

## **Global Mobilities<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Introduction**

Spanning Europe and the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific Ocean worlds, this chapter writes world history from below through the prism of global mobility: the movement, migration and circulation of enslaved people, indentured laborers, convicts, displaced persons, and labor migrants, from the fifteenth century to the present day. First, the chapter brings European nations and their colonies into an integrated framework of analysis with other polities, to take a global perspective. Second, it suggests that a focus on slaves and ordinary people on the move disrupts our global north centric understanding of migration as a largely European phenomenon, usually with a “start” and “end” point. Third, it opens out to view the importance of coercion in effecting the journeys that networked distant parts of the world, and the labor exploitation that ultimately underpinned global expansion. Fourth, this history of mobility from the bottom up challenges the idea that European migrants were largely free, and global “others” were largely unfree. It lays stress on the importance of slave, subaltern and subject peoples’ dissent too, for mobility was not only contested, it could also be generative of particular modes of resistance and rebellion. If people connected the world together, they could also become vectors in the production of moments and forms of *disconnection*. Finally, the chapter challenges

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teleological, progressive interpretations of the history of migration, which presume a long-term transition from “forced” migration in the past to “free” migration today. It argues rather for considerable continuities in the coercive texture of global mobility in the world in which we live.

The great irony of mobility in the age of European expansion is that although it emerged within a global context of enhanced technologies of communication and movement—most importantly in the nineteenth century steam ships, telegraphs, submarine cables and railways—it was often secured through the captivity, confinement and restriction of subject peoples, and not through freedom of movement. Their response to these modes of control was, however, far from passive; they mutinied on board ships, revolted on plantations, escaped from penal settlements, refused to work, feigned sickness and went on hunger strike. These were sometimes expressions of individual or collective protest against the particular living and working conditions that were associated with the organization of coerced labor. Yet these subordinated yet mobile subjects sometimes also carried with them or became exposed to new types of insurgency or anti-colonial sympathies on arrival in new places, lending their actions an explicitly political dimension. Whilst the movement of people and ideas took the same routes as the movement of capital and modes of colonial governance, a focus on the drama of their resistance, and its spread around Empire, therefore offers a point of intersection for the meeting of subaltern and global history. It is through this meeting point that the chapter stresses the prevalence of disruption and dissent amongst mobile peoples and their importance in making world history. It also provides perspectives on how insurgency moved across and around metropolitan and imperial spaces.

## **Indigeneity, Slavery, Coerced Labor**

### *Indigenous destruction and world history*

Since *homo sapiens* “came out of Africa,” human mobility has been a feature of human life, of community formation, and ultimately of the making of polities, nation states and Empires. And yet migration is often represented as a relatively recent or new phenomenon; as a feature of modern globalization that upsets finely calibrated societies rooted originally in indigeneity, or authentic, native belonging to particular places. Sometimes, of course, as in the Americas and Australia, European expansion effected through enslavement, the use of convict labour or other means in what became white settler colonies had a devastating effect on Indigenous peoples. In places like Australia, many Aborigines died in outbreaks of newly introduced diseases against which they had no resilience, were rounded up and confined on islands or in reserves, or died during what colonial administrators were fond of calling “skirmishes” —in other words violent and armed resistance against invasion.<sup>2</sup> The demographic, economic, social and cultural legacies of such colonization remain with us today, in the social, cultural and economic

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<sup>2</sup> Martin Daunton and Rick Halpern, eds, *Empire and Others: British Encounters with Indigenous Peoples, 1650-1800* (London: University College London Press, 1999); Benjamin Madley, ‘From Terror to Genocide: Britain’s Tasmanian Penal Colony and Australia’s History Wars’, *Journal of British Studies*, 47, 1 (2008), 77-106.

exclusion of Indigenous peoples from settler-descended societies, and in associated activism and rights movements.<sup>3</sup>

Notwithstanding the importance of acknowledging that migration has always been a feature of human life, and the urgency of recognizing the Indigenous devastation often wrought by imperial expansion, what does migration mean for those of us who are interested in writing world histories from below? This section of the chapter centers on how understanding mobility through the movement of subaltern or subject people offers a way of foregrounding three key phenomena of world history. First, it opens out to view something of the fundamental ambivalence of migration—that colonized subject peoples, and the European poor and in other ways socially disadvantaged, could also be *colonizers*. Second, it enables an appreciation of the intra-imperial and sometimes circulatory character of migration. This rebalances the importance of sojourning alongside that of settlement when considering the politics and patterns of movement and (re)location.<sup>4</sup> Third, and in relation to this second point, it facilitates a shift in focus beyond the nation state as a “natural” spatial unit for understanding world history. Rather, it stresses the significance of other spatialities, borders and borderlands. All three allow us to inject social hierarchy (and class) into world history, and also to understand it as more than the sum of Europe-centered histories, or as a story solely of Europe expanding outwards to disastrous Indigenous effect. I shall return to the importance of viewing

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<sup>3</sup> Emma Battell Lowman and Adam Barker, *Settler: Identity and Colonialism in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Canada* (Halifax: Fernwood Press, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Prabhu Mohapatra, ‘Eurocentrism, Forced Labour, and Global Migration: A Critical Assessment’, *International Review of Social History*, 52 (2007), 110-15.

migration as a feature of all societies in my discussion of the legacies of global mobilities, below. Meantime, here I draw on the examples of the Atlantic slave triangle, slavery in the Indian Ocean, convict transportation to and between the Americas, Africa, Asia, the Pacific and the Antipodes, indentured labor in the Pacific and the Caribbean, and the migration of Indian laborers across the Bay of Bengal.

### *Enslavement*

From the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, the European powers shipped some 12.5 million slaves from Africa to the Americas, and around half a million around the Indian Ocean (Tables 1 & 2). Though slave labor in the Americas was used extensively on sugar plantations, slave trading in the Indian Ocean was distinctive in its employment of slaves in households or small industries in places like the Cape Colony and Mauritius, and the ownership of slaves by so-called free coloreds, and not solely Europeans. If we include those exported by other polities from sub-Saharan Africa in the Indian Ocean totals, the number of enslaved peoples in the region likely exceeded those transported in captivity across the Atlantic. Despite its huge scale, the history of slavery is still marginalized in migration history despite its prevalence in area studies based historiography.

Table 1: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

<i>Period</i>	<i>No. of Slaves</i>
1501–1600	277,506
1601–1700	1,875,631
1701–1800	6,494,618

1801–1866	3,873,580
<i>Total</i>	12,521,336

*Source:* Slave Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database

<http://www.slavevoyages.org/tast/assessment/estimates.faces> (accessed March 27, 2015)

Table 2: Estimated Minimum Number of Slaves Traded by Europeans, Indian Ocean, 1500-1850

<i>Powers</i>	<i>No. of Slaves</i>
Portuguese	41,875–83,750
Dutch	43,965–66,465
English	10,525–12,539
French	334,936–384,040
<i>Total</i>	431,301–546,794

*Source:* Richard B. Allen, ‘Satisfying the “Want for Labouring People”: European Slave Trading in the Indian Ocean, 1500-1850, *Journal of World History*, 21, 1 (2010): 45-73 (64).

It is well established that slave labor was vital for the economic success of European empires and their successor states in Latin America, particularly in places like Brazil, the southern United States, and the Caribbean. But it is important not to lose sight of human stories and sufferings in these vast global mobilities. Enslaved people wrote and spoke about their experiences with a residual textual regularity that is perhaps surprising. In the United States context, authors included Olaudah Equiano, who detailed

his childhood kidnap in West Africa and enslavement in Barbados and Virginia; as well as Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs, African-Americans who escaped from slavery to inspire and to lead the abolitionist movement. Even where enslaved women and men did not write or publish autobiographies, though heavily mediated, glimpses of their attitudes to their enslavement, their labor, and their affective and intimate lives, can be found in a careful reading of the between-the-lines of the official record.

Image [Captives being brought on board a slave ship]

It is also evident that even after abolition, slavery endured in numerous other guises. Most notable, perhaps, was the transition from slavery to emancipation in most colonies in the British Empire. A further period of so-called apprenticeship was enforced on recently freed slaves in the 1830s. Envisaged as a transition to freedom, they were tied as workers to their former owners for a fixed number of years. Of equal notoriety was the indenturing of illegally trafficked slaves (“Prize Negroes” captured by the Royal Navy after Britain’s abolition of the slave trade in 1807. They were put out to work, sometimes in African colonies like Sierra Leone or the Cape, or on Caribbean islands like Tortola (some 40,000 went to the West Indies alone). Though the British called them “liberated Africans,” their conditions of servitude often resembled those of their chattel forebears.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Daniel Domingues da Silva, David Eltis, Philp Misevich and Olatunji Ojo, ‘The Diaspora of Africans Liberated from Slave Ships in the Nineteenth Century’, *The Journal of African History*, 55, 3 (2014): 347-69; Marina Carter, V. Govinden and S. Peerthum, *The Last Slaves: Liberated Africans in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Mauritius* (Port Louis: Centre for

They felt the similarities keenly too. Working with Saidiya Hartman's description of the larger context of slave trade abolition as "the story of an elusive emancipation and a travestied freedom," Anita Rupprecht analyses the mediated voices of liberated Africans in British parliamentary papers to demonstrate how they understood the distinctiveness of their fate from promises of citizenship and freedom, providing vital insights into the below, in the historical record.<sup>7</sup>

In numerous other contexts, including for and in African polities, and in pre-colonial and colonial South and Southeast Asia, slaves were not particularly mobile. Indeed, enslavement has complex meanings within a world history frame. Beyond the Atlantic, it was often situated within complex and locally defined forms of bondage that were not necessarily connected with either empire or mobility, present or ancestral, but rather with culture, poverty, and above all debt. This is especially evident in South Asia.<sup>8</sup>

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Research on Indian Ocean Societies, 2003); Bronwen Everill, *Abolition and Empire in Sierra Leone and Liberia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012).

<sup>7</sup> Anita Rupprecht, "'When he gets among his Countrymen, they tell him that he is free': Slave Trade Abolition, Indentured Africans and a Royal Commission", *Slavery and Abolition*, 33, 3 (2012): 435-55 (citing Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997), 10).

<sup>8</sup> Indrani Chatterjee and Richard Eaton, eds, *Slavery and South Asian History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006); Peter Robb, "'Introduction: Meanings of Labour in Indian Social Context'", in *Dalit Movements and the Meanings of Labour in India*, ed. Peter Robb (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993), 1–67.



Anthropologist-turned-fiction writer Amitav Ghosh articulates brilliantly the historical accidents through which their presence might be noted in official records. The title of his intervention is unequivocal: “The Slave of [archival document no.] Ms. H.6.” This deliberately and pointedly reminds us that in colonial archives, the subaltern is not always accorded the dignity of a name.<sup>9</sup>

### *Convict Labour*

Accompanying the development of our understanding of the importance of enslavement in the making of the modern world across various contexts, including most recently in the economic, cultural and social development of metropolitan Europe,<sup>10</sup> has been the growth in appreciation of the significance of other unfree labor flows for imperial expansion, in the period before, after and during slavery. Historians of imperialism have investigated bonded labor migration of various kinds, including European servitude, military impressments, penal colony work, and Asian indentured labor. So prevalent were these labor forms that, notwithstanding the crucial importance of slavery for imperial expansion, if we are to write world history from below, we ought to add “Coercion” to the established list of the “Three Cs of Empire”: Christianity, Commerce and Civilization.

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<sup>9</sup> Amitav Ghosh, ‘The Slave of Ms. H.6’, in *Subaltern Studies, Volume VII*, P. Chatterjee and G. Pandey, eds (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993), 159-220.

<sup>10</sup> Catherine Hall, Nicholas Draper, Keith McClelland, Kate Donington and Rachel Lang, *Legacies of British Slave-ownership: Colonial Slavery and the Formation of Victorian Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

Many of the first North American European settlers were what have been described as “colonists in bondage”.<sup>11</sup> Some were sent across the Atlantic under contracts of indenture. On arrival, they undertook service of various kinds, including domestic and agricultural work. In the eighteenth century, before the War of Independence, British convicts were also transported to the Americas, particularly to the Chesapeake. Positioned competitively against indentured servants, they were usually sold into indenture for the period of their sentence, and put to work in identical occupations. Prisoners sometimes awaited shipment for several years. Gwenda Morgan and Peter Rushton recount the case of one woman convicted in the northeast of England who was kept in jail of so long that she gave birth twice, and died before embarkation. British convicts sometimes worked alongside slaves and Indigenous Americans on plantations; only later did “race” emerge as a principle of organizing labor in the British imperial context.<sup>12</sup> These eighteenth-century Atlantic flows of indentured servants and convicts converged not only with the slave trade, but with the circular mobility of mariners who worked both slave and passenger ships. Impressed or inveigled into service, or seeking an escape from poverty or adventure at sea, these highly mobile, multi-national “motley crews” were one element of the “many-headed hydra” of Peter Linebaugh and Marcus

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<sup>11</sup> Abbot Emerson Smith, *Colonists in Bondage: White Servitude and Convict Labor in America 1607-1776* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1947).

<sup>12</sup> Gwenda Morgan and Peter Rushton, *Banishment in the Early Atlantic World: Convicts, Rebels and Slaves* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 120. See also: Roger Ekirch, *Bound for America: The Transportation of Convicts to the Colonies, 1718-1775* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).

Rediker's conceptualization of the revolutionary Atlantic; vital carriers of news and information between Europe and the Americas.<sup>13</sup>

Image [The Convict Ship]

Britain was far from alone in its use of convict transportation to satisfy the mutually compatible aims of getting rid of criminal offenders and using their labor to expand the frontiers of Empire. Indeed, unlike slaves, who constituted valuable property, convicts did not represent a financial investment, and so were expendable and easy to replace. All the major European powers—Dutch, Portuguese, Spanish, British and French—transported convicts overseas, both from metropole to colony, and (what is often lost in penal history and of especial interest to our interest here in the spatiality of mobility) between colonies. At the very lowest estimate, over 2 million convicts were sent overseas (Table 3). This figure rises to tens of millions if the great twentieth-century overland political transportations are taken into consideration. In the case of the movement of convicts between colonies, including the British West Indies, Cape Colony and Australia, transportation had additional functions: the putting down of native resistance or insurgency and the consolidation of imperial authority. It also effected massive labor movements that entirely circumvented Europe in shifting colonized peoples around the contours of the imperial globe.

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<sup>13</sup> Marcus Rediker and Peter Linebaugh, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (London: Verso, 2000).

It is interesting that in some places—Portuguese Angola and French Guiana, for example—into the twentieth century, European transportees worked side by side with Africans and, in the latter case, Indochinese and other imperially transported French convicts. This appears anomalous to increasing racial bifurcation in other imperial sites, for instance turn of the century “White Australia,” South Africa and North America. Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds have brilliantly articulated this as the drawing of a global color line.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, these exceptions that prove the rule are important reminders of both the unevenness of Empire—John Darwin characterizes Empire as a many-tentacled “project” —and the importance of injecting class and social status in discussions of economy, society and imperialism.<sup>15</sup> It warns against assuming shared experiences across *Empires* too. We are compelled here also to recognize the importance of incorporating the poor whites of imperial expansion into our world histories from below.<sup>16</sup>

The beginning of penal transportation in the imperial age can be dated to 1415, when the Portuguese first used convicts to establish a North African fort (*presidio*) at Ceuta. The Portuguese later sent convicts from and between Europe and Goa (western

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<sup>14</sup> Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>15</sup> John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World System 1830-1979* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)

<sup>16</sup> Harald Fischer-Tiné, *Low and Licentious Europeans: Race, Class and 'White Subalternity' in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2008).

India), Brazil, São Tomé and its African colonies Angola and Mozambique, with transportation enduring to 1932. The Spanish Empire from the seventeenth century was characterized by remarkable convict circularity, as transported felons flowed from Cadiz to and between *presidios* across the American coasts, Mexico and the Philippines. There were important overlaps with the army, for some of the Spanish convicts flowed into the military labor market, joining soldiers in their new destinations. The Dutch shipped convicts between the East Indies and the Cape Colony during the same period.

Table 3: Convict Transportation and European Empires: Principal flows, 1415-1939

<i>Origins</i>	<i>Destinations</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Estimated Total</i>
Portugal	Goa, Brazil, São Tomé, Timor, Mozambique, Angola	1415– 1932	92,000
Spain, New Spain, Cuba & Philippines	Cuba, Puerto Rico, New World/ N. African presidios, Fernando Po	1550– 1911	110,000
UK, Ireland, British colonies & British India	American & Caribbean colonies, Australian colonies, Bermuda, Gibraltar, Mauritius, Straits Settlements, Burma, Aden, Labuan, Andaman Islands	1615– 1939	376,000
France & French colonies	New France, Louisiana, French Guiana, Algeria, New Caledonia	1552– 1939	100,000
European Russia	Siberia	1590– 1920	1,900,000

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Total	2,578,000
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\* Period following 1823 only; generally poor data means that this is almost certainly an underestimate.

*Source:* Clare Anderson and Hamish Maxwell-Stewart, ‘Convict Labour and the Western Empires, 1415-1954’, in *The Routledge History of Western Empires*, eds. Robert Aldrich and Kirsten McKenzie (London: Routledge, 2013); Timothy J. Coates, *Convict Labour in the Portuguese Empire, 1740-1932: Redefining the Empire with Forced Labour and New Imperialism* (Leiden: Brill, 2013); Stephen Nicholas and Peter Shergold, ‘Transportation as Global Migration’, in *Convict Workers: Reinterpreting Australia’s Past*, ed. Stephen Nicholas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 30.

Following the loss of the American colonies in 1785, the British Empire sent a few felons to the slave forts of west Africa, but after most died, the British settled on Botany Bay in Australia as the new destination for convicts. As well as New South Wales, convicts were later sent to Van Diemen’s Land (Tasmania). Most originated in Britain and Ireland, but a few had been convicted and sentenced in Britain’s Caribbean, African and Mascarene colonies, notably Jamaica, the Cape Colony and Mauritius. The two youngest ever convicts sent to New South Wales, for example, were enslaved children from Mauritius, Elizabeth and Constance. They had been convicted of attempting to poison their mistress. Of British offenders, after important changes to the penal system were effected in the 1830s and 1840s, convicts also served out their sentences on hulks in Bermuda and Gibraltar, and in Western Australia. In each colony,

convicts undertook important public works projects, including the construction of a huge naval dockyard in the navy's small but strategically vital Atlantic outpost.

Though a few colonially convicted offenders were transported to the Australian colonies, the British largely pursued a policy of reserving them for "white" convicts. Thus, the much larger number of convicts from the jewel in Britain's crown, India, was shipped not to the Antipodes but to penal settlements in neighboring Southeast Asia and across the Indian Ocean. They included in the first part of the nineteenth century Penang, Malacca and Singapore (known together as the Straits Settlements), Burma and Mauritius. One man of African origin, George Morgan, had an extraordinary journey across Britain's penal archipelago. Convicted in Calcutta, in India's Bengal Presidency, he was first shipped across the Bay of Bengal to one of the East India Company's penal settlement in Burma. Escaping from the transportation ship when it docked on the Rangoon River, he was rearrested in Madras. From there, he was sent back to Calcutta, where he was retried and shipped to Van Diemen's Land. He soon escaped, never to be seen again.<sup>17</sup> After some of the Indian settlements refused to accept offenders convicted in the aftermath of the Great Uprising ("Mutiny") of 1857, the British renewed their earlier interest in consolidating trade routes in the Bay of Bengal, and established the Andaman Islands as a penal colony. The Andamans received convicts from India and

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<sup>17</sup> Clare Anderson, *Convicts In The Indian Ocean: Transportation from South Asia to Mauritius, 1815-53* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000); Anderson, *Subaltern Lives*.

Burma, and endured as a penal colony until the Japanese occupied in 1942, opened the gates of the cellular jail, and liberated the remaining convicts.<sup>18</sup>

The French also used transportation between colonies routinely and extensively. After an early disaster in the establishment of a late eighteenth-century penal colony in Guiana in South America, when most of the convicts died of fevers and other diseases, after 1858 *bagnards* were transported to a second settlement there, and *communards* to the Pacific colony of New Caledonia. Receiving convicts from the French colonies, including Indochina, French Guiana remained open until the Second World War. The penal colony acquired a dubious reputation for its incarceration of celebrated political convicts, like Albert Dreyfus (1859-35), whose conviction for treason resulted in his confinement on the notorious Devil's Island. In the first decades of the twentieth century, journalists wrote damning accounts of its unique system of *doublage*, which obliged time-served convicts (*libérés*) to remain in the colony, often for the rest of their lives. These accounts were sometimes based on the writings of *libérés* themselves. American roving reporter Richard Halliburton for instance paid French convicts for the production of materials that later formed the basis of his book on the penal colony, *New Worlds To Conquer*. His New York based literary agent wrote: "The stories the men wrote themselves... Of course they are frightfully rough, frightfully vulgar in spots... it is the

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<sup>18</sup> Clare Anderson, Madhumita Mazumdar and Vishvajit Pandya, *New Histories of the Andaman Islands: Landscape, Place and Identity in the Bay of Bengal, 1790-2012* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).



only material of its particular kind in the world.”<sup>19</sup> After the decision was made to close down the penal colony, the French metropolitan government called on the assistance of the Christian association, the *Armée du Salut* (Salvation Army), to assist with repatriation, largely to France and Algeria.<sup>20</sup>

Finally amongst the European powers, in the nineteenth century Russia shipped convicts to *kátorga*, expanding its frontiers in the Baltic in Central Asia and Siberia in the Russian Far East, and forming the precursor of the vast *gulag* archipelago of Soviet labor camps and colonies established for political purposes in the twentieth century. These forced relocations were part of larger efforts to remove opponents, and particular ethnic or religious groups, and to populate internal or imperial frontiers. As was the case in other penal colony contexts, only literate convicts left accounts of their transportation, which are atypical in their very existence, but fascinating nonetheless. A different published account, staggering in its detail, is Anton Chekhov’s *Sakhalin Island*. This study of one of the Siberian penal colonies in the Russian Far East might be described as

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<sup>19</sup> Princeton University Library, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections: C0247 Richard Halliburton Papers: Box 22 (Devil’s Island Correspondence for *New Worlds to Conquer*, 1929-33), Folder 46: Jean Wick (Mrs. Achmed Abdullah, author’s agent and advisor) to Tom Davin, October 11, 1933. Of crucial importance in bringing international attention to bear on Guiana a decade earlier was Albert Londres, *Au Bagne [In the Penal Colony]* (Albin Michel: Paris, 1923).

<sup>20</sup> Charles Péan *Devil’s Island* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1939).

one of the first modern social surveys.<sup>21</sup> Guards also wrote about (and sometimes drew representations of) life in the Russia colonies, including famously Danzig Baldaev who in the twentieth century also compiled an encyclopedia of convict tattoos.<sup>22</sup> However, despite the richness of all these sources, only with the opening up of the archives of the former Soviet Union since Gorbachov's period of *Glastnost* in the second half of the 1980s are historians beginning to understand the fully extent of this forced mobility. It is almost impossible to reach an appreciation of the total number of convicts sent to Russian *kátorga* and *gulag*, though it almost certainly reached many tens of millions. Anne Applebaum calculates that 24 million people were either sent to the *gulag* or exiled to remote locations between 1929 and 1953.<sup>23</sup>

An important feature of penal mobility during this five hundred year period was the gradual transition from blended flows of coerced labor, where as in the Americas, Straits Settlements and Philippines convicts joined those of other unfree workers, to the establishment of discrete penal colonies, containing only (or mainly) convicts. The latter included the Andaman Islands, Sakhalin in the Russian Far East, and Île Nou, New Caledonia. Across both periods, convict work included land clearance, the construction of basic infrastructure like roads and bridges, agricultural cultivation, forestry, and mining. On occasion, and even in discrete colonies, convicts could be employed alongside other types of laborers, including slaves and indentured workers. They were also employed in

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<sup>21</sup> Anton Chekhov, *Sakhalin Island* (London: Alma Books, 2013) (first published in Russian, 1895).

<sup>22</sup> Danzig Baldaev, *Drawings From The Gulag* (London: Fuel, 2010).

<sup>23</sup> Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History* (Doubleday: New York, 2003).

penal service: as warders, clerks, grooms, cooks and servants. It is noteworthy too that the European powers were not alone in their employment of convict labor for frontier expansion. Mid-Qing China used convicts for colonization purposes from the mid-eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries. After 1800, newly independent Latin American states set up penal colonies, including in Mexico and Argentina. With the Meiji Restoration of 1868, when Japan turned to the west in a bid to “modernize,” it consulted on British and French penal colonies, and sent convicts to the northern island of Hokkaido.<sup>24</sup> Across global contexts, then, convicts were sent as worker-settlers to remote locations; usually places that were so isolated that they did not attract free settlers. But even where free settlers would migrate, convicts were preferred as an expendable and pliable (i.e. easy-to-move) workforce. The fact that convicts moved across long distances in conditions of confinement and constraint into the middle decades of the twentieth century constitutes one of the deepest ironies of global mobility. Indeed, it reminds us that if we are to avoid teleological interpretations that celebrate the transition from

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<sup>24</sup> Chaki Oguchi, “The Formation of Some Towns Having Prison (*Shujikan*) in Hokkaido and the Images for the Prison by the Inhabitants” *Rekishichirigaku Kiyo* (March 1983): 43–70; Osamu Tanaka, ‘The Labour Form of the Initial Stage of Capitalism in Hokkaido: With a Focus on Convict Labour, *Keizaironshu* (March 1955): 67-112; Ricardo D. Salvatore and Carlos Aguirre, ‘Colonies of Settlement or Places of Banishment and Torment? Penal Colonies and Convict Labour in Latin America, c. 1800-1940’, in *Global Convict Labour*, eds. Christian G. De Vito and Alex Lichtenstein (Leiden: Brill, 2015); Joanna Waley-Cohen, *Exile in Mid-Qing China: Banishment to Xinjiang, 1758-1820* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

enslavement to freedom in world history, in many ways that history can *only* be written from below.

### *Asian indentured labour*

Another significant form of global mobility, beginning in the nineteenth century, was Asian indentured labor, which was used extensively in British and French colonies in the Indian Ocean and Caribbean. It was introduced first in the British Empire in Mauritius in the 1830s, at the moment of the abolition of slavery, as slave owners sought an alternative form of coerced labor to enslavement, mainly for work on sugar plantations. For this reason, at the time indenture was critiqued as a new system of slavery. Trinidad, British Guiana and Fiji also received substantial numbers of indentured migrants and, as in Mauritius and the French colonies of Réunion Island, Martinique and Guadeloupe, they mainly worked as plantation labor. Some indentured workers sent to Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya in east Africa, in contrast, were put to work in railway building. Most indentured laborers were from India, many were hill tribals (*dhangars*), and a significant minority was from China. Sometimes called “coolies,” migrants signed contracts of indenture for defined periods, their return passage paid. The total number of indentured workers who were shipped to British colonies during the period to 1920 when the system ended was close to 1.5 million—almost one third of whom went to Mauritius (Table 4). In the Pacific, Europeans exploited existing socio-economic structures to use the offer of “trade boxes” to indenture approximately 300,000 Melanesian migrants, many in Australia’s tropical Queensland. In that place, the powerlessness and alienation

felt by Indigenous people forced into labor coercion has been described as Aboriginal slavery.<sup>25</sup>

Table 4: Indentured Migrants, British India & China to British Colonies, 1834-1916

<i>Destination</i>	<i>Period of Migration</i>	<i>Total</i>
Mauritius	1834–1900	453,000
British Guiana	1838–1916	239,000
Malaya	1844–1910	250,000
Trinidad	1845–1916	144,000
Jamaica	1845–1913	36,000
Grenada, St Lucia, St Kitts & St Vincent	1856–1895	10,000
Natal	1860–1911	152,000
Réunion Island (French)	1861–1883	27,000
Surinam	1873–1916	34,000
Fiji	1879–1916	61,000
East Africa	1896–1921	39,000
Seychelles	1904–1916	6,000
Total		1,451,000

<sup>25</sup> Raymond Evans, “‘Kings in Brass Crescents’: Defining Aboriginal Labour Patterns in Colonial Queensland’, in *Indentured Labour in the British Empire 1834-1920*, ed. Kay Saunders (London: Croom Helm, 1984), 183-212. See also Adrian Graves, *Cane and Labour: The Political Economy of the Queensland Sugar Industry, 1862-1906* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993).

Source: Brij V. Lal, ed. *The Encyclopaedia of the Indian Diaspora* (Singapore: Editions Didier Millet, 2006), 46.

Indenture produced massive demographic changes. Within just a few years, for instance, the island of Mauritius, which had no Indigenous population, transitioned from a largely African-descended (formerly enslaved) population to one of largely Asian origin. This underpinned remarkable changes in culture and society in migrant destinations. In Mauritius it created new forms of community and identity; and led to the increased marginalization of slave-descendants. Anthropologists today call this *le malaise créole* [the creole malaise].<sup>27</sup>

#### Image [Coolies in Jamaica]

Though historians debate whether the character of indenture was more coerced than free, it is perhaps productive to note that early incidents of kidnapping and misleading migrants gave way to increased regulation during the nineteenth century. Migrant letters written home to India from the colonies reveal a complex experiential

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<sup>27</sup> Rosabelle Boswell, *Le Malaise Créole: Ethnic Identity in Mauritius* (Oxford: Bergahan, 2006). See also: Patrick Eisenlohr, *Little India: Diaspora, Time, and Ethnolinguistic Belonging in Hindu Mauritius* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Thomas H. Eriksen, 'Nationalism, Mauritian Style: Cultural Unity and Ethnic Diversity,' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 36, 3 (1994): 549-75.

picture.<sup>28</sup> Also, from contemporary enquiries in the rural districts of north India we know that potential migrants framed their prospects in the colonies through what appears to have been a wide knowledge of contemporary penal transportation. This suggests that subaltern perceptions of various kinds of migration perhaps blurred their character more than we might suppose. In one report on emigration, it was noted that the term *kala pani* [black waters] was a well-understood metaphor for the cultural degradation of crossing of the oceans into *either* penal transportation *or* indentured migration. One government official writing in the 1880s reported the response of potential indentured workers to recruiting magistrates' use of the words: "Says the coolie to himself, when he hears a Magistrate Saheb talking to him of *kala pani*— '*Kya! Ham ne kya kasur, kiya ke ham ko kala pani sunate hain?*'" ("What! What wrong have we done, that [he] speaks to us of *kala pani?*") It is also interesting that some ex-convicts, returning home from penal settlements in the Straits, Burma or Andamans to find property destroyed or land appropriated by others, on occasion signed contracts of indenture and on-migrated to the sugar colonies. There were significant overlaps, then, between these apparently distinct labor regimes.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Marina Carter, *Lakshmi's Legacy: The Testimonies of Indian women in C19th-Mauritius* (Rose-Hill: Mauritius, 1994); Marina Carter, *Voices from Indenture: Experiences of Indian Migrants in the British Empire* (London: University of Leicester Press, 1996).

<sup>30</sup> Clare Anderson, 'Convicts and Coolies: Rethinking Indentured Labour in the Nineteenth Century', *Slavery and Abolition*, 30, 1 (2009): 93-109.

A variant of indenture, the *kangani* system, through which trusted Indian workers recruited migrants on behalf of their employers, prevailed in Southeast Asia after 1910, where many such laborers worked on coffee and rubber plantations. As Sunil Amrith has shown recently, migration around the Bay of Bengal by indentured and other workers was so extensive that in the century after 1840 perhaps as many as 28 million Indian and Chinese people migrated to Ceylon, Malaya and Burma. For them, cultural similarities were more significant than imperial political borders or colonial projections of their difference. This staggering Bay of Bengal mobility far outnumbered other contemporary migrations, including the better known European flows to the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. One reason for the lack of historiographical focus on Indian and Chinese workers is that they often moved back and forth between places. This urges us to decenter global north assumptions about the character of mobility as migration from one place to another, and to take seriously global south patterns of circularity.<sup>31</sup> The global mobilities of the British Empire were not characterized so much by the *settlerism* of “Angloworld,” as James Belich has suggested recently,<sup>32</sup> as the *sojournerism* of its

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<sup>31</sup> Today, fully one quarter of the world’s population lives in countries bordering the Bay of Bengal: Sunil S. Amrith, *Migration and Diaspora in Modern Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 30. See also Sunil S. Amrith, *Crossing The Bay of Bengal: The Furies of Nature and the Fortunes of Migrants* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

<sup>32</sup> James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of Angloworld* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).



imperial “others.” The writing of bottom-up world histories of mobility demands, to use the eloquent language of Dipesh Chakrabarty, that we provincialize Europe.<sup>33</sup>

*Men, women and children*

Many population flows and migration streams were homosocial in character, as administrators sought fit, young men to work at various kinds of productive labor. In some penal colonies, for example, the number of female migrants was nil, in others it was small or miniscule. The pre-Andamans Indian penal settlements received only a handful of female convicts; French Guiana a few hundred only; and the Bermuda and Gibraltar hulks (prison ships) none at all. Colonial administrators were greatly exorcised by the sexual disorder that was said to result from the prevalence of men, and fears about the practice of both solitary masturbation and sex between men in penal colonies and hulks was often a central feature of abolitionist discourse. Indeed, the Indian Jails Committee of 1919-20 even compared the alleged “immorality” of the Andamans in this respect to that claimed for the Australian colonies of a near-century earlier.<sup>34</sup>

Otherwise, it is interesting that the Indian Ocean slave trade incorporated much larger numbers of women and children than was the case for the Atlantic Ocean. This was to do with the particular economic demands of a region that was not so dominated by plantation labor. In turn, because they were often captured in the Indian Ocean, women

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<sup>33</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000). For the century after c. 1850, see also Adam McKeown, ‘Global Migration, 1846-1940,’ *Journal of World History*, 15, 2 (2004): 155-89.

<sup>34</sup> *Report of the Indian Jails Committee, 1919-20* (1921), London: HMSO: 277-9.

and especially children made up a relatively large proportion of the liberated Africans who were taken from slave vessels off the African coast and apprenticed in West Africa and the Caribbean.<sup>35</sup>

Despite or perhaps because of early gender ratio imbalances in Asian indentured labor, over time the idea that migrant laborers were best managed for work from within family units became central to their organization across a range of contexts. After a series of gruesome murders in Fiji, for instance characterized as “coolie wife murders” provoked by arguments over women, regulations developed on the ratio of women to men on indentured ships, and during the second half of the nineteenth century women were shipped to plantations in much larger numbers than was previously the case.<sup>36</sup> There is, then, an important gender dimension to mobility and world history.<sup>37</sup> In South Asia, ideas about supposedly ideal communities developed, grounded in families and households. Model villages were established in settings as far apart as the canal and

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<sup>35</sup> Gwyn Campbell, Suzanne Miers and Joseph C. Miller, eds, *Women and Slavery, Volume I: Africa, the Indian Ocean World, and the Medieval North Atlantic* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2007); Gwyn Campbell, Suzanne Miers and Joseph C. Miller, eds, *Women and Slavery, Volume II: The Modern Atlantic* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2007); Gwyn Campbell, Suzanne Miers and Joseph C. Miller, eds, *Children in Slavery Through the Ages* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2009).

<sup>36</sup> Brij V. Lal, ‘Veil of Dishonour: Sexual jealousy and Suicide on Fiji Plantations’, *The Journal of Pacific History*, 20, 3 (1985): 135-55.

<sup>37</sup> See also Ulrike Strasser and Heidi Tinsman, “Engendering World History,” *Radical History Review* 91 (2005): 151-64.

railway colonies of the Punjab and United Provinces of northern India, and Ferrargunj in the Andamans. A so-called hereditary criminal tribe—the Bhantus—was sent in family groups for “rehabilitation” under the direction of the Salvation Army.<sup>39</sup> Each constituted an element of the politics of colonial intimacy and the swirling of imperial “bodies in contact,” as established by Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton.<sup>40</sup>

### *Periodization and the Global South*

Writing about global mobilities from below also suggests, as Adam McKeown has argued, that we challenge the overstatement of Trans-Atlantic (European/ New World) mobility in the usual periodization of 1914 as the historical moment at which mass migration ended. This does not work for global history. Many millions of people migrated transoceanically after the First World War, with millions more journeying between and around Africa and western Asia. Moreover, much migration in the Global South—including the Pacific, China and South and Southeast Asia—was seasonal, inter-

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<sup>39</sup> Anderson, Mazumdar and Pandya, *New Histories of the Andaman Islands*; Laura Bear, *Lines of the Nation: Indian Railway Workers, Bureaucracy, and the Intimate Historical Self* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2007); William J. Glover, ‘Objects, Models, and Exemplary Works: Educating Sentiment in Colonial India’, *Journal of Asian Studies* 64, 3 (2005): 539–66.

<sup>40</sup> Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, eds, *Bodies in Contact: Rethinking Colonial Encounters in World History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005). See also Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, eds, *Moving Subjects: Gender, Mobility and Intimacy in an Age of Global Empire* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2008).

regional and temporary. These labor movements are not easily captured in the archives from which migration figures are drawn; archives which overstate the comparative extent of Global North, or European, migration.<sup>41</sup>

If we are to be attentive to the often-coerced character of mobility, and take seriously the world outside of Europe in the Global South, it is also important to include the mass population displacements that accompanied and were often generative of the character of geo-political shifts during the last century in our characterization of “migration.” The *gulags* of Soviet Russia, discussed above, are important examples of this. Others can be drawn from the mass movements of people produced by European decolonization. Indeed, one of the great forced migrations in history was effected during the Partition of India, following Independence in 1947, when over 30 million British Indian subjects—Hindus and Muslims—were forced to move across the religious lines of the new nation states of India and Pakistan.<sup>42</sup>

### **Journeying, Identity and Protest**

The historiographies of enslavement and coerced migration more generally have engaged with important questions of colonial domination, individual and collective experience, and resistance and identity formation, in a range of contexts. In this section of the chapter, I will explore their relationship with global mobility specifically. As we will see, journeys were key sites for the establishment of coercive practices as well as for

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<sup>41</sup> McKeown, ‘Global Migration, 1846-1940’.

<sup>42</sup> Prashant Bharadwaj, Asim Khwaja and Atif Mian, ‘The Big March: Migratory Flows after the Partition of India’, *Economic and Political Weekly* (30 August 2008): 39-49.

community formation, and the staging of individual or collective, violent or everyday protest. I will draw here on the significance of ideas about shipmates and brotherhood in coerced labor streams; examples of shipboard mutiny from the mid-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries; and on incidents of unrest at sea connected to the sexual exploitation of migrant women. Writing world history from below reveals the nature and extent of resistance to coerced mobility, as well as some of the ways in which—perhaps somewhat surprisingly—it was productive of new forms of social affiliation and belonging.

### *Discipline and kinship*

In the “age of sail,” dating roughly from the fifteenth to the middle of the nineteenth centuries, discipline at sea was notoriously harsh, with ships’ captains declared “lords of the seas.” Their authority was unquestionable, and reprisals against those who challenged it were swift and violent. All those who were confined below deck, slaves, convicts, and indentured migrants, shared the rhythm of the ship, which over time grew to include a disciplinary repertoire of “dancing” (exercise), working, and medical surveillance. The entire ship was gathered to watch spectacles of flogging, which were displays encompassing both punishment and deterrence. Sailors too—some of whom were impressed into involuntary service by press gangs operating in port cities all over the world—were subject to equally strict regimes at sea, if not the inhumanity of routine chaining. Like soldiers, they constituted a transnational, circulatory labor force.

The close confinement of oceanic journeys was undoubtedly productive of new forms of identity, kinship, and social affiliation. Arguably, the “shipmate” relationship as

it developed between slaves became what Sidney W. Mintz and Richard Price have described as “a major principle of social organization” in the new world. In Jamaica, it appears to have been used in the same way as “brother” or “sister.” And, it had a genealogical afterlife that led children to call the shipmates of their parents “uncle” and “aunt”.<sup>43</sup> In other contexts, journeys were vitally important in producing new forms of kinship, including “mateship” in the Antipodes, which originated in convict transportation. And, as I have argued elsewhere, Indian convicts transported to Mauritius on the same transportation ships called each other *bhai* (brother).<sup>44</sup> I will return to the importance of these new social bonds vis-à-vis the theme of mobility and the spread of subject resistance in a moment.

### *Mutiny and unrest*

In a recent review of new work on unrest at sea, the apparently high incidence of mutiny was declared “perfectly astonishing.” War ships, merchantmen, whalers, slave vessels, and convict ships all experienced greater unrest than has been previously recognized—

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<sup>43</sup> Sidney W. Mintz and Richard Price, *The Birth of African-American Culture: An Anthropological Perspective* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 43.

<sup>44</sup> Russel Ward, *The Australian Legend* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1958). For a review of this important historian’s work, see the special issue of the *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, edited by Frank Bongiorno and David Andrew Roberts (no. 2, 2008); Clare Anderson, ‘The Bel Ombre Rebellion: Indian Convicts in Mauritius, 1815-53’, in Gwyn Campbell, ed., *Abolition and Its Aftermath in Indian Ocean Africa and Asia* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 50-65.

perhaps as many as ten percent of all slave ships broke out in mutiny. Moreover, in the great Age of Revolution (1760s-1840s) the oceans worked as spaces of incubation and as vectors for the diffusion of political radicalism. Adding further support to the earlier work of Linebaugh and Rediker, which had envisaged the early modern Atlantic World as characterized by collectivism, anti-authoritarianism, and egalitarianism, the sea is placed at the heart of what is usually seen as a history of land-based nations and empires. Solitary or collective, maritime resistance ranged from complaining to downing tools, sabotage to assaults on officers. And, off-board, sailors played key roles in the American, French and Haitian revolutions.<sup>45</sup> Eighteenth-century ships lay at the centre of a sphere of

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<sup>45</sup> Niklas Frykman, Clare Anderson, Lex Heerma van Voss, Marcus Rediker, 'Introduction' in 'Mutiny and Maritime Radicalism in the Age of Revolution', eds. Frykman, Anderson, van Voss and Rediker, *International Review of Social History* 58, Supplement S21 (2013): 1-14 [quote, Frykman, Anderson, Voss and Rediker, 'Introduction', p. 3.] See also Emma Christopher, Cassandra Pybus and Marcus Rediker, eds, *Many Middle Passages: Forced Migration in the Making of the Modern World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (London: Vintage, 2007); and David Richardson, 'Shipboard Revolts, African Authority, and the Atlantic Slave Trade', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 58 (2001): 69-92.

circulation that exploited labor capital, and they were both engines of capitalism and spaces of resistance.<sup>46</sup> Once again, here we see the importance of class.

Ships carrying slaves, convicts and indentured workers all experienced outbreaks of various kinds, including but not limited to mutiny. The most recent historiography has added rich ethnographic detail regarding individual incidents to earlier calculations of the extent of mutiny on Atlantic slave ships, and has shown that ships were one means through which revolutionary struggle could spread around the region.<sup>47</sup> During the first half of the nineteenth century, there were several outbreaks on Indian convict vessels, sailing to or from India, Mauritius, Burma, Singapore and the Andaman Islands. The convicts sometimes carried insurrectionary sentiment or protest to new locations, with subsequent outbreaks in the penal colonies on occasion connected both to pre-transportation local struggles and to connections forged in Indian prisons or on transportation ships.<sup>49</sup> Lascars, Indian Ocean sailors who hailed from all over the region

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<sup>46</sup> Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, ch. 2; Rediker and Linebaugh, *The Many-Headed Hydra*, 144.

<sup>47</sup> Marcus Rediker, *The Amistad Rebellion: Atlantic Odyssey of Slavery and Freedom* (London: Verso, 2013); Anita Rupprecht, “‘All We Have Done, We Have Done for Freedom’: The Creole Slave-Ship Revolt (1841) and the Revolutionary Atlantic’, *International Review of Social History* 58, Supplement S21 (2013): 253-77.

<sup>49</sup> Clare Anderson, “‘The Feringees are Flying – the ship is ours!’ The Convict Middle Passage in Colonial South and Southeast Asia, 1790-1860”, *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 41, 3 (2005): 143-186; Clare Anderson, ‘The Age of Revolution in the



and sometimes manned transportation ships, also contested shipboard authority and routine, through refusing to work, assaulting their superiors or outright mutiny. In what historians sometimes call everyday forms of resistance, they also maintained various cultural practices, including religious festivals.<sup>50</sup> Crossing the line (equator) ceremonies are particularly interesting in this respect. They were inversions of the usual hierarchy of the ship, led by ordinary sailors. A long-serving seaman dressed up as Neptune, and questioned, ridiculed, rubbed paint on and even shaved the beards of the ship's officers.<sup>52</sup>

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Indian Ocean, Bay of Bengal, and South China Sea: A Maritime Perspective',  
*International Review of Social History*, 58, Supplement S21 (2013): 229-51.

<sup>50</sup> Ravi Ahuja, 'Mobility and Containment: The Voyages of South Asian Seamen, c. 1900-1960', in *Coolies, Capital, and Colonialism: Studies in Indian Labour*, eds. Rana P. Behal and Marcel van der Linden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 111-41; Aaron Jaffer, "'Lord of the Forecastle": Serangs, Tindals, and Lascar Mutiny, c. 1780-1860', *International Review of Social History*, 58, Supplement S21 (2013): 153-75; Amitav Ghosh, 'Of Fanás and Forecastles: The Indian Ocean and Some Lost Languages of the Age of Sail', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 25 (2008): 56-62; James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Day Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

<sup>52</sup> National Maritime Museum, WEL/40: Diary of Richard Joyce of H.M. gun brig RICHMOND 1810-16, and afterwards midshipman of H.E.I.C. David Scott; JOD/5: Robert Ramsay, Journal of a Voyage from Gravesend to Calcutta by a Cadet in 1825

*Gender and race at sea*

Historian Verene A. Shepherd has presented a moving account of the rape and death of female passenger, an indentured laborer known to us only as Maharani, on her way to British Guiana in 1885 as a means of exploring the phenomenon of what she terms shipboard “sexploitation”.<sup>53</sup> As Shepherd shows, during the nineteenth century there were a number of violent incidents that revolved around Indian protests against crews’ assaults of or disrespect towards women, together with fragmentary and uncertain evidence of the existence of what we might term a shipboard sex trade. If indentured ships were gendered spaces, they were racialized ones too. During the 1880s and 90s, officials decried the relative merits of European and Indian lascar crews. Lascars were cheap, but unfit for cold weather, “cowardly,” and sexually predatory. Europeans were less culturally sensitive, but no more deferential to shipboard authority or female propriety.<sup>54</sup> Commonly it was a breakdown in the authority of captains and surgeon superintendents (often as a result of violent drunkenness) that led to more general lapses

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<sup>53</sup> Verene A. Shepherd, *Maharani’s Misery: Narratives of a passage from India to the Caribbean* (Mona, Jamaica: University of West Indies Press, 2002).

<sup>54</sup> India Office Records, British Library (henceforth IOR) L/PJ/6/37 File 538: Enquiry ... into certain complaints made by the immigrants of the ship ‘Ellora’ (1881); IOR L/PJ/6/96 File 640: Enquiry into circumstances on the emigrant ship ‘Hesperides’ (1883); IOR P/691: Nos 4-5: Complaint against the Dover Castle while employed in conveying emigrants from Calcutta to British Guiana (1872); IOR L/PJ/6/119 File 424: Emigration to Fiji and West Indies: question of employing lascar crews on vessels (1884); IOR L/PJ/6/309 File 2017: Emigration to Fiji and West Indies: lascar crews (1891).

in shipboard discipline, and their associated consequences for the health and safety of indentured laborers. In one case, Surgeon Superintendent Jacob Anthony was tried before the Mauritian Supreme Court for “criminally and willfully inflicting certain wounds in and upon the body of one immigrant (name unknown).” According to witnesses who testified against him, Anthony had tied the man up by his thumbs for “making a mess” between decks. He was being treated for dysentery at the time, and later died. At the same time, Captain J.C. Wilson and Chief Mate Joseph Ninton were fined for throwing the body of an almost dead coolie overboard to avoid the ship being forced into quarantine.<sup>55</sup>

*Migration, circulation, anti-colonialism and proto-nationalism*

Journeys were a space of identity formation and resistance, and they were also the means through which protest spread to other areas of the globe. We have already seen something of the political dynamics of shipboard revolt, and here I would like to extend this analysis through a discussion of how the migration or circulation of ordinary people helped to shape the spread of anti-colonial or proto-nationalist ideas. For instance, enslaved people in the Caribbean protested about their conditions through revolt, including after the British abolition of the slave trade in 1807, when it became clear that their emancipation was in fact to be a condition of apprenticeship and not freedom. Asian laborers too protested against the conditions of plantation indenture; feigning sickness, downing tools,

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<sup>55</sup> IOR P/188/64 India (Public) January 14, 1861 nos 31-3: Misconduct of doctor seaman on ship Thomas Hamlin; IOR P/188/70 India (Public) February 2, 1865 nos 9-13:

Regarding ill treatment of coolie passengers on board emigrant ship Rajasthan.

or assaulting their overseers. In extreme circumstances, including after the British shipped *sipahi* (soldier) convicts to Burma following the Great Indian Revolt of 1857, and again in the early twentieth century when they sent political prisoners to incarceration in the Cellular Jail in the Andaman Islands, individuals or groups of workers went on hunger strike, refusing to eat and during the later period suffering forced feeding.

Such actions were sometimes a response to the peculiarities of specific conditions, associated with the organization of coerced labor, but in some cases mobile subjects became exposed to new forms of insurgency or anti-colonial sympathies, and this could inspire action that was more directly political. Recently, Uma Kothari has described how imperial opponents were exiled to various places in the Indian Ocean. She argues that although they were supposed to lose their political associations in spaces of isolation, in important ways exile enhanced and deepened anti-colonial networks. Exiles carried ideologies of resistance with them, and inspired political agitation amongst the people that they met.<sup>56</sup> We find similar examples for the Bay of Bengal. They include soldiers transported from India in 1854 following British victory in the Anglo-Sikh Wars, who led a ship mutiny on board a ship called the *Clarissa*. They killed several crewmembers, took control of the ship and sailed to Burma, marching inland in the mistaken belief that they could offer themselves for the anti-colonial army of an as yet imperially unincorporated rajah. Unfortunately, they were two years too late. The ensuing criminal court

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<sup>56</sup> Uma Kothari, 'Contesting Colonial Rule: Politics of Exile in the Indian Ocean', *Geoforum*, 43 (2012): 697-706.

proceedings involved so many (convict) defendants that the trial had to be held in Calcutta's Town Hall.

## **Legacies and Continuities**

### *Creolization, cultural syncretism and cosmopolitanism*

Despite its often-coercive features, global mobility generated cultural creativity of various kinds: through the production of particular social and cultural practices, in the formation of communities, and in the making of postcolonial identities. In former slave colonies, this creativity is sometimes referred to as “creolization,” and in these and other contexts as cultural syncretism or hybridity. It might include the emergence of distinct forms of religious worship, language, music, dance and food, as place-specific blends of African, Asian and European influences. Examples are the Mauritian Kreol language, the Bermudan Gombey dance, and the Louisiana dish Jambalaya.<sup>57</sup> In recent years, in Mauritius, there have been calls for the concept of “coolitude” to join that of *créolité* (which emerged first in mid-twentieth-century French Martinique as a counter to the Pan-African ideal of *negritude*) as a means of explaining the process of cultural production, and incorporating the experience of Asian indentured migration specifically.

Further concepts employed by historians are those of “cosmopolitanism,” where different cultures live side-by-side, or “diaspora,” which is seen as a means of explaining the peculiar social and cultural formations of groups of people with shared cultures and values living outside their or their forebears' place of origin. For sociologist Robin

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<sup>57</sup> Robin Cohen and Paola Toninato, eds, *The Creolization Reader: Studies in Mixed Identities and Cultures* (London: Routledge, 2009).

Cohen, it is possible to distinguish various diasporic typologies, including that of the “victim diaspora,” those who were forced to migrate, including the descendants of slaves.<sup>58</sup> Scholarly critique includes skepticism as to whether social diversity amongst migrants can be captured in such an apparently all-embracing and cohesive term, as well as its underlying assumption that there are two kinds of populations: those which are static, and those which are mobile. As I suggested at the beginning of this chapter, over the long history of the world, migration has been a feature in the formation of all societies. A focus on the emergence of distinct cultural forms masks the way in which societies are continually in flux, and are made and remade as ordinary people move around and bring cultures into contact with each other. Such encounters range from the political to the intimate, and as we have seen the latter elevates the importance of gender and sexuality to the centre of our analysis of global movement.

### *History and the present*

Moreover, the tendency to celebrate the apparent cultural creativity and syncretism of parts of the post-colonial world today has the perhaps unanticipated double effect of glossing over their origins in disruption, dissent and contestation, and of turning our vision away from the significant continuities in patterns of global mobility today. One feature of the historiography of migration has been the viewing of forced labor as what Patrick Manning has eloquently described as “a significant and painful step in the creation of the modern world economy”.<sup>59</sup> I have already suggested the significance of

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<sup>58</sup> Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008).

<sup>59</sup> Manning, *Migration in World History*, 133.

coercion in effecting global mobility, and of recognizing the importance of Global South circular labor flows, and in so doing of foregrounding both resistance and domination in world history. I would also like to restate the value of looking beyond teleological interpretations of the historical “place” of forced labor and towards an appreciation not just of its effects, or legacies, but of its ongoing significance and importance. Without wishing to flatten historical difference or distinctiveness over time or across regions, borderlands, nations and/or empires, it is evident that forced labor and slavery remain features of the contemporary world, and that there has not been a seamless or total historical shift from coerced to free migration. A less Eurocentric understanding of labor mobility enables us to think of unfree migration, I would like to propose, as a form of human circulation that might never end.

Nowhere is this better represented historically than by juxtaposing the idea of Indian indenture as “a new system of slavery,” as critics argued in the 1830s, with Indian nationalist M.K. Gandhi’s celebration of its abolition in 1916. Though no new workers were indentured for overseas service thereafter, it was some years before those already in the colonies had served out their contracts. Moreover, even after the abolition of indenture, Indian migrant workers continued to play an important role in the global economy. They still do today, in the twenty-first century. The denial of citizenship and various other rights in some sites of migrant labor might be viewed as a direct legacy of earlier modes of coerced labor mobility. This includes, in the case of Indians working in

places like Singapore without voting rights, the political deprivations of transported Indian convict labor.<sup>60</sup>

### *The feminization of migration*

A second key element in modern overseas migration from Global South to Global North has been the feminization of international migration, and the development of a transnational sexual division of labor. Women from India and other countries in the Global South, including the Philippines, work overseas as nurses, nannies or maids. Many of the women who stay behind migrate long distances from their homes, to work in factories or export processing zones geared to meet the material desires of Europe and the United States.<sup>61</sup> Debt bondage, forced labor, enslavement and human trafficking remain features of many modern societies too. British campaign groups estimate that there are 13,000 people living in slavery in the United Kingdom alone. When we research and write about the abolition of the slave trade and of enslavement, in the earlier age of imperialism, we would do well to appreciate their seemingly enduring character.<sup>62</sup>

### **Further Reading**

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<sup>60</sup> Anoma Pieris, *Hidden Hands and Divided Landscapes: A Penal History of Singapore's Plural Society* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009).

<sup>61</sup> Bridget Anderson, *Doing the Dirty Work: The Global Politics of Domestic Labour* (London: Zed Books, 2000).

<sup>62</sup> [http://www.antislavery.org/english/slavery\\_today/default.aspx](http://www.antislavery.org/english/slavery_today/default.aspx) (accessed March 11, 2015).



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