

Integrating the Indian Ocean and Asian Slave Trades into Global History: Creating Trans-Regional Databases

Daniel B. Domingues da Silva, Jane Hooper, and Matthew S. Hopper

Abstract

Momentum has been growing in recent years to form a database that would catalog slaving voyages in the Indian Ocean and Asia. This chapter describes the progress, and reflects on the challenges encountered to present. Including the Indian Ocean and Asia on the SlaveVoyages website is crucial in demonstrating the global extent and consequences of transoceanic slave trading. However, one must acknowledge the complexities and challenges involved in doing so. Studies of the Mascarenes and Southern Africa confirm the arrival of enslaved Indians and 'Malays' as well as East Africans and Malagasies in European vessels. These and other examples reveal that to uncover the scale of global slaving one needs to examine how people from all parts of the Indian Ocean were forcibly trafficked across the ocean (and beyond).

Keywords: SlaveVoyages database, Indian Ocean, Asia, global slaving, statistics

The past decade has witnessed increasing interest in the creation of a database of all known Arab, Chinese, European, Indian, Southeast Asian, Swahili, and other slaving voyages in the Indian Ocean and maritime Asia. The need for such a database is mandated by a growing awareness that the transoceanic traffic in chattel and bonded labour between 1500 and the early 20th century was truly global in scope and encompassed the Mediterranean, Red Sea, Indian Ocean, Asia, and Pacific as well as the Atlantic. This interest may also be traced to various other developments: a growing appreciation among some scholars of the need to transcend the conceptual 'tyrannies' that dominate slavery and slave diaspora studies, that of the Atlantic and that of 'the particular,' i.e., the reluctance to situate the specialised studies that dominate these fields of study in more fully developed local, regional, pan-regional, and comparative contexts;¹ the publication since 2014

¹ E.g., Alpers, 'The African Diaspora in the Northwestern Indian Ocean', pp. 62–81; Zeleza, 'African Diasporas', pp. 1–19; Zeuske, 'Historiography and Research Problems of Slavery and Slave Trade in a

of groundbreaking research on European slave trading in the Indian Ocean and Asia;² the organisation since 2016 of a series of international conferences and workshops on slavery and slave trading in the Indian Ocean and Asia;³ and a growing awareness of the magnitude of this global commerce in chattel and bonded labour and its importance in world history.⁴ Successful funding applications likewise attest to a growing appreciation of this topic's importance to understanding slavery as a global phenomenon.⁵ Among the more recent of these applications is a digital production grant to the authors by the United States National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to create an Indian Ocean and Asia (IOA) database of voyages which transported enslaved African, Indian, Southeast Asian, and East Asian men, women, and children throughout and beyond these oceanic realms that will become an integral component of the open-access *SlaveVoyages* website (slavevoyages.org).⁶

This three-year-long project began on 1 March 2023, and since then we have started the process of merging ten existing datasets into a comprehensive database

Global-Historical Perspective', pp. 87–111; Allen, *Slave, Convict, and Indentured Labor and the Tyranny of the Particular*.

² E.g., Allen, *European Slave Trading in the Indian Ocean, 1500–1850*; Van Rossum, 'Private Slave Trade in the Dutch Indian Ocean World', pp. 95–116; Chakraborty and Van Rossum, 'Slave Trade and Slavery in Asia: New Perspectives', pp. 1–14; Allen, 'Merchant Capital and Slave Trading in the Western Indian Ocean, 1770–1830', pp. 273–296; Van Rossum, 'Toward a Global Perspective on Early Modern Slave Trade'; Allen, 'Exporting the Unfortunate', pp. 533–552; Sint Nicolaas, 'Maritime (Im)mobility', pp. 51–75.

³ E.g., workshop on 'Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean and Indonesian Archipelagic Worlds (16th to 19th Century: New Research, Results, and Comparisons,' International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, 10–11 November 2016; conference on 'Slavery and Bonded Labour in Asia, c. 1250–c. 1900: Continuities and Transformations in Comparative Perspective,' Leiden, 1–3 June 2017; conference on 'Enslavement in the Indian Ocean World,' Linnaeus University, Kalmar, Sweden, 8–9 September 2017; workshop on 'Towards an Indian Ocean and Asian Slave Trade Database,' International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, 27–28 September 2018; workshop on 'Recent Research on the Southwestern Indian Ocean Slave Trade,' University of Mauritius, 23 August 2021; 'Global Crossings: An International Workshop on Incorporating the Indian Ocean and Asia into *SlaveVoyages.org*,' Rice University, Houston, TX, 29–30 September 2022; workshop on 'Hidden Archives of Capitalism and Slavery in the Indian Ocean: State, Business, Personal Collections,' Rice University Paris Center, Paris, France, 22–23 April 2024.

⁴ Allen, 'Slavery, Slave Trading, and Bonded Labor Studies in Asia', pp. 13–28.

⁵ E.g., The workshop on 'Exploring Slave Trade in Asia: Towards an Indian Ocean and Maritime Asia Slave Trade Database' was funded by the Dutch Research Council (NWO) Internationalization in the Humanities Grant Program, 2018, <https://iisg.amsterdam/en/research/projects/slave-trade-asia>.

⁶ 'Global Passages: Creating a Public Database of Slaving Voyages across the Indian Ocean and Asia,' funded by United States National Endowment for the Humanities Digital Projects for the Public Production Grant, 2023, <https://www.neh.gov/news/neh-announces-281-million-204-humanities-projects-nationwide>.

that can be easily accessed and used by scholars, teachers, students, and the general public. These datasets, which are the product of archival and other research conducted over the last 20 years, deal mostly with Arab/Swahili, British, Dutch, and French slave trading in the western Indian Ocean, including Madagascar, the Comoros, the Mascarene Islands of Mauritius and Réunion, Mozambique, the Persian Gulf, South Africa, the Swahili Coast, and India. We are keenly aware of the limitations inherent in this focus on the western Indian Ocean, and an integral component of this project is to enlist the support of scholars with other regional expertise to expand the database's geographical coverage to include all of the Indian Ocean and maritime Asian worlds.

This chapter will report on our team's progress to date, reflect on the challenges that we have encountered so far, and conclude with an invitation to others to collaborate with us in this important undertaking. We believe that incorporating the Indian Ocean and Asia into *SlaveVoyages* is crucial to demonstrating the globality and complexity of transoceanic slave trading between 1500 and the early 20th century in ways that will transform our knowledge and understanding of these trades' dynamics, impact, and legacy.⁷ Doing so requires a willingness to acknowledge the complexities and attendant challenges inherent in any such endeavour, a point illustrated tellingly by what we know about the slave trade to the Mascarenes between 1670 and the early 1830s. During this period, these islands were involved in a minimum of 1,164 confirmed/probable/possible slaving voyages by Arab (probably Omani), American, British, Dutch, French, Portuguese/Brazilian, and Spanish ships, a number which ongoing research will undoubtedly increase. These vessels exported an estimated 336,120–388,260 slaves of diverse origin or ethnicity toward the islands from West Africa (Bambaras, Guineans, Wolofs), Madagascar (13 ethno-cultural communities), Mozambique (14 readily identifiable populations and others whose modern equivalent cannot be determined), the Persian Gulf, India (Bengalis, Tamils, Telegus), Southeast Asia (Balinese, Javanese, Makassarese, Niasans, Sumatrans, Timorese), and China between the 1670s and 1848.⁸

The multidirectionality and complexities of slave trading in the *Mare Indicum* is also revealed by the activities of the British East India Company (EIC) whose ships transported Cape Verdeans, Comorians, Indians, Malagasies, Mozambicans, and West and West Central Africans to its colony of St. Helena in the South Atlantic and various establishments in India (e.g., Bombay, Madras, Tegnapatam, Surat), Java (Bantam), and Sumatra (Benkulen).⁹ Recent scholarship has likewise begun

⁷ E.g., Boswell, *Le Malaise Creole: Ethnic Identity in Mauritius*; Hamilton, Hodgson, and Quirk, eds., *Slavery, Memory and Identity: National Representations and Global Legacies*.

⁸ Allen, *European Slave Trading*, pp. 73–74, 155.

⁹ Allen, *European Slave Trading*, pp. 36–38.

to reveal the complexities of slave trading in Southeast and East Asia. Some of the Japanese and Korean slaves who reached the Portuguese *comptoir* at Macau in southern China, for example, were subsequently carried to Manila in the Spanish-controlled Philippines from whence they were shipped, together with Burmese, Chinese, Javanese, South Asian, and other Asian slaves, on the Manila galleon across the Pacific to Mexico and Peru during the 16th and 17th centuries.¹⁰ East Asian slaves also reached other parts of the globe. Enslaved Japanese arrived in 16th- and early 17th-century Portugal and Spain, while Chinese slaves landed in Goa, Mozambique, and Mauritius during the 18th century.¹¹ These examples demonstrate that reconstructing the global traffic in slave and bonded labour is contingent on examining how and why enslaved peoples of such diverse origin were trafficked across the Indian Ocean and maritime Asian worlds between 1500 and the early 20th century.

1. Overview of project goals

While the databases already housed on *SlaveVoyages* – chiefly on the transatlantic and intra-American slave trades – are of unquestioned importance to our understanding of the slave experience, their focus on the Atlantic obscures the globality of transoceanic migrations of forced labour between the early 16th and 20th centuries.¹² An IOA database is accordingly the next logical step in the website's development and an effective response to a growing awareness of the need to deepen our knowledge of the human experience with slavery in all of its complexity. Because it builds on a successful model, the IOA database will operate as a separate but complementary and integrated component of *SlaveVoyages* which has a proven record of serving the general public, students, teachers, and researchers effectively.

SlaveVoyages currently provides scholars, students, educators, and the public with tools to easily access and engage with information about slave trading across the Atlantic and within the Americas between the early 16th and mid-19th centuries.

¹⁰ Sousa, *The Portuguese Slave Trade in Early Modern Japan*, 293–295, 404–405; Seijas, *Asian Slaves in Colonial Mexico*, pp. 73–108.

¹¹ Sousa, *The Portuguese Slave Trade*, pp. 404, 464–477; Boxer, *Fidalgos in the Far East, 1550–1770*, pp. 23–25, 238; Carter, 'A Servile Minority in a Sugar Colony', pp. 257–271. Sousa notes that Macau dispatched 450 slave women to India in 1563.

¹² The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database, which became available online in 2008, currently contains 36,150 voyages which exported an estimated 12,521,337 African slaves toward the New World. The Intra-American Slave Trade Database (IASTD), added to the website in 2019, currently contains 31,707 voyages which embarked 661,736 slaves destined to other colonies in the Americas between 1561 and 1866. The IASTD is based on O'Malley, *Final Passages*.

The website's most popular feature is the time-lapse map which offers compelling visual evidence of the scale and intensity of this traffic in the Atlantic world. Tables and charts can be easily configured and downloaded by those seeking quantitative evidence for their projects. Three-dimensional video tours of slaving vessels help to bring the past alive for those who visit the website. Because it contains the kind of detailed data that can provide profound insights into the social, economic, and cultural dimensions of the human experience with slavery, the website has played a key role in making the histories of enslaved Africans accessible to the public in a manner that would otherwise be impossible. It has, in short, democratised access to many marginalised communities' history.

The website's interactive time-lapse maps, essays, and sample lesson plans are, however, incomplete because they do not reveal the globality of the commerce in enslaved people. By expanding the geographical scope of *SlaveVoyage*'s existing databases visually and textually, the IOA database will demonstrate that millions of Asian as well as African men, women, and children were trafficked elsewhere than in the Atlantic world. The database will, moreover, show that slaves continued to be transported across vast oceanic expanses long after the transatlantic trade ended in 1867. The scale and longevity of these non-Atlantic maritime trades is suggested by estimates that Arab, Muslim, and Swahili merchants exported 4,134,000 Africans from the Red Sea and East African coasts to Arabia, the Persian Gulf, India, and beyond between 800 and 1900, while enslaved Africans continued to be carried across the Red Sea and northwestern Indian Ocean to Arabia and the Persian Gulf until the advent of World War II in 1939.¹³ Indian and Asian merchants shipped at least 600,000 Indian slaves to Southeast Asia between the 15th and 17th centuries, while an estimated 660,000–1,135,000 captives reached VOC possessions in the Indonesian archipelago during the 17th and 18th centuries, perhaps half of whom did so on local vessels and Chinese junks.¹⁴ Southeast Asian slaves likewise reached the southwestern Indian Ocean; some 14,300 'Malays' arrived at the Dutch-controlled Cape of Good Hope between the mid-17th and late 18th centuries, while another 3,800–4,750 were landed clandestinely in the Mascarenes between 1811 and the early 1830s.¹⁵ The 1820s, 1830s, and 1840s in turn witnessed the exportation of 386,000–437,000 slaves from Bali, Batak, Kalimantan, Lombok, Manado, the Mentawai Islands, New Guinea, Nias, Sulawesi, Sumatra, and Timor to other islands

¹³ Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*, pp. 17, 61, 138; Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century*.

¹⁴ Raben, 'Cities and the Slave Trade in Early-Modern Southeast Asia', p. 131; Van Rossum, 'The Dutch East India Company and Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean and Indonesian Archipelago Worlds, 1602–1795'.

¹⁵ Shell, *Children of Bondage*, pp. 40–41; Allen, 'The Mascarene Slave-Trade and Labour Migration in the Indian Ocean during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', p. 41.

in the Indonesian archipelago, while slave raiders imported 200,000–300,000 slaves from insular Southeast Asia into the southern Philippines' Sulu sultanate between 1770 and 1870.¹⁶

The IOA database will also demonstrate that Europeans trafficked large numbers of slaves elsewhere than in the Atlantic world between 1500 and 1850. The Portuguese, for example, exported at least 42,000–84,000 captives from Mozambique to India, China (Macau), and Japan (Nagasaki) between 1500 and 1834, while Macau received an estimated 16,400–24,000 Japanese and Korean captives from Nagasaki between the late 1550s and 1600.¹⁷ British, Danish, Dutch, French, and Portuguese ships exported a minimum of 101,300–108,700 slaves from South Asia (Arakan, Bengal, the Coromandel and Malabar coasts) to Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Southeast Asia, the Mascarenes, and South Africa between 1510 and 1810, an estimate which, given the fragmentary and often problematic information at our disposal, should probably be increased to 200,000.¹⁸ Overall, Europeans shipped a minimum of 450,000–565,000 African, Malagasy, Indian, Southeast Asian, and East Asian captives to their Indian Ocean establishments, a figure which future research will undoubtedly increase significantly. The need to incorporate the IOA into our understanding of European slave trading is further underscored by Europeans exporting 504,000–711,000 slaves from southeastern Africa and elsewhere in the Indian Ocean to the Americas. Enslaved Indians, for example, reached colonial Virginia and Saint Domingue during the 18th century,¹⁹ while the modern descendants of the Malagasy slaves who arrived in North America during the early 18th century continue to maintain a distinctive sense of identity based on knowledge of their ancestors' origins on the Grand Ile.²⁰

The significance of this European activity in the IOA is revealed in other ways. Markus Vink argued more than 20 years ago that the Dutch Indian Ocean slave trade during the 17th century was only slightly smaller in volume than the trans-Saharan slave trade, one-and-a-half to three times the size of the Swahili, Red Sea, and Dutch West India Company trades, and equalled 15–30 percent of the trans-Atlantic trade.²¹ Assessing the Mascarene trade's significance in similar terms is equally revealing. Adding the number of slaves exported to the Mascarenes to French exports across the Atlantic to the Americas increases the total volume of the French slave trade

¹⁶ Bosma, 'Commodification and Slavery in the Nineteenth-Century Indonesian Archipelago', pp. 114–115; Warren, *The Sulu Zone, 1768–1898*, p. 208.

¹⁷ Allen, *European Slave Trading*, p. 16; Sousa, *The Portuguese Slave Trade*, pp. 293–295.

¹⁸ Allen, 'Exporting the Unfortunate,' pp. 541–542.

¹⁹ Assisi, 'Indian Slaves in Colonial America'; Mettas, *Repertoire des expéditions négrières françaises au XVIIIe siècle*, vol. 1, pp. 613–614.

²⁰ Wilson-Fall, *Memories of Madagascar and Slavery in the Black Atlantic*.

²¹ Vink, 'The World's Oldest Trade', p. 168.

between 1640 and 1848 by 28–29 percent and reveals that one-fifth of all French slave trading between the 1670s and early 1830s occurred in the Indian Ocean.²² Research on British abolitionism in India and the Indian Ocean²³ and the ways in which the French Atlantic and Indian Ocean trades were intertwined further illustrates the complexity and globality of European involvement with slavery and slave trading.²⁴ European involvement in the Indian Ocean slave trades is also important in understanding the origins and dynamics of the migration of 3.7 million African and Asian indentured or free contractual labourers throughout the post-emancipation colonial plantation world during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.²⁵ In an early attempt to recruit and make use of such labour, some 3,100 indentured labourers were exported to Réunion from the former French slave trading enclaves at Pondichéry, (Puducherry), Karaikal, and Yanam on the Coromandel Coast.²⁶ The *engagé* system, in turn, entailed the recruitment of 50,000 ostensibly ‘liberated’ slaves and ‘free’ contractual labourers from Mozambique and Madagascar to work on Mayotte in the Comoros, the island of Nosy-Bé off Madagascar’s northwest coast, and Réunion after France abolished slavery in 1848.²⁷

This scholarship will inform the narrative essays that project personnel will write to accompany the IOA database. These essays, modelled on those already available on *SlaveVoyages*, will explain the differences and similarities between slave systems in the Atlantic and IOA, discuss the issues and problems inherent in reconstructing transoceanic slave trading elsewhere than in the Atlantic,²⁸ and compare the life experiences of enslaved men, women, and children in these

²² Allen, *European Slave Trading*, p. 23.

²³ Major, *Slavery, Abolitionism and Empire in India, 1772–1843*; Doulton, ‘The Flag That Sets Us Free’, pp. 101–119; Allen, *European Slave Trading*, pp. 141–178, pp. 180–193, pp. 206–229; Hopper, *Slaves of One Master*, pp. 142–180; Herzog, *Negotiating Abolition*.

²⁴ Allen, ‘Merchant Capital and Labor Migration in the Colonial Indian Ocean World’, pp. 129–153.

²⁵ For a survey of those who did so under written contracts of engagement, see Northrup, *Indentured Labor in the Age of Imperialism, 1834–1922*. See also Allen, ‘Asian Indentured Labor in the 19th and Early 20th Century Colonial Plantation World’.

²⁶ On early attempts to use Asian indentured labour in the colonial plantation world, see: Ly-Tio-Fane Pineo, *Lured Away*, pp. 14–17; Carter and Ng Fong Kwang, *Forging the Rainbow*, pp. 4–5; Gerbeau, ‘De la traite dans l’océan Indien à l’engagisme’, pp. 54–55; Weber, ‘L’émigration indienne à La Réunion’, pp. 309–310. Pondichéry and Karaikal subsequently figured prominently in the migration of at least 79,000 indentured Indians to Réunion, French Guiana, Guadeloupe, and Martinique between 1849 and the mid-1880s.

²⁷ E.g., Gerbeau, ‘Engagees and Coolies in Réunion Island’, pp. 209–236; Renault, *Libération d’esclaves et nouvelle servitude*; Fuma, ‘La traite des esclaves dans le bassin du sud-ouest de l’Océan Indien et la France après 1848’, pp. 247–261; Monnier, *Esclaves de la canne à sucre*.

²⁸ Gerbeau, ‘The Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean: Problems Facing the Historian and Research to be Undertaken’, pp. 184–207; Allen, ‘Ending the History of Silence’, pp. 294–313.

different parts of the globe. Project participants will also work closely with educators to create appropriate K-12 sample lesson plans that highlight the globality and complexities of the human experience with slavery.

The IOA database will be structured in a manner similar to the databases already housed in *SlaveVoyages* to ensure its compatibility with these databases and facilitate its accessibility and use for comparative purposes. Like these other databases, it will be easily searchable and complemented with images, maps, narrative, explanatory essays, and sample lesson plans that will provide compelling numerical and visual evidence of the pan-regional slave trades that carried millions of African and Asian men, women, and children throughout the Indian Ocean and maritime Asia between the early 16th and early 20th centuries. To this end, the database will include individual entries for each known slaving voyage which will record all available information about the voyage in question such as the ship's nationality, type or rigging, tonnage, captain, crew, and ownership, ports and dates of arrival and departure, dates and places where slave cargoes were purchased and landed, number of captives embarked and disembarked, the demographic structure of these cargoes, voyages' duration, 'refreshment' stops during the voyage, and slave shipboard mortality rates. Each entry will also include primary and/or secondary data points, and scholarly references that will enable visitors to learn more about the voyages uncovered by research in numerous archives around the world.

Users will be able to access this information through an interface that has search parameters for particular data points. This kind of user interaction will bring the numbers reported in the database to life, illustrating not only the global dynamics of this traffic but also the participation of individual actors and national groups. For instance, a visitor of the database might search only for voyages to Mauritius to learn more about the Malagasy, East African, Indian, and Southeast Asian populations that supplied slaves for export to the island. Or a visitor might examine only the voyages that involved US traders and their ships. The results of these searches will be presented in tabular form which users can download, and will also be illustrated by graphs and maps. Visitors from all backgrounds will thus be able to find answers easily to questions they may have or scroll through images, essays, and lesson plans to learn more about enslavement in the Indian Ocean and Asia or explore other topics of interest.

The essays that accompany the IOA database will explain how the database was developed, the rationale for its format, and how and why individual voyages were selected for inclusion in it. Other essays will contextualise the information it contains and demonstrate how these data deepen our understanding of the human experience with slavery and slave trading and their legacy. More specifically, these essays will address the following topics:

1. A chronological overview of transoceanic slave trading in the IOA, its connections to slave trading in the Atlantic world, and its importance in comparative world history.
2. The dynamics and patterns of enslavement in various parts of the IOA and their similarities and differences with enslavement in the Atlantic world.
3. The origins and demographic structure of slave populations being trafficked in the Indian Ocean and Asia compared to the Atlantic.
4. American involvement in the IOA trades from the 1790s to 1860.
5. Slave resistance on board vessels in comparative perspective.
6. The relationship between slave trading and other pre- and post-abolition labour diasporas in the Indian Ocean, Asia, and Atlantic.
7. Similarities and differences between abolitionism in the IOA and elsewhere.
8. The legacy of slavery, slave trading, and abolition in the contemporary Indian Ocean, Asian, and Atlantic worlds.

The sample K-12 lesson plans in the database will suggest how educators can connect American and IOA experiences with slavery. One lesson plan could, for example, have students and teachers compare the ‘middle passage’ during voyages in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. Such a comparison, combined with information about shipboard mortality rates, will reveal, for example, that although many voyages in the Indian Ocean world were usually of shorter duration than those across the Atlantic, IOA captives frequently experienced higher death rates, a demographic fact that can encourage discussions about the reason(s) for this difference. Another lesson plan might highlight European involvement in the enslavement of Asian as well as African peoples which will help students to learn about systems of racialised slavery elsewhere in the world and allow them, with the aid of personal narratives, to humanise and compare enslaved people’s experiences in the Indian Ocean and Atlantic worlds. These narratives could include that of Gabriel, an Ethiopian Jew who reached Portuguese Goa during the 17th century, Panaij van Boegies and other Indonesian captives transported to South Africa during the 18th century, and enslaved men and women in Dutch India.²⁹ Other personal narratives, such as those of Fezzah Khanom and Ziba Khanum, African women in 19th-century Shiraz and Yazd (Iran), respectively, and the 73 Oromo children liberated from an Arab/Swahili dhow during the mid-19th century who ultimately reached South Africa will humanise the lives of the people who remained enslaved after slavery

²⁹ Salvatore, ‘Between the Red Sea Slave Trade and the Goa Inquisition’, pp. 327–360; Groenewald, ‘Panaij van Boegies’, pp. 50–62; Schrikker and Wickramasinghe, eds., *Being a Slave*; Van Rossum, Geelen, Van der Hout, and Tosun, *Testimonies of Enslavement*. Other life histories of interest include: Alpers, ‘The Story of Swema’, pp. 185–219; Wickramasinghe, *Slave in a Palanquin*.

and the slave trade were abolished in the Atlantic world.³⁰ Still other life histories, such as those of Marie Rozette and Madeleine, Indian freedwomen who lived in late 18th- and early 19th-century Mauritius and Réunion, respectively, will reveal the lives that some enslaved persons and their children led following their manumission.³¹ Such narratives can also be combined with contemporary images, many of which are readily available online (e.g., slaveryimages.org), to deepen public understanding of the realities of the slave experience in the Indian Ocean and Asia. We anticipate that the IOA database and its accompanying materials will become accessible online early in 2026.

2. Where we stand and the road ahead

In September 2022, in anticipation of being awarded the NEH grant which occurred in January 2023, we organised a workshop at Rice University, Houston, TX, that brought together a group of distinguished scholars from France, Great Britain, Japan, Madagascar, Mozambique, South Africa, and the United States with expertise on slavery and slave trading in the Indian Ocean world to identify problems that might be encountered in creating an IOA database and develop strategies to address them effectively. Our determination to hold the workshop reflected a keen appreciation of Hubert Gerbeau's trenchant reminder more than 20 years ago that 'L'océan Indien n'est pas l'Atlantique' ('the Indian Ocean is not the Atlantic'), and that if there are similarities between slave trading in these two oceanic realms, there are also important differences.³² The workshop consisted of five roundtables which focused on assessing current knowledge about slave trading in the Indian Ocean and Asia, conceptualising the geographical organisation of the IOA trades, identifying problems and issues in reconstructing these trades, considering the practical aspects of creating an IOA database, and integrating the database into humanistic and public discourses.

The ensuing discussions can only be characterised as very productive, beginning with allowing us to identify books, catalogues, and other published materials with which we were not already familiar that contain data about slaving in the IOA and whose authors could be invited to collaborate with us in developing the database. The participants' expertise played an important role in allowing us to expand and refine a preliminary gazetteer of IOA regions and ports which will

³⁰ Lee, 'Enslaved African Women in Nineteenth-Century Iran', pp. 417–437; Lee, 'Ziba Khanum of Yazd'; Shell, *Children of Hope*.

³¹ Allen, 'Marie Rozette and Her World', pp. 345–365; Peabody, *Madeleine's Children*.

³² Gerbeau, 'L'océan Indien n'est pas l'Atlantique', pp. 79–108.

be merged with *SlaveVoyages*' existing gazetteer; doing so will not only reveal the multitude of ports and regions involved in the IOA trades, but also changes in local, regional, and pan-regional slave trading patterns through time. Other discussions generated suggestions about how best to integrate the IOA database into scholarly and popular discourse about the nature and dynamics of the human experience with enslavement and incorporate such insights into digital and physical public history sites. The workshop's participants also discussed the most effective ways to address the differences between the Atlantic and IOA trades, such as the role that European charter companies and indigenous African and Asian merchants played in this commerce, and the need to distinguish between inter-colonial (e.g., from St. Helena to Benkulen) and intra-colonial slave transfers (e.g., from the Seychelles to Mauritius). These discussions also focused on how best to incorporate other important information, such as shipwrecks, instances of shipboard resistance, the presence of adolescents (e.g., *capors*, *caporines*) as well as adult men and women and children in ships' cargoes, and instances when ships were captured by anti-slave trade patrols, especially those conducted by the British Royal Navy, and subsequently condemned, along with their human cargoes, by colonial and vice admiralty courts of adjudication.

Since this project began on 1 March 2023, we have been actively engaged in surveying our existing datasets, which contain approximately 2,800 voyages, and incorporating a representative sample of them into a prototype database. Doing so has entailed dealing with duplicate voyages and/or reconciling the information contained in multiple and sometimes problematic sources about individual voyages. Research trips by the project's principal investigators to archives in Europe and the Indian Ocean during 2024 should allow us to increase the number of voyages that will be included in the database and extend its geographical coverage when it becomes accessible online in 2026.

We are also currently collaborating with other researchers about expanding the database still further. From its inception, we have envisioned the creation of an IOA database as an inherently collaborative undertaking that will build on and incorporate the work of internationally based scholars who have been able to identify previously unknown voyages and/or can provide additional information about already known ones. This commitment reflects our appreciation that such collaboration has been crucial to *SlaveVoyages*' successful expansion over the years. The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database, for example, contained 27,233 voyages when it was first published in 1999 as a CD-ROM, a number which increased to 34,490 by the time it was launched online in 2008 and has now reached 36,150 precisely because of such collaboration.

3. Conclusion

In 1971, Joseph E. Harris observed cogently that the African diaspora of slave origin extended eastward across the Indian Ocean to India as well as westward across the Atlantic to the Americas and called on historians to take due note of this historical reality.³³ Three years later, J.-M. Filliot revealed the globality of the catchment area which supplied slaves to the Mascarenes during the 18th century.³⁴ The 1980s and 1990s witnessed increasing interest in the economics of the Indian Ocean trades,³⁵ while historians such as Rudy Bauss, Gwyn Campbell, José Capela, Marina Carter, Hubert Gerbeau, Pier Larson, and Robert Young began to examine the movement of Malagasy, East African, Indian, and other Asian slaves into the wider Indian Ocean world in greater detail.³⁶ The first decades of the new millennium have witnessed a dramatic expansion in our knowledge about the Indian Ocean and Asia slave trades, a trend illustrated by the collection of papers edited by Henri Médard and three colleagues, Pedro Machado's compelling work on Gujarati merchants' involvement in financing the Mascarene slave trade, and Richard Allen's seminal study of European slave trading in the Indian Ocean.³⁷

Missing from this scholarly discourse, however, is a comprehensive catalogue of the voyages by European and indigenous vessels which transported thousands of enslaved Africans, Indians, Southeast Asians, and others from one end of the Indian Ocean world to another each year. In 1967, Mauritian archivist and historian Auguste Toussaint hinted at the potential number of such voyages when he reported tallying 515 voyages which had brought slaves to the Mascarenes between 1773 and 1810; unfortunately, Toussaint did not catalogue these voyages or discuss these ventures in any detail.³⁸ In 1983, James C. Armstrong reported the results of his pioneering efforts to catalogue English and especially VOC-sponsored slaving voyages from the Cape of Good Hope to Madagascar during the 17th century.³⁹ The

³³ Harris, *The African Presence in Asia*.

³⁴ Filliot, *La traite des esclaves vers les Mascareignes au XVIIIe siècle*.

³⁵ Clarence-Smith, ed., *The Economics of the Indian Ocean Slave Trade in the Nineteenth Century*.

³⁶ E.g., Bauss, 'The Portuguese Slave Trade from Mozambique to Portuguese India and Macau and Comments on Timor, 1750–1850', pp. 21–27; Campbell, 'Madagascar and Mozambique in the Slave Trade in the Western Indian Ocean, 1800–1861', pp. 166–193; Capela and Medeiros, 'La traite au depart du Mozambique vers les îles françaises de l'océan Indien, 1720–1904', pp. 247–309; Carter, 'Indian Slaves in Mauritius (1729–1834)', pp. 233–247; Gerbeau, 'Les esclaves asiatiques des Mascareignes: Enquêtes et hypothèses', pp. 169–197; Larson, 'A Census of Slaves Exported from Central Madagascar to the Mascarenes between 1769 and 1820', pp. 131–145; Young, 'Slaves, Coolies and Bondsmen', pp. 23–26.

³⁷ Médard, Derat, Vernet, and Ballarin, *Traites et esclavages en Afrique orientale et dans l'océan Indien*; Machado, *Ocean of Trade*, pp. 208–267; Allen, *European Slave Trading*.

³⁸ Toussaint, *La route des îles*, pp. 96, 98–99.

³⁹ Armstrong, 'Madagascar and the Slave Trade in the Seventeenth Century', pp. 211–223.

publication of Jean Mettas' impressive two-volume compendium of 18th-century French slaving voyages and José Capela's study of the Mozambican trade, both which included information about individual French and Portuguese vessels trading slaves in the western Indian Ocean, revealed the promise inherent in cataloguing slaving voyages in the IOA, while Richard Allen's study of European slave trading demonstrated the many rewards of doing so.⁴⁰

The issue before us is accordingly not whether such a database should be created, but rather how can we build on previous and continuing efforts to document slave trading in the IOA in ways that will allow us to expand, if not transform, our understanding of the global commerce in chattel and bonded labour. Such an undertaking must include a willingness to draw on the insights that cognate disciplines such as archaeology can provide.⁴¹ Excavations at the Shimoni caves on the Kenya coast, for example, have yielded information about how captive Africans were held for export along the Swahili Coast.⁴² The discovery, excavation, and analysis of the artifacts recovered from the wrecks of *Le Coureur*, a notorious slaver which landed 900–1,200 slaves on Mauritius during six voyages in 1819 and 1820, and the Portuguese *São José Paquete d'África*, which carried 512 Mozambican slaves in its hold when it sank near Cape Town in 1794, have shed new light on the details of European slave trading in the western Indian Ocean.⁴³ There can be little doubt that the creation of a fully developed IOA database, like those already housed on the *SlaveVoyages* website, will be a lengthy process that will require a commitment of numerous historians to search out and make informed, creative use of hitherto unknown or underutilised archival and other sources. The success of such a venture will likewise rest on the willingness of this international group of scholars with diverse backgrounds, interests, and expertise to collaborate in ways that will expand and deepen our understanding of the human experience with slavery in all of its complexity and, by so doing, give meaning to the lives of the millions of men, women, and children who endured enslavement in the Indian Ocean world and Asia over the centuries.

⁴⁰ Mettas, *Répertoire des expéditions négrières françaises au XVIIIe siècle*, vol. 1, Nantes, and vol. 2, Ports autres que Nantes; Capela, *O tráfico de escravos nos portos de Moçambique, 1733–1904*; Allen, *European Slave Trading*.

⁴¹ Allen, 'History, Historical Archaeology, and the 'History of Silence'', pp. 121–142. On archaeology's value in reconstructing Indian Ocean history, see also Hauser and Haines, eds., *The Archaeology of Modern Worlds in the Indian Ocean*.

⁴² Kiriama, 'Archaeological Investigation of Shimoni Slave Caves', pp. 157–169.

⁴³ Metwalli, Bigourdan, and Van Arnim, 'Interim Report of a Shipwreck at Pointe aux Feuilles, Mauritius', pp. 74–81; Van Arnim, 'Le Coureur: Recherches historiques et archéologiques sur un navire négrier de Maurice à l'époque de la traite illégale', pp. 40–45; Manfio and Van Arnim, 'Maritime Archaeology of Slave Ships', pp. 492–508; Boshoff, Bunch III, Gardullo, and Lubkemann, *From No Return*.

