



Slaving,
Slavery and Abolition:
A View from the Indian Ocean.
Notes on Some Recent Publications¹

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Gwyn Campbell & Elizabeth Elbourne (eds), *Sex, Power and Slavery*.
Athens: Ohio University Press 2014. ISBN 978 0 8214 2097 3
(pb). 646 pp. incl. index.

Gwyn Campbell & Alessandro Stanziani (eds), *Bonded Labour and Debt
in the Indian Ocean World*. London, UK, Brookfield, USA:
Pickering & Chatto, 2013. ISBN 13 9871848933781. 240 pp.
including notes and index.

Robert Harms, Bernard K. Fremon & David W. Blight (eds), *Indian
Ocean Slavery in the Age of Abolition*. New Haven and London:
Yale University Press 2013. ISBN 978 0 3000 16387 2. 252 pp.
incl. index.

Andrea Major, *Slavery, Abolitionism and Empire in India, 1772-1843*.
Liverpool: Liverpool University Press 2012. ISBN 987 1 84631
753 1. 361 pp. with illustrations and index.

Joseph C. Miller, *The Problem of Slavery as History. A Global Approach*.
New Haven & London: Yale University Press 2012. ISBN
9780300113150. 218 pp. including notes, appendix and index.

William Mulligan & Maurice Bric (eds), *A Global History of the Anti-
Slavery Politics in the Nineteenth Century*. Houndmills and New
York: Palgrave-Macmillan 2013. ISBN 978 1 137 03259 1. 253
pp. incl. index.

Carolyn Retzlaff, "Wont have law give me my freedom". *Sklaverei vor
Gericht (1750-1800)*. Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh 2014.
ISBN 978 3 506 77941 4. 224 pp. incl. index.



The Setting

The bicentenary of slave trade prohibition within the British Empire – commemorating the Act of Parliament abolishing slave trade in 1807 which was, following its open circumvention and disregard, again implemented in 1811 as an act of felony – triggered a vast number of publications. As was to be expected, the majority of monographs and edited volumes which have seen the day of the light since the beginning of this millennium deal with the “Black Atlantic” and focus on the North Atlantic – Anglo-American – slaving and slavery. Yet, slaving, slave trading and slavery no longer remains the domain of an Anglo-American Atlantic as quite a few important and rather insightful contributions have been made by various authors in regard to South Asia and the Indian Ocean World since the turn of the millennium.²

While abolition seems to be the ostensibly new focus of many of these recently published books, the subject is as old as the practice itself. Human trafficking and the infamous “Middle Passage” as well as the conditions of the slave labour regime dominated public agitation at the end of the eighteenth century as well as the academic and public agenda in the second half of the twentieth century when slavery resurfaced as an imminent problem of the U.S.’ history in the wake of the country’s Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. Actually abolition as a subject of concern marks the origin of West European-North American consciousness about the evils of slavery, caricatured tellingly by a 2006 publication titling *Emancipation without Abolition in German East Africa* (Deutsch 2006). The title in fact questions the results of abolition and considers that while emancipation in many slave-holding societies of the nineteenth century did, without doubt, jurisdictionally liberate slaves, in practice however it marginalised and dissociated them from “white” society.

What is striking about most of the recent publications is the fact that the confinements of nation states and even areas seem to have been broken out of, with interconnectivity, entangled histories and even aspects of globalisation receiving special attention. Aside from this, slaving, slave trafficking and slavery are no more seen as hermetically closed systems of coercion and subjugation but as social phenomenon situated within a given society at a certain place and time (Campbell 2004; Idem: 2005; Idem., Alpers & Salman 2005; Chatterjee & Eaton 2006; Mann 2012; Zeuske 2013; Campbell 2005). This aspect is also highlighted in the publications under review in this article. Books in this review article are either edited volumes presenting different



results of latest field works or presentations of the recent findings of ongoing research. For purposes of convenience it seems appropriate to proceed from the more general books on slaving, slavery, and abolition, i.e. a global approach, to the more specific volumes dealing with the Indian Ocean World and the South Asian Subcontinent, which is in particular the focus of this review article. If however a book on a specific issue contributes to and exemplifies the more general aspects, the order of books will be ruptured.

The Research

Since the sixteenth century, slavery and forms of bonded labour have been part and parcel of global labour regimes consisting of highly fluid and constantly transforming systems of human trafficking and bonded labour or, in other words, forced migration and controlled labour. Such systems became particularly fluid and open to transformations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a period roughly stretching from 1750 to 1890 that is also marked by contemporary Anglo-American debates on Abolition. This aspect is highlighted in Joseph C. Miller's book on *The Problem of Slavery as History*, 2012. The current academic discussion of abolition of slavery, he claims, is largely determined by the Anglo-American narrative – one is tempted to call it discourse – of an institutionalised labour regime supported by personal power in the public realm drawn from human bodies held as private property which, at the same time, eroded the public body that was on the threshold of becoming a nation.

The study of slavery as a political subject of academic relevance re-emerged in the first instance in the 1960s as part of the U.S.-American Civil Rights Movement, and in the second instance and then much more pressing, in the 1970s and 80s as history of the "Black Atlantic". The political and social awareness and sadness the U.S.-American TV-series "Roots" (based on the Alex Haley's novel *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1976) caused, initiated academic research which since then dominates the debate on slaving, slave trafficking, and slavery.

However, as Miller points out throughout his book, the US-American situation was historically unique, as in the middle of the nineteenth century the vast majority of slaves – originating from outside and remaining outside the society they were part of, which admittedly seems to be a contradiction in terms –, had been born within the boundaries of the United States. They could, therefore, not simply be



regarded as outsiders any more since they were English-speaking, native-born residents. This hints at the crucial question whether early immigrants from European countries and later on U.S.-contemporaries regarded "black slaves" – and the slaves themselves – as members of the society albeit at its lowest end or whether *postbellum* racism eventually turned the freed slaves into a biologically inferior species of humans and therefore, by definition, as excluded from the "white" society. As indicated in the first paragraph, abolition then would be a rather doubtful means of emancipation, serving, in the first place, only the moral needs of just a handful of intellectuals, quite a lot of Evangelical radicals, and some politicians.

This is not to state that the abolition of slavery was not expedient but to state that the lot of most of the freed slaves turned from bad to worse as politicians did not take anticipatory measures for the economic and social consequences of the slaves' emancipation. At the same time, abolition was a process that did not take place uniformly during the (long) nineteenth century. Within the U.S., abolition was a question of defining citizenship in the still fragile republic of the former thirteen colonies and its territorial additions and, therefore, unique in that respect. In the British Empire, however, abolition was implemented between 1807 and 1834, and British slavers and West Indian slave owners were sufficiently marginal to the domestic politics of an industrialising England for the parliament (i.e. the English tax-payer) to be willing to compensate slave owners with 22 million Pound Sterling. In France and on Haiti revolutions (1789 and 1791) and continental warfare all but ended slaving. In contrast to Great Britain and the U.S., however, abolition remained a rather intellectual concern, emancipation eventually taking place in 1848. Yet, its implementation occurred rather unnoticed due to the revolutions taking place throughout Europe that year. It may be added that the abolition of serfdom in Russia in 1861 and emancipation of slaves in Brazil in 1889, too, were events hardly noticed by the public which, again, was in stark contrast to the public campaigns fought in parliament and press in Britain and the U.S.

Miller rightly claims that the historiography of slaving and slavery has, so far, had a teleological approach treating slaving and slavery as a sociologically static institution throughout history devoid of any dynamics. Instead, Miller wants to establish the notion of slaving and slavery being a historical strategy. According to him, slavery as an institution is an abstract category and therefore not viable for historians. Instead, seeing slavery as a historical process of non-linear



change and transformation (throughout time and space) enables historians' to generate incrementally and indefinitely complex, subtle and even contradictory chains (and/or webs) of human relations and reactions rather than providing results by arraying them as processes plausible to the present (p. 28). In keeping with this paradigmatic shift, Miller unfolds a new history of slaving, enslavement, slavery, and emancipation starting in the prehistory of humans. He understands slaving and slavery as a strategy of kin- and community building and, at least from the first millennium BCE, a strategy of marginalised merchants to provide rivalling chiefs and rulers with additional human capital.

Globally seen, these processes took place on the Eurasian as well as on the African continent at different times and at different places. In South Asia, for example, in the sixteenth century local merchant capital increasingly penetrated village communities and peasant structures, expanding and transforming bonded labour relations into debt bondage which could end up in permanent slavery. This process accelerated in the eighteenth century. As Miller admits, he is no historian of South Asia (nor of East Asia or Europe), which invites the reviewer to further comment on his observation that the British colonial state's fiscal and juridical politics promoted bonded debt relations until the beginning of the twentieth century: Eventually British colonial fiscal and labour politics cemented this process during the Great Depression, when impoverishment of peasants and a growingly aggressive labour market protected by colonial legislation dramatically increased the number of landless and bonded, i.e. in many ways enslaved, labourers. This proves Miller's general observation of slaving and slavery as a historical process being an initially marginal phenomenon which gained momentum through monarchical empire building, state formation and capitalisation.

On the African continent, epochs of history paralleled those in Eurasia in timing as well as historical significance. But, as Miller points out, strategies differed considering that people in Africa did not suffer the high costs of militarisation accompanying empire building as was the case in Eurasian countries. Instead, societies were able to preserve small, face-to-face communities of familiarity, kinship and affinity. These were by no means static but highly dynamic as societies met sequences of challenges using, among many other strategies, slaving to build new groupings of personnel adapted to new purposes, beyond the underlying focus of female fecundity and the fertility of the land they lived on. Even when they formalised these arrangements on



larger scales, rulers kept drawing on a variety of techniques to maintain the local, rich diversity they had cultivated throughout centuries. (p. 86) This also hints at the fact that “modernisation” does not necessarily include “technical” improvement in regard to military equipment as this would only reflect a Western notion of modernisation.

It was this specific historical, social and political constellation which made African polities able to resist the initially marginal Arabian merchant capital which turned up in Eastern Africa during the fourteenth century, as well as the Portuguese merchant capital that arrived at the shores of the western African littoral during the fifteenth century, but which almost collapsed under the massive onslaught of natural disasters at in Angola during the sixteenth century, uprooting thousands of starving people. Foreign money then found access to the local and regional markets and helped to transform, as in the above mentioned South Asian case, local communal structures including bonded forms of labour into debt bondage. Again, external credit turned erstwhile relations – in all probability fairly flexible and adjustable collective and customary – into commercially and personally fixed and rather static dependencies.

457

It was only after the massive commercialisation of the African societies through militarisation and commercialisation, which made them particularly vulnerable to the availability of Dutch and English credit-capital in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, that merchants of both countries introduced and imported quantitatively and qualitatively new commodities. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, slaving as a means of local labour resource as well as a means of debt repayment reached its logistical and geographical limits at the borders of the Sahara and in the central south of the continent. Local warlords and regional monarchs started raiding each other for human capital rather than expanding at the costs of vulnerable societies. This massive transformation eventually turned the terms of trade in favour of the north European slavers, who enslaved about 5 million people in the eighteenth century, which is approximately half of the overall transhipped slaves from Africa to the Americas between 1500 and 1800. If slaving had reached its limits in the western part of the African continent, it may be suggested, implementing Abolition in the “Black Atlantic” may have been successful (and necessary) also because of a lack of human supply. In contrast, in Eastern Africa slaving reached its peak in the second half of the nineteenth century after



British, German, Arabian and African capital had reached its limits in the interior of the continent.

Miller's approach is breath-taking and thought-provoking at the same time – a comment may sound rather ambiguous but is warranted in this case. By no means will the study be the last word on the subject as many theses and hypotheses need further proof, but in any case, Miller's ideas and suggestions will have consequences for the academia regarding slavery, slaving and slave trade throughout history in different parts of the world. Historicising slavery and thereby liberating the established narrative from its sole abolitionist Atlantic agency is certainly the most important and certainly far reaching suggestion. It opens the door for a fresh look onto the mechanisms of slavery and slaving, not as a historiographically and sociologically stereotyped system, but a much more flexible, fluid and functional form of mobilising and controlling labour, including its immobilisation. It is this more general aspect which brings the trans-Atlantic indentured servant system of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, different bonded labour regimes in Africa, America and Asia, the global indentured labour system of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and guest-workers of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries into the orbit of labour regimes characterised by different intensities of control (Mann 2015: 212-63).

As has been pointed out by Miller, historicising slavery and slaving also sheds some new light on the agency of enslaved people. They are not merely persons being caught, trans-shipped, sold and made to work as the Atlantic narrative would suggest. It is against the background of this narrative that Miller heavily criticises Orlando Patterson's concept of the "social death" slaves allegedly experienced when placed into a new geographical, cultural and social environment. (Patterson 1982) In fact, slaves did become part of the new society also preserving parts of their erstwhile cultures. Hence, Miller suggests enslaved people acted both collectively and individually. Slave revolts indicate the former, slaves fighting for their personal rights, the latter. This aspect has been highlighted by Carolin Retzlaff's seminal study, 2014, on slaves suing their freedom at court in the late English American colonies and the early phase of the United States (1750-1800). Not Abolition as a moral category but justice as a legal institution provided for the liberation of slaves, although for just a very few in comparison to the many enslaved people. Altogether 260 law suits are recorded in the above mentioned period. They demonstrate the



enslaved peoples' faith into the legal system of the British colony as well as the independent American state.

Enslaved used the law as a tool to seek their freedom or the restitution of the freedom they once enjoyed. Law suits demonstrate that colonial as well as independent judges did not simply confirm existing relations of dependence but decided individually. On the one hand, agency existed among a fairly small number of enslaved, on the other, some kind of moral responsibility was evident among the representatives of governments. Basically three kinds of freedom suits can be distinguished.

First, genealogical cases in which slaves claimed their freedom due to the descent from a free person regardless the latter's ethnic origin. According to a Virginia law of 1662 and its principle of *partus sequitur ventrem*, the legal status of the mother defined that of her issue. Thus, slaves showed a distinctive consciousness as to their family origins and family bounds. Such cases demonstrate the enslaved cultural, social and economic embeddedness in the new society. Such freedom suits actually helped to stabilise the slavery regime. Incorporation and acculturation therefore were not specific to what has been termed "Oriental slavery" but took also place in the "Black Atlantic".

459

Second: juridical cases which comprise a fairly wide spectrum of different freedom suits. They range from broken promises, agreements not kept, dis-observance of last wills, and various other juridical regulations. Enslaved men and women appealed to the law to claim their right to freedom – and to resist sudden kidnapping, re-enslavement, and negative consequences of their owners' sudden death. Additionally, and rather interestingly, some of the plaintiffs claimed compensation of wages not having been payed to their clients during (re-)enslavement/ loss of freedom. More than in the case of the genealogical law suits plaintiffs acted as self-confident individuals who believed in the justice of the juridical system.

Third: political freedom suits which are closely related to the fundamental changes that went along with the American Revolution. In contrast to the genealogical and juridical cases, enslaved people appealed to egalitarian as well as national ideas of justice. In this way they appealed to the principles the American Revolution and its ideological protagonists believed to be universal, namely the basic right of freedom for every human being. It is this universal approach and individual pursuit which eventually de-legitimised slavery on a global (universal) scale and, of course, on the very local (individual) level.



This is not to say that judges at that time principally shared the same view but to state that the institution of slavery was on the political agenda of the USA until abolished in 1865.

Aside from these three categories, the colonies/ federal states also differed with regard to the legal traditions mirrored in the freedom suits stored in the archives. Only Connecticut, for example, recorded freedom suits which included compensation for non-paid wages. New York was known for its freedom suits concerning enslaved/ kidnapped "foreigners" from the Caribbean, mostly Spaniards, whereas Maryland demonstrates the familial communication networks that made "chain-suits" fairly likely when one family member had successfully fought his or her freedom suit. All cases show the willingness of enslaved people to fight for their right regardless of whether they would be able to secure the ways and means of their livelihood after their "liberation". The cases also show the, albeit limited, accessibility of the law to people who, according to the mainstream historiographical narrative of the "Black Atlantic", are classified as private property and were therefore, *eo ipso*, without any right (to pursue).

The book is a very thoroughly elaborated German language piece of academic research, at times a somewhat tiresome to read. However, the study deserves much larger attention than a German speaking readership as it provides fresh insights into questions of slave agency under the rubric of slavery and abolition. Since its inception in the second half of the eighteenth century, the concept of Abolition restricts agency only to British and later to American ideologues and pressure groups within and without parliamentary institutions, as well as to historians' and sociologists' discursive concepts. As Retzlaff's meticulously worked study demonstrates, freedom for slaves was not simply a ritual of benevolent manumission from a master's service in the aftermath of moral campaigning and state legislation, but an individual and collective competence of enslaved women and men self-confidently and discretely fighting for their right before Abolition became a political priority of the Evangelical moralists.

Coming back to the global approach of many books considered in this review, the variety of articles presented in Mulligan's and Bric's edited volume *A Global History of Anti-Slavery Politics in the Nineteenth Century*, 2013, represents the Atlantic narrative of slavery and abolition rather than providing a global perspective. The collection of articles includes Haitian slavery and independence, British and U.S.-American debates on slavery and Abolition, liberated slaves in Sierra



Leone, anti-slavery debates in Spain and anti-slavery campaigns in European states, all of which define the geographic Atlantic rim. Only one article deals with slavery and Abolition in the Ottoman Empire, which, via its Arabic Provinces, borders on the Indian Ocean. Dipping a toe in the Indian Ocean, however, does not make the book's approach "global". Instead the established narrative of the North Atlantic, Eurocentric slave trade and slave regime, including debates on its abolition as a result of Europe's enlightenment and allegedly advanced Anglo-American Christian morality, is perpetuated in spite of latest scientific findings in regard to the Indian Ocean.

Articles, however, do shed some fresh light on the huge set of established research like, for example, Maurice Bric's on "Debating Slavery and Empire" (pp. 59-77). The author describes the World's Anti-Slavery Convention which met in London in 1840. Right at the beginning of the meeting and rather tellingly, a huge discussion commenced whether female delegates would be admitted to the debates which conservative British members denied. In the end American delegates had the impression that English men were to define and establish their custom, habits and morals as global standards regardless other nations' traditions. At times the assumed Anglo-American special cultural relationship seems to have been fragile when claimed universalistic progress found its limitations in nationalist pride and prejudice. The article, unintentionally, proves the fact that abolition was a matter of a country's and a nation's elite and probably part and parcel of an ongoing nation-building process.

That abolition was the business of any nation's or state's elite, demonstrates Ehud R. Toledano's article on the abolition of slavery in the Ottoman Empire (pp. 117-36). He asks why the Ottoman Empire's elite did not or only selectively respond to the Euro-American, British dominated debate on the slave trade's and slavery's abolition during the nineteenth century. It was in only 1857 that, after long and arduous negotiations a British-Ottoman treaty prohibited the slave trade with Africans. However, trafficking Caucasians and enslaving people from that region including the southern parts of the Russian Empire was never part of the negotiations. Actually, Caucasian women were essential to the Ottoman elite's reproduction system meaning that many members of the 10 percent slave-holding elite were in fact descendants of slaves. This ethnicity and gender complexity created a unique entanglement as the very men who could have suggested and pursued the abolition of slavery were the biological and social product of that very system. Rather than being a question of economics, status



or religion it is this personal entanglement which prevented the emergence of an anti-slavery movement in the Ottoman Empire and made its elite rather hesitantly, if at all, react to British interventions.

In regard to the social aspect of "Oriental" slavery, contemporary defenders of it, whether the elites in the Ottoman Empire or in British India, argued in a similar way to the abolitionists in Britain. They all stressed the vast difference between agrestic slavery constitutive for the Atlantic plantation economy and domestic slavery allegedly ubiquitous in Oriental societies, ranging from the eastern coast of Africa including the Arabian Peninsula, via Persia, South Asia, Southeast-Asia to China. According to these contemporary voices (and essentially seen), Slavery in the "Orient" was mild and benevolent, in sharp contrast to the "Black Atlantic" where slavery was brutal and suppressive. This alleged, roughly and readily constructed difference is highlighted by a contemporary abolitionist looking at slavery in British India who argued at the climax of the Abolition debate in Britain and British India that "it is an abuse of language to call it slavery" (quoted in Mann 2015: 168, fn 5). Some Ottoman voices which also stressed the social aspect of domestic slavery, intentionally served British "Oriental" clichés and colonial arguments to prevent any further interference in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire and in particular of the domestic affairs of its elite.

In contrast to publications on slavery, slave trade and abolition in the Atlantic World, monographs and edited volumes on the Indian Ocean World provide a fresh approach on the subject. A huge variety of themes in *Indian Ocean Slavery in the Age of Abolition*, 2013, edited by Robert Harms, Bernard Freamon and David Blight, point at the vast field still rather unexplored and therefore, more or less, unencumbered concerning established narratives and discourses. In his contribution (pp. 23-44) Gwyn Campbell provides a broad overview on the book's subject based on articles and monographs that have to a very large extent been published before the turn of the millennium except his own dating from 2006 and 2007. Apart from the fact that the article does not represent the very latest state of the art it provides the readership with a kind of solid and broad overview on the subject that is needed at the beginning of such an ambitious book.

The contribution of Edward E. Alpers (pp. 45-58) shows how the Indian Ocean was turned into a "British Lake" only during the nineteenth century. The victory of the allied forces over Napoleon in Europe in 1815 and the victory of British and allied forces in India over



the Maratha Union in 1818 made possible this geo-strategic transformation of the Indian Ocean, at first gradually and later on systematically. It was only in the second half on the nineteenth century when the aim of overall control could be accomplished to some extent. But, as Alpers points out, control was never absolute and effective as the Western Indian Ocean trade was dominated by local and regional traders while in the Eastern Indian Ocean piracy remained a predominant problem. In both its parts, but particularly in the eastern section, piracy and slavery were never fully suppressed and placated by "Pax Britannica", just as slavery continued to exist in East Africa, the Arabian Peninsula and Persia.

It is against this background that the Indian Ocean became of eminent importance to the emerging world economy, also known as "globalisation". It describes a process that quantitatively yet, more important, qualitatively changed the world after the middle of the nineteenth century. The labour regimes of the Indian Ocean provide a good example for this entangled, trans-local history. Richard B. Allen contributes (pp. 183-99) to this new understanding of the Indian Ocean cultures' and economies' interwoven nature in a globalising world when looking at the transformations taking place in the first half of the nineteenth century. Against the predominating argument of abolitionists (and historians) which still and often juxtapose "free" against "unfree labour", Richard Allen draws attention towards the structural continuities between indentured and slave labour regimes. This is not to maintain that indentured labour was a "New System of Slavery" as contemporaries as well as twentieth century historians would term it (Tinker 1974), but to focus on established systems of human trafficking and bonded labour systems prevalent on the South Asian subcontinent prior to indentured labour recruitment. The existing structures and their transformations under colonial supervision facilitated the expansion of human trafficking from British India, Eastern Africa, and Madagascar.

As to the re-organisation of the global labour market in the nineteenth century, Mauritius was of particular importance. The 1832 insurrection of the island's planters against abolitionist attorney general John Jeremy accelerated the ongoing debate on the restructuring of the British Empire's labour market in the Caribbean and on the western Indian Ocean islands. Between 1832 and 1843 Mauritius served as a laboratory for the future organisation of a labour market based on regulated contract labour. In various concerted actions, Caribbean and Mascarene plantocrats, the British Indian colonial



government in Calcutta, and the British imperial government in London transformed and adjusted the recruitment of labourers for the Atlantic and Indian Ocean plantation economy (Mann 2015: 166-77). It is this global context which highlights the need for those studying the transformation of the global labour market to look beyond the confines of the Atlantic World, to overcome Anglo-American or Western Atlantic centrism and to consider the importance of the Indian Ocean World. Seen from this global perspective it may be suggested that the American Civil War, as a consequence of slavery's abolition in the U.S., was not a national event but collateral "damage" of a globally changing labour market taking place between the 1830s and 1880s.

The aspect of the effects of a globalising economy is emphasised in M.S. Hopper's chapter (pp. 223-40) on pearl diving in and date palm plantations along the Persian Gulf. Both natural products were procured by slaves and reached unprecedented export numbers at the beginning of the twentieth century. Agro-industrial date palm plantations and massively increasing outputs in California, however, caused a steady decline of dates imported in the U.S. from the Gulf after 1925. The same can be observed with regard to the pearl industry after Japanese Mikimoto had perfected artificial pearl breeding and expanded pearl cultures that produced pearls on a large (industrial) scale at the turn of the nineteenth century. By the end of the 1920s – with the onset of the Great Depression – the pearl-diving industry in the Gulf had completely collapsed. To get rid of their unproductive and costly labour force, slave owners now manumitted their agrestic and aquatic slaves who now had to fend for themselves.

A rather telling history of the operation of the Indian Ocean slave trade is offered by the article of M.E. Limbert (pp. 120-40). She thoroughly scrutinises the information given in a file concerning the capture of the *Jasmine* off the east African coast. Intercepted by the Royal Navy's ship *Vulture* in 1872, records simply state the number of 169 slaves, 13 crew members and 21 passengers. No further specifications are provided, so we do not learn anything about the slaves' gender, physical and living condition on board the ship, or whether there were any slave traders among the passengers or the crew. However, according to the interviews made with crew members, the captain and his son, it seems that a large number of different middlemen were involved in the slave trade. Due to the lack of supplementary evidence or research based on additional records we do not know whether the fairly fragmentary record actually represents the filing practice of British officials involved in the control and capture of slav-



ing ships or whether this case is a unique example of careless and negligent recording.

Nevertheless, the surviving slim file does divulge some information: the captain frankly admitted that 16 of the slaves had died before he boarded them, and a simple death certificate of a British official stated that another 6 had died on board during their voyage to Bombay after the ship had been intercepted. No reason, however, is given why the slaves were shipped to Bombay instead of East Africa or whatever origin the ship or the slaves had had – the origin of the slaves is also not indicated in the file – considering that the Bombay authorities had massive problems in securing employment for the freed slaves. According to the British Resident at Bushire on the Makran Coast where the *Vulture* stopped over, the majority of slaves were women and children. It is likely that the women were forced to work as prostitutes. Reading this file, the very scanty nature of the evidence or rather the way evidence was filed suggests a fairly extensive system of slaving, a prosperous slave trade still undetected and in its extension still unknown. It also suggests that British officials were only half-heartedly and probably partisan in implementing the imperial legislation concerning the slave trade in the Indian Ocean.

465

J.J. Ewald's chapter (pp. 200-22) has a look at African bondsmen and freedmen. In the nineteenth century, slavery and wage labour co-existed in the Indian Ocean labour regime. However, even before the plantation economy was established by European trading companies on the Mascarenes and on Zanzibar, Pemba, and the East African Coast in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, slavery, various kinds of bonded labour, and wage labour co-existed and supplemented each other which also pertains to local and regional recruitment systems. Only during the eighteenth century did Europeans massively begin to interfere in and transform these structures, doing so again in the nineteenth century by developing separate structures of labour supply. On the one hand, expanding and increasingly interconnected markets and sites of production as well as means of transport (caravans, carts, ships, and trains) required an additional supply of labourers. On the other hand, employers needed mobile and flexible labourers, who were, at the same time, a constant and reliable work force that could counter balance economic fluctuations.

In addition to the urban proletariat which came into existence with the expansion of industries and the rural proletariat on the plantation and mining sites also a maritime proletariat emerged which consisted



of bondsmen, slaves, freedmen, and wage labourers settling in “straw towns” of port cities along the shores of the Indian Ocean and beyond. Of particular interest is the composition of crews on ocean liners and tramp ships, the former regularly traversing the sea, the latter irregularly turning up at port cities exchanging goods on short term demand. Whilst Asian and African crew members (lascars, seedis) of the ocean liners had to be disembarked in the ports where they had been recruited, the crews of the tramp ships could be changed, dismissed, and replenished at ports of the captain’s discretion. The members of these crews became a rather flexible and, simultaneously, a fairly vulnerable labour force within the transforming maritime labour regime of the Indian Ocean. Ravi Ahuja’s many seminal contributions to this complex history would certainly have been a valuable and necessary amendment (Ahuja 2002; 2006; 2008).

Finally, Lindsay Doulton’s chapter is a fine example of how British self-perception of its civilising mission and their role as humanistic benefactors was perceived completely different by those who were regarded the beneficiaries. Rather than being a story of British successful anti-slavery campaign in the age of abolition, which represents Britain as the spearhead of European civilisations and at the forefront of human progress, a closer look at contemporary sources reveals a fairly ambiguous story. Part of this contradictory history was the self-representation of ship’s crew members and missionaries. Generally, many naval officers regarded themselves as part of an overall imperial civilising mission, the suppression of slavery and the slave trade being an integral part of this mission. Hence liberation was seen as freeing Africans from physical and mental enslavement. Indeed, many freed slaves adopted Christian faith and received the freeing ship’s name as surnames, married, and started families at mission stations.

However, the idyllic picture drawn by naval officers and missionaries was contradicted by experiences slaves made during the “act of liberation”. First: shooting, which most often went along with the capture of a slave, was not seen as a sign of liberation but death, because the slaves thought the “white men” were shooting at them, some of them jumping overboard many of them drowning. Second: because Arab slave traders depicted Europeans as cannibals, many slaves refused to take food from Europeans which worsened their physical condition. In addition, the crew’s drilling with swords and rifles was seen as a preparation for killing the slaves, worsening their mental condition. Third: the shrill sound of the pipe whistle used to give orders to the members of the crew frightened some slaves to such an



extent that they jumped overboard, again many of them drowning. Fourth: Separating families according to age and gender on board a British ship – probably reflecting British fears and clichés of sexual promiscuous Africans (Orientals) – caused discomfort, despair and fear among the freed slaves. Although fear cannot be quantified it can be assumed that the act of liberation may have (again, after having experienced slavery) traumatised the freed slaves and, in quite a few instances, subjugated them to European values of civilisation. In case the colonial and missionary administration could not provide the slaves with jobs on a free labour market, the freed slaves, bare of any income were forced to rely on the jobs offered by missionary stations. Hence the picture of an idyllic (Victorian) family relying on their own hands' labour.

Gwyn Campbell's and Alessandro Stanziani's book *Sex, Power and Slavery* also demonstrates the huge variety of controlled labour that existed in the various regions of the Indian Ocean including its south-eastern parts from the beginning of the eighteenth right into the twentieth century.³ The articles in the book do not simply elaborate another form of slavery but highlight debt bondage as a variation of bonded labour and, at the same time, as a specific form of strictly controlled labour within a highly transforming and diversifying labour market. This is particularly stressed by Isabelle Guérine's chapter on twentieth century debt bondage in South Indian Tamilnadu (pp. 119-34). She argues that contrary to economic theory, which generally rejects bonded labour as well as slave labour as unproductive, local industrial agriculturists employed any form of labour that would maximise their profits. In the case of the three industries investigated in the volume, local capitalists encourage bonded labour because it made the local workforce cheaper, easier to discipline and, eventually, to control.

In the introduction (pp. 1-29) the editors point out the "considerable continuity, as well as change, in the transition from the older forms of debt-related bondage to the new ones that emerged with the forces accompanying the international economy that developed in the long nineteenth century, namely European colonialism and the more recent process of globalisation" (p. 2). Bonded labour and debt bondage, in many cases ending up in hereditary slavery, is thus not only a phenomenon of modern times. On the contrary, such forms were established in different forms in various parts of the Indian Ocean world since ancient times – as Joseph C. Miller has suggested. However, growing industrial capitalism of the few "Western" countries and colonial capi-



talism based on the appropriation and extraction of capital in their imperial annexes transformed and re-shaped the existing labour relationships which were based on rather customary relationships and transformed into legalised institutions. This, in fact, strengthens the narrative “from custom to contract”. Also, in contrast to the trans-Atlantic chattel slavery which depended on the capture and trafficking of humans, in the Indian Ocean World the majority of slaves seem to have originated from local debt bondage, which is why in most cases debtors remained in their local environs.

High interest rates on credits, gambling debts, droughts and famine were the frequent reasons why humans were indebted or were sold as slaves. In most cases victims of men’s indebtedness were women and children as men sold both to reimburse their varying creditors. It is against this background that in some regions of the Indian Ocean debt bondage outnumbered slavery – until debt bondage was inherited by the children of the debtor and was thus converted into slavery. The article by Bok-rae Kim (pp. 165-72) points to the fact that in Korea enslavement of people removed them from the population subject to taxation, which is why some states tried to prohibit or at least to curb debt bondage and enslavement due to debts. A variation of such state intervention is elaborated on by Gwyn Campbell (pp. 45-56). In 1865, the ruler of the Merina Empire on Madagascar emancipated 150,000 privately owned slaves only to categorise them as members of a hereditary slave caste many of whom were employed in state projects.

Yet, despite the abolition of the slave trade and slavery in the British Empire, both increased during the nineteenth century. As Edward Alpers shows in his article (pp. 31-44), a fast growing slave trade from the late eighteenth century substantially altered the mechanisms of pawnship in East Africa, eventually transforming it into an institution to procure slaves on a large scale. This interrelationship tightened the links between debt, pawn, and slavery, and was strongest along the East African coast and along the main trading routes into the hinterland. Yet what was prevalent in some parts of East Africa did not exist or emerge in West African societies. The contributions of Ei Murakami and Bok-rae Kim (pp. 153-64; 165-72) confirm Alpers’ observations, namely that in some regions of the Indian Ocean, debt bondage and slavery dramatically increased: in Korea, for example, from just one to about fifty per cent during the nineteenth century.

The effects of globalisation, migration, agro-industrial production, and the concomitant growing demand for labourers brought about new



forms of labour control, the spectrum ranging from supposedly 'free' wage labour on the one extreme to slavery on the other. Of particular interest is the fate of liberated slaves. In some cases emancipation led to rather peculiar forms of new enslavement. The most prominent example is that of the "Prize Negroes": Africans liberated from ships in the Indian Ocean yet kept as confiscated property and transferred to the British government whose officials often forced them into contract labour. For the Eastern Indian Ocean (Indonesian Archipelago) James Warren in his article (pp. 87-102) demonstrates that in the Zulu zone Westerners involved in the redemption of slaves often passed the accrued costs of liberation on to the freed slaves and therefore considered them indebted to themselves. The liberated slave was thus forced to work for the "advanced money" and the costs for his ship passage. In consequence, many former slaves became more dependent on their new "masters" than they had been before liberation; and in some cases slaves freed by Spanish warships were simply forced into the ships' crews.

It has been, again, argued by one of the editors that indentured labour in fact was similar to slave labour – which is by far not the case. Just to mention a few substantial differences: First, indentured labourers possessed contracts which were of particular importance to labourers when the terms of contract became negotiable in case of another period of indenture. Second, living conditions of indentured labourers could be much worse than that of slaves as, in contrast to slaves, "coolies" had to pay for their clothing, medical care, and of course food. Consequently, many indentured labourers had to either work small plots of land or, in the case of the women whose wages were generally half the amount of their male colleagues', were forced to work as prostitutes. It seems that in the case of indentured and bonded women, labour often meant sex work as well. This is highlighted, again, by Ei Murakami's article (pp. 153-64) which demonstrates that the various colonial regimes in the eastern Indian Ocean caused a rise in the demand for Chinese prostitutes due to the increasing number of soldiers and migrant workers.

It is this thematic perspective of *Sex, Power and Slavery* which makes the voluminous book edited by Gwyn Campbell and Elizabeth Elbourne a highly appreciable contribution to the ongoing academic debate and, simultaneously, opens up new fields of utmost concern. As the editors emphasise in their very useful introduction (pp. 1-39) the collection of articles look at the intersection between the history of slavery and the history of sexuality in a broad comparative perspec-



tive. Slavery, the core argument throughout the edited volume's contributions, is not simply about control of labour but almost unlimited control of the body of the enslaved person that hints at the 'erotics of power relationship' (p. 7). This is of particular relevance for enslaved women, their providing sex being an essential part of the enslavement regardless moral reservations and legal regulations. Men, too, experienced sexual humiliation and even destruction of their sexual organs as a sign of possession and subjugation. However, women, for example, due to their capability of reproduction, often became members of a patriarch's family and kinship networks. This seems to be of particular relevance in the Indian Ocean World, but was also part of the slavery system in South America and the Caribbean as it allowed plantation households to replenish themselves.

Many contributions in the book indicate the blurring boundaries between "free" and "unfree" labour as categories of a labour regime which holds especially true for the late eighteenth and nineteenth century – abolitionists' debates providing the ammunition for such differentiation. Marriage and concubinage seem to have been more prevalent as hitherto assumed despite the strong regulations of extra-marital relationships in any given society. Sex-relationships certainly satisfied the sexual wants of a slave holder yet enslaved women could take such a relationship as a chance to enhance their social status within a slave-household, eventually being manumitted. Manumission also seems to have been a common practice in many more societies than hitherto assumed, including colonial societies in the Americas. Furthermore, aside slave women fighting legal cases in the British American colonies and the early decades of the U.S., in French colonial Mali enslaved women also used status ambiguity and legal loopholes to fight for a betterment of their social status and even for gaining freedom, as Marie Rodet's contribution nicely demonstrates (pp. 182-202).

Of particular interest is the "Orientalist" (in the Saidian sense) stereotype of Orientals' sexuality in general and of Oriental women in particular. African and Asian men were regarded as promiscuous unable to control their sexuality and therefore portrayed as dishonourable, but also as wild and uncivilised, i.e. dangerous. Women were viewed as lascivious and willing sexual partners of "white men". This supposedly perverse sexuality of the colonised was, among other deficits of "Orientals", used to justify colonial rule just as similar ideas were used to justify slavery (Levine 2003). Yet the then perception of "Orientals'" sexuality also hints at the fact that sexual abuse and rape were not considered a criminal offence, as the case of female indent-



ured labourers demonstrate. Women on board ships were subject to particular suffering as doctors misused the trust they built with them to sexually assault and rape them. Women were also victims of sexually motivated attacks from the sailors who took advantage of the separate accommodation of the women below deck. Only in a handful of cases did such attacks have serious consequences for the criminal behaviour of the offenders (Shepherd 2002). Similarly, sexuality and dehumanisation through Europeans and North-Americans is highlighted in David Brion Davis' article (pp. 34-60), in which he points out that Africans in particular were compared with primates or, as in the case of *antebellum* U.S.A., slave insurrections were associated with and depicted as boundless raping of "white women".

Richard Hellie's chapter on slavery and serfdom in Russia (pp. 83-95) contextualises slavery and serfdom as two distinct forms of controlled labour, serfdom taking up when slavery left off. Aside from this general observation, "slaves but not serfs were exempted from paying taxes, [wherefore] slavery became an increasingly attractive option for impoverished serfs" (p. 85). Self-sale into slavery persisted until the abolition of agricultural slavery at the end of the seventeenth century and household slavery at the beginning of the eighteenth. In regard to sexuality, slavery and serfdom sources are rather silent. So far, only very general observations are possible which have been extracted from literary descriptions in novels written, for example, by Dostoevsky and Tolstoy indicating the supposedly massive sexual abuse of serfs and slaves. Yet much more research is needed to get a closer insight into sexual relationships between slaves and serfs on the one side and owners on the other.

Johanna Ransmeier sheds fresh light on "the ambiguities in the sale of women at the end of the Qing dynasty". The article is a fine example concerning the general ambiguities of slavery. "The place of women in Chinese society was defined both by the language of property and by the language of obligation." As women became wives or concubines and therefore simultaneously considered kin and property it "makes it extremely difficult to unravel when a woman's situation went from traditional obligation to exploitation and servitude" (pp. 321-2). According to the Qing Code, women were under the proprietary control of men which was particularly true for sexual access to their bodies. At the same time, the code prohibited men from selling their wives without just cause – poverty, for example, being one of the rare causes, adultery another one. And although Qing law forbade the sale of women from respectable families into prostitution, the growing



sex-market in metropolises like Beijing, Shanghai and other growing cities encouraged such sales and belied the effectiveness of the legislation.

At the same time the social status of a concubine could tremendously improve if she bore a son to her buyer. Yet, the children were, in any case, regarded as the immediate issue of the patriarch's primary wife. Her position, however, since she had been bought as well, was not safe as she could be leased to another man despite the fact that the Qing Code forbade that. Any children born during this time became part of the leaser's family, and the leased wife's status was below that of the leaser's wife and concubine(s). Although selling women into marriage, concubinage and prostitution, the knowledge that women could be turned into cash at times tore families apart. On the other side, there seems to have been some space for developing close relationships, for example, when a concubine and her buyer fell in love with each other. Occasionally women could alter the conditions of their servitude and some of them were able to run away, the legal arm too short to get hold of them. Nothing is known about their fate as single women, which makes it very likely that they ended up as prostitutes or in a brothel. Yet as the author concludes, "[w]hether a sold woman might be considered to be a enslaved very much depended upon the treatment she received after the initial transaction and to what extent she might be subjected to further, unanticipated transactions" (p. 340).

Ronaldo Vainfas' contributes to a much broader understanding of colonial sexual relationships as hitherto considered, opening up aspects that had not been part of historical investigation because the question had not been put forward. The more same sex relations become part of the present-day public debate, the more they become part of the academic agenda – *cum grano salis*. The "case study of Minas Gerais during the eighteenth century" provides a completely new insight into "[s]odomy, love, and slavery in colonial Brazil" (pp. 526-40). Based on the archival sources of the Jesuit Inquisition, over one-hundred individuals were accused of sodomy, yet only four were actually prosecuted, two of them receiving the ultimate sentence: death by burning. As the cases of London, Paris, Lisbon, and Mexico City indicate, homosexuality seems to have been a rather urban phenomenon as only a town provided the necessary secrecy for same-sex relations. As the author states, "[i]n Minas Gerias, everyday sodomy was just as non-specific as throughout the rest of Portuguese America, and the nefarious relationships merged with other types of social



relationships, especially between masters and slaves" (p. 523). Relationships seem to have been of different natures, ranging from affectionate long-lasting relationships to rather brutal raping after young slaves had been made drunk, and fairly orgiastic 'sex parties' which included male and female slaves. That the Inquisition's "Holy Office" pursued a fairly lax policy towards 'sodomy' seems to be grounded in the advice given by the colonial authorities during the 1500s – "that Brazil would only be populated at the expense of many pardons" (p. 536).

Another aspect of male sex relationships is provided by Salah Trabelsi, namely "Eunuchs, Power, and Slavery in the Early Islamic World" (pp. 541-57). During the eighth and ninth century, at many Islamic courts, most prominently the one at Abbasid Baghdad, the possession of young male slaves of extraordinary beauty was in line with the courts women's desire for access to masculinity. As many slaves were elite soldiers, the men's interest in young women was accordingly high. Male slaves, however, were also trained and forced to serve the sexual pleasures of their male owners. A particular category of male slaves were eunuchs, men often stemming from African, eastern European and Caucasian countries. Eunuchs seem to have been a residual phenomenon of the splendour of princely households and a large number of eunuchs honoured a court. They were entrusted with specific tasks such as guarding a harem (of women and/ or men and boys), espionage within and without the palace, and the command of elite troops as well as specific tasks in the administration.

Of particular interest is the fact that eunuchs, in contrast to an overall belief, could get married and have courtesans – since they could still have sexual intercourse as long as only their testicles had been removed. According to an eighth-century observer, a "eunuch is still a man, depriving him of a single organ is not enough to classify him as hybrid gender. Not having a beard does not mean he is no longer part of the masculine gender ... because the operation he underwent does not change who he is inside" (p. 550). Having said this, it seems rather strange to subsume eunuchs under the book's rubric "Queering the Study of Slavery". Why, in the first place, "queering" eunuchs and, in the second place, who says that a eunuch is a man preferring same-sex partners – as the majority of eunuchs obviously did not. Why, more generally, is it necessary at all to "queer" studies and to relate them to allegedly "unusual" sexual behaviour of men? This reflects a discourse on sexuality determined by Western



nineteenth-century binary categories of hetero- and homosexuality, and obviously not a contemporary understanding at the courts of the "Islamic World". Rather, the question is, in how far personally or collectively dependent people, whether women, children or men, are subjected to casual or permanent sexual abuse. For the present study it would have been appropriate to place Vainfas' article under the rubric "Intimate Power: Sexuality and Slavery in the Households of the Atlantic World", the same is suggested for Brian Lewis' chapter, and Trablesi's text under "Sex Trafficking and Prostitution".

In any case, the altogether 26 articles shed fresh light on a hitherto rather neglected subject. The chapters also demonstrate the importance of trans-disciplinary subjects and themes which provide a deep insight into the living conditions and social realities of slaves. Also, this kind of research departs from the established discourse on slavery and abolition and its prominent subjects of human trafficking and enslavement. As slaves did not produce many written sources, the remaining and surviving few such as court cases or ships' logbooks comprise invaluable material that questions the picture of an overall brutal slave regime or the philanthropic act of emancipation. This is not to deny the fact that slavery was harsh system of labour control and certainly not that emancipation was not a humanitarian act, but to emphasise the different perspective one has to take in order to achieve a more nuanced impression of a sunken mosaic whose dimension, details, and colourfulness will probably remain undetected for ever – as do many aspects of human history.

Turning, finally, to the South Asian Subcontinent, Andrea Major's book on *Slavery, Abolition and Empire in India* is a seminal contribution to slavery and abolition in this area. The author has a fresh look at old sources as well as taking new ones into consideration. Point of departure is the abolitionists' debate in Britain and in British India in the first half of the nineteenth century, according to which slavery in India was fundamentally different from slavery in the Atlantic rim. As indicated above, overall opinion agreed upon the alleged fact that slavery in the "Orient" was a mild and rather social institution in sharp contrast to the Atlantic system and in particular the horrible "Middle Passage" which was to prove the abolitionists main argument, namely that it is a human (and Christian) duty to liberate the slaves from such evil. Emancipation in British India, it was argued, would cause social upheaval and widespread unrest eventually shaking the foundations of British rule in India, if not end it. Prominent politicians like the Duke of Wellington, who had served as Arthur Wellesley on the (Indian) sub-



continental theatre of war at the turn of the eighteenth century before gaining even more merits on the battlefields of the (Iberian) Peninsular Wars, explicitly pointed out the risk of riots and rebellions.

Taking a fresh look at the huge amount of correspondence and reports produced for the Parliamentary enquiry commission and published in several massive folio volumes of the Parliamentary Papers 1828, 1834, 1837, 1841, and 1843, as well as numerous newspaper articles, Andrea Major is able to shed a bright light on the contemporary British official attempt to comprehend and, at the same time, to construct slavery, bonded labour, and servitude. The accounts of the colonial officials in the plains and mountains, fields and forests, are a telling example of information gathering and colonial control rather than a documentation of "slavery" *in situ*: often a simplified product of personal perception and understanding of complicated social matters, which was further synthesised, simplified and sanitised as it proceeded up the bureaucratic hierarchy of the East India Company's administration. This "systematic order of things" however provided for an imperial ideology that included the imaginary of "free labour" that camouflaged the socially embedded and appreciated forms of bonded labour and slavery.

475

However, this discourse had its precursor in Charles Grants' – an East India Company military and civil administrator in Calcutta 1767-90 – *Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain* written in 1790-2. Eventually published in 1813, at the height of the Evangelical agitation for opening up British India for Christian mission, Grant's text was a latecomer in the abolitionist discourse, however, not in regard to British India. Yet, as has been pointed out more poignantly (Mann 2013: 164), Grant was the first person who wrote about the Hindu society of the Indian subcontinent as being enslaved by superstitious beliefs and Brahmanic morals, which he saw as preventing the social, material and moral improvement of the Indian society. Grant echoed the then "Orientalist" image of an erstwhile ancient Indian civilisation which, however, had utterly deteriorated but could be improved with Indian institutions under British guidance. In this respect Grant opened the field for what was to become "Anglicist" propaganda regarding social reforms in British India, James Mills *History of British India*, published in 1817, being the knell for India's ancient civilisation and culture and, at the same time, demanding the radical improvement of India's society through Western institutions.



Admitting Christian mission to British India in 1813 was the immediate outcome of the Evangelical pressure group around William Wilberforce that agitated within and without Parliament. As to the prohibition of the slave trade in the British Empire in 1807 and again in 1811 and the abolition of slavery in 1834, colonial authorities in British India were rather reluctant to implement the law. In fact they denied whether the laws were actually valid in British India maintaining they were only meant for the Caribbean. Arguments of administrators in India and Abolitionists in Britain went hand in glove, eventually leading to the lukewarm legislation of 1843 which officially “de-legalised” slavery in British India. Yet the law simply prevented judges, owners of slaves, and slaves to use the word “slave” henceforth, which allowed British officials to deny the existence of slavery in the country. The same is true for the 1862 legislation (Indian Penal Code) prohibiting human trafficking: a law hardly obeyed, implemented or executed.

After Indrani Chatterjee’s highly innovative and still important book on slavery and gender in India (1999) and the likewise seminal volume edited by Chatterjee and Eaton (2006) on various aspects of the Indian subcontinent’s slaving and slavery systems, Andrea Major’s book is the most recent and at the same time most outstanding publication on slavery and abolition against the background of empire formation and its ideological construction, including “justification” of colonial rule in India as beneficial, humanitarian, and civilising. As Andrea Major pointed out at the very beginning of her study, it is not a work on the institution of slavery as it might have existed on the South Asian Subcontinent in the eighteenth and nineteenth century since this is not her field of interest. Rather, it is about the ideological construction of the British Raj in the first half of the nineteenth century. In that respect the book deserves utmost attention not only by historians of slavery (as a social construct) but also by historians of the British Empire, and sociologists looking at the political, and ideological construction of identities and communities.

The Prospect

As this review article demonstrates, slaving, slave trafficking, slavery, and abolition are still – or rather, more than ever – fields of academic research shedding fresh light on old subjects and offering new insights as to new aspects. This is in particular true for the Indian Ocean World research which is still far behind the “Black Atlantic”. However, in contrast to the Atlantic, research regarding labour regimes in eastern



Africa and Asia, whether forms of slavery, of bonded labour or indentured labour, could offer additional and very important aspects which may give a fresh perspective and possibly re-interpret human trafficking and labour control in western Africa and the Americas. After 1500 CE, the rather peripheral Atlantic and its rim was by no means a secluded and isolated ocean but was gradually integrated into the long existing world economies of Eurasia and Africa. Hence a look towards “the East” may be stimulating, inspiring and promising.

However, what is actually missing is a definition of slavery and slaves on the one hand and debt bondage and other forms of controlled labour including wage labour (!) on the other. One category, of course, overlaps with the other in quite a few cases and boundaries may also blur in many cases, yet the definition and the status of a slave seem to be taken for granted, regardless of the various societies and polities of the Indian and Atlantic Ocean World. A slave seems to oscillate between an ancient Roman understanding of *res* and rather diffuse definitions of the 1926 “Slave Convention” speaking of “slavery in all its forms” and the “power one person has in parts or completely over another person” yet failing to explain what might be understood by “forms” and “power”. Chattel slavery and household slavery, military slavery and sex trafficking, to mention only a few categories, seem then to be rather arbitrary rubrics as long as slavery as such is not clearly distinguished from other forms of controlled labour.

Conceptually seen, and that seems to be true universally since “time immemorial”, slavery substitutes death not suffered. That was, most prominently, the case with prisoners of war, with starving persons selling others or themselves into slavery in case of severe famine, as well as with death sentences converted into permanent slavery. Aside from this, a slave is owned by another person and can be liquidated and bequeathed (bought, sold and inherited). This smallest common denominator does not include the social, cultural and economic status of a slave in a given society or household at any given time but is a very simple yet basic reference point for subsequent considerations and contemplations regarding slaves and slavery (Mann 2012: 10-12). This simple definition also helps to distinguish between slavery and other forms of strictly controlled labour. It would explain why a serf is not a slave, and indentured labour by far not another system of slavery.

Finally, the western Abolition discourse still or again seems to dominate academic debates on slaving, slave trafficking and slavery. The



discourse rotates around the question of North Atlantic human beneficiary action liberating suffering creatures; slaves were never part of the debate, never asked. In this context Andrea Major's study is quite revealing as she points at the ideological forces of the discourse. However, as has been indicated at the beginning of this article, and also by a few recently published articles, abolition, seen from the perspective of those being or having been liberated, could be a rather dubious act of setting someone free. Slaves, for example, were in many cases a more or less integral part of a household, whether on the plantations of the Caribbean, the Mascarenes and Zanzibar or in the princely households of African and Asian rulers or wealthy merchants. This stood in contrast, for instance, to indentured labourers who were never integrated into an employer's family and kin.

The consequences of emancipation and liberation could be very harsh for those affected, namely social and economic impoverishment. In the U.S., pauperisation of former slaves caused their migration to the "Wild West" where they constituted at least a third of the "cowboys" – yet this is another whitewashed story. Emancipating slaves, as in the case of the Gulf date and pearl industries of the 1920s, also indicate the lot many a "dismissed" slave had to suffer due to global economic changes. The plight of emancipated slaves does, in perhaps many instances, not seem to be different from that of a dismissed wage labourer. Future research should take the social, economic and political fate of the emancipated slaves into consideration rather more than the immediate consequences of an intellectual debate. This holds, of course, true for the Atlantic and the Indic, meaning that global interconnectivity as it emerged in the eighteenth century should be considered more closely.

Endnotes

¹ This review article has been published before with *Geschichte Transnational*: <http://geschichte-transnational.clio-online.net/rezensionen/id=23055>
Many thanks to the editorial board for allowing this second online-publication.

² cf. the present author's review article: „Sklaverei, Knechtschaft und Kolonialismus im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert“, <http://www.hsozkult.de/publicationreview/id/rezbuecher-11337> and "Slavery", <http://www.hsozkult.de/publicationreview/id/rezbuecher-4649>

³ The following paragraphs are a slightly abridged version of a previously published review of the book by the author in: *International Review of Social History* 60, 1 (2015), pp. 115-8.



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