male adults, 37% female adults and 30% children. These two sets of data suggest a greater preference for male children and female adults among slaves in this market, presumably for domestic use.

A similar pattern appears to have characterised the slave trade to the Benadir. Three dhows were captured in 1871 off the Benadir carrying a total of 321 slaves. Of these only 26% were male adults and 49% were female adults and 25% were children, but there were more than twice as many boys as girls among these. The preference in this market was thus still in favour of male children and adult females but in a more marked manner.

A more fair balance between the sexes obtained in the slave population of Zanzibar although, naturally, the settled population was much older compared to the fresh slaves entering the trade. In 1860 British Consul Rigby embarked on a campaign to emancipate nearly 8,000 slaves owned by Indians in East Africa whom he considered to be British subjects. Some of the slaves were domestics, including concubines, but agricultural property had begun to pass into the hands of the Indian merchants and moneylenders through foreclosures of indebted Arab landed properties, and a considerable proportion of the slaves were therefore plantation hands.¹⁸

We are fortunate in having a list of 1,620 of these slaves giving their age, sex and ethnic origin, which shows that there were almost exactly as many males as females (see Table 4 and Graph 1). In contrast to slaves freed in the process of trade, four-fifths of the Indian-owned slaves in 1860 were older than 20 years, females again being somewhat older. The largest group of both sexes was between 20 and 39 years of age, but nearly 17% were more than 40, and there were many in their 50s.

TABLE 4. INDIAN-OWNED SLAVES IN ZANZIBAR, 1860-61 (BY AGE, SEX AND CLASS OF OWNERS)

No. of slaves per owner	Males					Females					Total	
	1-9	10-19	20-39	40+	Tot	1-9	10-19	20-39	40+	Tot	No. of slaves	No. of owners
1-9	15	67	145	24	255	16	53	135	25	234	489	194
10-69	33	86	239	68	429	46	50	307	91	499	928	42
Ladha	22	12	184	53	271	10	6	121	36	175	446	1
Total	70	165	568	145	955	72	109	563	152	908	1863	237

Totals include slaves for whom there is no age data.

Source: Zanzibar Archives: AA 12/3.

Among these slaves, those originating from tribes closer to the coast, who, according to Rigby, had previously provided more slaves, tended to be older and with a slight female preponderance: 26% of them were over 40 years of age compared to 16% in the case of those from tribes farther in the interior; and there were about 11 females for every 9 males among the former (which may be a result of greater mortality among older male slaves), whereas the latter were almost equally divided in terms of sex (see Table 5).

Within the total slave population by 1860, nearly 13% were locally born on Zanzibar (*wazalia*). While their sex proportion was exactly equal, the age pattern was the direct opposite of those imported from the mainland, indicating the relative recency of local breeding. Three-quarters of the *wazalia* were under 20 and the majority were less than 10, while only a handful were in their 40s or above (see Graph 1). Commenting on the fertility of slave women, Rigby claimed that fewer than 5% of the adult females bore children because they were liable to be deprived of their offspring.¹⁹ However, his list of freed slaves shows at least 124 children under the age of 10 of whom 104 were born in Zanzibar, and a total of 511 females of child-bearing age between 20 and 39 some of whom had more than one child. This would seem to suggest a much higher rate of fecundity.

How representative is this sample of the slave population of Zanzibar? The Indians were undoubtedly predominantly merchants, but they had also begun to acquire clove plantations since the 'clove mania' of the 1840s which was naturally accompanied by slave ownership.²⁰ It was in fact the emancipation of their slaves by Rigby that drove them out of landownership and made them more purely merchants. Before 1860 a large number of Indian households, probably like their Arab

TABLE 5. SOCIAL COMPOSITION OF ZANZIBAR SLAVES, 1860-61 (BY AGE, SEX AND ETHNIC ORIGINS)

	Males					Females					Grand Total
Age:	1-9	10-19	20-39	40+	Tot	1-9	10-19	20-39	40+	Tot	
Southern tribes:											
Yao	4	50	166	21	241	6	32	143	27	208	449
Nyasa	1	7	102	27	137	1	6	79	14	100	237
Ngindo		6	43	9	58	1	12	57	23	93	151
Others	1	18	76	29	124	2	9	99	31	141	265
Total	6	81	387	86	560	10	59	378	95	542	1102
Northern tribes:											
Sagara	1	9	26	15	51	1	4	55	28	88	139
Mrima	1	11	23	13	48		3	30	10	43	91
Nyamwezi		1	14	7	22		1	12	5	18	40
Others	1	2	9	4	16		1	9	2	12	28
Total	3	23	72	39	137	1	9	106	45	161	298
Zanzibar born											
Others	56	26	22	1	105	48	28	25	4	105	210
		1	3	3	7	1		2		3	10
Grand Total											
%	65	134	484	129	809	60	96	511	144	811	1620
	4	8	30	8	50	4	6	32	9	51	101

Source: Zanzibar Archives: AA 12/3 - List of slaves unlawfully held in slavery by British Indian subjects at Zanzibar and its dependencies.

counterparts, held a small number of domestic slaves, including concubines, although some were also probably employed to perform mundane duties in the shops. From Rigby's partial list of slaves owned on Zanzibar island itself, there were 194 owners out of 237 who had less than 10 slaves (with an average of less than 3 each), and they owned altogether 489 slaves. Eighteen of the owners were females, and from their names they appear to be mostly local wives, probably concubines (some specifically described as *suriya*) who may have inherited slaves from their dead masters. Among the slaves themselves, there was a fair balance between the sexes with a slight (52:48) male preponderance, and the vast majority ranged fairly evenly from their teens to their 30s (see Table 4).

On the other hand there were 42 slave owners in Zanzibar who owned between 10 and 69 slaves, and they included only one female

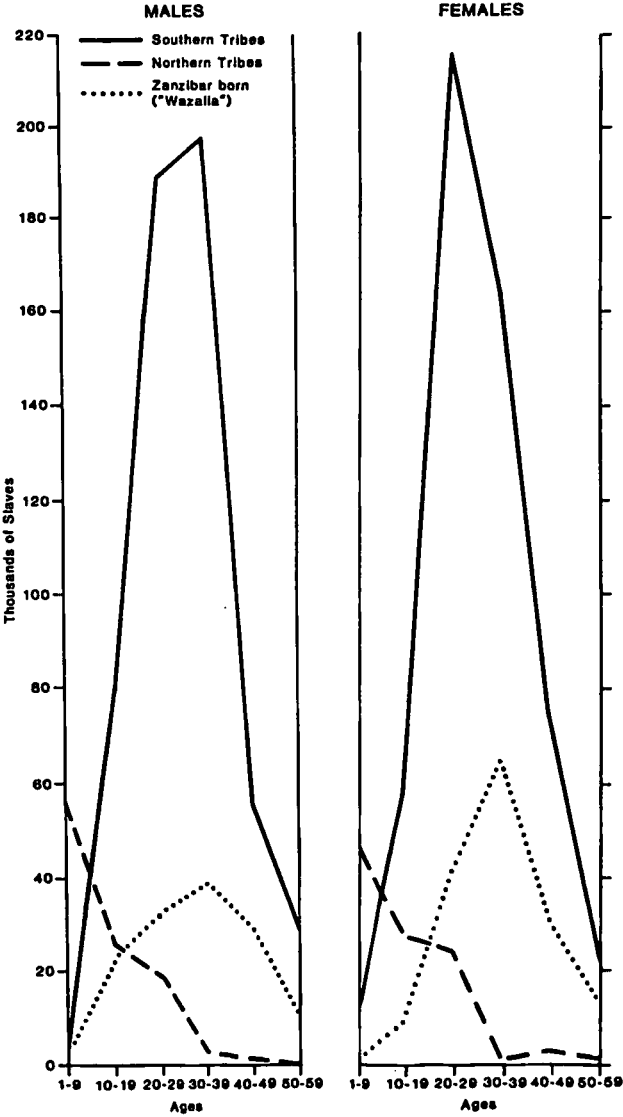
owner, who was apparently a local wife or concubine. In all they owned 928 slaves at an average of 22 slaves. The larger Indian slave owners were probably plantation owners since merchants tended to hire slave labour from professional transporters for their large-scale but intermittent commercial needs.²¹ Since clove stemming and even picking from the lower branches have been traditionally performed by females and children, and since females tended to live longer in a more settled population, it is perhaps not surprising to find a female preponderance (46:54) among the slaves owned by this stratum of owners. Moreover, as a productive class of slaves, they tended to be somewhat older than the domestics, the majority (59%) being in their 20s and 30s, and only 15% were in their teens (compared to 25% among the domestics).

Finally, there was one slave owner in a class of his own who possessed more than 400 slaves, although this was not large compared to the bigger Arab landowners. Ladha Damji of the firm of Jairam Sewji was the customs master as well as being the most substantial merchant, and he is known to have owned several clove plantations. As the farmer of customs he also employed a large gang of labourers at the customs house to transport goods around, for which he charged the merchants.²² These *hamalis* are likely to have been slaves, and since they were naturally males, this has given a more marked male preponderance (61:39) to the slaves owned by the customs master. This pattern may have been typical of the urban slaves of Zanzibar town where there were a large number of *hamalis* to operate the commercial economy.

A further confirmation of the overall sexual pattern of Zanzibar slaves comes from the nearly 12,000 slaves who were freed by the British courts during the decade following the emancipation decree of 1897 (see Table 6). There is almost a parity between the sexes among the 5,000 slaves freed on Zanzibar island, 64% of whom were city dwellers. On the other hand 59% of the nearly 7,000 slaves freed in Pemba were from the rural areas, and the demographic tendency may have shifted the balance in favour of females (45:55) during the quarter century when fresh importation was hindered. Taking the figures of the two islands together, thus combining the urban bias of Zanzibar and the rural bias of Pemba, the slave population shows a smaller preponderance in favour of females (47:53) which, if corrected for the demographic tendency mentioned above, would give a more even sexual balance among the Zanzibar slaves before the abolition of the slave trade.

ETHNIC ORIGIN OF ZANZIBAR SLAVES

Although the southern hinterland behind Kilwa was the main source of slaves since the eighteenth century, the Zanzibar list enables us to define more precisely the proportions of the different peoples who



Source: Zanzibar Archives, AA/12/3
GRAPH 1. SOCIAL COMPOSITION OF ZANZIBAR SLAVES, 1860

TABLE 6. SLAVES EMANCIPATED IN ZANZIBAR AND PEMBA, 1897-1907

Zanzibar	Men	2,404	49.3%
	Women	2,477	50.7%
	Total	5,141	
Pemba	Men	2,487	45.4%
	Women	2,988	54.6%
	Total	6,696	
Total	Men	4,891	47.2%
	Women	5,465	52.8%
	Total	11,837	

Source: F. Cooper, *From Slaves to Squatters*, Yale, New Haven, 1980, pp.73-4.

The totals include children and others for whom sexual breakdown is not available. Sexual proportions have been calculated only for the data that is available.

were enslaved during the nineteenth century (see Map 1). The largest contingent came from the Yao (28%), followed by the Nyasa (15%) who lived east of Lake Nyasa. Between them they contributed more than two-fifths of the Zanzibar slaves. By the 1860s, however, a large number also came from the Ngindo in the south and the Sagara and the Mrima tribes of eastern Tanzania. Smaller numbers of slaves originated from the Manganja, the Makua, the Makonde and the Mwera in the south, as well as the Nyamwezi in central Tanzania. By then there was a scattering of slaves from the area west of Lake Nyasa, including the Bisa and the Tumbuka, as well as other less traditional sources in Tanzania such as the Hehe, the Gogo and the Matumbi. Thus, by the mid-nineteenth century the slave trade had touched many of the peoples in eastern and southern Tanzania, northern Mozambique, Malawi and as far as Zambia and beyond, though to varying degrees.

CONCLUSION

The evidence from the slave captures has been extremely useful in providing information on the main sectors of the East African slave trade, on the size of the dhows and of their slave cargoes. However, it cannot be used by itself to give a precise idea of the trade, for the simple reason that anti-slavery patrols were not comprehensive except for a few years. Nevertheless, bearing in mind the evidence for these years (in 1870 only 3% of the dhows were found to be involved in the slave trade), and the overall size of Arab shipping at this time, it is possible to define the upper limit of the slave trade in certain sectors.²³

On the other hand evidence from dhow captures and the list of slaves on Zanzibar has exposed a significant difference between the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic slave trade in terms of sex and age ratios. There was a fair balance between the sexes in all sectors of the East African slave trade, whether in the export trade to Arabia or in the composition of the slaves on Zanzibar. There was a marked preference for male children and female adults in the export trade by the 1860s which would

suggest a bias towards domestic slaves. While a similar sexual balance was maintained in the slave population of Zanzibar, the population was on the whole older and had begun to reproduce itself to some extent even before the slave trade was abolished, although obviously not enough to diminish the importation of slaves before the trade was abolished in 1873.

NOTES

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2. A. Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices & Ivory in Zanzibar*, London: James Currey, 1987. R.A. Austen, 'The Nineteenth Century Islamic Slave Trade from East Africa (Swahili and Red Sea coasts): A Tentative Census', paper presented to the workshop on Indian Ocean Slave Trade, London, 1987 (see pp.21-44 of this volume).
3. Sheriff, op. cit. F. Cooper, *Plantation Slavery on the East Coast of Africa*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1977.
4. Sheriff, p.229. C. Glassman, 'A quantitative social history of the illegal, seagoing, East African slave trade, 1873-1900', unpublished paper, 1977.
5. The 300 dhow captures are listed in Irish University Press, *British Parliamentary Papers* (IUP, BPP), Vol.91, pp.117-19, 187-90, 201-3, 231-40, 279-81; Vol.92, pp.216-19.
6. Sheriff, p.223.
7. C.E.B. Russel, *General Rigby, Zanzibar and the Slave Trade*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1935, p.333. Seward to Foreign Office (FO), n.d. [3/1867], Public Record Office (PRO): FO84/1279.
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9. Sheriff, pp.71-2.
10. Seward to Bombay, 6 May 1867, Maharashtra Government Archives: Political Department (MAPD), 124/1867, pp.57-8. Churchill to Russel, 19 Feb. 1869, India Office: L/P&S/9/48.
11. IUP, BPP, 91:240.
12. Sheriff, p.231.
13. Kirk to FO, 20 May 1870, PRO: FO84/1325.
14. Tucker to Cockburn, 2 Nov. 1871, PRO: FO84/1344. IUP, BPP, Vol.91, pp.280-1; Vol.92, pp.216-17.
15. Data analysed from R. Ross, 'The Dutch on the Swahili Coast, 1776-8, two slaving journals', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 19/2 (1986), 329-60.
16. O. Patterson, *Sociology of Slavery*, London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1967, p.107.
17. Ross, op. cit.
18. R. Ethersey to Rear Admiral Leake, 2 Sept. 1856, MAPD, 113/1856, pp.143-51, 191-3.
19. Rigby to Bombay, 21 March 1860, PRO: FO Confidential Print, 44/2314.
20. *Ibid.*
21. Sheriff, p.53.
22. *Ibid.*, p.149-50.
23. *Ibid.*, p.95.
24. *Ibid.*, p.224.

The Structures of the Slave Trade in Central Africa in the 19th Century

François Renault

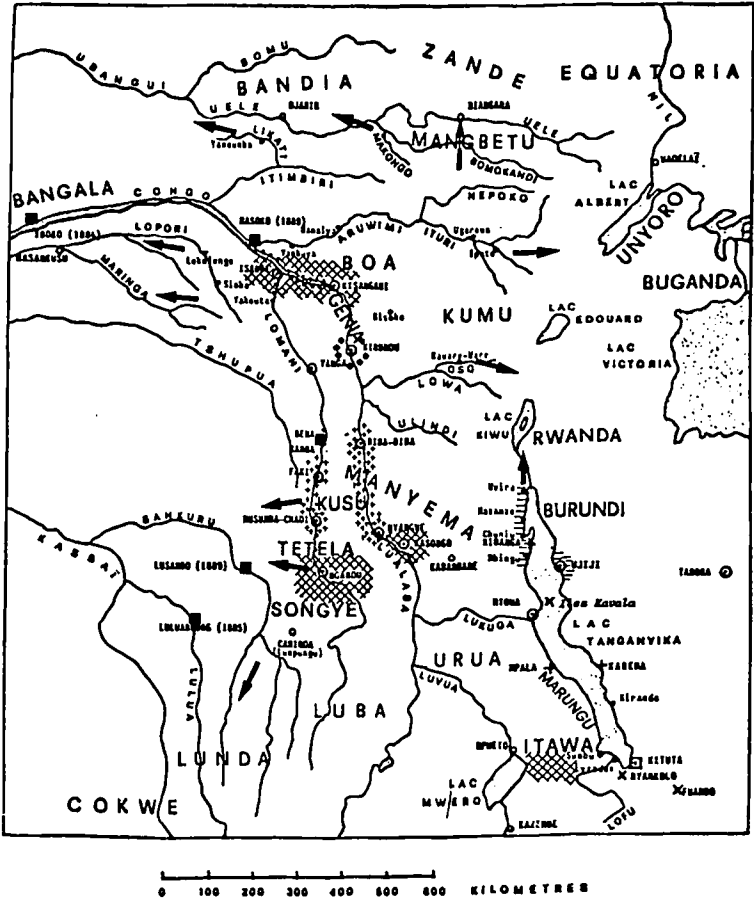
The political and economic history of the East Coast of Africa in the nineteenth century cannot be understood without taking account of the penetration of the Arab traders deep into the interior of the African continent, and of the constantly expanding commercial network which they set up. This network was vast and varied. Being unable to study it here in all its dimensions, we shall limit ourselves to one sector, which formed a very distinctive zone.

The migration of the Arab traders from the sultanate of Zanzibar into the continent was carried out along two main axes, branching out into many ramifications. The first started off from Kilwa and Lindi in the direction of the Yao and Lake Nyassa. It then went north-west to reach the big commercial centre of Kazembe, south of Lake Mweru. It ran through warlike populations, who raided neighbouring areas and handed over those they captured in exchange for produce from the coast. Most of the slaves arriving at the Zanzibar market came along this route: in the 1870s four-fifths of them came via Kilwa.

A second axis started off from Bagamoyo and Saadani towards Tabora. From there it branched out into three routes: one towards Buganda in the north; another towards Ujiji in the west; and a third towards Kirando in the south-west, a centre established on the shores of Lake Tanganyika. A smaller number of slaves reached the coast by this route. They came mainly from Marungu and Urua, where political disintegration made raids relatively easy, and from regions bordering the south of Lake Tanganyika. Here the Arabs, who had taken possession of Itawa, were operating (and a Baluchi, who assured his predominance over Urungu) as well as the Bemba, with whom the Arabs kept up complex relations, alternating between alliance and hostility. The development of the traffic in this area brought about the creation of the post of Kirando, which opened up a more direct route towards Tabora, avoiding the old detour through Ujiji. However, this latter centre did not lose its *raison d'être*. On the contrary, its importance increased, since it became the base for a vast expansion into the Congolese forest.

In the 1860s some pioneers crossed Lake Tanganyika and moved west from what was to become the post of Mtowa. After reaching the Lualaba in Nyangwe, they went down the river, setting up a succession

ARABS AND EUROPEANS IN CENTRAL AFRICA AROUND 1890



of establishments as far as Isangi, at the junction with the Lomani. These bases of operations, linked together by a great navigable river, cut by some rapids only upriver from Kisangani, formed a sort of backbone for a system of exploitation spreading over the whole north east quarter of the present Republic of Zaïre. Without going into details about its setting up, it is this system which we propose to examine in its operation and its relations with the east coast of Africa.

A WELL-STRUCTURED SYSTEM

Although the traders coming from Zanzibar acted without unified political control as they spread through Central Africa, in a relatively short time they built up a rather coherent structure. Some towns of variable importance formed their main bases. The biggest one was Kasongo which in 1889 numbered 20,000 inhabitants.¹ Nyangwe had 10,000.² Kisangani was no doubt close to the same figure. Other centres had some thousands of people: Mtowa, Riba-Riba, Kirundu and Isangi. At a lower level there was a network of posts held by small garrisons, serving as relay-stations along the Lualaba or guarding crossing points over the Lomani. The final level was made up of delegates of the big traders, established in subject villages whose chief had to hand over several hostages as a guarantee of good behaviour.

This structure was dominated by the Arabs, and that is why the label 'Arab' was assigned to it. However, this label must be used with a lot of caution, since, in the strict meaning of the word, it could only apply to some forty or so residents.³ Far more numerous were the islamized Swahili coming from the coast. The name *ngwana*, 'freeman', as opposed to slaves, was applied first of all to them. Later it was extended to Africans from the interior, swept along in their wake, to the Nyamwezi in particular, who also crossed Lake Tanganyika. In the

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Signs used on the map

○	Main Arab centres	➔	Axes of expansion of Arab traders
•	Posts or light garrisons	+	Catholic Mission station
◦	Other places	×	Protestant Mission station
⊗	Tippu Tip's territories	■	Camp of the Independent State of the Congo
⋯	Mohara's territory	□	Station of the African Lakes Company
⋄	Kibonge's territory		
≡	Rumaliza's territory		

Congo itself, they attracted some indigenous Africans, among whom two categories can be distinguished. First there were some young men, eager to free themselves from a society dominated by the elders, in order to try their luck and arrive at a certain social standing. They too were called *ngwana*. On the other hand, some adolescents would join a caravan passing through, or, more often, were carried off during an attack on a village and incorporated into the band of assailants. They were designated under the name of *tamba-tamba*. Through this process, the movement triggered off from the coast was constantly being enlarged with new recruits.

The above list corresponded to a hierarchy: Arab chiefs, immigrant *ngwana* and autochthonous *ngwana*.⁴ In this way, the masters had at their disposal a numerous personnel, and their rifles provided a decisive element of military superiority in the face of peoples who had none. They set up real fiefs, organized from bases of operations, and extending over large areas. The most powerful chief was Hamed ben Muhammed el-Murjebi, better known under his nickname of Tippu Tip, who established his bases at Kasongo and Kisangani. He owned the territories of Utetela and, in a more loose dependency, that of Itawa, at the south-west end of Lake Tanganyika. The members of his family were closely associated with his affairs, in particular, to quote those we shall meet subsequently, his nephew Rachid, who founded the post of Isangi, and his son Sefu, who, established in Kasongo, supervised Utetela, entrusted to a *ngwana* of Kusu origin, Ngongo Leteta. After Tippu Tip, and often in rivalry with him, there was, next in order of importance, Mtagamoto ben Sultani, called Mwinyi Mohara, one of the pioneers in the Congo.⁵ Becoming master of Nyangwe, he owned a more compact territory, spreading north along the Lualaba as far as Riba-Riba and, over the midstream of the Lomani, from Faki to Musumba-Chadi. Finally, in Kirundu there lived Kibonge from the Comoro Islands: a trader of lesser scope, he assumed a certain importance when a young Arab, Saïd ben Abed, chased out of Nwangwe by Mohara after his father's death, came to join him. These big traders remained linked to the east coast by a constant stream of caravans. The crossing of Lake Tanganyika was an obligatory part of this route. It was under the control of Muhammed ben Khalfan, called Rumaliza. After his first campaigns in the shadow of Tippu Tip, he gained personal power over Ujiji and the whole northwest shore of Lake Tanganyika, where he stationed small garrisons from Uvira to Mtwara.

The establishments situated beyond the Lualaba and the Lomani were surrounded by zones directly dominated by the Arabs, or else – the most frequent case – inhabited by peoples with their own chiefs, but subject to various obligations and to pay tribute. In the first case subjection comprised much heavier burdens. Tippu Tip's description, in his auto-

biography, is rather eloquent in this respect. After his conquest of Utetela, he delegated the administration of the district to one of his subordinates to turn it into a profitable property. He appreciated this man's zeal, since he wrote: 'After two or three months, they began to bring him ivory, men, goats; as much as he asked for.'⁶ This practice suggests, rather than a fixed tribute, taxes demanded according to circumstances and without any limit. Another example is just as suggestive. In 1888 Tippu Tip was travelling round his fief of Kasongo in the company of two poverty-stricken Arabs. In each village they went through, he assembled the inhabitants and gave his companions full liberty to make their choice. These latter acquired some dozens of slaves, selling some to ensure their material conditions for a whole period of time.⁷ Such procedures provoked revolts, as in Utetela: Tippu Tip had to bring the area back to obedience in 1884 with terrible violence.⁸ In the second case, that of peoples winning peace by accepting to pay tribute, we are ill-informed about the manner of payment. Ivory constituted the main item, but the rare pieces of information at our disposal do not allow us to determine in a general way how much was levied as tax and how much was traded in exchange for other articles. No doubt no precise norm was established. Other tribute could be demanded, such as provisions for the caravans, or, for the river-side villages of the Lualaba, teams of rowers for transport by canoe.

Beyond these subject regions, the principal chief sent out expeditions under the control of *ngwana*. They plunged further inland, seeking ivory and slaves. Covering hundreds of kilometres across unknown and difficult regions, they operated for a year or two, and sometimes more, before regaining their starting point. When they reached a sufficiently promising region, they established temporary stations, bases for their movements and places to store the booty they obtained. After the neighbouring zone had been pillaged, the installations were abandoned, and they went further on.⁹ The means used varied little. Violence occupied the first place. Isolated in the hostile milieu of the great equatorial forest, tackling peoples who had been without contact with the exterior and whom they regarded as savages, these bands acted mercilessly to seize men and goods. Using such methods, the expeditions swiftly exhausted the resources they were exploiting. They were able to find fossil ivory (on dead elephants) in relative abundance in regions still untouched, but these reserves were diminishing. On the other hand, these expeditions were causing depopulation due to losses in human life, famine provoked by the destruction or pillaging of granaries, and enslavement.

This fact of depopulation affected a number of regions in the eastern Congo. In Manyema above all, the first region to be penetrated by the traders from the coasts, whole villages disappeared. This entailed serious consequences for the provisioning of caravans travelling between the

Lualaba and Lake Tanganyika. Repopulating the region with immigrants from the lands to the east of the lake was a partial remedy.¹⁰ Elsewhere, voids were created. The peoples most touched were, from north to south, the Kumu who underwent 'a complete disintegration of their community'; the Rega, between the Lova and the Ulindi; the Songye and the Luba, victims of the repeated raids of Ngongo Leteta.¹¹ The same process was occurring on the north west side of Lake Tanganyika, dominated by Rumaliza. It is interesting to quote a case, limited though it be, since we find numerical data very rare at that period. They are provided by the Catholic missionaries who had founded an important establishment at Kibanga, in a district called Umora, at the foot of the Ubwari peninsula. Rumaliza had set up several posts in the neighbourhood, and their activity was not long in producing serious consequences. Ubwari had three villages of roughly equal importance, totalling 4,000 people in 1886. By 1891 two of them had no more than 900 and the third is not mentioned, a sign perhaps that it had disappeared. In Umora, between the same dates, the number of inhabitants fell from 1,000 to 200.¹² Taking into account that 1,200 people had found refuge with the missionaries of Kibanga, the loss of population amounted to more than 40 per cent in five years.

The drying up of human and material resources compelled the traders to advance still further to discover new ones. It was a deployment in all directions. In the north, expeditions made contact with the Mangbetu, abandoned by the Nubians after the Mahdist rebellion, and with the Banda of Uele;¹³ some vanguards even began to descend the River Ubangi.¹⁴ In the east, incursions took place as far as Lake Albert;¹⁵ between the Lualaba on the one hand and Lakes Edward and Kivu on the other, several stations quite close to one another served as staging-posts for a deeper thrust¹⁶ towards the northern frontier of Rwanda, a country which Rumaliza had tried to penetrate from Lake Tanganyika in the south, but without success. On the opposite side, west of the Lomani, there was a network of rivers, with the Lopori and the Maringa as the main branches: the traders' caravans began to descend these rivers which converged on the important market of Basankusu, linked to the slave and ivory traffic of the Ubangi and the lower Congo.¹⁷ From the middle of the Lomani, attempts were made to reach the Sankuru, which flows into the Kasai and offered a way of advancing towards the west. This was done by Mohara, well implanted on the Lomani, and also by Ngongo Leteta, governor of Utetela.¹⁸ This latter, halted by the foundation of Lusambo camp by the Independent State of the Congo in 1889, turned in the direction of the Upper Kasai River and the Cokwe people in the south west.¹⁹ In short, with the exception of the south where the power of Msiri opposed a solid barrier in Katanga, the Arab zone of the Upper Congo tended to spread out

everywhere, an expansion in all directions that only the European colonial conquest halted.

A SLAVE SYSTEM

The traders' aim, coming from the coast to Central Africa, consisted mainly of the search for ivory. But the system set up for this purpose required a servile personnel, the manpower for which increased in proportion to the enlarging of the enterprise undertaken. Two main tasks were performed by slaves: portorage along the paths and farming work in residential centres.

Portorage was the first problem to be solved. In the great Congolese forest, Arabs and Swahili found conditions quite different from those they knew to the east of Lake Tanganyika. Between the ocean and Ujiji, transport was carried out by porters of free status, by the Nyamwezi in particular, among whom this occupation was held in honour. Or else it was done by slaves hired from their masters in Zanzibar, and often well disposed to do this work, which enabled them to earn something. These conditions did not exist in the great Congolese forest, where long-distance trade was unknown. In order to get their ivory out, the traders had to requisition the necessary number of men and prevent them from running away by keeping them in chains. This was the only way of proceeding, Tippu Tip's agents explained to the explorer Cameron.²⁰

Portorage carried out under such conditions entailed a high mortality, and an increasing mortality as the expeditions penetrated deeper into the forest, and the routes for bringing the ivory back to the Lualaba lengthened. On the river, transport was by canoe, but it was still necessary to go overland between Nyangwe or Kasongo and Lake Tanganyika. The men in the caravans usually arrived on the shores in a state of great exhaustion, as the missionaries established nearby observed on several occasions. To the heaviness of the load, more painful for people with no experience of this occupation and doing it under duress, were added other handicaps: epidemics, the chronic evil of caravans in East Africa, and, most noticeable in Manyema in particular, the lack of food due to depopulation and the disappearance of a certain number of villages, which colonization by immigrants had not wholly replaced. We have available what a certain number of European observers said about the conditions of transport carried out along this route. As for the expeditions which plunged even further into the great equatorial forest, picking up at the various stages of their journey the men necessary for evacuating the ivory they had obtained, no account exists. We can only form some idea of conditions by reading the reports of Stanley and his companions of their trip through these same regions searching for Emin

Pasha in 1887-89. They express sufficiently the tremendous difficulties they had to overcome and the cost in human lives that had to be paid by the bulk of the column (even without taking account of the disaster of the rearguard) for it to be possible to state that mortality must have been high among the porters requisitioned by the *ngwana*. This fact is important for evaluating the slave trade. They never managed to preserve intact the manpower assembled for portage, which was constantly being decimated. These gaps had to be filled, and that in turn accelerated the rate of the raiding.

The same remark must be made about the second task to which slaves were assigned: farming work. We saw that the traders from the coast founded residential centres of variable sizes on the Lualaba and the Lomani, from real towns to small garrisons. A major process of colonization was achieved: colonization in the original meaning of the word, i.e. the implantation of groups of immigrants. But they were not farmers. Coming with a commercial aim, all their activity was organized to this end and was carried out with numerous personnel, both volunteers joining them and porters forcibly recruited. In order to ensure the subsistence of a whole population of residents and caravans passing through, manpower specially assigned to cultivating farms had to be assembled: only the slave trade could provide this manpower.

In the establishments created by the Arabs along the Lualaba there were thus assembled a number of farm workers, in relation to the extent of the land to be brought under cultivation. We are well informed about one case, the most characteristic since it is the most important, that of Kasongo. The crops covered thousands of hectares. They were varied: sugar-cane, rice, maize, cassava, sweet potatoes and various kinds of fruit trees. The servile work-force was subjected to severe discipline. Assembled at the sound of a gong at the end of the night, they were divided into teams and they left for designated places under the control of *tongo*, foremen from the coast or from Unyamwezi. Armed with hippopotamus-hide whips, the foremen imposed continuous work, apart from a two-hour break at midday.²¹ Since Kasongo had 20,000 inhabitants, the slaves must, in all likelihood, have formed the big majority of the population, most being assigned to cultivating the soil, and the rest to domestic service. The same remark applies to all residential centres, but the data are too fragmentary for a global estimation of this category of the servile population to be put forward.

Such an estimation would moreover be insufficient to appreciate the volume of the slave trade. The rate of mortality would also need to be known. According to its level, a more or less rapid rate of renewal in manpower would be required. We do not know mortality rates for the Upper Congo, but we do have a reference point in the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba, where large plantations existed. In the 1840s

Consul Hamerton put it at between 20 and 30 per cent per year for slaves working there.²² Later on Consul Kirk estimated at 20 per cent the annual loss in the servile population before the 1873 treaty forbidding the export of slaves outside the continent.²³ This figure referred not only to deaths, but also to the abductions carried out by the people of Oman, who came every year to impose their turbulent presence for several months. The mortality rate was therefore lower, but Kirk made his estimation for all the slaves, both in domestic work and in farming. Now conditions for the two categories differed greatly. Domestic service, usually mild enough, did not entail high mortality. As to farming, which concerns us here, a distinctly harder existence led to a much higher death rate. In a word, if the global figure of losses put forward by the consul for the years prior to 1873 must be reduced in any evaluation of the number of deaths, we can certainly retain it as an order of magnitude for the plantation slaves' mortality.

Do these data apply to the Arab establishments in the Upper Congo? No doubt, since those who created them came from the same world. They belonged to it and shared its ideas from the cultural, economic and social points of view. In a general way, it is striking to observe that they spontaneously reproduced in the heart of Africa what their ancestors had achieved along the east coast: a chain of towns surrounded by crops, bases of commercial activity, linked by a great waterway. A similar organization being likely to result in the same effects, it is not arbitrary to state that the high rates of mortality observed among the work-force on the plantations of Zanzibar and Pemba must have been reproduced among the same category of slaves along the Lualaba. Moreover, the masters could without great inconvenience register heavier losses, since they experienced less difficulty than their compatriots on the coast in filling the gaps. However, to maintain the manpower levels a constant stream of new captives was necessary. In addition, numbers had to be increased to keep up with an ever-expanding commercial system and a more numerous personnel, whose subsistence had to be ensured. In order to complete this demographic question, the birth rate would also need to be considered, indicating the rate at which the generation on the spot proceeds to its own renewal. The case of Zanzibar shows that the balance was very much in deficit, but we shall not go into details, since the Arab domination over the Upper Congo collapsed before the long-term effects of such a situation could make themselves felt.

Both tasks mentioned above, portorage and farming work, concerned men. As for women, if we can suppose that they too took part in cultivation, no source provides us with information in this respect. Their occupations were essentially domestic, in the widest sense of this term. The Arabs did not speak of this reserved domain, and European travellers obtained little information, so it is impossible to put forward

any kind of evaluation in this respect. The general context, however, implies a high number of women carried off from their villages. Everything indicates that very few immigrants arrived with female companions and that they procured them on the spot. As to the local Africans, living in societies where the elders were distributors of spouses and at times left prospective husbands languishing in long expectation, the promise of receiving a concubine – in addition to the gift of a rifle – constituted a powerful attraction in the eyes of the younger men who enlisted in the service of the Arabs. These *ngwana*, during their expeditions, had to bring back ivory and slaves to their masters, but they still sought to derive as great a profit as possible for themselves. Taking women formed an appreciable part of this. The importance of a staff of domestic servants marked rank in the social hierarchy and quite naturally they aimed at making their domestics more numerous. In this respect, let us point out an absence which contrasts with many other regions of Muslim culture: that of eunuchs. This tradition did not exist in Central Africa, and the sources are silent about its existence, even in the wealthiest households.

Another function of slaves – men as well as women – consisted in fulfilling the role of money in barter operations, of which they formed one of the most sought-after elements. Among the many testimonies on this question, we shall only quote those relating to the purchase of ivory and to transport affecting Arab traders. Descending the Lualaba to the north of Nyangwe in 1876, accompanied by Tippu Tip, Stanley observed that a *frasilah* (i.e. 35 pounds) of ivory was obtained in exchange for 12–15 slaves.²⁴ This was a maximum and the price obviously depended on the size and weight of the elephant tusks. Ivory had more value whole, but the Arabs also bought broken pieces which could be traded. At different times, one tusk was sold for between two and ten slaves on the Lomani.²⁵ The same variations are mentioned on the Itimbiri²⁶ and the Tshupua.²⁷ Such a tariff supposed a knowledge of the value of ivory on the part of the local Africans, acquired after the first contacts with the traders coming from the outside, and these latter in that case displayed prudence. It is to be noted that the cases quoted above concerned regions in which, at that time, their authority was not assured. When their force proved insufficient or when they found themselves facing more solidly organized societies, they had to proceed by barter, and they did this with captives brought from elsewhere.

Slaves also served to pay for certain means of transport. On Lake Tanganyika an average-sized boat was acquired in return for the delivery of about ten individuals.²⁸ The cost of a crossing was arranged in the same way. In 1881 when Tippu Tip arrived at Mtowa with a huge caravan laden with ivory, he hired some Jiji to ship it to the east bank. For this purpose he paid one slave for two rowers making ten journeys.²⁹ We do not know the exact number of rowers per boat, nor

that of the journeys made, but it must have been quite significant, since the caravan numbered 3,000, 2,000 of them porters – something rather rare. Given the general situation of Lake Tanganyika at that time, it seems that Tippu Tip was able to get 'wholesale' prices well below those usually demanded. We must not be surprised to see the most powerful chief in Central Africa finding himself obliged to pay for the services demanded, whereas he knew so well how to impose his authority and exact tribute in other regions. Navigation on Lake Tanganyika was a job for experts and the Jiji were famous for their experience. Similar cases were found elsewhere³⁰ when the Arab traders had to come to terms with autochthonous peoples, experts in certain services which they needed: in that case slaves usually served as the means of payment.

A SLAVE TRADE WITHIN THE CONTINENT

A study of the slave trade demands that we tackle the question of numbers. But an evaluation for Central Africa is much more difficult than for the coast. In fact, although we possess a series of calculations for maritime exports, these are lacking for the interior of the continent. To our knowledge, we have here only a single and very fragmentary estimate. In 1889 the European Resident in Kisangani, Nicholas Tobback, estimated at about 100 the number of slaves arriving each week in this capital of Tippu Tip's,³¹ say about 5,000 per year. This important figure explains how the master of the spot could ship out in a single voyage a flotilla of about 40 canoes loaded with chained slaves towards his other domain of Kasongo, a centre which made constant calls on a servile work-force.³² Now at this time the expeditions of the *ngwana* dependants of Tippu Tip had not yet reached their greatest extent. In the north they were going as far as Itimbiri, but they were only making the first contacts with sultan Djabir on the Uele, before advancing any further. In the west the Isangi station, established the previous year by Tippu Tip's nephew, Rachid, had not yet shown its full capacity as a base of operations for the lower reaches of the Lomani and the network of the Lopori and Maringa rivers. The figure given in 1889 must therefore have been higher in the following years.

On the other hand, Kisangani was not the only centre where slaves arrived. In the north the Bomokandi-Ituri region was covered by bands dependent on Kibonge, established in Kirundu, and on Saïd ben Abed who had taken refuge with him.³³ It is probable that a certain association in business had brought them together.³⁴ In any case it was at their residence that those captured by their men arrived. Further south Nyangwe was the domain of Mohara. We have little information about this chief, except that he came immediately after Tippu Tip in order of importance

and his capital on the Lualaba was second in the number of inhabitants. His slave acquisitions must have been running at a high level, for he had always used particularly violent methods, so much so that Tippu Tip himself regarded him as a brute.³⁵ Still further south, Ngongo Leteta launched deep raids as far as the regions of the rivers Lulua and Upper Kasai. Those captured were either kept in the territory of Utetela or sent on to his master at Kasongo. However, this list is not exhaustive since, in addition to the slaves brought back to the Arab centres, one would need to count all those seized during the expeditions in the great forest, who died on the paths and had to be replaced by others to ensure portage.

Taking all these elements into account, what conclusion can we draw from the figure given by Tobback in 1889, of arrivals in Kasongo, i.e. 5,000 per year for this single locality? Can we find a base of evaluation for the whole of Central Africa? In this case, to double it would not be enough. We would perhaps need to treble it to arrive at a likely estimate. Can we go further and draw up a global assessment of the seizures carried out at the time of the Arab penetration and later domination in the Congo? We would need then to start off from the fact that Tobback's figure applies to a very definite date. Since the traders were constantly widening the field of their activities, the proceeds of the raids must therefore have been lower in the previous years and higher in the following years. But this outline is too succinct. Too many unknown factors subsist for us to be able to arrive at a valid deduction in the present state of research.

Let us go back to 1889 and to the estimate of enslavement approaching 15,000. It is very suggestive to compare this figure with another, provided at the same period by an excellent observer of the situation prevailing on Lake Tanganyika, François Coulbois of the Catholic Missions. According to him, the number of slaves arriving at Ujiji from the Congo did not exceed 2,000 per year.³⁶ Now this route remained practically the only one used for this kind of export. A Protestant missionary mentioned in 1879 some consignments towards the south of the Congo bound for certain autochthonous peoples and some Portuguese establishments in Angola.³⁷ But it does not seem that this current had any great importance and we can consider the arrivals in Ujiji as forming almost the whole of the exports. There, a good number were kept on the spot to fill the gaps created among the slaves of the town as a result of the deplorable physical condition in which they arrived and of their transplantation into a very different climate. According to Wissmann, on average they did not survive more than a year.³⁸ If this estimate seems exaggerated, nevertheless the well furnished heap of bones on which their corpses were flung testified to a particularly high mortality.³⁹ Others were sold in Tabora, whose importance increased over the years. How many then reached the east coast? Very few, according to Cameron;⁴⁰ none, some

well placed observers later declared.⁴¹ In a word, the great majority of the slaves seized in the north-east quarter of the present Zaïre remained within this zone, a small number were exported to the other side of Lake Tanganyika, but a tiny number, and perhaps none at all, came down to the ocean to be exported.

From this point of view, the system of Arab domination established in Central Africa was organized as an essentially internal one. The slaves were seized to ensure its own running and not to provide exports: this constituted a simple surplus. We should like in this respect to bring out two aspects of particular importance. The first concerns the *sex-ratio*. It is frequently affirmed that the Arab slave trade, as opposed to the European, drained off a greater number of women in comparison to men. This was surely not the case in Central Africa, since the tasks distributed to the servile population required at least an equal number of men, and we even think the male population was larger. Moreover, nothing proves the current affirmation about a higher proportion of women. For instance, some research that we have just concluded about the Black slave trade to the Medieval Near East tends to reveal the weakness of this thesis, and the conditions of the traffic in other regions and at other periods would have to be examined more closely before an overall judgment on this question can be pronounced. In the present state of research, it is preferable to leave the question open.

The second aspect to bring out is the continental character of the structure studied here. When we talk of the Black slave traffic in Africa, we automatically think of exporting outside the continent. This is true for the Atlantic slave trade, since the Europeans did not penetrate into the interior of these lands (the case of the Portuguese in the old Congo of the sixteenth century formed an exception): their purchases on the coast took place solely with a view to transport overseas. The Arab practice was more complex: they too proceeded to a very important exportation across the Sahara and the Indian Ocean, which in overall terms attained a magnitude identical to that of the Europeans. But in addition they penetrated into the interior of the continent and, in the nineteenth century, they organized their own states, which functioned thanks to a plentiful servile work-force. This occurred not only in Central Africa but also in the Upper Nile. The Arab slave trade was both internal and for exportation. This adjective 'internal' must not be regarded as a kind of attenuation in the sense that the victims remained on African soil, since ultimately it comprised characteristics similar to that of the maritime traffic.

Transport over long distances: The case mentioned above of the flotilla of forty canoes sent by Tippu Tip from Kisangani to Kasongo, is significant. The slaves were the proceeds of raids carried out in the north, on the Aruwimi 150 kilometres away, or the Itimbiri 300 kilometres

distant. Then to get to Kasongo they had to cover 600 kilometres. This town absorbed part of the arrivals for its own labour needs. But it also formed the starting point for caravans which had to take the overland route to Mtowa on Lake Tanganyika, say 300 kilometres, for the men assigned to portage. These latter ran a great risk of seeing themselves then sent on to Ujiji or Tabora to be sold. They finally found themselves transplanted to places very far from and different from their home countries.

Mortality: Comparison with the maritime trade would demand a knowledge of the rates of mortality affecting the long route by caravan. No figure can be put forward but we have noted that it was fairly high among porters and these latter found themselves more and more numerous with the lengthening of the radius of action of the slave traders.

Numbers: These states within the continent, covering vast areas, absorbed an important quantity of slaves at certain periods. In research at present being pursued to evaluate the number of individuals carried off by the Arab slave trade, we cannot therefore consider only the expeditions across the Sahara, the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. We also need to take account of important sectors in the interior of Africa. If the calculation in this latter case is much more difficult to establish (and will no doubt remain impossible), we must not forget that it existed.

UNITY OF THE ARAB ZONE IN EQUATORIAL AFRICA

One might well question the appropriateness of this contribution in a collection devoted to the slave trade in the Indian Ocean, since the zone considered participated in it in a negligible way. But Central Africa was closely linked to the Indian Ocean by another means. It is now necessary to enlarge the geographical framework to the whole eastern half of Equatorial Africa.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Zanzibar was the biggest world exporter of ivory.⁴² The product came from its vast hinterland, scoured by its traders. The regions to the west of Lake Tanganyika were thus contributing in an important manner to the economic prosperity of the sultanate. This fact is well illustrated by the considerable emotion aroused in Zanzibar when the news of Stanley's arrival in Kisangani in December 1883 was received, after he created a series of posts on the Congo from the Atlantic Coast. What the Zanzibari had already suspected about Leopold II's plans was taking shape: a diversion towards the west and the mouth of the Congo River of the ivory traffic from Central Africa, which till then had been directed towards the east coast. So seriously was the threat felt that a large-scale counter stroke was organized. After agreement with Sultan Seyyid Bargash, Tippu Tip

marched on Kisangani at the head of a numerous army, whose aim was to sweep away the still fragile installations established by the authorized agent of the king of the Belgians. Arriving on the spot, he gave up the idea since, with his practical eye, he understood at once that the great waterway running west offered him a much more advantageous and easy outlet for his ivory than the very long caravan route stretching out towards the Indian Ocean. He then decided to practise a policy of commercial understanding with the new Independent State of the Congo.⁴³ A succession of events prevented this policy from being activated before 1888.⁴⁴ From that date on, large quantities of ivory were shipped from Kisangani towards the Atlantic coast. But this did not mean a complete reversal of the situation in the Arab zone, since the regions further to the south remained closer to Zanzibar, and their production continued to flow out this way. This was the case for Mohara in Nyangwe, very hostile to Tippu Tip, but also for Tippu's son, Sefu, acting in close collaboration with his father in Kasongo. The importance of this commercial current from the Congo to the Indian Ocean explains a certain number of facts such as the rivalries of the Germans and the British in dealing with the big traders. The Germans wanted them to follow the traditional route passing through their new colony of Deutsch Ost Afrika, and the British hoped that they would turn towards Mombasa, in the possession of the British East Africa Company. Both parties protested when the Congo State revealed its intention to raise customs duties on Lake Tanganyika, so as to halt this current and reverse it towards the Atlantic. Finally, it explains the reactions of the Arab traders when an attempt was actually made to implement these customs duties.⁴⁵

In order to appreciate the importance of the Central African region in the economic activity of Zanzibar, it would be necessary to know the proportion of ivory from this source in the total exports of the Sultanate. Such information is lacking, but we can state in a general manner that it must have grown as a consequence of two factors: on the one hand, the exhaustion of resources in regions already exploited between the Ocean and Lake Tanganyika; and on the other hand, the extension of the Arab zone in the Congo and the operations of the Ngwana. It is interesting in this respect to quote a definite case. When the first German administrator, von Sigl, arrived in Tabora in 1891, he found in the stores large quantities of ivory from various regions: 1,000 *frasilah* from Karagwe or countries bordering Lake Victoria, and 3,000 to 4,000 'from other regions, in particular from Manyema'.⁴⁶ In this stock, Central Africa therefore formed the largest part, even though at this time part of its production was flowing westwards to the Lower Congo from Kisangani. Since very little ivory was collected east of Tabora, these proportions must have remained identical on the east coast. We cannot generalize from a particular case, but nothing indicates that it

was exceptional. It explains the interest in the region of the sultans of Zanzibar, who also provided the Congo traders with imported produce, in particular the rifles and powder necessary to maintain and extend their undertakings. These latter therefore preserved very solid and mutually beneficial economic links with their home country.

In this vast network, Lake Tanganyika served as a turntable. It was crossed in all directions: from the north-west side to Ujiji, an important centre in the ivory trade;⁴⁷ from the south-west regions to Kirando, the activity of which was growing; and also from north to south. The Jiji were expert in navigation, and the Arabs profited from their experience. On the other hand, Rumaliza, after establishing his authority over Ujiji and part of the northern regions of the lake, extended it towards the southern part as far as Itawa where Abdallah ben Soliman, at first Tippu Tip's man, was binding himself to him more and more. On this side, links were being formed with the Bemba, great slave raiders, and with the second great axis of penetration of the Arab traders, which we have already described, running from Kilwa to Kazembe.⁴⁸

The vast zone covered by the Arab traders from the east coast of Africa to the centre of the continent therefore formed one whole of a certain homogeneity. We know the saying current at the time of Richard Burton: 'When the flute is played in Zanzibar, they dance in Ujiji.' Thirty years later, they could have said: 'They dance on the Lualaba.' Without constituting a compact territory, this network of routes on which were situated centres of more or less importance, sometimes surrounded by peoples subject to tribute, formed a real unity: the cultural unity of men sprung from the same world, and economic unity, with its nerve centre in Zanzibar where there were the providers of the indispensable financial loans and the outlet for exports. We can even conjure up a certain political unity: not a European structure, imagined too quickly by travellers who described a pyramid formed at the summit by the sovereign, with governors and subordinates. The traders, however, acknowledged a certain allegiance to the Sultan of Zanzibar. If they established themselves in Central Africa for essentially commercial purposes, they came to claim the rights of the first occupant and put forward claims of a political order when faced with European invasion. These claims were stated as early as 1880 in Tabora and Ujiji, following the disquiet aroused by the foundation in a short period of time of many stations by missionaries and explorers.⁴⁹ Two years later, at the time of Stanley's establishment on the Lower Congo and his advance towards the Arab zone, the Sultan's sovereignty over the whole of Equatorial Africa was declared in Zanzibar.⁵⁰ Finally, Tippu Tip rejected the territorial claims of the Independent State of the Congo by posing as the lawful owner of his lands.⁵¹ Not exclusive owner, however, since, following the European advance from both sides of Equatorial Africa, and especially

after the blockade of the east coast in 1888, a rumour circulated insistently that the Arabs, including the Sultan of Zanzibar, had withdrawn to the centre of the continent, in order to form a nucleus of resistance, which the invaders would have great difficulty in reaching.⁵²

While taking account of the diversity of situations and of inevitable rivalries, a real unity in the Arab network can be affirmed. Now this essential fact is often misunderstood in a certain number of works about the east coast of Africa. This great zone stretching from the Indian Ocean to the Congo was split up by colonial partition into one part that became Anglophone and another which became Francophone, and the fact had its repercussions, it seems, in the minds of many a historian. Studying regions, the administrative language of which was familiar to them, they lost sight of the others. Thus some essential elements of explanation of general aspects or particular events occurring during the pre-colonial period when this separation did not exist are lacking. In order to understand the political and economic situation of the Sultanate of Zanzibar in the second half of the nineteenth century properly it needs to be envisaged with all its hinterland, stretching right to the centre of the African continent and constantly increasing in size.

It is in such a context that the slave trade in the northern quarter of the present Republic of Zaïre must be situated. This sector of the communications network established by the Arabs in the interior of the continent presented some originality with regard to all the others: it formed a sphere of domination for the benefit of the traders. This characteristic was found elsewhere only exceptionally and on a much reduced scale, as in Kota-kota for instance, on Laka Nyassa. Originality, however, did not mean rupture. We have noted that the individuals requisitioned or seized within this zone in practice provided no slaves for the ocean trade. They found themselves all monopolized by the running of the system of exploitation which had been set up. But this system itself was organized for collecting ivory, the whole of which at first, and later the greater part of which was exported to Zanzibar. It was by this indirect means that the slave traffic in Central Africa was linked to the Indian Ocean: not directly by the sending of caravans of individuals for sale, but indirectly by ensuring supplies of ivory which formed a growing part of the Sultanate's economic activity. Let us make it clear that the term *indirectly* does not comprise an accessory character. On the contrary the slave trade fulfilled an essential role. It formed as it were the 'source of energy' without which the whole system would not have been able to function and, like any source of energy, it was very consuming, demanding a perpetual renewal. It contributed the indispensable elements for animating a commercial network opening on to the Indian Ocean, through the transport of ivory and the material subsistence supplied to the various centres of communication in Central

Africa. The importance of the links existing between both the extremities does not allow us to study the one without taking account of the other.

In a general manner, the long-distance slave trade in Black Africa comprised two sides, the maritime (or trans-Saharan) and the continental. When the slave trade led to exports, the two trades constituted the overland and maritime stages of one same line of trade. When the internal side preserved its autonomy, it did not necessarily form an isolated circuit. Organized by foreign traders coming from the coast, it was then linked to the coast. We find a very distinct illustration in the twofold aspect of the traffic which was developing in the world covered by the Zanzibari. On the one hand, exporting outside the continent provided the coastal islands with the necessary work-force for the plantations, of cloves in particular, and a large surplus was released for ocean navigation. On the other hand, in Central Africa, keeping a population on the spot allowed the supply and shipment of large quantities of ivory, a much sought-after produce and an important source of income. If in such circumstances, the slaves did not themselves pass through the Zanzibar market, they fed it indirectly, but every bit as efficiently as their fellow-beings sold on the coast. In this way the Sultanate built up its prosperity on these two trades, maritime and within the continent. They formed a whole which must be taken into consideration in all its dimensions.

One big difficulty lies in the state of the sources. On the ocean trade, the researcher has at his disposal a relatively abundant documentation left by the Europeans, seafarers or residents established on the coast. On the internal trade, items of information exist to a far lesser extent, due to the tardy and limited European presence, the dearth of documents of Arab origin, and the limited number of oral inquiries among Africans. But the importance of a phenomenon is not measured by the quantities of the traces which subsist. In spite of everything, the historian must try to sift the material in order to re-establish balance. This is the case with the slave trade in Central Africa, not only in its internal structure, but also in its links with the commercial circuits of the Indian Ocean.

NOTES

1. E. Trivier, *Mon Voyage au continent noir* (Paris, 1891), p. 140.
2. According to Lieutenant Gleeurp: A. Chapaux, *Le Congo* (Bruxelles, 1894), p. 139.
3. A. Lopasic, *Commissaire général Dragutin Lerman, 1863-1918* (Tervuren, 1971), pp. 145-7: list of 37 names, but there are some omissions.
4. The rigorous maintenance of this hierarchy created a bitterness among the autochthonous *ngwana*, relegated to the role of executors. This led a certain number of them to rally the troops of the Independent State of the Congo. This fact explains to a great extent the rapid victory of these latter over the Arabs in 1892-93. On this question, see Kamanzi Bimanyu, *The Waungwana of the Eastern Zaïre*, PhD, London University, 1976.

5. In 1891 his armed force would have numbered 4,000 rifles, after that of Tippu Tip, who had twice as many and as much as all the other Arab chiefs together.
6. *L'autobiographie de Hamed ben Mohammed el-Murjebi, Tippu Tip*, edited by F. Bontinck (Bruxelles, 1974), para. 107.
7. J.S. Jameson, *Story of the Rear Column of the Emin Pusha Relief Expedition* (London, 1890), p.259. The author himself travelled in the company of Tippu Tip.
8. *L'autobiographie* . . . , quoted, para. 155.
9. H.M. Stanley, *In Darkest Africa* (London, 1890), I, pp.196 sqq. Description of the two stations of Ugarowa and Ipoto on the Ituri. The list of personnel illustrates well the hierarchy indicated above: Coast *ngwana*, autochthonous *ngwana*, here the Manyema, and troops recruited locally. On the other hand Tippu Tip's autobiography shows the important role the Nyamwezi played at his side.
10. Letter from Stanley to the *Daily Telegraph*, 28 Oct. 1876; *Address before the Anti-Slavery Society* (Manchester, 1884). H. Wissmann, *My Second Journey through Equatorial Africa* (London, 1891), pp.239-41.
11. Kamanzi Bimanyu, quoted (n.4), pp.85-9. Wissmann, crossing Songye country in 1886, noted a high depopulation with regard to his previous journey in 1882: quoted, pp.193 sqq.
12. Vyncke to Lavigerie, 25 Dec. 1886; White Fathers Archives (Rome) C 19/395, Gatchi to Lavigerie, April 1891; *Ibid.* D 11/212.
13. L. Lotar, 'Les Arabes des Falls dans l'Uélé', *Congo*, 1935, I, pp.641-67; II, pp.665-84.
14. *Mouvement Géographique* (Bruxelles), 26 July 1891.
15. T.H. Parke, *My Personal Experiences in Equatorial Africa* (New York, 1891), p.423.
16. Bimanyu, quoted (n.4), p.87.
17. A. Delcommune, *Vingt années de vie africaine* (Bruxelles, 1922), I, p.326. E.J. Glane, *Six years of adventures in Congoland* (London, 1893), pp.191-201. E. Bollaert, 'Les Arabes à l'Equateur', *Aequatoria*, 1957, pp.10-18.
18. Carnets Dhanis, *Registre AA*, p.225 (Musée de Tervuren).
19. On Ngongo Leteta, cf. J. Okito, 'Notes historiques sur la vie de Ngongo Leteta', *Communauté* (Luluabourg), No.10 (16 Sept. 1957) to No.21 (1 March 1958). P. Ceulemans, *La Question arabe et le Congo* (Bruxelles, 1958), pp.345 ff.
20. V.L. Cameron, *Across Africa* (London, 1877), II, p.27. See also J.S. Jameson, quoted (n.7), pp.253, 263. Some European explorers had at times to use the same procedure with the porters provided by their Arab hosts: Doctor Briart's diary (Delcommune expedition), 10 May-11 July 1891 (Musée de Tervuren).
21. J.S. Jameson, quoted (n.7), pp.252-75. S.L. Hinde, *The Fall of the Congo Arabs* (London, 1897), pp.186-9. To these eye-witnesses, must be added some oral inquiries: (Dallons-Cornet), 'L'arrivée des Arabes dans la région de Kasongo', *Bull. militaire* (Léopoldville), Sept. 1949, pp.532-5; *Id.*, 'Etude sur les arabisés du Congo', *Archives Africaines* (Bruxelles) A1 1407; Marie de la Salette, 'Kasongo', *Trait d'Union* (Anvers), 1948, No.5-6, pp.6-10.
22. R. Coupland, *East Africa and its Invaders* (London, 1938), p.514.
23. Kirk to Seyyid Bargash, letter attached to a report to the Foreign Office, 13 Jan. 1878; FO 84/1514. Kirk here recalls the situation prior to the 1873 treaty. Ten years after this date, the mortality rate dropped to between 10 and 12%, no doubt due to the fact that the slaves were better treated owing to the greater difficulty of procuring new ones and their higher price: Miles to the Foreign Office, 1 March 1883; FO 84/1644. But we do not have to take account of this last item for our comparison with Central Africa where obviously the 1873 treaty did not apply. On this question, see also F. Cooper, *Plantation Slavery on the East Coast of Africa*, (London, 1977), p.225.
24. *The Exploration Diaries of H.M. Stanley* (London, 1961), p.134.
25. Talk by A. Hodister: *Conférences antiesclavagistes libres* . . . avril 1891 (Bruxelles, 1892), p.43.
26. A. Delcommune, quoted (n.17), I, p.324.
27. E. Bollaert, quoted (n.17), p.15.

28. Bridoux to Deguerri, 12 Sept. 1889; White Fathers Archives C 16/181.
29. Journal Deniaux, 25 March 1881; *Ibid.* C 16/7.
30. That of the Genya, for example, experienced fishermen who knew how to navigate to the rapids upriver from Kisangani.
31. Tobback to his family, 20 March 1889; Archives Africaines (Bruxelles), fonds Tobback A/24. A slave market was held regularly at Kisangani: J.S. Jameson, quoted (n.7), p.275.
32. The explorer E. Trivier, who stayed in Kisangani in February 1889, then travelled on this flotilla to go up the Lualaba: quoted (n.1), p.91.
33. On the Ituri, Ipoto station depended on Abed ben Salim, according to T.H. Parke, quoted (n.15), p.155. But Abed died at the time when the author was passing through that station. His business was taken over by his son Said ben Abed. The expeditions sent out towards the rivers Nepoko and Makongo also depended on Said: L. Lotar, quoted (n.13), II, pp.668-9.
34. Another station on the Ituri was commanded by a *ngwana* named Ugarowa. According to Parke (quoted, p.104), he was one of Abed ben Salim's men, but the remark in the previous note applies here. According to a Belgian officer, he belonged to Kibonge: Hinck to Tobback, 11 Nov. 1891; Papiers Tobback, Musée de Tervuren. The two statements are not necessarily contradictory.
35. H.M. Stanley, *Through the Dark Continent* (London, 1878), II, pp.119-20.
36. F. Coulbois to Deguerri, 9 Nov. 1888; White Fathers Archives C 19/123.
37. Hore to Kirk, quoted in Kirk's report to the Foreign Office, 7 Nov. 1879; FO 541/47, p.550.
38. H. Wissmann, quoted (n.10), p.246.
39. See in particular Guillemé's descriptions to Deguerri, 1888, White Fathers Archives C 19/439; and A.J. Swann, *Fighting the Slave Hunters in Central Africa* (London, 1910), pp.75-6.
40. V.L. Cameron, quoted (n.20), II, p.28.
41. Kirk to the Foreign Office, 15 March 1877; FO 84/1484. F. Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin Pasha ins Herz von Afrika* (Berlin, 1894), p.600.
42. According to the statistics published by the Meyer Firm of Hamburg, the annual average of exports of ivory from 1883 to 1888, date of the blockade of the east coast which upset the market, was established in the following manner: Zanzibar, 196,000 kilos; Tripolitania and Egypt, 171,000 kilos; Mozambique, 142,000 kilos, etc. The total for Africa reached 848,000 kilos and for Asia 20,000 (*Mouvement Géographique*, 4 oct. 1891, pp.96-7).
43. For all these questions, we refer to our book *Tippo Tip, un potentat arabe en Afrique centrale* (Paris, Société française d'histoire d'Outre-Mer, 1987).
44. In the list above (n.42), the Congo was reckoned as 86,000 kilos. For the period indicated, this figure related to the ivory taken out of regions of the lower course of the river (going at most as far as the Bangala) and exported to the Atlantic coast. Other statistics give higher figures: P. Ceulemans, quoted (n.19), p.195.
45. P. Ceulemans, quoted, pp.306 ff. and 331 ff.
46. Report of Sigl, without date, *Deutsches Kolonialblatt*, 15 March 1892, p.164.
47. R.W. Beachey, 'The East African Ivory Trade in the nineteenth Century', *Journal of African History*, 1967, p.272.
48. F. Renault, *Lavigerie, l'esclavage africain et l'Europe* (Paris, 1971), I, chap. I and V.
49. *Ibid.*, pp.305 sqq.
50. V. Giraud, *Les Lacs de l'Afrique équatoriale* (Paris, 1890), p.34.
51. Tippu Tip to his brother and his son, translation attached to Euan Smith's report to the Foreign Office, 2 Jan. 1889; FO 84/1975.
52. Raffray to the Minister, 17 Nov. 1886; Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères (Paris), Corresp. polit., Zanzibar, vol.8. N. Tobback, *Suite de mon journal* and letter to his family, 20 March 1889; Archives Africaines (Bruxelles), fonds Tobback A/23,24. Karema Diary, 3 Aug. 1890; White Fathers Archives.

*Madagascar and Mozambique
in the Slave Trade
of the Western Indian Ocean
1800–1861*

Gwyn Campbell

INTRODUCTION

The slave trade of the Western Indian Ocean was long neglected by the British who only became aware of its real dimensions from the mid-nineteenth century. However, they never fully realised the extent of the trans-Mozambique Channel trade, and historians to date have failed adequately to fill this gap. It has traditionally been assumed of the nineteenth-century East African slave trade that Swahili coast exports were channelled almost exclusively to Arabia and the plantation islands of Zanzibar, Pemba and the Mascarenes, whilst the demand for Mozambique slaves was generated predominantly by Brazilian and Cuban demand, with the French sugar islands constituting a secondary market. This article is the first of two covering the nineteenth-century Malagasy and trans-Mozambique Channel slave trades which challenges the orthodox interpretation. It argues that the 'southern' network, comprising slave exports from Kilwa south to below the mouth of the Zambesi, cannot be considered without reference to the growing influence both of the French islands and of Madagascar – the latter in many ways constituting the 'missing link' in the history of eastern and southern Africa.¹ This paper investigates the growth and structure of the trans-Mozambique Channel slave trade until the early 1860s, focusing on the hitherto neglected role of Madagascar as both an exporter and importer of slaves, and upon Mozambique as the major supplier of slaves for the islands of the Western Indian Ocean.

* * *

Demand for slaves on the Mascarenes grew dramatically following the economic revitalisation of the islands from the 1730s. The closest and cheapest source of slaves was Madagascar from which the Mascarenes procured 45 per cent of the 160,000 slaves imported between 1610 and 1810, compared to 40 per cent from East Africa. In the Malagasy interior, slave-raiding expeditions were traditionally launched in the dry

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'winter' months by the Merina, Antsihanaka, Bezanozano, Antemoro, Betsileo, Bara and Sakalava whilst from the late eighteenth century French and, to a growing degree, Merina traders dominated the traffic in slaves from Imerina to the east coast.²

The French preferred the markets of the east coast of Madagascar as the latter constituted the closest slave supply centres to the Mascarene islands. Due to winds, this coast was, at 18°S, divided into two sections: that north of Toamasina possessed excellent harbours, whilst the coast to the south lay unprotected for 800 kilometres until the southern bays of Ste Luce, Mananiva and Taolanoro were reached. The north-east coast was most popular as it was close to the interior slave marts whilst the hinterland produced plentiful rice. Mahavelona (Foulepointe) was the centre of the slave export trade during the late eighteenth century, but was replaced by Toamasina from 1801.³ However, the supply of slaves from the relatively densely populated plateau interior was frequently interrupted by internecine strife, and by trade disputes. This encouraged middlemen, notably Arab merchants from north west of the island, and Betsimisaraka from the north east, to search for alternative sources of slaves. From 1785 to 1820 the Betsimisaraka launched periodic slave raids on the Comoro islands, notably Anjouan, and upon East African ports, including Ibo, Kilwa, Querimba and Mozambique Island, off which, in August 1809, a British naval ship was positioned for protection against the Betsimisaraka raiders.⁴ Some captives were retained for domestic use but most were sold to the French; for instance, it was noted that all slaves offered for sale on Nosy Boraha in 1803 hailed from Anjouan.⁵

The Mascarene trade supplemented a much smaller but older slave export trade from the west coast of Madagascar to the Muslim markets of Arabia and India, and to occasional European slaving ships supplying markets as widely dispersed as the Mascarenes, the Cape of Good Hope and South America. Merina and Arab traders sold slaves from the interior to Muslim merchants on the north-west coast, whilst European slavers were supplied chiefly by the Bara and Sakalava of the south-west coast.⁶ By 1820, five main slave supply routes had developed in Madagascar: Betsileo to Morondava, Ibara to St Augustin, Imerina to Iboina (notably Mahajanga), Iboina to Antongil Bay via the river Sofia and Imerina to Mahavelona and Toamasina. All channelled Malagasy slaves for export, whilst the fourth also fed African slaves, imported through ports on the north-west coast, overland to markets on the north-east coast.⁷

From 1820, when a Britanno-Merina treaty effectively ended the slave export trade from the Merina-controlled regions of Madagascar, and especially following the adoption of autarky in 1825, the labour demands of the imperial Merina economy clashed with those of Réunion and Mauritius. During the 1820s the economy of the Mascarenes shifted

wholesale over to sugar cultivation which, unlike tobacco, demanded all-year-round intensive labour. Mascarene animosity towards the Merina regime intensified as Merina forces simultaneously gained overall control of the eastern seaboard, effectively cutting any clandestine slave exports from that quarter. From 1820 the British Admiralty maintained a strict surveillance over the trade from the east coast of Madagascar, as did Radama I of Imerina, so that whilst slaves continued to be clandestinely imported into Mauritius in the early and mid-1820s, they were predominantly of Mozambique origin. The only tangible evidence of slave exports from the east coast of Madagascar was of Merina-owned slaves being transferred by boat from one region of the Merina empire to another. It was precisely because slave exports from the Merina-controlled regions of Madagascar came to an abrupt halt in 1820 that slavers smuggling their cargoes into Mauritius claimed Toamasina as their port of origin in an attempt to allay any suspicious British port officials might entertain as to the legitimacy of their operations.⁸

Thus between 1820 and 1840 East Africa became the major source of slaves for the Mascarenes; they were anyway considered more docile and honest than Malagasy slaves who were reputed to be inveterately dishonest. It was noted that from 1824 to 1826 the French exported approximately 3,500 slaves a year from Inhambane, and so great did the French demand for East African slaves become that, contrary to traditional assumptions, the French islands were rivalling and might even have replaced Brazil as the major export market for Mozambique slaves by 1830. Curtin estimates that Brazil imported 116,000 slaves from Mozambique and Madagascar, predominantly from the former, between 1817 and 1843, representing approximately one quarter of slave exports from Mozambique during those years. The majority of the remaining exports would have been shipped to the Indian Ocean islands. Although French demand slackened in the 1840s, it picked up again later in the decade.⁹ Indeed, supplies from East Africa were insufficient to meet demand following the emancipation of 60,800 slaves on Réunion in 1848, for the newly liberated slaves refused to remain on the plantations. In 1835, 76,774 slaves had also been freed on Mauritius and the resulting manpower crisis highlighted the importance of regaining Madagascar as the closest and cheapest source of labour, leading to pressure for British and French government intervention to secure supplies of Malagasy contract labour.¹⁰ Moreover, the decline from 1840 of both local sugar production and the price of raw sugar, whilst motivating large plantations to become increasingly mechanised, forced small planters with limited capital resources to rely more than ever on cheap labour.¹¹ Labour shortages added to the growing French resentment of the Merina which in 1844 culminated in a combined Franco-Britannic naval attack on Toamasina. The invasion force was repulsed and the Merina court retaliated by

closing all imperial ports to foreign trade. Thereafter, the French and British governments proved reluctant to militarily confront the Merina and turned their attention to finding alternative sources of labour.

Fortunately for Mauritian planters, negotiations with the Indian government for a supply of Indian 'coolie' labour bore fruit. In addition the British navy offloaded at Mauritius many slaves 'liberated' from slavers, captured in regional waters, who were immediately snapped up as 'apprentices' by sugar planters.¹² The planters of Réunion were not so fortunate. Deprived during the Napoleonic Wars of their base in India and denied access to Indian labour until 1861 by the British, they were tempted in increasing numbers into the traffic in slaves, disguised as *engagés*, from East Africa and regions of Madagascar independent of Merina control: between 1848 and 1859 an estimated average of 7,500 *engagés* a year were imported into Réunion alone.¹³

The shipment of slaves from independent reaches of Madagascar has been little studied due to the insistence of historians that the Merina regime conquered the entire island of Madagascar from the time of Radama I (1810–28). In reality, the region effectively governed by the Merina never exceeded one-third of the island, being confined chiefly to the central and eastern provinces.¹⁴ The transfer of commercial attention to independent regions of Madagascar accelerated a trend which had been in progress since the initial ban on slave exports from the Merina empire in 1820. Initially some Malagasy labour was 'recruited' from the south-east coast, near Taolanoro, and on the south coast between Cape Ste Marie and St Augustin Bay, but by mid-century the middle and northern reaches of the west coast had become the established supply centres of the Malagasy slave export trade. In western Madagascar, St Augustin Bay had long been a slave exporting centre of minor importance. The favoured slave import centres on the north-west coast from the start of the nineteenth century were Mahajambo and Mahajanga, both of which possessed fine harbours and access to the interior via the Sofia and Betsiboka rivers. Baly Bay grew in importance from the early 1830s due to the advent of Mascarene slavers, whilst the growing import trade from East Africa stimulated the rise of Maintirano as a major slave entrepôt by the mid-nineteenth century. By then a fairly clear division existed on the west coast, most ports north of the Manambolo river importing East African slaves both for the domestic Malagasy market and for re-export to the French plantation islands, and those to the south exporting Malagasy slaves, chiefly of plateau origin, to the French islands, notably to Réunion via the Seychelles.¹⁵ It has been claimed that from 1835 the export of slaves from the west coast grew considerably due to new markets in the Americas and in India, leading to Arab and Indian slavers conducting 'de véritables raffles de population' in western Madagascar.¹⁶ If it existed, the export trade to the

Americas and India must have been a temporary phenomenon, for from the 1830s virtually the sole market for Malagasy slaves was the French plantation islands. Of the latter trade from north-west Madagascar it was commented in 1859 that:

ce trafic infâme par la manière dont il s'exerçait généralement, jetait sur toutes ces plages une foule de navires attirés par l'appât d'un gain fabuleux (l'engagé qui s'achetait 20 à 29 piastres, se revendait à La Réunion jusqu'à 200 et 240 piastres).¹⁷

However, despite Samat's boast that, if required, he could supply 6,000 to 8,000 *engagés* at a moment's notice from Baly Bay, Mascarene traders on the north-west coast found their activity hindered both by Merina hostility to the export of potential 'imperial' manpower from the island, and by the entrenched position of the *antalaotra* middlemen above Maintirano. The *antalaotra*, a generic term for Muslims of Swahili-Arab origin, were subdivided into the *hounzati*, a group living in Iboina but originally from Malindi, and the *mozanghi* of Mahajanga. This latter town had boasted a population of 6,000 Arab and Indian traders and their families at its commercial zenith in the 1780s and 1790s, but they were largely dispersed by the Merina conquest of 1824 so that by 1869 only 700 to 800 *mozanghi* families remained.¹⁸ The *antalaotra* recovered much of their influence from the mid-1820s as the Merina came to value their political and commercial expertise. Thus Ramanetaka, the first Merina governor of Mahajanga, cultivated the friendship of Mose Sama, a local *antalaotra* dignitary, and his successors maintained the alliance. In addition the *antalaotra* retained the co-operation of many independent Sakalava chiefs into whose families they frequently married, and whom they influenced to adopt Islamic customs. Their position was reinforced by the expansion of the Omani trading empire, based on Zanzibar, into which the *antalaotra* became fully incorporated and which linked them with Arab trading colonies on the Comoro Islands and East African coast.¹⁹ Finally, *antalaotra* dominance was secured through their alliance with the *karany*, or Indian community in Madagascar, most of whom were 'Khoja' or 'Bohra' Shia Muslims. Frere wrote of them in 1873.

In Madagascar and elsewhere the Indians assured me that though their oldest house was not more than sixty years standing, their caste had traded to the coast for ages previous . . . In Madagascar they assert that they have been, for at least a century, settled at Nosi Beh and other ports, and that they [ie, the Bohras and Khojas] preceded the Hindoos on the African Coast.²⁰

Although the *karany* were a growing influence in the legitimate trade of the west coast, their rise to commercial predominance was founded on

the slave trade. Intimate relations with large Bombay-based companies and close co-operation with other Indian traders in the area guaranteed the Indians sufficient capital and flexibility to survive trade fluctuations and constantly expand their commercial frontier. This formed a sharp contrast to their Arab, créole and European competitors who, with few exceptions, lacked substantial financial backing. Moreover, unlike the *antalaotra*, the *karany* had little idea of permanent settlement in Madagascar, though many claimed Merina in addition to British citizenship.²¹ From the ports of the north west the *karany* played the vital role of financing slaving activity along much of the western littoral and interior of Madagascar. Some held important positions in Merina-controlled ports whilst Daosa, the *karany* leader in Mahajanga in the 1860s, followed the example set by Indian traders working under Omani rule by financing the construction of a customs house in the port.²² They maintained commercial contact with the firm of Jairam Sewji whose agents farmed the Omani customs, and with the *Banians* who were the chief financiers of the slave trade on the Mozambique coast after 1840. For their part the *karany* advanced credit to the *antalaotra*, Sakalava, Merina and even Mascarene traders, arranging 'loans, advances and mortgages, on every kind of property, real and personal, and on various kinds of security; by advances of goods for trade etc'.²³ Although they rarely took an active role in the actual shipment of slaves, they also provided slaving ships; old India-built ships that had made their last 'respectable' voyage with the annual flotilla from Western India to Madagascar and Mozambique were relegated to the slave trade where risks were high, it being noted that 'cheap and old vessels are preferred; they have an almost equal chance of making the voyage before a regular trade wind and, if captured, are a smaller loss'.²⁴

With *karany* backing, the *antalaotra* in Madagascar managed a two-way slave traffic, buying from the Sakalava for export to the French plantation islands and also importing from the Mozambique and Zanzibar coasts to supplement the regional French trade and supply the internal Malagasy market. As middlemen, they retained such dominance over the external commerce of north-west Madagascar that they could demand higher prices than could Sakalava chiefs, and insist on payment in dollars. They thus earned the antipathy of créole traders like Edmont Samat who described them as a 'caste maudite qui entrave beaucoup les Européens qui habitent ou qui passent sur cette côte'.²⁵ To bypass the *antalaotra*, Mascarene slavers moved southwards beyond Cape St André in the 1840s, establishing bases at Morondava, Morombe, and Toliara. Some traders like Desmorels had been based in the south-west since the early nineteenth century, but the real expansion in the foreign trade of the area commenced in the 1830s and 1840s with the arrival on the mid- and lower west coast of the Samat and Rossier brothers, as well

as individual traders like Achille Lemerle and César Pepin, all of whom were heavily involved in the slave trade of this region. The Sakalava and Bara supplied slaves in exchange for which they obtained mainly arms, which in turn enabled them to launch slave-raiding expeditions on to the central plateau of the interior. As the Sakalava were polygamous, they retained some female slaves, but as the total number seized was always surplus to requirements the majority were sold to Mascarene slavers on the coast for export.²⁶ However, the *antalaotra*, and later their *karany* allies, also expanded their trading frontier southwards, their competition forcing prices to rise, by a multiple of ten for some legitimate export commodities between the late 1840s and early 1860s. In consequence, Mascarene traders moved still further south and by 1850 had reached and greatly stimulated the slave export trade from St Augustin Bay.²⁷

Merina resistance to French demands for Malagasy labour from 1820 can only be fully appreciated in the context of the rise of the Merina empire based upon an autarkic economy in which forced labour played a pivotal role. As early as 1824, Radama I realised that his traditional sources of labour were insufficient to meet the mounting demand for labour in the imperial economy, and thereafter Mozambique slaves were imported into Imerina in increasing numbers. As Hastie commented following Radama I's refusal in 1824 to ban slave imports as he had slave exports in 1820:

I asked him [Abdalla] if Radama had not given my orders about the importation trade. He replied, 'No', but the orders against exportation were repeated previous to his [Radama I's] departure from Majunga, and he [Radama I] had laid a duty of five per cent on the exports and two per cent on all importation commerce; and of course, said Abdalla, slaves are included as he [Radama I] knew that to be our [ie the *antalaotra*] principal commerce.²⁸

The Merina court found that due to both the death toll in imperial campaigns and the attempt to forge an armaments industry based on forced labour, demand for labour, slave and *fanompoana*, outstripped supply. In consequence, African slave imports were stepped up, as were internal slaving expeditions. The total number of slaves, imported and captured, is estimated to have quadrupled during Ranavalona I's reign.²⁹ However, in contrast to traditional assertions, the imperial Merina economy depended far more heavily on the exploitation of *fanompoana*, or the forced labour of 'free' imperial subjects than it did upon slave labour.³⁰ The Sakalava of the west coast north and south of the Merina-controlled port of Mahajanga also took an increasingly active role as middlemen in the supply of East African slaves for the French and Merina markets, and in the process themselves developed a

demand for slave imports. The price differential meant that the Sakalava could work a slave during the prime years of his or her life, usually in agriculture, and subsequently still sell the slave at a high price to the Merina or the French.³¹

Mascarene and imperial Merina demand greatly stimulated the slave export trade from the 'southern' East African slave complex centring on Portuguese Mozambique. This region had long enjoyed a brisk foreign trade due not only to the availability of luxury exports, gold, ivory and slaves, but also to the accessibility to the interior which the coast north of Cape Delgado did not possess. As Kirk pointed out in 1865, the Zambesi, which was unbroken by rapids for 300 miles from its mouth, formed the best natural trade route into the interior in the whole of East Africa. Moreover, via its tributary, the Shire, it tapped Malawi, one of the major sources of slaves for export.³² The number of slaves exported from Mozambique was small until the late eighteenth and particularly the early nineteenth century when it developed rapidly due to growing demand, notably from Brazil, which emerged during the Napoleonic Wars as one of the world's major sugar producers, but also from the Mascarenes and, to a lesser extent, India. Such was the Brazilian demand for slaves that in 1811 the ban was lifted on Brazilians trading with ports in Mozambique other than Mozambique Island.³³ The dramatic growth in slave exports from Portuguese East Africa is reflected in the rise of customs revenue from slaves, from 32.5 to 55 per cent of the total at Mozambique Island between 1818 and 1829, and from 17 per cent of the total in Quelimane in 1806 to 85 per cent by 1821 when net slave exports sometimes equalled those from Mozambique island. Slave exports from Ibo also revived in the 1820s with the end to predatory attacks by Malagasy raiding parties and the growing demand for slaves from the French Indian Ocean islands. Ibo was practically a French reserve between 1820 and 1829 in which year the number of French slave traders visiting the port was described as 'fantastic'.³⁴ It is estimated that by 1830 slave exports were responsible for between 55 and 75 per cent of all exports from Mozambique.³⁵

Portugal barred its nationals from the slave trade in 1836, but the decree was almost completely ignored by the Mozambique administration who acknowledged the dependence of the colony's economy on slave exports. Even had they wished to enforce the decree, the force at their disposal – some 100 to 300 soldiers at the start of the nineteenth century – rendered them incapable of hindering the slaving activities of the *prazeros*, who possessed private slave armies of several thousand men. Moreover, there existed a collusion between ill-paid Portuguese officials and slavers – a pattern that was duplicated on the other side of the Mozambique Channel, with the Merina administration in Madagascar. As a British officer of the anti-slave trade squadron stated in 1852:

I regret that the Portuguese authorities instead of repressing this traffic, afford every facility for its continuance. I learn that the Governor of Inhambane permitted a slaver to lie at anchor off that port for three weeks and capture 1000 slaves in December 1851, and the Governor of Ibo connived at the trade.³⁶

In the mid-1840s, Mozambique Island, Quelimane and Ibo were surpassed as slave ports by Angoche. Ruled by a Sultan practically independent of both Omani and Portuguese rule, Angoche had long been a major supplier of slaves to the French islands and Madagascar, and also distributed slaves to the other slave centres on the Mozambique coast. Similarly independent sultanates supplying slaves to the islands of the Western Indian Ocean were Quintangonhe (which, according to Alpers, was with Angoche the dominant centre of slave exports to Madagascar from the mid-nineteenth century), Sancul and Sangaye. Unlike Portuguese-dominated ports of Mozambique, these sultanates were dominated by Swahili slave traders who exported their cargoes in dhows to the Zanzibar coast, the Comoro islands, and Madagascar. However, French traders from Réunion were also starting to trade in Angoche by the late 1830s. In 1846 a combined Britanno-Portuguese expedition succeeded in subjugating it, but despite nominal Portuguese sovereignty it remained largely independent and maintained its slave network into the second half of the nineteenth century.

Kilwa, which was firmly under Omani influence, was from the late eighteenth century to c.1822 the largest East African supplier of slaves to the Mascarenes. Approximately 20 per cent of its slave exports were channelled into the southern trading network in the nineteenth century, initially for shipment to the Americas, but increasingly to the northern network, the French islands and Madagascar. Inhambane was also frequented by French slavers from the 1820s. However, the phenomenon of a few large slaving ports disappeared by the mid-nineteenth century as the activity of British anti-slave trade patrols in East African waters obliged slavers to deconcentrate the trade, with the result that a multitude of small slave ports developed. This, in turn, stimulated the Swahili- and Arab-dominated slave networks, as Portuguese influence outside a few main ports was limited.³⁷

Mascarene slave traders were prominent visitors to Mozambique and the ports of the Swahili coast, notably Kilwa, at the close of the eighteenth and the start of the nineteenth century, but from c.1810–30 they were overshadowed by slavers catering for the Brazilian market. The Portuguese dominated slave exporting from Mozambique territory in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Indians controlled most of the import cotton trade in the early nineteenth century, but they were largely eclipsed in the main ports by mid-century. Although they

TABLE 1: PORTS INVOLVED IN THE TRANS-MOZAMBIQUE CHANNEL SLAVE TRADE. 1800-61³⁸

A. East Africa (Exports)			B. East Madagascar (Exports)			C. West Madagascar (Imports and Exports)		
Port	Position	Dates	Port	Position	Dates	Port	Position	Dates
Kilwa Kivinje	8°45'S	1810-91	Antongil Bay	15°23'S	1800-25	Nosy Be	13°20'S	? -95
Lindi	10°00'S	?	Nosy Boraha	16°50'S	1800-30	Passindava	13°40'S	1840-95
Quinga	10°37'S	1840s-?	Fenoarivo	17°21'S	1800-20	Narinda	14°38'S	1840-95
Tunghi Bay	10°46'S	1840s-?	Mahavelona	17°40'S	1800-20	Mahajambo	15°27'S	1800-95
Ibo	12°21'S	1800-?	Toamasina	18°10'S	1800-20	Mahajanga	15°40'S	1800-95
Quissanga	12°24'S	1820-1880s	Ste Luce	24°46'S	1800-25	Baly Bay	16°05'S	1830-95
Mozambique Is.	15°00'S	1800-1880s	Mananivo R.	24°58'S	1800-25	Maintirano	18°01'S	1850-95
Condúcia Bay	15°15'S	1840s-?	Taolanoro	25°01'S	1800-25	Manambolo R.	19°00'S	1850-95
Angoche	16°11'S	1840-1880s				Morondava	20°19'S	? -95
Moma	16°46'S	1840s-?				St Augustin	23°31'S	1800-61
Sena	17°30'S	1820s						
Quelimane	17°53'S	1806-1880s						
Inhambane	23°51'S	1824-1860s						

advanced credit to both Portuguese and Yao middlemen to finance the slave traffic from the interior, there is little evidence that they were as dominant capitalists of the slave trade in Mozambique territory as they were for the Malagasy or for the northern Swahili network, until possibly the mid-nineteenth century, by which time 'Bathias' from Cutch and Gujerat, backed by Bombay financial houses, had superseded the hitherto dominant 'Banians' from Diu.³⁹ The two chief 'capitalists' and slavers in Quelimane, the main centre of the slave export trade by the 1830s, were Romão and Moraes; both were dead in 1843 by which time the chief agent of the slave export trade appears to have been Fernando, the Governor of Quelimane who, by contrast to De Lima, governor of Mozambique who refused to engage in the slave trade and in consequence was a relatively poor man, is reputed to have made \$60,000 in fifteen months through 'peculation and slave fees'. As Barnard commented;

It appears, that any number of slaves may be obtained and shipped from Quilimane itself at a few hours' notice, and that the Governors have been in the habit of receiving fixed bribes from the slave dealers whose launches are always ready to start the moment a ship makes her private signal.⁴⁰

Two main trading complexes operated in the interior of Mozambique: the first linked Mozambique Island with the Yao and Makua homelands, and stretched as far as the southern Lunda and southern Tanzania; the second linked Quelimane with its hinterland, extending as far as the southern Lunda kingdom of Kazembe and the Changamira kingdom in Zimbabwe.⁴¹ The main slave supply areas were Nsenga, Manganja,

and notably the Southern Chewa chieftaincies, the highland region to the north of the river Zambesi being more heavily populated than the relatively unhealthy lowlands to the south. In a sample of 659 male slaves emancipated in 1856, although twenty different ethnic groups were represented, 85 per cent originated from the matrilineal peoples lying to the north of the Zambesi. Of this total, 61 per cent comprised Malawian groups; the Maganja, Chipeta, Maravoi, and especially the Chewa who formed 58 per cent of Malawian slaves.⁴² Slaves were both captured and purchased; for instance, the Chewa, Nsenga, and Maganja readily sold as slaves their 'undesirables', chiefly enemy soldiers, thieves, witches, and adulterers.

The Portuguese attempted to bypass Arab middlemen and engage in direct long-distance trade with the Karanga and Malawi chieftaincies of the interior and, at their height in the 1850s and 1860s, they dominated the slave trade in the Shire Highlands to the south of Lake Malawi. However, slave-trading in the interior was the work not of the Portuguese so much as of the *misambadzi*, or specialist slave agents of the *prazeros* of Zambesia. They acted as middlemen notably in the region controlled by the Malawi Nsenga and Yao, and, alongside the Yao, Bisa, Ovimbundu and Chokwe, constituted one of the most successful groups of long-distance traders in south-east central Africa. The *misambadzi* were backed by powerful private armies of the *prazeros*, comprising sometimes 10,000 slave soldiers, used in slaving expeditions and in the escort of slave caravans to the coast.⁴³ Disputes involving the *prazeros*, Yao and African chiefs over control of the trade frequently resulted in interruptions in the traffic during the first half of the nineteenth century. Although by the mid-nineteenth century, the Yao came to dominate the trade from the north of Lake Malawi to the coast between Cape Delgado and Kilwa, they were almost immediately challenged on the Kilwa route by the Bisa, whilst both groups were pushed aside by the Ngoni expansion northwards into Malawi at the end of the 1850s, which led to a serious disruption of slave supplies from the region. Only after obtaining regular supplies of arms from the Portuguese in the 1860s and later from the Arabs, did the Yao manage to regain control of some of the trade, and it is from that time that their dominance of the Quelimane route dates.⁴⁴

Slaves were purchased mainly in kind. In the interior of Mozambique, slaves and ivory were exchanged for beads, iron, alcohol, and especially guns and cloth – foreign cloth and locally manufactured 'manchilla' which formed a staple of internal trade and a local commodity money. On the coast the same type of trade goods were used by foreign slavers to purchase slaves for export, with cloth (from Zanzibar and Madagascar) and arms prominent. For example, in 1821 it was commented that 'Quilimane is the greatest mart for slaves on the coast; they are

purchased with dungaree, cloths, arms, gunpowder, brass and pewter, coloured beads, cutlery, &c &c'.⁴⁵ On the Mozambique coast slaves were washed and oiled. Those destined for the Indian Ocean islands and markets on the Swahili coast were split into three main groups: the *pesca*, comprising healthy men and women aged between 18 and 25, commanded the highest price, followed by the *pote d'agua*, healthy slaves aged 14 to 18, who commanded the second highest premium, and finally a group containing less desirable slaves. Slaves purchased for the Brazilian and Cuban markets were divided simply into the '*brutos*' ('savages') and the '*ladinos*' ('clever ones'). The latter could speak some Portuguese and therefore commanded a higher price. Young women were generally at a premium on the Swahili coast which was orientated towards the Muslim markets of the north, but on the Mozambique coast strong young men were at a premium for the plantation markets of the Americas and the French Indian Ocean Islands, whilst young men for re-export, and young women and children for the domestic market were in demand in Madagascar.⁴⁶ As on the Mascarenes, Mozambique slaves in Imerina had the reputation of being strong, hard-working, and less truculent than Malagasy slaves. This was reflected in slave prices, paid in either kind or in money; as 'Abdalla', a major *antalaotra* slave trader at Mahajanga remarked to Hastie in 1824, 'Mozambiques are in demand in the interior and bring from 40 to 50 head of cattle, though Ova (ie, Merina) slaves are not worth more than 8 to 10 bullocks in their own country'.⁴⁷ The total number of slaves, imported and captured, is estimated to have quadrupled during Ranavalona I's reign. This largely accounts for the levelling out of the average price of a slave in Imerina after climbing rapidly from just under three dollars in 1820 to over \$30 by 1840.⁴⁸

For foreign traders, preliminaries of trade in Madagascar involved

TABLE 2: THE TRANS-MOZAMBIQUE CHANNEL SLAVE TRADE —
ESTIMATED ANNUAL VALUE⁴⁹
(IN \$000s AT POINT OF EXPORT/IMPORT)

Period	A. Exports		B. Imports	
	Portuguese East Africa	Madagascar	French Islands	Madagascar
1801-10		135		
1811-15	270	33		
1816-20	392	160	244	
1821-25	450		198	
1826-30	470			
1831-40	500	15		43
1841-50	210	73		
1851-60	610	150	1,085	

the giving of numerous small gifts to the local sovereign and court entourage, and the contract was frequently sealed by the *fatidra* or blood brotherhood ceremony.⁵⁰ Until 1820 Mascarene traders paid for their slaves in cash (Maria Theresa dollars), arms or cloth. From 1820 cloth and arms were by far the most important forms of payment for slaves, although the *antalaotra* on the north-west coast, whilst importing cotton cloth and slaves in exchange for 'legitimate' staples, insisted on dollars when selling slaves to Mascarene traders.⁵¹ The *karany* were one of the main importers of cheap Bombay cloth, which constituted a form of currency in the south of the island and, at the opposite end of the scale, fine silks, although from 1865 American traders moved in to capture most of the trade in imported cotton piece goods.⁵² In the Mascarenes most slaves were purchased in cash: those exported from Madagascar from 1820 were generally landed on Réunion for, quite apart from the stricter surveillance maintained on Mauritius, 'slaves are sold for much higher prices at Bourbon [Réunion] than here [Mauritius]'.⁵³

Burton in 1860 considered that slave traders gained a 500 per cent profit on the purchase of slaves in interior East Africa upon their sale on the coast, where slave prices more than trebled between 1847 and 1856. However, Burton grossly underestimated the capital costs and risks of slaving ventures into the interior.⁵⁴ On regional routes, slave trade profits were as high as 1,000 per cent by the second half of the nineteenth century, similar to those made on the Mozambique to Rio de Janeiro run until 1853. This induced many of the dhows that had formerly specialised in coasting to turn to the trans-Mozambique Channel slave trade, making multiple crossings in the same season.⁵⁵

Madagascar was not subject to the same regular rhythm of winds and currents, based upon the half-yearly alternation of the monsoons, that characterised the waters of the equatorial and north-east African coast.⁵⁶ Mascarene slavers to Madagascar sailed from March to December, when the seas were calm and there was a regular supply of slaves from the interior of the island where the slaving and trading season coincided with the dry winter season. The average length of a return slaving voyage was three to four months, although a single crossing took only seven to ten days. This was due to the vagaries of the weather and the long preliminary negotiations that traditionally accompanied commercial transactions in Madagascar. Whereas the general pattern of winds and currents was dependable, the advent of hurricanes in the rainy season from November to April was unpredictable. As the south-western Indian Ocean experienced an average of five to six hurricanes a year during the rainy season, shipping was generally restricted to the months of April to October. Permanent south-east trade winds pushed ships to the east coast of Madagascar, but the wind split at approximately latitude 18° S, some 70 miles offshore. To the north of this point the SSW winds

and current travelling at approximately 3 knots pushed ships towards Toamasina, Foulepointe, and Antongil Bay, and they were obliged to return by sailing in a wide arc, passing close to Tromelin Island. To the south of latitude 18° S, NNE winds and currents of less than 3 knots pushed ships down the east coast as far as Taolanoro, and the return trip was made by sailing in a large arc south, then east, and finally north-west. In November and December coastal winds blew uniformly from the north, so slavers headed for Antongil Bay before turning south.⁵⁷

Off the East African coast a trade current of great velocity, reaching 40 miles in 24 hours during the north-east monsoon from April to November, runs past Cape Amber and divides at Cape Delgado, a perennial southern current, which could reach a velocity of 60 miles in 24 hours during the SW monsoon, affecting the Mozambique coast. On the opposite side of the Channel the North-East monsoon blows from October to April on the north-west coast of Madagascar, whilst during the remainder of the year the winds vary from South to West from noon to nightfall, following which they vary between South and East. In general terms, trans-Mozambique Channel traffic followed a pattern based on the monsoon winds. As was noted in 1859:

The slaves are first taken to depots in St. Augustine's Bay and Bojanna Bay on the west coast of Madagascar from all parts of the east coast of Africa, but principally from Quiloa and Ibo during the northeast monsoon and from St. António and Quizungo during the southwest monsoon.⁵⁸

In the early nineteenth century, trading expeditions into the interior of Mozambique aligned themselves with this pattern. They commenced from the coast from late January, after the first ships with foreign trade goods started to reach the coast on the north-east monsoon. From May or June, the pattern was reversed with the expeditions beginning to return to the coast in time for the start of the south-west monsoon from August, although the duration of their stay in the interior might be up to two years. However because the system of winds and currents in the Mozambique Channel differed from the more regular pattern in the equatorial region further north, slave dhows plying the trans-Channel trade from Portuguese East Africa, unlike those from the Swahili coast, were largely independent of the monsoon winds, and slaves were shipped to Madagascar all year round, particularly when demand was high. This in turn meant that in the interior of Mozambique, notably in the region of Lake Malawi, in contrast to Madagascar, the slave trade continued throughout the year. This helped ensure a ready supply of slaves in coastal embarkation points and helped maintain low slave prices on

the Mozambique coast.⁵⁹ The trans-Mozambique Channel run generally peaked in December and January, at precisely the time when commercial traffic between the east coast and the Mascarenes was at a virtual standstill due to storms and the prevalence of malaria. However, those cargoes destined for the French sugar islands were often shipped around July, at harvest time, when the greatest demand for field hands was felt. It generally took between three and nine days for a slave dhow to cross the Channel depending on currents, the weather and the destination.⁶⁰

At the start of the nineteenth century the trans-Mozambique Channel slave trade was carried out openly as the British, who concentrated their anti-slave trade patrols off the West African coast, had little notion of the extent of the East African slave trade, especially below Zanzibar. As Lloyd states, until Owen's survey of 1823 the British were more familiar with the coastal geography of Australia and China than of the 2,100-kilometre coastline of Portuguese East Africa or that of the west coast of Madagascar. The Britanno-Portuguese Treaty of January 1815 prohibited Portuguese subjects from engaging in the slave trade north of the equator, but it left them free south of the line. The first measure affecting the slave trade of the region was the 1820 Britanno-Merina treaty banning slave exports from Merina territory, and this was given teeth in a revised treaty of 1823 empowering the British navy

to seize and detain all ships and other vessels, whether of or belonging to the subjects of Madagascar, or of any other nation or people whatever, which shall be found in any harbour, port, roadstead, creek or river, or on or near the shores and coasts of Madagascar, carrying on the traffic in slaves, or aiding and abetting in carrying on such traffic.⁶¹

The British anti-slave trade squadron largely ignored the Mozambique Channel until the 1840s. Not until 1839 did Britain declare the right to search Portuguese ships suspected of slaving, and only in 1842 was a naval patrol established in the Mozambique Channel. Even then rarely as many as three cruisers were employed in the area, and they were generally easily evaded by the captains of slaving ships who co-operated to establish an effective system of warning signals. Moreover, the speed of the slavers, combined with their captains' intimate knowledge of the difficult currents and winds of the Mozambique Channel, frequently enabled them to outwit the British.⁶² The most common boat used for trans-Mozambique Channel slave traffic was the Swahili or Arab captained *betela* dhow, described as

from 35 ft, to 45 ft, long, and, perhaps, 10 ft, greatest beam. They are built of wood, and are roughly but strongly put together. The

fore and after ends are decked over, and over the centre of the dhow, as a protection for the cargo, a roof is built from a framework of sticks and poles and thatch of plaited cocoa-nut leaves. These dhows have generally one mast, which rakes very much forward. On it is hoisted a long yard, to which the upper side of the large cotton sail is secured. This sail approaches a right-angled triangle in shape – the hypothenuse is made fast to the yard, and the right angle is the after lower corner, while the lease is almost parallel with the dhow's side . . . The crew . . . would consist of a captain, three or four sailors, and two boys. The captain is generally a fair seaman and a good pilot.⁶³

The *betela* could sail as fast as most of the boats possessed by the British, who stood little chance of catching slave dhows until the development of steam in the 1840s. Even then capture was rare. As Colomb commented of the dhows in the early 1870s:

These vessels are enormously swift; they would tax the powers of our fastest yachts in light winds; the most speedy man-of-war, under steam or sail, has her hands full when she gives chase to them in a breeze. I have doubted of success, when rushing after them at ten and a half miles an hour. I have missed my quarry when I had not immediate means to go more than ten miles in the hour.⁶⁴

Their shallow draught gave dhows supremacy in shallow coastal and riverine waters and it was not until 1883 that the British Navy ordered special light-draught steam launches. These, unlike schooners, could follow dhow slavers into the innumerable small coastal creeks and channels which marked both the Malagasy and African sides of the Mozambique Channel. Again, this development did not guarantee success to the anti-slave trade squadrons, for possession of fast boats and an intimate knowledge of the coastlines, winds, and currents of the Mozambique Channel, considered treacherous by most European navigators, frequently enabled Arab pilots to outmanoeuvre British patrols.⁶⁵

Antalaotra and Mascarene traders also devised devious routes for the passage of slaves; for example, many Mozambique slaves destined for Réunion were shipped to coastal barracoons on the west coast of Madagascar, where they were joined by Malagasy slaves seized in the interior, before being dispatched to the Seychelles on the second leg of their journey. There they could be detained for several months awaiting the opportune moment to be sent to the Mascarenes.⁶⁶ In 1833 the British declared that the Franco-British agreement on the

mutual right to inspect the other's ships be applied to all waters within twenty leagues of Madagascar. This measure encouraged slavers to run up flags of other nations until the French withdrew from the agreement in 1841. Indeed, the greatest contributory factor to the continued success of the *antalaotra* slave runners was the immunity they gained from British naval searches by flying foreign flags – particularly French and, from the 1840s, American colours, for France, and the United States until the 1860s, refused to grant the British the right to search their vessels.⁶⁷ In 1844 the British insisted that ships' flags be verified but anti-slave patrols could not enforce this measure on ships carrying French colours unless within Malagasy waters as defined by the 1833 accord. Slavers minimised risks by sailing under cover of dark and carrying false papers in which Nantes forgers specialised, and which the French readily made available to the *antalaotra* and Swahili slave-runners.⁶⁸

Slaves were smuggled across the Mozambique Channel in two ways, forming part of a specific cargo of slaves, the average number being between 150 and 200, or of a general cargo of which they constituted a profitable side-line. The dhows were anything up to 350 tons; those of between 80 and 100 tons could carry up to 150 slaves, whilst specially adapted dhows could transport up to 250 slaves. For instance, in August and September 1867, two cargoes totalling 500 slaves were landed in Passandava Bay.⁶⁹ If, as occasionally happened, one of the specialist long-distance slaving dhows of the northern network was diverted into the southern Mozambique Channel trade, cargoes of up to 400 slaves were carried. This was still 50 per cent of the slave-carrying capacity of the large European ships used during the first half of the nineteenth century for the Atlantic run.⁷⁰ However, whereas European and American slavers were specially adapted for the purpose, Arab dhows would normally carry a mixed cargo. This entailed far less risk, as the five to twenty slaves aboard could generally be passed off as crew members should the vessel be searched. As Frere commented of the slave trade to Madagascar in the early 1870s:

After landing their Indian supercargo with the import cargo of cloth etc, at Madagascar, they [ie. the Arabs] stand over to the opposite Portuguese coast, pick up a small cargo of slaves at the outposts with which they return to Madagascar, making sometimes more than one trip of this kind before it is time to return northwards. These dhows are said frequently to put into the Comoro islands for water and provisions, and sometimes clandestinely part with some of their slaves there; but they generally put into the Sakalava ports or unfrequented harbours which abound on the Madagascar coast.⁷¹

The treatment of slaves aboard Arab dhows engaged in the northern slave trade, supplying the Muslim markets of Arabia, was generally considered reasonable by British naval officers. Indeed, slave mortality ashore was greater than at sea. It was possibly as high as 25 per cent in transit to the coast and in barracoons awaiting embarkation – there are instances of almost 30 per cent mortality in barracoons on the Mozambique coast.⁷² A major influence on slave mortality aboard ship was the weather, dhows generally embarking slaves only in fine weather and with a strong backing wind to ensure a speedy journey. Filliot has estimated a 12 per cent mortality for slaves transported from Madagascar to the Mascarenes at the start of the nineteenth century compared to a 21 per cent loss for slaves from East Africa. It is highly unlikely that slave mortality at sea declined in succeeding decades as the speed of the boats remained unaltered, whilst harassment from British naval patrols, and overcrowding, increased – both of which would have contributed to slower crossings and a greater number of deaths, especially from disease. The Cape Commissioners noted, in January 1859:

The mortality among African immigrants to Réunion during the voyage and on board while lying at the anchorage of St. Denis is very great from smallpox and dysentery . . . One vessel . . . landed only 72 Negroes out of 300 on board.⁷³

In this incident, 24 per cent of slaves died aboard ship, a figure close to Filliot's estimates, whilst on the shorter Mozambique–West Madagascar crossing 12 per cent of slaves probably died. This would appear high given that approximately the same percentage of slaves perished on the Atlantic run during the first half of the nineteenth century – although two estimates from the 1820s give a 28 per cent mortality for slaves in transit between Mozambique and Brazil.⁷⁴

As for the number of slaves exported, Milburn estimates that during the 1810s over 12,000 slaves per annum were shipped from the ports of Mozambique and, from 1814, Quelimane, and this rose to over 20,000 a year in the 1820s, as many as were exported from Zanzibar at the same time. Sixty per cent of Mozambique exports were initially destined for the Americas. Most of the remainder – an estimated 4,800 a year in the second decade of the nineteenth century, rising to 8,000 and over in the 1820s – were shipped to the islands of the Western Indian Ocean. Until 1820 the vast majority of the latter would have been shipped to the Mascarene islands, either directly or via the Comoro islands or Madagascar, although only about 77 per cent would have survived the voyage and disembarkation. From 1820 demand for East African slaves increased significantly on the Mascarenes, both because of the widespread adoption of sugar cultivation and because of a cholera

TABLE 3: SLAVE TRADE IN THE S.W. INDIAN OCEAN-ESTIMATED ANNUAL TRAFFIC⁷⁵

Period	A. Exports			B. Imports	
	Portuguese East Africa	Swahili Coast	Madagascar	French Islands	Madagascar
1801-10	5,000	3,000[?]	1,500	2,000	
1811-15	10,000	8,000[?]	600	3,720	
1816-20	14,000	20,000	3,560	6,975	
1821-25	20,000	20,000		6,588	2,500
1826-30	20,000	20,000		7,823	4,906
1831-40	20,000	30,000	3,000[?]		8,536
1841-50	15,000[?]	20,000[?]	3,500[?]		
1851-60	20,000	20,000	4,000[?]	10,338	

epidemic in 1819-20 which killed many slaves. Between 8,700 and 12,200 slaves per annum were shipped to the Mascarenes from 1817 to 1825, rising to between 13,300 and 16,800 by the early 1830s.⁷⁶ Simultaneously, a market for East African slaves in Imerina started to develop, some 2,000 to 3,000 slaves a year being imported into Imerina through Mahajanga by 1824, representing possibly ten per cent of Mozambique slave exports, depending on the numbers exported to the island from the coast north of Cape Delgado. As it has been estimated that the slave population of Antananarivo probably increased by a factor of 4.17 in the 13 years from 1820, it is possible that East African slave imports increased at a similar rate, giving an annual influx into Imerina of possibly 10,000 East African slaves by 1833. This could indicate an increase in the slave import trade of Madagascar from between ten to as high as 40 per cent of Mozambique slave exports in a decade, and would signify the emergence of Madagascar as a major factor in the East African slave trade network.⁷⁷

Slave exports from Mozambique declined in the 1840s, due on the demand side to a decline in the price of sugar on the world market which in turn led to a diminished demand for slave labour on sugar plantations, the transference of the activity of French slavers to West Madagascar, and a slowing of the growth of demand in Imerina, and on the supply side to the disruption caused by the decline of the *prazos* from the mid-1830s, a trend accentuated by the Nguni invasions of Zambesia. However, stability returned to Zambesia from the mid-century with the rise of the 'supra-prazo' polities such as Massingire. At the same time, the rise in sugar prices from 1845 and again in the late 1850s, and the 1848 emancipation of slaves combined with a 20 per cent mortality rate amongst *engagés* workers on the French sugar islands, resulted in immense labour shortages on Réunion, Mayotte, and Nosy Be. Thereafter demand for slaves/*engagés* increased on the coasts both of West Madagascar, leading to the pushing of the slaving frontier to

Maintirano and below, and East Africa. Following the abrupt closure of the Brazilian market in the 1850s, Mozambique slave exports were sustained predominantly by demand from the French plantation islands, which imported up to 11,000 slaves per annum, and from Madagascar where the number of East African slave imports rose after a lull in the 1840s and 1850s.⁷⁸ Slave exports from Madagascar to the Mascarenes probably never exceeded 5,000 per annum in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, and were often as low as 600, and following the 1820 ban on slave exports and the expansion of imperial Merina rule slave exports dropped sharply in the 1820s and early 1830s. Slave exports from Madagascar picked up from the mid-1830s, but only from those areas of the island independent of Merina rule, notably the west coast and isolated pockets in the south-east, with possibly 5,000 slaves/*engagés* exported annually by the 1850s.⁷⁹

SUMMARY

One of the largest gaps in the history of the East African and Western Indian Ocean slave trades in the nineteenth century is the trans-Mozambique Channel slave traffic, and notably the role that Madagascar played in it. Slave exports to the Indian Ocean islands was stimulated initially by the demand for servile labour on the French plantation islands; Réunion and Mauritius until 1820 and Réunion, Mayotte and Nosy Be thereafter. As much of this traffic originated from Muslim-controlled regions of Portuguese East Africa, as well as the Swahili coast below Kilwa, and in addition was clandestine, its importance has not been reflected in official customs returns. There are indications that, by 1830, the 'French' slave trade was as important, if not greater, than the Brazilian trade. Moreover, the traffic in slaves to the French islands was augmented from 1820 by demand from a new market arising in Madagascar which had traditionally been an exporter of slaves. From the adoption of autarky in Imerina in the early 1820s, the Merina empire, which incorporated approximately one-third of the land area of Madagascar, started to import East African slaves on a growing scale. Simultaneously, areas of the island independent of Merina rule, notably the west coast, both exported Malagasy slaves, and imported East African slaves for the home market as well as for re-export to Imerina and the French islands.

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Covert Slaves and Coveted Coolies in the Early 19th Century Mascareignes

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INTRODUCTION

When booming sugar production in the nineteenth century Mascareignes met the rising tide of the anti-slavery movement, the legitimate commerce in slaves went underground and diversified into a variety of new and less visible channels. The traditional centres of supply underwent modification: new ports were opened up, and new depots established. Slaving vessels were disguised and alternative routes mapped out. The ingenuity of the evasive tactics adopted was encouraged by the conjuncture of economic necessity and political hostility to the British in the newly conquered islands. The proximity of Mauritius and Bourbon to the major sources of supply and the presence of numerous small islands in the region greatly facilitated the task of the colonists. Ultimately, however, the risks and the costs of illegality propelled the planters and merchants towards the regular, cheap and legal pool of migrants who provided the second stream of sugar workers to the colonies.

'THE NECESSITY OF ILLEGALITY':

THE DEMAND FOR SLAVES IN MAURITIUS AND BOURBON

The Napoleonic wars bequeathed a period of acute political and economic turmoil to the Mascareignes. The symbiotic relationship of the jointly controlled French islands was replaced, after 1814, by the divergent policies of the newly 'abolitionist' British Mauritius and the restored government of Bourbon which was to experience a milder and lengthier transition from slavery.¹ At the same time the distinct but complementary agricultural and commercial roles of the Iles de France and Bourbon respectively, collapsed in the face of revolution and blockade in the first decade of the nineteenth century.² Instead, the fortunes of these islands were henceforth to be dictated by their joint plunge into large-scale cultivation of sugar cane, spurred on by falling production in the British Caribbean and the loss of St. Domingue.³

The tardy conversion of the Mascareignes to sugar production, in comparison with the Antilles, generated in the former an escalating demand for labour at the precise point when the anti-slave-trade policies

of Britain sought to close down the major avenues of supply.⁴ For the planters of the Mascareignes abolition was equated with economic ruin. They argued that because the slave population was incapable of reproducing itself, the cultivation of sugar was impossible without continuous importations of labour. If the trade was abolished, their extensive recent investments in their plantations – often financed by borrowed capital – would be lost. Thus, when abolition threatened, the colonists mounted a fierce and generalised opposition, and over time perfected highly successful obstructionist tactics.⁵ The recent conquest of Mauritius and the tenuous loyalties of its predominantly French inhabitants rendered the task of securing acceptance of abolition measures particularly delicate.⁶ The colonists' traditional opposition to slave abolition was reinforced by political antagonism towards the new administration.⁷ Furthermore, the blockade of the islands immediately preceding their capture, and the resulting disturbance to labour supplies and agricultural production, encouraged the new administration to an indulgence towards slave trading awkwardly incompatible with metropolitan directives.⁸ Thus, Farquhar's interest in suppressing the trade was subordinated to his desire to see the Mauritian economy benefitting from an augmented labour supply.⁹ That this was a concern shared even by those governors committed to eliminating the trade is demonstrated by Milius' frequent assurances to the notables of Bourbon that '*la privation des bras dont la colonie a besoin pour sa culture*' did not cease to preoccupy him.¹⁰

The continuing expansion of sugar production in Mauritius and Bourbon during the first half of the nineteenth century, accentuated by attractive prices and favourable terms of trade, merely increased the need for labour, as externally imposed restrictions on supply bit deeper. The economic and political characteristics of the Mascareignes thus rendered the demand for slaves both a more pressing issue and their continued importation a more generally perceived right than in other slave-owning colonies, making the slave trade abolition laws particularly difficult to implement.

BETWEEN FAÇADE AND FARCE: THE ABOLITION LEGISLATION AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

British measures to end the slave trade were rendered applicable to the Mascareignes immediately after their capture. Following the return of Bourbon to French control, the policy and practice of suppression can no longer be considered in common, for the two islands became subject to varying degrees of pressure from their respective authorities. One feature remained common to both: whilst laws of increasing severity were promulgated, their provisions were equally clearly flouted; each

new strategy adopted was matched by its evasion.¹¹ Three principal methods of annihilating the slave trade were employed: a series of treaties negotiated with local rulers in the sending societies, maintenance of a naval presence at sea to locate and intercept vessels departing with slaves from these territories and landing them in the Mascareignes, and checks upon the augmentation of the slave population by clandestine importation through obligatory enumeration of slaves possessed or transferred.

The most notable exponent of the treaty formula was Sir R. Farquhar, the first Governor of Mauritius, whose protracted negotiations and eventual agreements secured with the Imam of Muscat and Radama I of Madagascar, among others, revealed a commercial rather than a philanthropic preoccupation.¹² This branch of anti-slave trade policy was interrupted in Mauritius between 1818 and 1820 during the tenures of the acting Governors Hall and Darling. They claimed that slave traffic from Madagascar had not been ostensibly checked following the ratification of the treaty.¹³ Darling felt that only a prohibition on arms sales to Madagascar, and particularly the supply of gunpowder, would diminish the numbers of slaves captured in warfare and sold to traders.¹⁴ Farquhar's second administration nevertheless re-established contact with rulers in the sending societies and his practice of 'suppressing the trade at its source' remained a cornerstone of abolition strategy for the duration of the struggle.¹⁵ International treaties also procured for Britain the 'right of search', enabling cruisers to examine the cargoes of ships trading within clearly defined limits in the Indian Ocean. European powers as well as local rulers collaborated in a series of such agreements to demonstrate their commitment to the principles of abolition. Mauritius and Bourbon equipped themselves with colonial schooners to patrol their shores, whilst naval vessels tracked the routes of slavers and endeavoured to keep a watch over points of embarkation and debarkation.¹⁶

The alternative or additional means of combating the trade involved punitive measures against the importers and employers of slaves themselves – the colonists. Lengthy legal cases were constructed against captains, crews and owners of vessels seized, special courts were later established to deal with them and in some cases offenders were sent for trial externally.¹⁷ Punishments were also tabled against officials or inhabitants colluding in the trade. Both Farquhar and Hall were obliged to suspend judges who failed to convict or showed undue lenience towards slave traders.¹⁸ Hall, along with Milius in Bourbon, adopted particularly severe surveillance and search tactics.¹⁹ Finally, a system of slave registration was introduced at Mauritius and censuses at Bourbon, requiring proprietors to enumerate their slaves and to notify the authorities of subsequent changes in the size of their work-force.²⁰

In practice, however, these measures were evaded with ease by the colonists and their allies. The topographical features of Mauritius offered every advantage to the procurer and shipper of slaves. The rocky coastline and wooded slopes, in the north and south, afforded ample opportunity for concealment of small craft and their cargoes. The small islands of the Seychelles and other dependencies in the Mascareignes were too numerous to be effectively patrolled, rendering illegal imports from nearby East Africa, Madagascar and even South and South-East Asia relatively unproblematic.²¹

The natural facilities for the introduction and concealment of slaves into Mauritius and Bourbon were compounded by the almost universal interest of the inhabitants in the continuance of the trade. The community actively assisted in the covert landing of slaves and their concealment on shore, and closed ranks against those charged with investigating infractions of the abolition laws.²² Slave traders were depicted as heroes who risked their lives for their compatriots, and the anti-slavery laws were portrayed as oppressive restrictions.²³ In both islands, moreover, the majority of officials charged with upholding the law, either related to planters or proprietors of slaves themselves, supported the continuance of the trade, often in open defiance of their public duties. John Jeremie, a well known abolitionist and shortlived Procureur Général of Mauritius, denounced:

This universal maladministration . . . the plague-spot of Mauritius; it explained everything: search for arms, your police was in their pay – confiscate unregistered or unlawfully imported slaves, you pillaged even to your own administrators.²⁴

In Bourbon, one Governor even went so far as to suggest that a colonist suspected of involvement in the trade be informed in advance of a raid upon his domicile!²⁵ During the administration of Hall, the partisan behaviour of judges, gaolers, soldiers and commissaries was underscored.²⁶ Some examples of his revelations were that the Chief Judge had released a convicted slave trader from prison, that a gaoler had helped to effect the escape of others from his own custody, and that civil commissaries – called upon to accompany the military in domiciliary searches – had in one case put a slave informer into irons for revealing the whereabouts of a newly landed cargo and in another case had alerted the inhabitants of a property about to be searched to the impending arrival of troops!²⁷

The slave registry was treated with an equal display of derision on the part of the inhabitants and laxness of enforcement by officials. Mylius, sent from England to oversee the system in Mauritius, found overwhelming evidence of alterations, corrections and errors calculated to

mislead.²⁸ Slaves who had been recorded as having died were re-entered as living; slaves registered as 'creoles' (i.e. born in the colony) were later listed as being from Mozambique, Madagascar or India.²⁹ When comparisons were made between slaves actually resident on plantations and their entries in the registry it was found that some had apparently become shorter in height whilst others listed as 'creoles without markings' were in fact covered with the 'country marks' which indicated their African birth.³⁰ The perpetration of these frauds was assisted by the failure of proprietors to enumerate all their slaves at succeeding censuses and to register new births and deaths. It was also alleged that at the initial registration of slaves some proprietors had claimed to possess a greater number than they actually owned, thus leaving themselves the option of obtaining new hands at a later date.³¹ Thus from the highest instrument of its application – the governor – to the most insignificant participant in the trade, abolition law was circumvented, ignored and rendered largely ineffectual.

THE OPERATION AND EFFECTS OF THE CLANDESTINE SLAVE TRADE

The anti-slave trade laws, despite their widespread evasion, were not completely without effect in Mauritius and Bourbon. The shift from an open to a covert system of slave transportation produced important changes both in the character and the content of slave importations. The presence of vessels hostile to the trade along the known routes from Madagascar and East Africa contributed to alternative sourcing of slaves, whilst the conditions of transportation and landing of slaves were significantly affected. It may also be conjectured that the insecurities and dangers of the covert trade ultimately led planters to favour the recourse to the longer distance but legal 'engagé' recruitment.

The proximity of the Mascareignes to Madagascar ensured that a majority of slaves brought to the French islands during the eighteenth century – as legitimate commerce – were from the 'Grande Ile'.³² Farquhar's emissary to Radama revealed that Tananarive and Tamatave remained important centres of the slave trade in the second decade of the nineteenth century. Firearms, cloth and other manufactured goods were exchanged for slaves collected chiefly by Arabs or captured as a result of internal warfare; most of the latter were said to be 'Ovahs'.³³ It was predominantly non-European merchants in the sending societies who bartered for slaves in the African and Asian markets. At the port of Mazungay in Western Madagascar, for example, the commerce in slaves was reportedly controlled by 'a horde of Arabs, Moors and Indians'. The Bombay Government was warned that many of these 'traffickers' belonged to its dominions.³⁴ The freighters and owners of

the Mascareignes ships which transported the slaves to Bourbon and Mauritius were usually respected members of colonial society. The notorious slave trader, Cuvillier, for example, was a well-to-do merchant with a fleet of ships and employing several agents at Madagascar.³⁵ The captains of such vessels were often also well-known colonists, usually French or coloured creoles, their crews, ex-sailors or liberated slaves.³⁶

The treaties signed with Radama effectively destroyed the influence of Tamatave as a major slave trading port, but clandestine exportations continued from the northern and western coasts, particularly Majunga, into the 1820s.³⁷ With the gradual closing off of the Madagascar trade, the east African coast was more heavily patronised by the slavers than before. The treaty of 1822 with the Imam of Muscat aimed at eliminating this direct trade with Zanzibar also. Once again, however, the trade was not extinguished but simply modified – depots established at Kilwa and Lindi, where the Imam's authority was nominal, were resorted to by the French traders.³⁸ Similarly, Mombasa and Sevee continued to furnish 'a brisk trade in slaves' to the French.³⁹ In general, the evidence suggests that the slaves continued as in the eighteenth century to be drawn principally from Madagascar and the east coast of Africa.⁴⁰ The table below listing vessels intercepted with slaves on board indicates the prevalence of ships carrying natives of these regions. This seems to support the conclusion that the traditional sources of supply were never blocked by the treaties negotiated with local rulers.⁴¹

At the same time, the decline in availability of slaves at these sites undoubtedly promoted the adoption of alternative venues for the procurement of labour. Ships were intercepted en route to Bourbon and Mauritius carrying slaves from as far afield as West Africa, New Guinea and Java.⁴² The *Magicienne*, for example, left France in May 1823 ostensibly for the Cape of Good Hope, but instead picked up a cargo of slaves from the Gulf of Benin and Prince Island and disembarked them at Bourbon in November of that year (see maps below). As the abolition measures increased in severity and efficacy so the traders spread their nets wider. Thus in 1827 the Bombay Government reported that a 'considerable traffic in slaves' was being carried on between Sumatra and the French settlements, principally Bourbon.⁴³

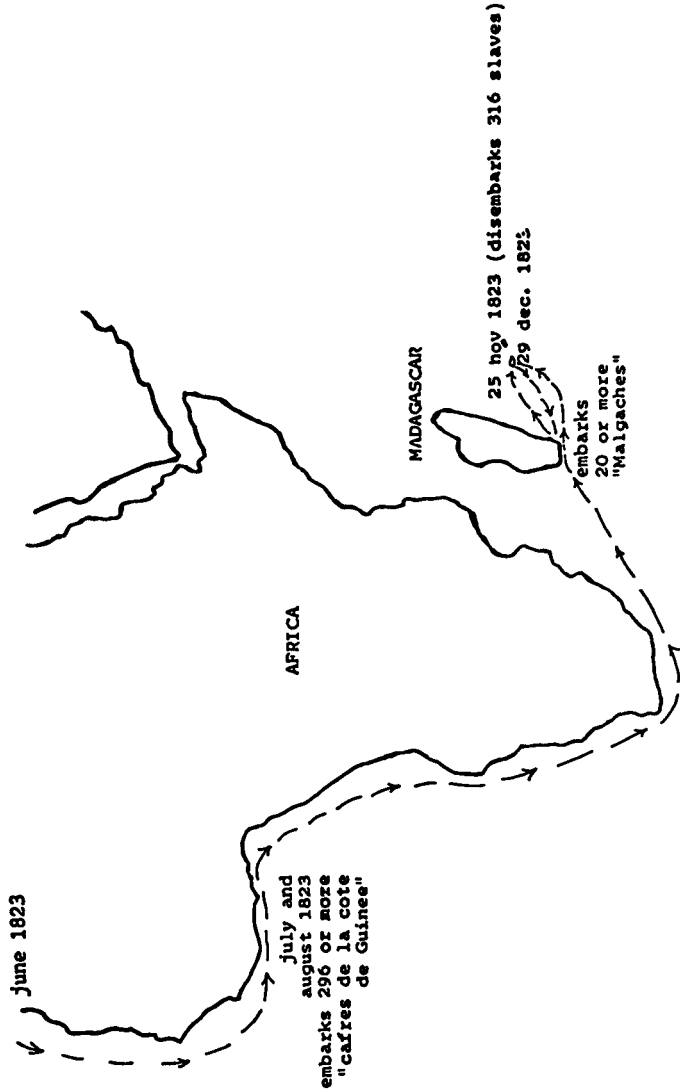
The routes adopted by the traders were similarly affected. To avoid naval patrols captains of slave vessels disembarked natives of Africa on the west coast of Madagascar for re-embarkation, often in smaller vessels, on the eastern coast of that island.⁴⁴ Other methods of avoiding discovery involved the disembarkation of slaves at the small dependencies and archipelagoes of the region. Thus, a plan to use the Seychelles as a depot for later transfer to Mauritius was reported to Darling in 1819, and Moorsom suspected that slaves from Majunga and Mozambique were being offloaded in the Amirantes.⁴⁵ In 1821 the

A SAMPLE OF SHIPS SEIZED IN THE MASCAREIGNES SLAVE TRADE.
1812 – 1845, WITH DETAILS OF CASTE OR REGION OF CAPTIVES

Name of Ship	Date of Seizure/ Enquiry	Caste or Region of Origin of Slaves Transported
Alcyon	Jan. 1830	Malais
Angélique	1821–2	Zanzibar and Madagascar
Antoinette	June 1831	Mozambique and Madagascar
Bacchante	Jan. 1822	Ste. Marie de Madagascar
Bamboche	May 1819	Piraterie en Inde et Afrique
Bayonnaise	June 1819	'Caffres' bought at Mahe
Bellier	April 1822	Aldabra
Bon-Accord	23 Nov. 1818	Madagascar
Cécile	1823–4	East Africa
Deux-Amis	Dec. 1819	Tamatave
Deux Frères	Nov. 1830	African coast
Eglé	1819	Madagascar
Eliza	Jan. 1812	Tamatave
Eole	Nov. 1818	Madagascar
Espérance	March 1819	Tamatave
Espoir	Aug. 1820	Tamatave
Espiègle	Jan 1830	Anjouan
Eurydice	Aug. 1826	Madagascar
Favorite	1818	Zanzibar
Hersilie	March 1828	Madagascar
Industrie	Sept. 1820	Madagascar
Jeune Adolphe	July 1819	Tamatave
Jeune Emilie	1817	Madagascar
Josephine	Dec. 1823	Madagascar
Laurentia	June 1831	Madagascar
Louis Décé	Dec. 1826	Madagascar
Magicienne	1823	West Africa and Madagascar
Marie	Aug. 1827	Caste Mozambique
Mouche	Nov. 1825	Oybo, Andy
Pauline	Sept. 1826	Madagascar
Petite Amie	Oct. 1816	Tamatave
San Josef	Oct 1816	Tamatave
Sans Souci	1845	African coast
Semillante	1825	Fort Dauphin
Soleil/Tigre	June 1825	Mozambique
Succès	1820	Zanzibar
Victor	Dec. 1831	Fort Dauphin
W. Farquhar	Jan. 1825	St. Luce

Sources: ADR 47 M 2; ADR 174 M 1–6,8; ADR fut. U. 21 212–57–2 no.24; Delabarre de Nanteuil, Législation de l'île Bourbon, 1844; Nouvelle Gazette de Maurice; PP 1826 xxvi (331), PP 1826 xxvii (295) and (352)

islands of Providence and Cotivi were suspected of providing a pick-up point for two Mascareignes slavers – the *Industrie* and the *Succès*. The ships were seized and searched at this rendezvous but no slaves were found.⁴⁶ The voyages of the *Cécile* and the *Magicienne* demonstrate the complex and ingenious devices adopted by the 'négriers' and 'armateurs'

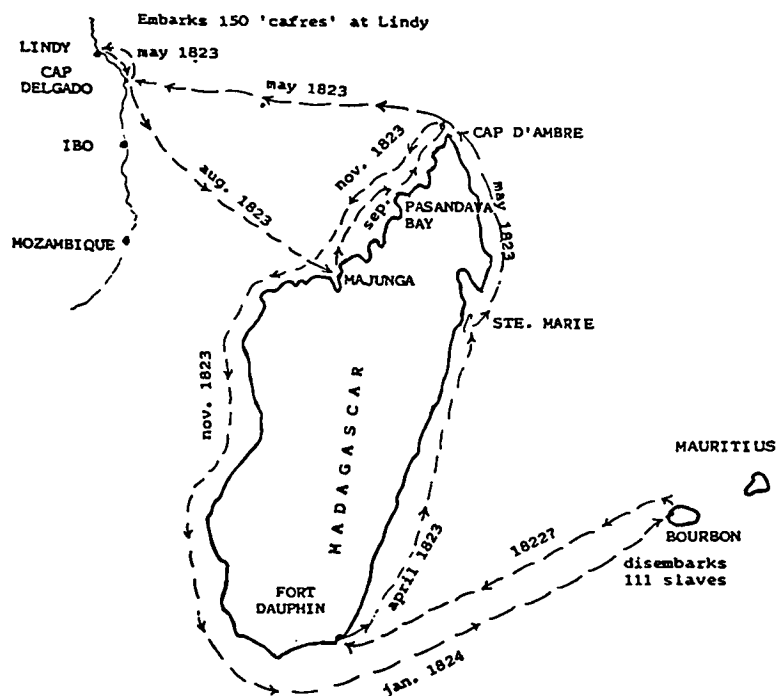


Approximate Route of the MAGICIENNE

Sources: ANOM 2 mi 134; ADR 42 M 16, 45 M 7, 174 M 2, 54 M 2 and U 150

to disguise their occupation. The *Magicienne* disembarked 316 slaves from Western Africa covertly at Bourbon before undertaking a further voyage to Madagascar to pick up a cargo of beef. That this was a tactic habitually employed to provide a rationale for these ships' presence in the Indian Ocean is shown by the *Angélique's* overnight discharge of slaves brought from Zanzibar at Sainte Suzanne (Bourbon) and subsequent appearance at the main port of the island claiming to have transported and lost en route a consignment of cattle from Madagascar.⁴⁷

The greater length of some of these voyages undoubtedly raised the death toll amongst slaves covertly imported. Furthermore, because of the risk of capture, traders preferred to use vessels which were in poor condition or of limited capacity so that they could more easily be hidden and whose loss engendered minimal expense.⁴⁸ At Bourbon, the 'ordonnateur' Thomas testified to the seizure of one ship of only 20 tons on to which over 100 slaves had been crammed.⁴⁹ The disguise of



Approximate Route of the *CECILE*

Sources: ADR 56 M 11, 56 M 12, 45 M 7, 54 M 2, 50 M 4, U 1492 and U 1502

slave ships as bullock carriers and the practice of carrying an insufficient quantity of water and food – so that the presence of the human cargo would not be revealed by articles destined for their nutrition – contributed to the miserable conditions of those on board.⁵⁰ Attempts to evade pursuit by cruisers led in a number of instances to the wreck of the slave ships with attendant loss of life. Knowing that fewer naval patrols operated during the hurricane season, the covert trade was most active at that time.⁵¹ In other cases slaves might be jettisoned to avoid their discovery by inspecting officers.⁵²

The disembarkation and landing of illicit slaves was equally fraught with dangers. Usually carried out at night, the transfer of slaves onto 'pirogues' or small craft, and the frequent delays at sea while awaiting a signal from accomplices on shore, contributed materially to the risks of death by drowning and of disease amongst arrivals. Slaves who were sick or injured would be abandoned on the beaches. One prominent Bourbon colonist spoke of those stricken by '*des plus affreuses maladies . . . jetés hors des bâtiments et exposés sans pitié sur le rivage de la mer, n'attendant plus que la mort pour terme de leurs cruelles souffrances*'.⁵³ Smallpox was rife in these clandestine shipments, and without any quarantine measures, the dangers to the population at large were considerable.⁵⁴ The testimonies of the slaves Victoire and Lavolette provide eloquent exposés of the clandestine 'middle passage' and landing of slaves in the Mascareignes. The latter, employed as a cook on a ship, bringing 250 slaves from Zanzibar and Kilwa, revealed the heavy mortality from smallpox en route and whilst the captives were kept in seclusion about the island awaiting sale.⁵⁵

For the captains and crews of slave ships, the hazards were immense. Fatalities were high when slaving vessels ran aground or were dashed against rocks while avoiding pursuit.⁵⁶ If caught, slave traders faced fines and periods of imprisonment which, while often short, could have fatal consequences. The Mauritian, Cuvillier, committed to prison by Hall in March 1818, survived less than a month in custody.⁵⁷ Others, sent to England for trial, were more likely to be subjected to the full force of the law.⁵⁸ The colonists themselves faced increasingly severe penalties for financing or receiving clandestine imports.⁵⁹ They were furthermore not unaware of the mobilisation of philanthropists in the metropolises, and some amongst them even argued that the excesses of the illegal trade would persuade the home governments to abolish slavery altogether. Others feared the presence of newly introduced Africans amongst their 'creolised' fellow-workers.⁶⁰

When cost benefit analyses began to demonstrate that 'free' recruits could be obtained and supported more cheaply than slaves, planters' reactions to schemes floated in the early nineteenth century to recruit 'engagés' from Africa, Madagascar and Asia, were tentatively

supportive.⁶¹ The last doubts were removed once it was established that indentured labour could be given the sanction of government as nominally 'free' whilst being subjected in practice to penal conditions little different from those arraigned against slaves, and a series of pilot schemes were undertaken.⁶² Thus as the anti-slave-trade measures began finally to tighten the noose around the trader's neck, the day of reckoning was eluded once more by the switch to indentured labour.

CONCLUSION

The first decades of the nineteenth century witnessed a growing cleavage between anti-slave-trade policy and the continuing practice of labour importation into the Mascareignes. The imperatives of a steady supply of workers to the expanding plantation economies of Mauritius and Bourbon ensured that abolition legislation was reluctantly enforced, habitually hindered and generally bypassed. In view of the limited results of this policy, its cost was very high. Increased hostility to British rule in Mauritius was one result, the worsening conditions of slaves already in the colony was another. Stricter disciplinary measures to curb the allegedly malign influences of newly imported slaves were enacted, and when the acquisition of new workers grew increasingly difficult, manumissions declined and domestic slaves were shifted over to field labour.⁶³ Epidemics ravaged the island as the wretched and sick were offloaded onto their shores and dispersed, in secret, in their towns. Whilst the most flagrant profiteers of the illegal slave trade escaped justice, hardship was experienced by those whose 'honest' occupations or needs fell within the scope or the suspicions of anti-slave-trade laws or officials.⁶⁴ Further, whilst some officials responsible for bringing traders to justice openly expressed their sympathies for the accused, slaves who secured information for the colonial government relative to illegal importations were cruelly punished by their masters.⁶⁵ Above all, the victims of the trade, the clandestinely introduced slaves, suffered deplorable conditions of transportation without the benefit of regulations, and even those who were seized in the name of abolition were condemned to labour for the colonial state, whilst their captors often went free!⁶⁶ Thus laws aimed against the planters inevitably found their greatest casualties amongst other, poorer sections of the population, and in particular, the slaves themselves.

Finally, as if in vindication of all their past acts, the colonists of Mauritius and Bourbon were given the blessing of their respective governments for the large-scale importation of Asiatic, Malagasy and African 'free' labourers. These 'engagés' or indentured workers served to marginalise still further the slave populations of the Mascareignes,

whilst themselves being marginalised by the 'malédiction de la pioche' which condemned them, by virtue of their employment, to 'servile' conditions and a 'servile' status.

NOTES

*We would like to thank the Leverhulme Trust, the Indian Council of Historical Research and CNRS (GRECO) for providing funds to assist the collection of materials for this paper.

1. Serge Daget has demonstrated how the vagueness of the early French laws was fully exploited by the colonists, and points out: 'Le code français était infiniment moins sévère pour le trafic d'hommes que pour l'incendie d'une meule de paille, ou pour le vol d'un pain', in 'La France et l'abolition de la traite des Noirs de 1814 à 1831', thèse de 3e cycle, Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1969, p.106 and 124.
2. Gerbeau, H. 'La Réunion et le temps: une respiration insulaire' in *La Réunion dans l'Océan Indien*, Paris, CHEAM, 1986, pp.27-9.
3. The loss of Mauritius to the British meant that Bourbon's function as supplier of food to the former was terminated. On the loss of St. Domingue see C. Wanquet, *Histoire d'une Revolution: La Réunion 1789-1803*, Marseille, J. Lafitte, 3 vols., 1980-4; see Vol.2, pp.332, 485, 500-1 and Vol.3 p.428 (fn. 67) and p.466.
4. See Gerbeau, H. 'Quelques aspects de la traite illégale des esclaves à l'île Bourbon au XIXe siècle' in *Mouvements de Populations dans l'Océan Indien*, Paris, 1980, pp.274-5 and Burroughs, P. 'The Mauritius Rebellion of 1832 and the Abolition of British Colonial Slavery' in the *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, IV, 3, 1976, pp.247-8 for details of the rationale and consequences of this switch-over to sugar in Bourbon and Mauritius respectively.
5. The Jeremie incident in Mauritius is perhaps the best known example, see Burroughs, op.cit., and E. Wanquet, 'The Application of British Slave Policy to Mauritius, 1810-1835', *mém. de maîtrise d'anglais*, Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1984, pp.182-209.
6. As Farquhar, the first Governor of Mauritius, advised the Colonial Office, 'wise conquerors . . . proceed gently', PP 1829, xxv, Farquhar to Colonial Secretary, 3 Feb. 1829.
7. The Assemblées Coloniales in the Iles de France and Bourbon refused outright to implement the anti-slavery decree of pluviose, an II. Noël, K. 'L'Esclavage à l'île de France pendant l'Occupation Française, 1715-1810', thèse pour le doctorat de l'Université de Paris, 1953, pp.57-60; C. Wanquet, op.cit., vol.2, pp.429-504.
8. Farquhar even went so far as to suggest that labour shortages were so acute in Mauritius as to justify a temporary continuance of the slave trade; he was firmly rebuffed from London: CO 167/5 Farquhar to Liverpool, 8 Jan. 1811; CO 168/2 Liverpool to Farquhar, 2 May 1811.
9. Farquhar to Liverpool, 15 Feb. 1811, PP 1826, xxvii (295), p.6.
10. He suggested a number of schemes to import Malagasy labourers. ANOM Réunion C 515 d 5989 and ADR 56 M 3, lettre circulaire, Déc. 1819, Gouverneur à 40 habitants.
11. It has been estimated that 45,000 slaves were introduced clandestinely to Bourbon, the majority between 1817 and 1831. Contemporary assessments for Mauritius suggest that between 40,000 and 50,000 slaves had been smuggled into the island by the end of the 1820s: Gerbeau, H. 'Quelques aspects de la traite illégale . . .', op.cit., p.296; PP 1826, xxvii (352), p.96. Hall to Bathurst, 28 May 1819.
12. Three large volumes in the IOL cover the progress of these negotiations: see Board's Collections F/4/746 20306, F/4/913 25777-8, F/4/914 25779. Selected Correspondence is also published in PP 1821, xxiii (669), PP 1823, xviii (556), pp.21-4; PP 1825 xxv (115) pp.48-58; PP 1826 (295) p.117, pp.137-40 and PP 1826,

- xxvii (352), p.148. See also Gupta, A. 'Suppression of Slave Trade and British Imperialist Strategies in the Indian Ocean 1815-1870', unpublished conference paper, Mauritius, 1985, for an analysis of the reasons underlying the signing of such treaties.
13. Hall to Bathurst, 26 June 1818, and Darling to Bathurst 1 May 1819, PP 1826, xxvii (352), pp.54-5, 75.
 14. Darling to Bathurst, 15 July 1819 in *ibid*, p.87.
 15. M.K. Jones, 'The Slave Trade at Mauritius 1810-1829', B.Litt., Oxford, 1936, pp.2-3.
 16. CO 167/20 Farquhar to Tyler, 20 Nov. 1813 and Farquhar to Bathurst, 10 April 1814.
 17. MA 1B 21/15, 22/19-21 and CO 167/39 Hall to Bathurst, 16 June 1818 for examples of cases brought against slavers; for details of special courts set up see E. Wanquet, *op.cit.*, pp.108-9, and ADR fut.U 21, 211-57-1 no.17, and for examples of trials held externally see PP 1826, xvii, Farquhar to Bathurst, 10 April 1814.
 18. CO 167/20, proclamation of Farquhar; CO 168/3 Bathurst to Hall, 5 June 1818.
 19. ANOM Réunion C 70 d 451 Milius au Ministère, note des bureaux, 1821. Hall imposed restrictions upon nocturnal fishing - later rescinded by Darling - and authorised 'domiciliary visits' or raids upon the homes of planters suspected of harbouring newly arrived slaves, PP 1826, xxvii (352), p.15 Husson to Attorney General, 29 March 1818, Darling to Bathurst, 1 March 1819; *ibid*, 16 July 1819 in pp.15, 73 and 90; CO 167/45 Proclamation of Darling, 25 Feb. 1819.
 20. See CO 167/21 Farquhar to Bathurst, 18 Nov. 1814 and CO 168/3 Bathurst to Farquhar, 24 Oct. 1814 for details of the establishment of the registry, MA 1A 9/2 and 1C 3-73 for relevant correspondence, and PP 1826, xxvi (339) for the Order in Council for the registration of slaves at Mauritius.
 21. MA 1B 8/4 Evidence of Letord/Dorval before the Commissioners of Enquiry.
 22. CO 167/38 Hall to Bathurst, 20 April 1818; PP 1826, xxvii, Darling to Bathurst, 29 May 1819.
 23. For an example of the manner in which the operation of the abolition legislation was viewed as a feature of colonial oppression see the defence of the convicted trader Mongin and his tirade in colourful language against the judge who condemned him. *Procès du Navire Français, L'Industrie*, MA 1B 22/21.
 24. J. Jeremie, *Recent Events at Mauritius*, 1832, p.15, 151. The Commission of Enquiry sent to Mauritius in 1826 to investigate the continuance of the trade also bears testimony to official involvement: see their report in PP 1829, xxv (292), pp.49-95.
 25. ADR fut.U 21 212-57-2 no.24.
 26. Hall to Bathurst, 28 Jan. 1818 PP 1826, xxvii (352), p.5.
 27. Hall to Bathurst, 21 Sept. 1818; Darling to Bathurst, 29 May 1819; *ibid* 27 Aug. 1819 in *ibid*. It is little to Farquhar's credit to note that it was he in 1814 who had established that the military should not be allowed to act alone to seize slaves, impelling them to call out the commissaries prior to effecting raids, Nwulia, M., *The History of Slavery in Mauritius and the Seychelles, 1810-1875*, AUP, New Jersey, 1981, p.46; See also ADR 174 M 8, case of *Jeune Emilie*; ADR 174 M 2, case of *Deux Amis* and the voluminous correspondence relative to legal proceedings in Mauritius in PP 1826, xxvii (295), pp.35-136. Judges often contrived to free slave traders by dismissing cases on a legal technicality as in one celebrated case in Bourbon: CO 167/20 Farquhar to Bathurst, 10 Jan. 1814.
 28. MA 1A 9/2 Mylius to Dick, 25 Feb. 1833. In Bourbon Thomas and Barbaroux both testified to similar attempts by colonists to conceal illegally procured slaves through census returns.
 29. MA 1A 9/2 Kelsey to Dick, 14 Dec. 1832, encl. 'Description of some of the Cases contained in Mr. Mylius's List of Irregularities'.
 30. This was particularly the case with slaves introduced as legal transfers from the Seychelles. A sizeable number were refused entry on such grounds, see PP 1828, xxv (206), *passim*.
 31. Darling to Goulbourn, 17 Dec. 1819, PP 1826, xxvii (352), pp.121-2.

32. Filliot, J.M. *La Traite des Esclaves vers les Mascareignes au XVIIIe Siècle*, ORSTOM, Paris, 1974; Toussaint, A. *La Route des Iles*, Paris, 1967.
33. CO 167/34 Blanc to Pye, 28 June 1817 and Farquhar to Radama, 9 Aug. 1817, CO 167/51 Farquhar to Bathurst, 26 July 1820 and Hastie to Farquhar, 11 Sept. 1820.
34. MSA General Dept., Vol.26/84, Commodore Nourse to Governor of Bombay, 27 July 1824.
35. Jones, op.cit., p.28 and CO 167/57 Farquhar to Bathurst, 11 June 1821, encl.3.
36. Report of Commissioners, op. cit., p.132.
37. CO 167/67 Moorsom to Cole, 1 Dec. 1823.
38. PP 1825, xxv, Farquhar to Bathurst, 12 March 1821; CO 167/78, Owen to Cole, 4 Aug. 1824.
39. MSA Political Dept. Vol.28/283, Colebrooke and Blair to Governor of Bombay, 7 Nov. 1826; Vol.29/284 Wilson, Resident, Persian Gulf to Bombay Govt., 21 July 1827.
40. The tentative hypothesis advanced here is based largely upon evidence of ships arriving in the Mascareignes with their human cargoes. Similar, although more indirect information relative to the proportions of Africans and Malagasy among the slave population could be gleaned from plantation records and notarial sales. See for example, Gerbeau, H., 'Des minorités mal connues: esclaves indiens et malais des Mascareignes au XIXe siècle', *Migrations, Minorités et Echanges en Ocean Indien, XIXe-XXe siècle*, Table Ronde 1978, IHPOM, No.11.
41. For the trade from Mozambique see Capela, J. and Medeiros, E. 'La Traite au Depart du Mozambique vers les Iles Françaises de L'Océan Indien, 1720-1904', unpublished conference paper, Mauritius, 1985; Owen to Cole, 20 Aug. 1825, PP 1826, xxxvi (331), p.4.
42. ADR 45 M 7, Gouverneur au Ministère de la Marine, 5 Mars 1823; 29 Nov. 1823; 21 Mars 1824.
43. MSA Political Dept., Bombay Govt. to Colebrooke and Blair, 24 March 1827; and IOL E/4/1052 proceedings of 20 July 1830.
44. E. Wanquet, op.cit., pp.91-2.
45. CO 167/46, Darling to Bathurst, 27 July 1819; CO 167/67, Moorsom to Cole, 17 Nov. 1823.
46. CO 167/56, Farquhar to Bathurst, 14 April 1821.
47. ADR 45 M 6 Nos.20, 32, 87, March to May 1822; ADR 42 M 15 No.136, 27 July 1822, 42 M 7 Nos.149, 174, Sept.-Nov. 1822, 42 M 17 No.297, 11 Dec. 1822, 49 M 1 No.380, 4 Nov. 1818. ANOM Réunion C 515 d 5989, 12 Nov. 1818, ANOM 2 mi 134 pièces diverses sur l'Angélique.
48. ADR fut. U pièces de procès; série M. correspondance administrative.
49. ANOM Réunion C 515 d 5989, Procès verbal de la séance d'une Commission Extraordinaire convoquée pour examiner un projet d'introduction à Bourbon de Madécasses engagés ou loués pour remplacer les noirs esclaves, séance du 27 Juin 1820.
50. Report of Commissioners, op.cit., pp.57-9, 87-8; for details of the conditions of slaves see Captain Chapman to Croker, 19 May 1825, PP 1826, xxvi (339), pp.514-15 Captain Brine to Sir Pulteney Malcolm, 4 Dec. 1816, PP 1826, xxvii (295), p.119; Lieutenant Arthur to Captain Ogden, 31 Aug. 1818; Stokes to Darling, 19 Feb. 1820 in PP 1826, xxvii (352), pp.60, 141.
51. CO 167/29, Farquhar to Bathurst, 10 Sept. 1816 and encls.
52. ADR 174 M 2 *Deux Amis*; Cole to Bathurst, 20 April 1824, PP 1825, xxv (115), p.77; Milius proclamation to inhabitants of Bourbon, 31 March 1819, PP 1826, xxvii (352), p.77.
53. ANOM, Réunion C515 d 5989 Procès Verbal, op.cit., Charles Desbassyns. ADR records indicate that in some cases such slaves were rescued by others already settled on the island and nursed in secret by them.
54. ADR fut. U 21 211-57-1 no.15, Procureur à l'Ordonnateur, 9 Oct. 1815; ADR 174 M 1, Lettre au Gouverneur, 11 June 1828. Landings at Mauritius were carried out on the wooded northern and southern coastline; at Bourbon, Bois Rouge was a favoured site of disembarkations; ADR 174 M 1, Cheffontaines to Lancaster, 5 July

- 1828; deposition of Richard Higginson, 14 March 1826, *ibid* William Kendrick, 27 March 1826, PP 1826-7, xxii (68), pp.22-5.
55. PP 1826, xxvii (352), Evidence of Lavolette encl. in Hall to Bathurst, 6 Nov. 1818.
 56. Captain Stanfell to Sir Pulteney Malcolm, 30 June 1817, PP 1826, xxvi (295), p. 124.
 57. His tomb became the site of 'semi sacrosanct pilgrimages' by the colonists, Barnwell, P.J., *Visits and Despatches, Mauritius, 1598-1948*.
 58. CO 167/38, Hall to Bathurst, 16 April 1818.
 59. In Bourbon, a law of 1827 provided for the banishment of those co-operating with the illegal slave trade, and another of 1831 introduced longer terms of imprisonment with hard labour for persons convicted of buying or selling slaves as well as for those directly involved in organising or carrying out voyages to procure them. *Gazette de l'île Bourbon*, No.815, 31 Aug. 1831; *Bulletin Officiel de l'île Bourbon*.
 60. ADR 174 M 1, Lancaster au Gouverneur, 11 June 1828.
 61. CO 167/182 23 Jan. 1834, Bergstein correspondence.
 62. H. Ly Tio Fane, *Lured Away: The Life History of Indian Cane Workers in Mauritius*, MGI, Mauritius, 1984, pp.17-22; *Mauritiana*, 2, 37, 1910, pp.98-99. Carter, M. 'Indian Labour Migration to Mauritius and the Indenture Experience, 1834-1874', unpublished D.Phil thesis, 1987.
 63. *Feuille Hebdomadaire de l'île Bourbon*, 26 April 1843, lettre sur la question des engagés libres, Y.Y.
 64. For example, the fishermen of Mauritius were badly affected by Hall's order prohibiting the use of small vessels by night. The case of the Indian tailor Amédée whose attempts to bring his aged mother from the Seychelles to Mauritius fell foul of restrictions imposed on slave transfers, is also illustrative. Amédée to Cole, 25 May 1825, PP 1828, xxv (206), p.51.
 65. Finnis to Leitch, 9 Sept. 1818; Montagu to Dumaresq, 17 Sept. 1819, PP 1826, xxvii (352), 63, 145.
 66. See the Statement of Slaves introduced from the Seychelles, 'prosecuted' and 'condemned' by the colonial authorities, June 1823 to April 1826, PP 1826-7, xxii (68), p.21.

Abbreviations

- ADR: Archives Départementales de la Réunion (Saint-Denis)
- ADR fut. U: Archives judiciaires, not yet classified, but forming a future U series
- ANOM: Archives Nationales, section Outre-Mer (Aix-en-Provence)
- CO: Colonial Office documents (Public Record Office, Kew)
- IOR: India Office Records (Waterloo, London)
- MA: Mauritius Archives (Coromandel)
- MSA: Maharashtra State Archives (Bombay, India)
- PP: Parliamentary Papers

The Last Years of the Slave Trade to the Cape Colony

Robert Ross

Cape Town faces north towards the Atlantic. Despite this it can be thought of as the most westerly port of the Indian ocean, or at the very least as on the line of division between the two seas. In the eyes of the strategists of the late eighteenth century the great importance of the Cape derived

from its forming the master link of connection between the western and eastern world, from its being the great outwork of our Asiatic commerce and Indian Empire and above all from the conviction that, if in the hands of a powerful enemy it might enable him to shake to the foundation, perhaps overturn and destroy the whole fabrick of our oriental opulence and dominion.¹

It was indeed these considerations, as well as those of supplying its fleets, which led the Dutch East India Company (VOC) to found a colony at the south-western tip of Africa in the mid-seventeenth century, and then led the British, the successors to the Dutch as the premier European imperial power in Asia, to conquer the colony in 1795 and again, after a short intermezzo when it was returned to the Netherlands, in 1806.

Even though the colony at the Cape of Good Hope was seen as an adjunct to Empire rather than as a profitable part of it, at least until the discovery of diamonds in the South African interior in 1867,² from its first foundation the Dutch set about founding a self-sufficient settlement in the hinterland of Table Bay. By the early eighteenth century there had developed an economic and social structure in the colony which, despite its considerable quantitative expansion, would last until the abolition of the slave trade about a hundred years later, and indeed somewhat longer. This was based on a tripartite division between the port city of Cape Town, which provided the main market for the colony's produce, the agricultural hinterland, within about a hundred kilometres of Cape Town, where the main crops grown were wheat and grapes, for wine, and the pastoralist interior, where sheep and cattle for meat production were run on very extensive ranches.³

The expansion of the Cape colony into the South African interior did not occur in a social vacuum. Rather the Khoisan peoples of the

western part of modern South Africa had to be conquered before this became possible.⁴ While this entailed the appropriation of their land and eventually of their labour, they were neither numerous nor tractable enough to provide the labour force required for the urban functions of the port city that grew up on the shores of Table Bay, or for the farms that were opened up on the plains and hill-slopes of the south-western Cape. As a result, almost from the beginning, the Dutch colonists and their rulers had recourse to slave labour.

They were able to do this because they could latch on to the existing network of slave trading within the Dutch maritime world in the Indian Ocean, whose node was already Batavia (Jakarta), although the position of the Cape at the western extremity of the VOC's empire meant that there were certain peculiarities in the way it worked. It would not fit into the context of this paper to describe either the wider VOC network or the trade to the Cape colony in any great detail; it is however necessary to give a brief sketch of at least the latter if the changes which occurred in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are to be understood.

The slave trade to Batavia and other Dutch possessions in the Indian Ocean is relatively little known, because it was not conducted by the VOC itself. As a result it has left only incidental traces in the archival record. Nevertheless it was of considerable extent. It has been reckoned that the exports from South Sulawesi, at about 3,000 per annum, were approximately equivalent in numbers to the Dutch Atlantic slave trade, which itself was around 5 per cent of the total.⁵ Although this was by far the largest single contributor to the Batavian imports, it did not in itself represent a 50 per cent share in that trade, at least if the proportions of slave origins in Batavia itself is more or less equivalent to that in the imports.⁶ This would mean that around 7,000 slaves a year would have entered the Indonesian slave trade, of whom slightly less than half ended up in Batavia itself.⁷ The slave population of Batavia was generally between twenty and thirty thousand, employed primarily in household activities.⁸ This was indeed the case with the majority of European-owned slaves in the Dutch empire, but was not universal. On Banda, there was the only major European-run plantation system in the Indian Ocean before the opening up of the Mascareignes, for the production of nutmeg. This was entirely based on slave labour.

The slaves themselves came from a wide sweep of the Indian Ocean. By the early nineteenth century, the trade was confined to the Indonesian archipelago, with Bali and the lesser Sunda islands providing the major share, after Sulawesi.⁹ In the seventeenth century, and perhaps into the early part of the eighteenth, Sri Lanka and the Indian sub-continent provided a major proportion of the slaves in Batavia (and for that matter at the Cape) but then, for unknown reasons, it dropped to almost nothing.¹⁰ At the Cape, though, Indian and Sri Lankan

slaves continued to constitute a small but significant proportion of the slave population.¹¹

The Cape was able to benefit from this slave trading network. Employees of the VOC were allowed to take a small number of slaves from Batavia to the Cape for sale there.¹² They could also take slaves to the Netherlands, but by so doing they implicitly manumitted them.¹³ Presumably there was a profit to be made in this transaction, despite the difficulties that would ensue in having money remitted from the Cape to the Netherlands and the charges that the VOC made for the transport costs. Unfortunately, though, I have no information on prices in Batavia to compare with those at the Cape.¹⁴ There are, however, suggestions that there was a price differential in favour of females in Batavia, at least in the late eighteenth century,¹⁵ but that this did not hold for the Cape.¹⁶ If this is the case, it may go some way towards explaining the massive sexual imbalance among the Cape slave population, which among adults was in the order of five men to each woman.¹⁷ This discrepancy is also explicable in terms of the work patterns in the two colonies, with Batavia requiring primarily domestics, while the Cape slave market was led by the demand for agricultural labour.

Its geographical position at the south-western point of the VOC's trading network meant that the slaves received by the Cape were not just a sub-set of those on the Batavian market. On the one hand, as was mentioned above, Indians and Sri Lankans continued to arrive at the Cape in slavery long after they had disappeared from Batavia, even if in diminished numbers. The reason for this was presumably that VOC servants who had served in those countries, and who had bought slaves in Columbo, the south Indian port cities or even Bengal continued to take a few to the Cape when they were 'repatriating', as it was known, even though the regular trade to Batavia had long since passed away. On the other hand, Cape Town could tap into the slave trade of the East African coast and Madagascar, which was of marginal importance for South and South-East Asia.¹⁸

The trade to the western shores of the Indian Ocean was of two types. Historically by far the most visible were the expeditions sent out by the VOC to acquire slaves for its own use in and around Cape Town. In total, between the foundation of the Cape Colony in 1652 and 1786, some 39 expeditions were sent, of which 33 went to Madagascar and the rest, with one exception, to the east coast of Africa, between Mozambique and Somalia.¹⁹ In total, around 4,300 slaves were purchased during these expeditions, of whom 2820 (66 per cent) came from Madagascar.²⁰

The burghers and the VOC officials also acquired a considerable number of slaves from the western Indian Ocean. While it is possible to give at least minimal totals for the number of slaves imported privately during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries,²¹ thereafter the

documentary record leaves historians in the dark.²² Also the identities of the various traders remains largely unknown. It is however clear that English slavers who put into the Cape on their way between East Africa or Madagascar and the New World took the opportunity of disposing of a number of their cargo, and there were one or two, in the seventeenth century at least, who considered it a viable proposition to shuttle between the Cape and Madagascar.²³ This does not seem to have continued in the eighteenth century, but nevertheless the Cape was able to maintain a reasonable contact with this trade. Thus, one sample of slaves owned in the rural district of Stellenbosch in the 1760s shows that 22 per cent of the imported male slaves came from either Madagascar or Mozambique.²⁴ This meant that there would have been around 300 male slaves from these regions in Stellenbosch and Drakenstein districts at the time, and if the proportions for those districts were the same as for the colony as a whole (a large and rather unwarrantable assumption), then there would have been around 750 in the whole Cape.²⁵ This of course suggests that the majority of imported slaves still came from mainland or island Asia, while the women (a small minority) were already largely South African born.

From the 1770s, and above all from the 1780s, this pattern changed. In the first place, in 1767, a prohibition was enacted against the importation of Asian slaves into the Cape on Company ships.²⁶ The reason for this was, in part, a wish to control the unauthorised use of shipping space on the Company's ships. More importantly it was the result of a panic in Cape Town after Buginese and Sumatran slaves had murdered a Company official and run loose for some weeks on the slopes of Table Mountain.²⁷ Ethnic stereotyping of slaves was such that the fear of the few men in this group of outlaws was extended to all slaves from Sulawesi, and indeed from the whole of Indonesia. Nevertheless, the ordinance did not have a great effect, as is shown by the fact that it had to be repeated at regular intervals till the end of Company rule.²⁸

The second main reason for this change was the great increase in the number of foreign slavers who put into Table Bay. This can be shown on the basis of the lists of ships which put into Table Bay or Simonstown, the winter harbour of the Cape. From the mid-1780s onwards, there was a considerable number of ships which sailed from one of the East African ports to the Caribbean or Brazil. Clearly a ship voyaging from Kilwa, Mozambique, Ibo, Inhambane or Quelimane to St. Domingue or Bahia can only have been transporting slaves. Between April 1783 and December 1793 at least 60 ships on such a journey entered one of the Cape harbours for a longer or shorter period, and were thus certainly able to sell slaves. The great majority of these slavers were French, destined ultimately for St. Domingue, and the peak years were 1788-9, with

11 such ships, 1790–1 also with 11, and 1791–2, with 8. In addition, a few ships sailed from the Mascareignes to St. Domingue, with, significantly by far the largest annual total in 1783–4, immediately after the War of American Independence had ended. Presumably, slaves who had been accumulated in Mauritius during the previous few years were now sent to the West Indies. How many slaves they were carrying is unknown, except for the single period between July 1790 and October 1791. The 11 ships that were destined for St. Domingue carried 3,754 slaves, and in addition one North American ship which reported its home port as Jersey carried 258. There was also one ship, on the round trip between Mauritius and the Cape, which had 50 slaves on board, presumably all for the Cape market.

In addition to these clear slavers on the route between East Africa and the New Worlds, there were a number of other ships which plied entirely within Indian Ocean waters. Between 1779 and 1793, at least 15 of the ships which put into the Cape reported that they had begun their voyage in an East African port and intended to proceed to one of the Mascareignes, usually Mauritius. Once again, it is difficult to be certain exactly what the trajectory of their voyage was, but it may very well have been the case that they were purely interested in bringing slaves to the Cape market. It is for instance significant that one of these ships' captains, François Duminy, later entered the service of the VOC at the Cape and gained his initial promotion on the basis of his knowledge of the slave trade.²⁹ Also, in the years immediately after the First British conquest of the Cape, a plan was hatched to acquire supplies for the beleaguered and still French islands in the Mascareignes by selling Mozambiquan slaves at the Cape in exchange for grain, which would then be shipped surreptitiously and without the knowledge of the British authorities to Mauritius. The plan was discovered by the Royal Navy and came to nothing, but it demonstrates that the possibility of such a trade was appreciated, and that it had almost certainly been previously carried out.³⁰

All the same, slaves continued to enter the Colony in much the same way as before. In the four months for which precise lists of the import duties paid on slaves survive, March to June 1792, some 240 slaves were landed at the Cape. Of these 113 came from a single Portuguese vessel, and 12 from another, but the other 115 arrived in small numbers, often as the private cargo of Company officials. This period, the Cape autumn, was moreover a relatively slack one for Cape shipping, as the main trade fleets arrived in December or January.³¹ It is also difficult to gauge whether the ships journeying from the Mascareignes to Europe, or to Boston, were likely to be carrying slaves, but it is well within the bounds of possibility that they were, and that they sold their human cargoes, at least in part, at the Cape.

The result of these imports was that the total number of slaves owned by burghers within the Cape Colony grew considerably. Thus in 1782 this slave population was 11,572, but in 1795 it had risen to 16,839. This meant a growth rate of 2.9 per cent per annum, as compared with 2.4 per cent for the period from 1751 to 1782. This is admittedly a somewhat misleading average, as the detailed figures show that in 1783-4, 1786-7 and 1793-5 the population increased much more swiftly than in the other years, and thus the imports were presumably concentrated in these years. The first two years coincided with a period of prosperity at the Cape, while the growth in the last years of Dutch rule may perhaps be explained by British naval activity in the Caribbean, which would have made it less attractive to French merchants to send slaves from the East African coast to St. Domingue.³²

Naturally enough, the possibilities of this greatly increased trade were seen by the Cape merchants. As early as 1719 the burgher representatives had requested that the slave trade be allowed on the East African coast (where indeed they also hoped to find markets for Cape corn and wine), but this was refused, since international shipping was one of the monopolies of which the VOC was most jealous.³³ Again, one of the demands of the Cape Patriots in 1779 was that they be allowed 'free licence for the slave trade to Madagascar, Zanguebar etc., as otherwise foreigners take the profit'.³⁴ Eventually this right was granted, in 1793.³⁵ The early 1790s were not a favourable time for the beginning of commercial enterprise in the Indian Ocean by any non-British Europeans, however, and such shipping as was sent out from the Cape before the British conquest does not seem to have indulged in the slave trade. From 1793, it was claimed, no slaves were imported into the colony until the end of VOC rule two years later.³⁶

In the first years of the First British Occupation of the Cape, which was to last from 1795 to 1803, the evidence suggests that the slave trade was also at a very low level.³⁷ Various proclamations issued in London made this illegal, and the Royal Navy captains of the ships on the Cape Station did their best to ensure that the law was not broken, probably because they hoped to be able to claim prize money for the capture of such slaves.³⁸ It was considered that between 1795 and 1798 the price of slaves at the Cape almost doubled.³⁹ The Burgher senate complained vigorously that this price rise made it impossible for the economy of the Colony to be carried on in its proper way, as the inhabitants would be forced to purchase their slaves at ruinous prices. Rather, so they believed, around 1,000 slaves a year should be imported.⁴⁰ The result of this was that there were great profits to be made from the importation of slaves, and 'every day' applications for a licence to do so were made to the Governor. Nevertheless, until around 1800 these were resisted, since, despite requests to the contrary, no directions on the subject had

been received from London.⁴¹ Very occasionally cargoes were landed in Cape Town, when Portuguese slavers arrived in Table Bay, and their requests could not be refused, but these came no way towards meeting the demands of the Cape slave-owning class.⁴²

From about 1800 the situation changed somewhat, not as a result of new orders from London, but rather because the new Governor, Sir George Yonge, was quite prepared to ignore the limitations which had bound his predecessors. Yonge, who owed his appointment to the direct intervention of George III, was an embodiment of 'old corruption'. On the one hand, he was, it seems, quite prepared to accept a direct bribe of £5,000 from Michael Hogan, an Irish merchant resident in Cape Town, to allow the landing of some 800 slaves into the Cape.⁴³ On the other hand, he usually did not need to indulge in such blatant practices. His aide-de-camp, Lt.-Col. Sir James Cockburn, described how Hogan and Yonge went about their business, in which he himself also took part. Hogan presented the enterprise of slave trading to the East African coast as 'promising very considerable advantage', which it certainly did, and stated that 'it had been always usual to offer shares in such voyages to members of the Governor's family for the time being'. Cockburn, who had to defend himself against the charge of acting improperly, commented, somewhat ingenuously, that

the procuring licences for the importation of slaves was so completely a branch of the civil department of the Government, and so entirely distinct from my line, that it was impossible I could have interfered [and moreover], as I paid my proportion of the outfit of the vessel, and was liable for a share of any loss which might have arisen, I considered the transaction merely as a favorable commercial speculation.⁴⁴

Hogan's methods of evading the rules prohibiting, above all, commercial dealing with Mozambique were ingenious. Initially he sent out a ship, the *Collector*, which was equipped with letters of marque to act as a privateer. Rather remarkably, he managed to capture two small schooners both laden with Mozambiquan slaves and to drive on to the shore a third vessel, which also contained some 250 slaves which he was able to capture (although the putative French crew seem all to have escaped). On returning to Cape Town, those slaves who had survived were admitted as prizes by the Admiralty court. In the meantime, though, 90 had apparently died of thirst.⁴⁵ It was later discovered that, far from being prizes, the slaves had been purchased in Quelimane, along with those on another slaver, the *Joaquim*, which also managed to unload its slaves in Cape Town. Hogan claimed that all these procedures were the work of the ship's captain, but it seems more than likely that he was

aware of what was going on.⁴⁶ At any rate, he managed to make a good profit out the business, and in the next few years considerably expanded his operations. In 1799, 1800 and 1801 he requested letters of marque for no less than six ships, and he also seems to have owned several others.⁴⁷ The cession of the Cape to the Government of the Batavian republic in 1803 meant that he could no longer carry on his operations, which relied on his close relationship with the Government, and he then sold up and left the colony.

Presumably the profits that could be made in these years derived from a combination of a high demand and a plentiful supply, with the main bottleneck being in the linking of the two – an ideal situation for an unscrupulous merchant. The demand derived from the shortage of slaves over the previous years, while on the supply side the disruption of sea traffic, and indeed the slave revolution in St. Domingue, meant that earlier trading partners of the Portuguese in Mozambique no longer purchased in the numbers to which they had been accustomed.

In total, perhaps 2,000 slaves entered the colony legally during the period of the First British Occupation, while there may well have been others who were imported without licence.⁴⁸ Under the rule of the Batavian Republic, from 1803 to 1806, there were again several hundred slaves brought to the Cape, although the spirit of Batavian rule was against the institution of slavery itself, so that, together with the difficulty of setting up a new trading network, the numbers were relatively few.⁴⁹ Immediately after the Second British Occupation there were also about 300 slaves landed,⁵⁰ but the abolition of the slave trade within the British Empire meant that this traffic was of short duration. Thereafter, there were a few attempts to land slaves clandestinely, but they can have had little effect on the numbers of the slave population.⁵¹ However, the measures to prevent this did awaken among the slaves a belief that they were unlawfully held in slavery, which contributed in part to the uprising of 1808.⁵²

The uprising also shows how the increased slave imports of the previous quarter of a century had altered the ethnic composition of the Cape slave population. Of the 71 slaves involved in the march on Cape Town whose place of birth is known, some 25 had been born in the Colony. Of the others, 26 (or 57 per cent) came from Mozambique.⁵³ There is every reason to suppose that this was a fairly representative cross section of at any rate the rural slave population of the colony. This is thus a considerable change from the situation during the mid-eighteenth century, and was further strengthened by the coming of large numbers of 'liberated Africans' captured as prizes on Portuguese slavers from the East Coast in the half century following the abolition of the trade.⁵⁴ What was later to be the so-called 'Cape Coloured' community had thus received a very substantial addition from the African mainland.

NOTES

1. Macartney to Dundas, 10 July 1797, in G. McC. Theal (ed.), *Records of the Cape Colony*, 36 vols, London, 1897–1905 (hereafter *RCC*), 2, 114.
2. C.f. the comment of the British colonial secretary, Earl Grey, in 1853 that 'Few persons would probably dissent from the opinion that it would be far better [for Britain] if the British territory in South Africa were confined to Cape Town and Simon's Bay [the winter harbour on the Indian ocean shore of the Cape peninsula]', cited by J.S. Galbraith, *Reluctant Empire: British policy on the South African frontier*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1963, pp.2–3.
3. For a general discussion of the Cape's eighteenth-century economy, and a fairly comprehensive collation of the statistical material, see P.C. van Duin and Robert Ross, *The economy of the Cape Colony in the eighteenth century*, Leiden, 1987.
4. For a discussion of this process, see Richard Elphick, *Khoikhoi and the founding of White South Africa*, Johannesburg, 1985 and *idem*, 'The Khoisan to c. 1770', in Richard Elphick and Hermann Giliomee (eds.), *The Shaping of South African Society 1652–1820*, London, 1979, pp.3–40.
5. Heather Sutherland, 'Slavery and the Slave Trade in South Sulawesi, 1660s–1800s', in Anthony Reid (ed.), *Slavery, Bondage and Dependency in South-East Asia*, St. Lucia, Queensland, 1983, p.270; Paul E. Lovejoy, 'The Volume of the Atlantic Slave Trade: a Synthesis', *Journal of African History*, 23 (1982), 483.
6. On this see S. Abeyasekere, 'Slaves in Batavia: Insights from a slave register', in Reid (ed.), *Slavery, Bondage and Dependency*, p.291.
7. For the current estimates of slave imports to Batavia, see Anthony Reid, 'Introduction: Slavery and Bondage in South-East Asian History', in Reid (ed.), *Slavery, Bondage and Dependency*, p.19.
8. Reid, 'Introduction', p.29; see also Remco Raben, 'Bevolking in Batavia: Volkstellingen en segregatiepolitiek in VOC-Batavia', MA thesis (Leiden, 1988), pp.54–5 and Frank Spooner, 'Batavia, 1673–1790: a city of colonial growth and migration', in Ira A. Glazier and Luigi De Rosa (eds.), *Migration across time and nations: population mobility in historical contexts*, New York & London, 1986, pp.30–57.
9. Abeyasekere, *loc.cit.*
10. Reid, 'Introduction', pp.29, 32.
11. Nigel Worden, *Slavery in Dutch South Africa*, Cambridge, 1985, p.47.
12. J.A. van der Chijs (ed.), *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakaatboek: 1602–1811*, 17 vols, Batavia and the Hague, 1885–1900, vol.3, 508, vol.4, 37; Klaas van der Tempel, 'Wij hebben amok in ons schip': Aziaten in opstand tijdens twee terugreizen op het einde van de achttiende eeuw', in J.R. Bruijn and E.S. van Eyck van Heslinga (eds.), *Mutierij: oproer en berechting op schepen van de VOC*, Haarlem, 1980.
13. Van der Chijs, *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakaatboek*, vol.4, 57.
14. In the late seventeenth century, the taxable value of Balinese slaves imported into Batavia was no more than 15% of the real selling price of Indonesian slaves at the Cape. Diana Poot, 'De betrekkingen tussen Batavia and Bali, 1620–1688: Een onderzoek naar een slavenhandelstraject', M.A. thesis (Leiden, 1986), p.54; Robert C.-H. Shell, 'Slavery at the Cape of Good Hope, 1680–1731', Ph.D. thesis (Yale University, 1986), p.460. Clearly, these two figures are far from strictly comparable, but they do suggest that slaves in Batavia were considerably cheaper than at the Cape.
15. Reid, 'Introduction', p.27.
16. The problem is that the only sex-specific series for Cape slave prices yet produced ends in 1731. Shell, 'Slavery', p.452. At this time the differential in Batavia had not yet become prominent.
17. Van Duin and Ross, *Economy of the Cape of Good Hope*, pp.114–15.
18. It was not totally insignificant. In the 1670s and 1680s, and again in 1734 slaves were sent by the VOC from Madagascar to Sumatra, for work in the gold mines there, and a century later there were African slaves working in the Calcutta docks. See James C. Armstrong, 'Madagascar and the slave trade in the seventeenth century',

- Omalý Sy Anio*, 17–20 (1983–84), 228–9, Shell, 'Slavery', p.46 and Peter Marshall, 'Eighteenth-Century Calcutta' in Robert Ross and G.J. Telkamp (eds.), *Colonial Cities: Essays on Urbanism in a colonial context*, The Hague, 1985, p.97.
19. The exception was a single expedition to Dahomey in 1658. To do this, the VOC had illegally to enter the charter area of the West India Company.
 20. James C. Armstrong, 'The slaves, 1652–1795', in Elphick and Giliomee (eds.), *Shaping*, pp.77–8.
 21. Shell, 'Slavery', Ch.2.
 22. It is not impossible that this problem could be solved by demographic calculations, since we do know the absolute number of at least the burgher-owned slaves at all times in the 17th and 18th centuries. This procedure would however require a considerable number of assumptions about mortality and fertility rates at the Cape, for which there is again no hard information, and there is a danger that the errors that are unavoidable in such a procedure would be cumulative.
 23. J.L. Hattingh, ' 'n Ontleding van sekere aspekte van slawerny aan die Kaap in die sewentiende eeu', *Kronos*, 1 (1979), 61–3.
 24. Calculated on the basis of Worden, *Slavery in Dutch South Africa*, Table 4.1, p.47.
 25. Figures are calculated from Worden, *Slavery*, p.47 and Van Duin and Ross, *Economy*, pp.114–15. Since the inventory sample relates to the whole of Stellenbosch district, I have amalgamated the Stellenbosch and Drakenstein population figures to make my estimate of the numbers. The division made between them for the annual census was not repeated in other administrative acts.
 26. Van der Chijs, *Nederlandsch-Indische Plakkaatboek*, vol.8, 291–2.
 27. Robert Ross, *Cape of Torments: Slavery and Resistance in South Africa*, London, 1982, p.19.
 28. Van der Chijs, *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakkaatboek*, vol.9, 591; *Kaapse Plakkaatboek*, vol.3, 164; vol.4, 80.
 29. For these ship lists, see Algemene Rijksarchief, s'Gravenhage, VOC 4292, 183; 4295, 123; 4298, 343; 4303, 670; 4307, 538; 4311, 324; 4315, 753; 4320, 724; 4324, 38; 4332, 850; 4333, 1101; 4350, 170; 4351, 820; 4359, 745. Unfortunately, these lists are not entirely complete. While they exist from April 1779 to August 1789 (and for that matter for earlier in the century), I have only been able to locate lists for July 1790 to April 1792 and August to December 1793 in the subsequent period. On Duminy, see J.L.M. Franken (ed.), *Die Duminy Dagboek*, Cape Town, Van Riebeeck Society, 1938.
 30. Pringle to Nepean, 27 Jan. 1797, *RCC*, 2, 47–8.
 31. Worden, *Slavery*, p.45.
 32. Van Duin and Ross, *Economy*, p.115.
 33. H.C.V. Leibbrandt (ed.), *Precis of the Archives of the Cape of Good Hope: Requesten (Memorials) 1715–1806*, 2 vols, Cape Town and London, Government Printers, 1905, 1, 49.
 34. Cited in Coenraad Beyers, *Die Kaapse Patriotte gedurende die laatste kwart van die agtiende eeu en die voorlewing van hul denkbeelde*, 2nd edition, Pretoria, 1967, p.54. For the Patriots in general see also Gerrit Schutte, 'Company and Colonists at the Cape', in Elphick and Giliomee (eds.), *Shaping*, pp.198–203 and Robert Ross, 'The Rise of the Cape Gentry', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 9 (1983).
 35. *Kaapse Plakkaatboek*, vol.4, 141 f.
 36. Craig to Dundas, 14 Jan. 1797, *RCC* 2, 39.
 37. This might seem to be belied by the fact that the census figures for the slave population rose from 16,839 in 1795 to 25,754 in 1798. See Van Duin and Ross, *Economy*, p.115; Hermann Giliomee, *Die Kaap tydens die Eerste Britse Bewind, 1795–1803*, Cape Town and Pretoria, 1975, p.15. However, the reason for this apparent growth should be seen in the changing universe of registration, not in any great imports. Under the VOC, the slaves owned by the officials of the Company were not included in the totals, but after the capitulation to the British this would have been the case.
 38. John Osborne *et al.* to John H. Greene, 7 March 1800, *RCC*, 3, 79.
 39. *RCC*, 2, 237.

40. Burgher Senate to Dundas, 25 Feb. 1799, *RCC*, 2, 373.
41. Major-General Dundas to Rt. Hon. Henry Dundas, 6 April 1799, *RCC*, 2, 417.
42. Craig to Dundas, 14 Jan. 1797, *RCC*, 2, 39; Dundas to Burgher Senate, 19 Feb. 1799, *RCC*, 2, 364.
43. Minute, by Hobart to Dundas, 2 May 1801, *RCC*, 3, 487.
44. Sir James Cockburn to Castlereagh, 1 March 1808, *RCC*, 6, 286-7.
45. Minute, *RCC*, 3, 487.
46. Campbell to Dundas, 8 May 1800, *RCC*, 3, 125-7.
47. Peter Philip, *British Residents at the Cape, 1795-1819: Biographical records of 4800 pioneers*, Cape Town, 1981, pp.182-3.
48. Giliomee, *Die Kaap tydens die Eerste Britse Bewind*, pp.183-4.
49. J.P. van der Merwe, *Die Kaap onder die Bataafse Republiek, 1803-1806*, Amsterdam, 1926, p.279. The Batavians in the Netherlands even issued instructions that all children born to slave mothers were henceforth to be free, but the proclamation to this effect only reached the Cape after the colony had been reconquered by the English, and so it did not take effect. *Ibid.*, p.282.
50. Caledon to Castlereagh, 18 May 1808, *RCC*, 6, 328-30.
51. E.g. Caledon to Castlereagh, 18 May 1808, *RCC*, 6, 330-3.
52. Ross, *Cape of Torments*, p.98.
53. *Ibid.*, 101; this is of course only a small proportion of the several hundred slaves who joined the march.
54. On these, see Christopher Saunders, 'Liberated Africans in Cape Colony in the first half of the nineteenth century', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 18 (1985) and, for a later immigration, Patrick Harries, 'Mozbickers: the Immigration of an African Community to the Western Cape, 1876-1882', *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, 1 (1979).

Notes on Contributors

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James W. Cox holds graduate degrees in theology from Yale and Cambridge Universities. He now teaches in the History Department of Atkinson College, York University, in Toronto and is currently collaborating with his wife, Professor A. Jwaideh, in a study of the imperial role of Great Britain in Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf during the nineteenth century.

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Robert Ross, educated at Cambridge, is now Coordinator of African Studies of the Faculty of Arts, University of Leiden. He has written numerous works on the history of Colonial South Africa, including *Cape of Torments: Slavery and Resistance in South Africa* (London, Routledge, 1983) and *The Economy of the Cape Colony in the Eighteenth Century*, (Leiden, Intercontinenta, 1987) (with Pieter van Duin).

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