
PART II

Legacies, Memories, Absences

At Sea in the Archive

Slavery, Indenture and the Nineteenth-Century Indian Ocean¹

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Acts and forces

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Contract with freedom—a horizon of solutions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Acts and compulsions

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

PORT OF VICTORIA, SEYCHELLES.

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

NUMBER.	SEX.	NAME.	FATHER'S NAME	AGE	STATURE.
148	Female	Panlette	Deceased 17. 2. 72.	22. 5.	5.
149	"	Pra.	Wormaninge	21. 5.	5 1/2
150	"	Rosette.	Changecla.	20. 5.	5.
151	"	Rosalie	Gallapaye	24. 5.	5.
152	"	Rosaline	Accelaide	26. 5.	5.
153	"	Rachael	Wyeandan	25. 4.	11.
154	"	Rosamunda	Gallapaye	26.	6.
155	"	Romania	Gendar	20. 5.	5 1/2
156	"	Sarah.	Ameyilla	16. 4.	8.
157	"	Sophie	Chowbiata	17. 5.	5 1/2
158	"	Seraphine	Hamagwadar.	13. 4.	10.
159	"	Sally.	Cayendar.	8. 4.	3.
160	"	Sally.	Moocanda	9. 4.	4.
161	"	Tamara.	Canje	7. 3.	11 1/2

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

Source: Seychelles National Archives.

B85

N. S. Co. Linn. line

MARKS.	DATE OF LANDING AT VICTORIA.	DATE OF REGISTRATION.	HOW DISPOSED OF.
Lea on right temple	7.10.71.	13.10.71.	All to Aug. Long ✓
Lea above right hip	" " " " "	" " " " "	All to Dr. Denton ✓
Large Lea on left shoulder - black.	" " " " "	" " " " "	All to Dr. Brooks. ✓
Lea on both knees.	" " " " "	" " " " "	All to Dr. Denton ✓
Lea on left shoulder Blattered all over	" " " " "	" " " " "	All to Dr. Martin ✓
Lea on right side neck	" " " " "	" " " " "	Road Camp. ✓
Lea above right ankle	" " " " "	" " " " "	All to Aug. Long ✓
Lea above left knee	" " " " "	" " " " "	All to Dr. Denton ✓
Large Lea on left side	" " " " "	" " " " "	All to Aug. Long ✓
Upper lip pierced with iron face.	" " " " "	" " " " "	All to Dr. Denton ✓
Two Lea on left knee.	" " " " "	" " " " "	All to Dr. Martin ✓
Lea under left ear	" " " " "	" " " " "	Road Camp. ✓
Large hollow ears and teeth all over	" " " " "	" " " " "	All to Aug. Long ✓
Five front teeth missing in upper jaw & the others projecting	" " " " "	" " " " "	" " " " "

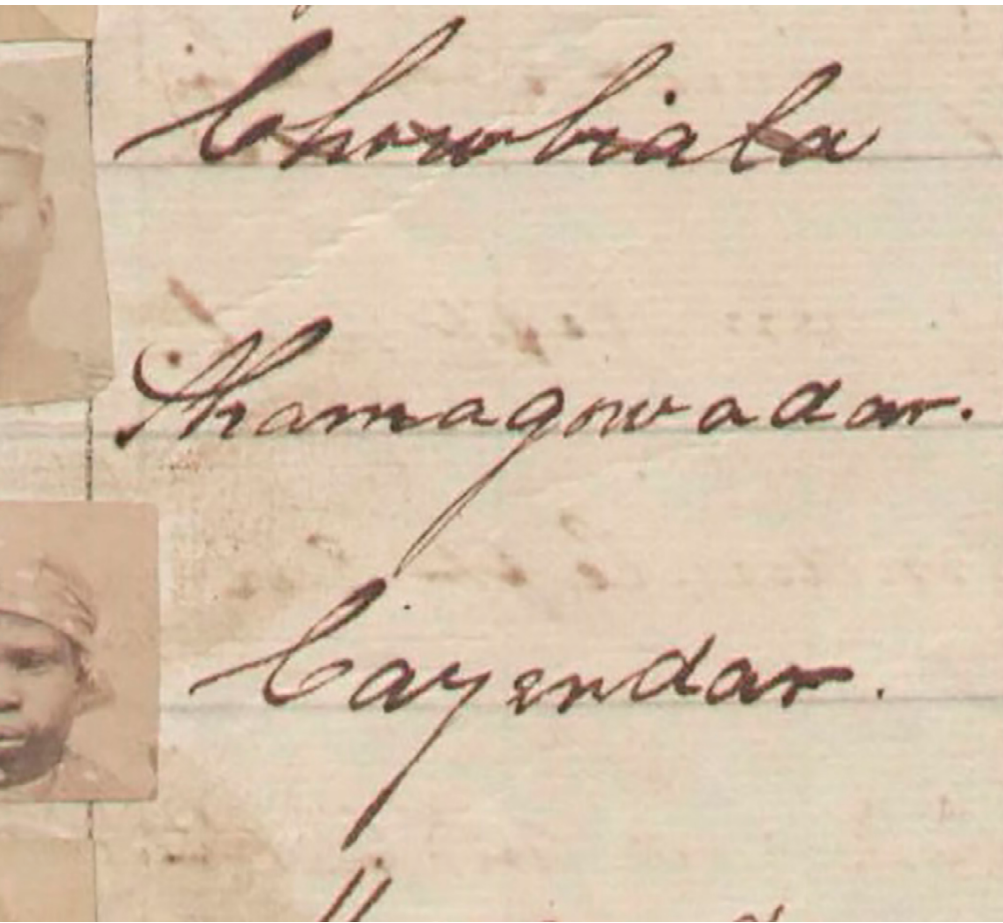


Figure 6.2. Detail from HMS *Columbine*'s register.

Source: Seychelles National Archives.

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The future anterior of liberation

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And:

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

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

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

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

New forms of return and registration

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

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

Saving face

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Notes

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

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

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

- of Long-Run Trends,” in *Routes to Slavery: Directions, Ethnicity, and Mortality in the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, edited by David Eltis and David Richardson, 16. London: Frank Cass & Company Ltd., 1997.
9. George Lydiard Sullivan (sometimes spelled Sulivan) wrote of his first voyage into the Indian Ocean as a midshipman of the *Castor* in 1849 that traders were operating on behalf of American slavers as well; George Lydiard Sullivan, *Dhow Chasing in Zanzibar Waters and on the Eastern Coast of Africa, Narrative of Five Years' Experience in the Suppression of the Slave Trade*. London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low, & Searle, 1873.
 10. Charles Hothman. “Letter from Charles Hotham to the Secretary of the Admiralty. August 17. 1848,” in *First Report From the Select Committee on the Slave Trade Together With the Minutes of Evidence and Appendix*, 143. London: The House of Commons, 1849.
 11. Those settled in Mumbai were known as the Bombay Africans and it was from their midst that Richard Burton, John Hanning Speke, Henry Morton Stanley and David Livingstone all sought guides and translators for their explorations at the suggestion of the President of the Royal Geographical Society and British Governor to India, Henry Bartle Frere. In the late nineteenth century, some of these “Bombay Africans” did return to the east coast of Africa to areas around Mombasa where the Christian Mission Society had established its Mombasa mission in 1844, which it renamed Frere Town in 1875. *Church Missionary Gleaner*, Vol XII.I, March 1885, 34.
 12. The Church Mission Society had already committed to a settlement of freed slaves near Mombasa, under the leadership of Reverend Price. The 1873 Treaty, signed by Sultan Bargash bin Said, Nasir bin Said bin Abdallah and John Kirk (British Political Agent), closed public slave markets in the Sultan’s dominions and banned the export and traffic of slaves. No Indian or British subject was allowed to trade in slaves. For Prideaux see “Captain Prideaux to the Earl of Derby, 2 January 1875,” in *Correspondence with British Representatives and Agents Abroad, and Reports from Naval Officers relating to Slave Trade*, by House of Commons (1876) Vol. LXX, 327.
 13. Prideaux, “Captain Prideaux to the Earl of Derby, 2 January 1875”, 291.
 14. *Ibid.*, 292.
 15. *Ibid.*, 291.
 16. Christopher Saunders, “Liberated Africans and Labour at the Cape of Good Hope in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 18, no. 2 (1985): 223-239. See especially 228 with reference to the slave Vilelagani/Nancy.

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

- Public Proceedings, Range 186, Vol. 99. 9 August 1841. Calcutta Commission of Enquiry Report. 1840. See 58. *Report of the Committee on Indian Labourers, Bombay*. IOL. A *Bombay Public Proceedings*. Range 347, Vol. 71. 20 September 1839.
27. J.P. Grant, "Minute on the Abuses Alleged to Exist in the Export of Coolies," in *Hill coolies. Copies of papers respecting the exportation of hill coolies, received from the government of India; in continuation of those presented to the House of Commons on the 11th day of February last*, by House of Commons Vol. XVI.483, 1841.
 28. Emphasis added.
 29. See Marina Carter, *Servants, Sirdars and Settlers: Indians in Mauritius, 1834-1874*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995. See also Marina Carter, *Unshackling Slaves: Liberation and Adaptation of Ex-Apprentices*. London: Pink Pigeon Press, 2001, for an account of the African slave population on Mauritius post emancipation in April 1839. See W E B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America: 1860-1880*, 16. New York: The Free Press, 1998. Carter locates Indian indenture in Mauritius within the larger scale of recruitments of Indian labour across the British Empire. See *Voices from Indenture: Experiences of Indian Migrants in the British Empire*. London: Leicester University Press, 1996.
 30. Slave registers, as opposed to Registers of Liberated Africans, were established in Trinidad in 1813 and adopted throughout British colonies by the 1820s (the exceptions being the Cayman Islands and Honduras). See, for example, the Registry Act of 2 October 1818 for Guiana. A centralized Office for the Registry of Colonial Slaves was established in London in 1819 to which copies of all registers kept in colonies were sent. See African Institution, *A Review of the Colonial Slave Registration Acts, in a Report of a Committee of the Board of the African Institution made on the 22nd of February 1820*. London: Ellerton and Henderson, 1820.
 31. Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," in *Black, White and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture*, by Hortense Spillers, 208. Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003.
 32. "Djoram (Juhoorun) Aya, vide Captain Finnis' Memorandum dated 1st August 1838", in *Report of the Committee Appointed by the Supreme Government of India, to enquire into the Abuses Alleged to Exist in Exporting from Bengal Coolies and Indian Labourers, of Various Classes, to Other Countries; Together with An Appendix, Containing the Oral and Written Evidence Taken by the Committee and Official Documents Laid Before Them*, by House of Commons, Exhibit No. 10. Calcutta: G.H. Huttman, Bengal Military Orphan Press, 1839.
 33. Grant, "Minute on Coolies", 6.

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

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

