"Oceans without Borders": Dialectics of Transcolonial Labor Migration from the Indian Ocean World to the Atlantic Ocean World[1]

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Abstract

By investigating the hitherto unstudied trans-colonial migration between Mauritius and the Caribbean in the nineteenth century, this article complicates liberal Eurocentric perceptions of global labor force formation under the auspices of colonial capital. Indeed, coercion, as depicted in liberal historiography, was a crucial component of indentured migration but indentured workers themselves sometimes availed of the opportunity of the global demand for their labor by engaging in trans-colonial migration. The dialectic of the formation of globalized indentured labor regime was such that while capital sought to confine workers to specific plantations, the very nature of the demand for labor enabled workers to defy the dictates of capital and further enabled them to move from one colony to another in search of better livelihoods and thus made them globally mobile. These migrations did not follow the so-called boundaries between the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic Ocean. Rather such migrations reflected workers' search for jobs through trans-colonial networks within the framework of imperial domination.

On June 16, 1915, in a letter to Jehangir Bomanji Petit, the Secretary of the South African Indian Fund, Mohandas K. Gandhi expressed his strong disapproval of the indentured labor system in the following words:

> I feel that I ought to place on record my strong conviction, based upon close personal observation extending over a period of twenty years, that the system of indentured emigration is an evil which can only be ended. No matter how humane the employers may be, it does not lend itself to the moral well-being of the men affected by it. I therefore feel that your Committee should lose no time in approaching the Government of India with a view to securing entire abolition of the system for every part of the Empire.[2]

Gandhi's indictment of the indentured system found its way into the liberal historiography on indentured labor, which presented indentured (contract) workers'[3] experiences within the British imperial state as "a new system of slavery."[4] By investigating the hitherto unstudied transcolonial migration between Mauritius, India, and the Caribbean in the mid-nineteenth to early

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twentieth century, this essay complicates such straightforward liberal characterizations of global labor force formation under the auspices of colonial capital. Indeed, while coercion was a crucial component of the indentured labor system,[5] indentured workers themselves often used the opportunity afforded by the global demand for their labor to engage in transcolonial migration. While capital sought to confine workers to specific plantations, the very nature of the demand for labor enabled workers to defy the dictates of capital and craft new lives on distant shores. The nature of oceanic travel and the dynamics of capital further enabled a category of workers to move from one colony to another in search of better livelihoods and thus made them globally mobile. These migrations did not restrict them to the inner and hermetic borders of either the Indian Ocean World or the Atlantic Ocean World.[6] Rather, such migrations reflected the workers' search for jobs and their quest for family lives through transcolonial networks within the British Empire. By situating labor migration within oceanic frameworks (the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic), this paper explains why and how indentured workers subverted imperial apparatuses to improve their lives and used social networks within the British empire that transcended the geographical boundaries of oceanic economies.

Historiographical Contexts and Debates

Approaches to indentured labor may be divided into two perspectives. The first, comprised of various branches of liberal, anticolonial, humanitarian, and neo-Marxist readings, suggests that indentured labor was akin to slavery and that receiving societies furthered workers' exploitation at multiple levels (gender, caste, and class).[7] The second, espousing a modernist and neoliberal stance, suggests that indentured workers were rational decision makers who opted for migration and voluntarily sought to leave India. According to the second group of scholars, such informed decisions would inevitably lead to the betterment of indentured workers' lives.[8]

However, it is a representative of the first approach, Hugh Tinker's *A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830–1920*, that has had resounding significance within the historiography on indentured labor from India. The term "new system of slavery" reveals simplistic affinities with a hegemonic Afro-Atlantic model of slavery.[9] This emphasis on the Atlantic model of slavery, a reflection of Eurocentric understandings of labor migration, led Tinker to ignore the interconnectedness of the oceans. This further strengthens his inability to engage with workers' capability to negotiate with different groups of employers in order to further their own interests in a globalized labor recruitment system. Tinker equated indentured labor with slavery by emphasizing irregular and forced recruitment by labor intermediaries, unrealistic contractual terms, and the destitution of recruits. Tinker's influence can be observed in the recent postcolonial scholarship of Madhavi Kale, who despite her criticism of Tinker (and her emphasis on critical interrogation of colonial archives),[10]

focuses primarily on imperial elites and thus neglects the voices of indentured workers.

The "new system of slavery" thesis sparked a sizable revisionist scholarship. Kissoonsingh Hazareesingh and Brij Lal took an oppositional stance to that of Tinker, suggesting that the indentured migrant was an autonomous decision maker who crafted his or her way to the new destination. They also saw emigration as a political response to British rule in India.[11] According to such revisionist literature, the indentured agricultural worker's break with the land of his birth had occurred before he met the recruiter and indicates that the worker was actively looking for overseas opportunities.[12]

A third position emerged in the work of Marina Carter, who argues that the above two schools of thought ignore the role that returnee migrants played in motivating new migrants to take the route to overseas destinations.[13] This essay builds upon Carter's thesis and focuses attention on transoceanic migration by workers. It also rejects the view that the colonial state was a monolithic entity that extended from its headquarters in London to various government offices of colonies in India, Mauritius, British Guiana, Trinidad, and elsewhere.[14] In order to highlight the complex role of different ruling entities in plantation colonies, we use the term "colonial governments" to indicate the plurality and overlapping nature of administrative structures and to avoid the suggestion that the term "colonial state" signified an orchestrated labor migration.[15]

To develop this line of argument, we reject a preformed category of "indentured migrant worker." Frederick Cooper has suggested that a scholar may use these terms as "analytic categories … for description and analysis" and miss how "historical actors deployed similar terms" in their own historical contexts.[16] By doing so, the scholar ignores the ordinary desires and motivations of people who migrated and eventually re-migrated, thus resisting capital's sway through capital's own need for more labor in distant corners of the global plantation systems.

Beginnings of the Indentured System in Mauritius—1834

The arrival of indentured labor to the island of Mauritius coincided with the global expansion of sugar plantations and the collapse of slave-based economies. As the British gained control over Mauritius in 1810, they sought to transform the island into a sugar plantation colony. Under the British, the number of sugar estates rose from 106 in 1820 to 259 in 1858.[17] The growth in sugar production obviously generated new demands for labor. As cholera and various diseases affected slaves and as the British Parliament sought to ban the slave trade from 1807 onward, planters turned their attention to India for "'free' agricultural laborers."[18] Since India was a pivotal component of the British imperial networks of trade and commerce in the nineteenth century, it also became the site for labor catchment areas for British global networks of plantations. More than 450,000 indentured Indian workers reached Mauritius before the migration system ended in 1910.[19]

Faced with the exodus of emancipated slaves, planters from all over the world—from Natal in South Africa to the Malay peninsula in the Indian Ocean rim, Fiji in the Pacific Ocean, and the Caribbean Islands, as well as the British, Dutch, and French Guianas on the mainland of South America in the Atlantic world—searched for a supply of labor and, more importantly, a stable workforce that could, in theory, be paid minimal wages and settled in the sugar plantations. Indentured contracts, it was hoped, would bind these workers to the plantations for a substantial period of time and would stabilize the production regime. In recruiting such workers, the planters and the colonial governments relied upon the indentured workers' presumed ignorance of their new work environment.

The image of ignorant workers dictated the strategies of the planters. In 1834, Gillanders, Arbuthnot and Co., a British commercial agency in Calcutta with business links to Mauritian planters brought the first seventy-five indentured workers to Mauritius. By June 6, 1836, "two thousand natives" had reached the island.[20] Meanwhile, in the Caribbean, planters such as John Gladstone, father of future British Prime Minister William Evart Gladstone and a planter with interests in Demerara and Jamaica, contacted Arbuthnot noting that planters in the Caribbean "were most desirous to obtain and introduce Labourers from other Quarters," especially given that "plantation labour in the field is very light" and that the "task work … is usually completed by two o'clock in the afternoon."[21] Far from light, the work pattern on sugar plantations proved to be very demanding, especially because of the volcanic topography of Jamaica and Demerara.[22] Gladstone sought "young, active, able-bodied people" from Bengal whose "wives [would] be disposed to work in the field as well" for "not less than five years or more than seven years."[23] Arbuthnot acquiesced to Gladstone's request and further underlined how "the Natives being perfectly ignorant of the Place they agree to go to, or the Length of the Voyage they are undertaking" would go to Demerara and Jamaica instead of Mauritius.[24] Arbuthnot's colonial anthropological assumptions about indentured workers were numerous. According to him, the "[Dhangurs] from the Hills … north of Calcutta" were "well-limbed and active, without prejudices of any kind," had "no Religion, no Education, … no Wants beyond Eating, Drinking, and Sleeping; and to procure which they are willing to labour."[25] In brief, the early indentured workers, in planters' perceptions and as transmitted to the colonial archive, "were more akin to the Monkey than [to] the Man."[26] The presumptions of Arbuthnot, an ally of the colonial governments, are an example of the early ethnic and racial categorization of indentured workers in Mauritius.[27] The recruitment of indentured workers also demonstrates how employers within island sugar colonies and the colonial governments operated on a global scale while hoping that labor would be tied to the narrow confines of their separate destinations.

In the beginning the hopes of the global masters of Indian[28] workers were not belied. A commission of inquiry appointed to investigate working conditions for these indentured workers concluded that "Coolies and other natives

exported to Mauritius and elsewhere were … induced to come to Calcutta by misrepresentation and deceit…."[29] The ignorance attributed to workers in the report took various forms. For example, F. W. Birch, the Superintendent of the Calcutta Police explained that *duffadars* (native local recruiters) and crimps held onto six months of pay of indentured workers because of the latter's ignorance. Because of their credulity, indentured workers arrived at their destinations with only two or three rupees on their persons.[30] Taramony, the sister of Nobin Bawory, an indentured worker from Moomeeavya, Bancoorah, in India, reported that her brother was promised five rupees a month and that he could return home at the end of a year.[31] However, her brother had not been back for "two or three years" and had not "sent any money" to his family.[32]

The 1841 Calcutta Commission of Enquiry depicts the appalling conditions of workers at various stages of their migration. But workers did not tolerate such a situation for long and soon sought better opportunities. While immigration rates from India increased in the late 1850s[33] due to the expansion of sugar plantation complexes, indentured workers were also returning to India. For example, on January 11, 1850, Daccoo, Rama, and Dhurma were "desirous of returning home without delay … at their own expense and in a vessel of their own choice."[34] The reasons for return migration were various. The Protector of Immigrants, Thomas Hugon, sheds light on this process by explaining how "the rate of wages which labourers can obtain here [in Mauritius] is well known in India, they would not bind themselves for less without fraud being employed."[35] In a skeptical fashion, Hugon further details how "immigrants on their arrival [in Mauritius] [were] certainly under the influence of comrades … whom they follow blindly."[36] However, Hugon also relates how he encountered "numerous instances where [indentured workers] have acted for themselves, making enquiries as to the Estate, or for relations already in the Island whom they wished to join."[37] In many ways, indentured workers had developed complex information networks stretching from their places of origin in India to the different nodes of colonial plantation societies.

While the number of workers moving to Mauritius from India and various colonies grew rapidly in the 1850s, it had already started in the early phase of the indentured system in a more nebulous form. For example, after the first five-year indentured contracts expired in 1839, Chapman Barclay, a large proprietor in Mauritius, sent Dhibby Deen back to India to recruit more men. Dhibby Deen, "a man of good character, who return[ed] to his native country" would have his passage paid, "[the] cost of his food, as well as [that of] any able-bodied men who may wish to accompany him, not exceeding 50 in number."[38] Thus regular to-and-fro migration of workers to Mauritius from India in the early phase of indentured immigration was possible because of the planters' requisitions for more labor and colonial government's structural support in the form of free passages.

However, upon taking office in 1851, the island's new Governor, T. M. Higginson, canceled "[the] right of migrants to a paid return passage to

India at the end of their indenture."[39] But since 1850, several immigrants had already been able to pay for their passage back to India without relying on the free passage offered by the colonial government of Mauritius (as evidenced above by Daccoo's example). Not only did indentured workers pay their own fares, they also paid for passengers who were accompanying them. For example, on January 28, 1856, Duljeet, Bhunjun, and Bundhooram agreed to pay the passage of the female immigrant Dookhny.[40] As the colonial government attempted to restrict indentured workers' mobility—by banning the free return passage, for example—it also unwittingly created information networks that indentured workers used to their benefit. Returnees informed potential migrants of possibilities available in Mauritius. At the same time, some indentured workers' economic situations in the receiving societies had improved to such an extent that they could also afford their own passages.

Gender and Migration: Resistance, Information Networks, and Remigration

As international sugar prices[41] increased and colonial governments sought to obtain physically fit labor for an export-oriented sugar colony between the late 1830s and 1860s, a change in migration patterns occurred. A notable feature of this new migration was the presence of women. In 1838, female indentured Indian immigrants were less than 2 percent of the immigrant population.[42] Planters and colonial officials perceived female immigration as a stabilizing force for the predominantly adult single male migration that had hitherto been employed and sought to increase it. While this action would increase the "average individual labour cost," by 1861 "the public treasury undertook to bear half the cost of female immigration in addition to paying bounties to their introducers."[43] They hoped that this measure would tie male workers to their respective plantations.

Ironically, colonial encouragement of female immigration contributed to the circular migration of time-expired migrants (those whose indenture had ended after five years) and who sought either to bring their families to Mauritius or take their families back to India. Time-expired or returnee immigrants had spent between five and fifteen years in Mauritius. They had managed to save and could further pay themselves out of their indenture or pay their passages.[44]

Indentured workers who settled for a longer period on the island, as opposed to re-migrating to other colonies for better opportunities, faced various obstacles. By 1847, the local colonial government crystallized the difference between "new" immigrants, those who had reached Mauritius for the first time, and Old immigrants, those who had stayed back and, in several cases, left the sugar estates to become vegetable hawkers. The Colonial Office considered that indentured workers had been introduced solely to provide agricultural labor. Thus it penalized workers who pursued other avenues.[45] In 1849 Ordinance 7 was passed to increase policing to prevent desertion from sugar

estates. Workers who left the plantations but remained on the island gradually came to be considered vagrants.

Vagrancy laws were not new in British territories and had appeared as early as the mid-fourteenth century in England.[46] As they evolved in other parts of the British Empire, vagrancy laws were used to control and mobilize labor. In Mauritius, Ordinance 31 of 1867 (also known as the 1867 Law) came to define former indentured workers as vagrants. It was Old immigrants who were particularly subject to the strict control of the 1867 Labor Law.

The former indentured workers, also known as old immigrants, had long-standing grievances against the pass system, which was stipulated in the 1867 ordinance. Old immigrants were required to carry a photographed police pass at all times. Failure to produce the pass whenever it was demanded resulted in arbitrary imprisonment and physical violence. Old immigrants often complained of "the number and oppressiveness of the fees charged for duplicate tickets …, [the] 'ill-treatment in the Immigration Office,' and 'arbitrary and vexatious conduct of the police in carrying out the law.'"[47] The fear of vagrancy among freely mobile workers—those who were unattached to sugar estates and had started engaging in other trades such as selling vegetables—deeply disturbed the political authorities. The double-pronged purpose of vagrancy laws[48] was to limit the peasantization of the local economy, whereby former indentured workers (Old immigrants) resorted to selling agricultural goods grown on their small plots. This was a global trend in plantation colonies.

Old immigrant workers' discontent with Ordinance 31 was reflected in the petitions of 1871 presented to the Royal Commissioners, William Frere and Victor Williamson, two London-based lawyers who had been sent to Mauritius to investigate Indians' conditions. Adolphe de Plévitz, a German[49] who came to Mauritius in 1859 and settled on his father-in-law's estate, collected 9,401 signatures to present to Frere and Williamson.[50] For example, Dilloo, No. 82,500, an Old immigrant who was a "gardener," related the abuse of the pass system:

> About the month of July 1868, I was living at the Nouvelle Découverte. On a certain morning four policemen came, and, without a warrant, entered my premises and asked for our papers; I was able to show the papers for myself and wife, but, through my house having been burnt down a short time previously, I could not show the police the acts of birth of my children born at Mauritius, as they had perished in the flames, and as I had no copies of them; but I explained this to the police: my children being respectively 9, 12, and 13 years of age, notwithstanding this (and the affair occurred on a Wednesday morning at 5 o'clock), the police arrested my three children as vagabonds. They were taken to the Moka police station, a distance of seven miles, and were locked up there till the following Friday, when they were discharged at noon, the evidence of a gentleman residing at the Nouvelle Découverte having proved to the satisfaction of the Magistrate that they were not vagabonds. Secondly—About the month of September 1868, my son Seewagalam (the second son in the previous complaint),

> went to Flacq to visit a relative. My son, although a Creole of the colony, was arrested by the police in the Flacq district on his return, sent to Pamplemousses, and sentenced by the Magistrate there to 10 days' imprisonment with hard labour as a vagabond.[51]

By the late 1860s and early 1870s, more than 200,000 indentured workers had stayed back in Mauritius. Dilloo, a former indentured Indian worker was one of them and had started a family there. Once workers' contracts ended, planters had no legal tool at their disposal to make them renew their contracts. Such old immigrants would leave the sugar estates and become gardeners as was the case for Dilloo. Ordinance 31 of 1867 was designed to force them to stay on the sugar estates. In the above quote, the policing method underlines how the planters and the island's local government sought to prevent the desertion of indentured workers prior to the lapse of their contracts. This is precisely why the colonial government in Mauritius targeted old immigrants who saw themselves as part and parcel of the colony (for example, in Dilloo's reference to his "Creole" son). This story was but one example of many. In his petition, Ramluckhun, another gardener, explained how he "prepared everything for [his] marriage, and spent for that purpose a sum of $50" and how:

> A sergeant of police and two constables came to my house and knocked at the door, which I opened, when the sergeant entered, in spite of my remonstrances, and looking all round, with the help of this lantern, it being then early in the morning, bade me come out, without allowing me time to dress, asked for my papers, which I immediately produced, consisting of my photograph ticket, a police pass for the district of Pamplemousses, lease of ground, and a permit for the sale of the produce of my garden in the said district; in spite of which I was taken by him to the high road, where I found many others who had also been arrested. I had to leave my poor aged parents, of whom I am the sole support, which I explained to the sergeant; and was taken before the Magistrate the third day, to whom I explained my case and was told to return on the following Friday, which I did, and had to do, by order of the Magistrate, for three consecutive Fridays. At last, I was released; no reasons whatsoever having been given me for such proceedings, which caused me a very serious loss. In fact, up to the present time, I have not been able to recover from it.[52]

News of the harassment of ex-indentured workers traveled to India and informed future migrants as they selected a destination. This is confirmed in Major Pitcher's report published in the Royal Gazette of January 13, 1883. In his numerous encounters with potential recruits to Mauritius, Major Pitcher recounts the following:

> [A]mongst returned emigrants there seem to be some popular notions on the subject. Trinidad (Chini Ta'l) has the preference, then Demerara (Damra or Demeraila). All speak well of Jamaica. Little is known yet of either Fiji or

> Natal. Mauritius (More righteous and Mirch) is admitted to have advantages in the shortness of the journey, the cheapness of the return passage, and (for the lazy) in the payments of monthly wages in the place of a daily task, or rather piecework; but industrious people prefer the latter. Rightly or wrongly, Mauritius had acquired a doubtful reputation in some of the lower districts, and at Gorakhpur I was told by a recruiter that Coolies would sometimes say that they were ready to go to any colony but Mauritius. We know from the latest report that this feeling is most unjust to Mauritius of the present day, and any discredit attaching to it must be a reflection of the old days of "Vagrant hunts"…[53]

In other words, the transoceanic network of communication informed subsequent patterns of migration. Vagrant hunts under Article 31 of Ordinance 1867 in Mauritius influenced the island's image among potential recruits in India who, faced with ecological deterioration, demographic pressure on land, famines, caste discrimination, class exploitation, gender marginalization in colonial India, and seeming planter despotism abroad, sought destinations that offered better opportunities.

Migration to the Atlantic World

Global labor migration that spanned the oceans (the Indian, Atlantic, and Pacific[54]) was not uncommon. Once the indentured system was implemented in Mauritius, it was quickly replicated in other corners of the British Empire. Here British Guiana (including Demerara) and Trinidad need to be considered in conjunction with each other given their geographical proximity and how migration between these locations functioned.[55] By January 1838, four hundred men and some women and children reached Demerara and Berbice.[56] However, abolitionists' and humanitarians' ardor halted the system temporarily in the West Indies. Moreover various groups of Indian employers viewed the overseas labor migration as a contributing factor toward wage increase within India and further condemned emigration of labor to Mauritius and Demerara.[57]

After much lobbying from the planter class, indentured migration was reopened in 1844.[58] By 1846, British Guiana had received 7,617 immigrants; Jamaica, 4,250; and Trinidad, 4,159.[59] However, because of the "scarcity of shipping," emigration agents in Calcutta and Madras were unable "to engage three ships" to ship laborers to the Atlantic.[60] While the indentured labor flow to Mauritius continued to increase, the West Indian colonies were at a loss and could not compete with their Indian Ocean competitor, as they "were quite unable to provide funds for any further immigration…."[61]

Despite the great distance separating the Caribbean colonies from Mauritius, a number of similarities existed across the oceans. As in Mauritius, indentured workers' contracts in the Caribbean were for five years and included a free return passage to India.[62] In the Caribbean also, the colonial governments sought to regulate the labor market through various legal strictures. For instance, in Trinidad, the 1854 Consolidating Ordinance provided a free return

passage to indentured immigrants who came before that year. Both groups (those who came before and those who came after 1854) "had to serve as labourers for a period of three years, and could then re-indenture themselves for a further two years or buy out their remaining time by paying … the colonial government."[63] Thus indentured workers who had completed their initial contract could renew it, if they chose to do so. However, contract conditions within the Caribbean differed. For example, in Dutch Guiana (present-day Surinam), migrants were given a "free return passage immediately upon expiration of their 5-year indenture contracts."[64] Conversely, workers in British Guiana had to work "two five-year terms" before obtaining a free passage home. Far from capitulating to oceanic barriers, the British colonial governments found ways to fuel the ever-increasing demands for labor from various parts of the globe. However, oceanic distances were such that the number of workers who returned to the Caribbean islands after their journeys to India was possibly lower than those who went back to Mauritius.

Shipping shortcomings in the Indian Ocean port of Calcutta slowed the introduction of indentured labor into the Caribbean. Competition among receiving colonies had been felt since the 1840s, when Mauritius had firmly reestablished itself as a destination with the Calcutta emigration agents and other labor intermediaries.[65] In that decade, Mr. White, a West Indies Emigration Agent, attempted to trace the popularity of Mauritius and found that

> returned emigrants, men who had previously been [there] and who had returned … at the expiration of … five years, or who had anticipated that period by paying themselves a portion of the return passage money had acquired the confidence of the proprietors or managers of the plantations on which they had been located….[66]

Therefore, Mr. White, dejectedly wrote:

> All these circumstances combine to make the Mauritius emigration attractive to the natives of India, and to inspire them with confidence, and as now conducted it may be considered as being on a permanent and satisfactory footing. While it continues open I apprehend the natives will give a preference to it over all other emigration.[67]

What is evident here is the ability of workers to navigate the complex opportunities offered by the overseas migration system and to choose their preferred destination based on available information harvested through diverse informal networks. Yet in the 1850s this situation changed radically.

Between 1850 and 1853, emigration restarted for the West Indian colonies. In 1857, W. Walker, Governor of Demerara, noted "the very large amounts [of cash] carried home [to India] by these people, of whom the majority have been little more than five years resident in the colony."[68] Governor Walker was shocked at the not small amount of $28,959.98 [69] that "259" statute adults were taking with them. One driver from the Arabian coast of Demerara, who

had reached the colony in 1846, took with him $3,122.[70] Another driver, who also had a shop and had reached the colony in 1847, was carrying $2,456.08.[71] Indeed, many of those who returned with cash to India could be labor intermediaries who used the contradictions inherent in the powerful political economy of sugar to make a small fortune.[72]

However, the successful operation of such labor recruiting and managing ventures was intricately tied to the variation in prices of sugar on the international market. The late nineteenth century saw a remarkable increase in sugar production. British Guiana and Trinidad saw their sugar production increase by 270 percent between 1852 and 1908.[73] However, the sugar industry's fortunes were not to last. Competition from other parts of the globe, as well as an increase of beet sugar industry in France, further lowered sugar prices for planters in British Guiana.[74] By 1896, the British Guianese producer received, on average, £9.60 for a ton of sugar.[75] Such a dismal situation laid the ground for the rise of new commodities within the Caribbean political economy. One of them was rice.

The difficulties of the sugar industry were not to stop indentured workers. One possible attraction of Demerara to returnees could have been its nascent peasant economy, since rice paddy cultivation flourished under the efforts of post-indentured workers.[76] They built up a rice plantation economy that had been initiated by marooned slaves, who had turned to rice production after fleeing planters' oppression.[77] Moreover, strikes on sugar estates affected sugar production. For example, thirteen strikes took place on British Guiana's sugar estates between 1884 and 1903.[78]

Besides the rice economy's ascendance and the crisis of the sugar industry, other factors influenced the return and eventual permanent residence of indentured workers in the Caribbean. In order to stabilize the labor market, planters and the colonial governments sought to settle the workers in the colonies instead of allowing them to return to India. Furthermore, planters in Trinidad and other British Caribbean colonies were reluctant to fulfill their obligation to provide return passages back to India. Thus, while Governor Arthur H. Gordon introduced a policy in 1869 that allowed Indians to get "a plot of land at the end of their period of indenture …,"[79] most Indian cane farmers had already bought their own land.[80] While some was for the cultivation of rice and cocoa, most of it ended up being used for sugar cane.

Acquisition of land was not necessarily beneficial, however. Probably, ex-indentured workers exercised their choice to stay on the island given the opportunity to buy land. These settlements were, however, not always very successful. Sometimes the location of the settlements was unhealthy.[81] In other cases, immigrants could not choose the location of the settlement, and many subsequently felt that the "land commutation scheme"[82] was merely a plan to rob them of their return passage. K. O. Laurence has argued that planters were opposed to the possible success of the land allotments and preferred for workers to remain on sugar estates rather than cultivate their own land.[83] Not surprisingly, planters were opposed to the development of a more open labor market in which alternative earning opportunities increased for workers.

Land policy also reflected the attempts of the colonial government to attract workers. The colonial governments attempted to differentiate between the older settled workers and newly-arrived indentured workers. Those who had been on the island were offered land so they would not leave the sugar estates. Those who returned to the island where they had first indentured were not always hired because, as seen in the case of British Guiana, planters were reluctant to "take on re-indentured Indians since these knew the ropes."[84]

There is no doubt that further complexities developed when the presence of Indian immigrants threatened the competitive edge of the emancipated African workers, and complex animosities developed around differences in race, religion, and ethnicity among oppressed social groups. Yet such competition did not prevent resistance through strikes and protests and everyday actions of absenteeism. While it would be wrong to imply that subaltern agencies would automatically lead to proletarian consciousness in a unidirectional manner, it would be equally wrong to expect that subalterns would accept the dominance of capital and would be subsumed within its fold without resistance. An example might be Bechu Kurmi of Bengal, who described himself as a "bound coolie," and offered in his series of letters to British Guiana's *The Daily Chronicle* a radical representation of himself.[85] Bechu claimed to be a *kurmi*, a member of the agricultural caste, and a Bengali from Calcutta who was orphaned at an early age.[86] He received no formal education but was schooled by "a white missionary lady."[87] In 1894 the 34-year-old Bechu enlisted for Trinidad but was shipped instead to British Guiana and indentured to the Enmore plantation in East Coast Demerara from December 1894 to February 1897. Yet on arrival, Bechu was found physically unfit for manual labor and was made an assistant driver; later, the deputy manager of the Enmore estate, Mr. Nicholson, allowed Bechu to read newspapers and books.[88] In his first letter to *The Daily Chronicle*, dated November 1, 1896, Bechu condemned shootings that had occurred on the Non Pareil plantation on October 13, 1896. Five indentured workers were killed while fifty-nine were wounded. Bechu's continuous castigation of indentured workers' conditions forced Governor Augustus Hemming to "commute his indentureship in February 1897."[89] Left to his own devices, Bechu started writing a series of letters to the same newspaper that exposed the overworking of indentured labor. Bechu wrote that indentured workers worked twelve hours a day, often faced arbitrary fines, and that female workers faced sexual harassment but were subdued by the threat of being shot.[90] Bechu's letters were so strident that the West India Royal Commission interrogated him. To the commissioners, he elaborated how around early 1897 about 5,000 coolies wanted to return to India, especially those who "have families" in India.[91] Attachment to the land of birth was such that indentured workers were not willing to be mistreated and quickly sought to return to India. As for Bechu, he was a peripatetic immigrant since he had moved from colony to colony.

Before his arrival to British Guiana, Bechu had traveled to Rangoon and Mandalay.[92] While Bechu seemed to have atypically exercised his choice to

reemigrate, several indentured workers resorted to circular migration in order to avoid confinement on sugar estates and to search for better livelihoods. Circular migration of indentured workers bringing the same workers to similar or different destinations was confirmed in the Protector of Immigrants' Annual Report:

> Most of these had already been at Mauritius; and have come back, either with the object of becoming permanent settlers in the Colony, or with the hope of turning their industry and earnings to a more profitable account than they could in India.[93]

Networks of information had established themselves with the return of many indentured workers.[94] Soon certain destinations proved to be popular among workers including returnees from Mauritius, many of whom reembarked on journeys to other colonies. For example, Major Pitcher's report of the emigration of "coolies" from northwestern India to plantation economies is revealing:

> One Din Muhammad returned from Demerara eighteen months ago, after an absence of fifteen years [from India]; took his wife out with him, and brought her back. Had money, but his wife's illness and death, six months ago, cost him a great deal. Was now going to try his luck in Natal, though he would rather go to Demerara, if only the season were open. Spoke with intense scorn of Hindustan, as being unfit to live in after Demerara. No short-commons there, no famine.

Major Pitcher further adds that,

> I drew him out by suggesting that it was very cold, that they could not get fish, and so on, which elicited from him lavish praise of everything and every one connected with Demerara as compared with Hindustan. With him was his son, a boy of five or six, and particularly bright and intelligent. The child had returned from Demerara speaking English, but could now only say a few words, which, however, he seemed very pleased to have an opportunity of using.[95]

While Din Muhammad was one example of a Demerara returnee to India, it has been estimated that about 22 percent of the 451,000 indentured workers who reached Mauritius returned to India for good. According to Geoghegan, "[T]he Colonial Government attributed this fact to the facility of intercourse between India and Mauritius, the short term of engagement, the good wages, enabling the laborers soon to amass a little hoard,…"[96] Geoghegan further adds that "many of those returning to India returned, it was said, but for a time, and ultimately found their way back to Mauritius."[97]

Often indentured Indian immigrants became deeply attached to their newfound homes in different colonies. Once they were informed of their actual destination, they were often tragically disappointed. This was the case for an indentured worker called Carpen, who hanged himself in his hut on a sugar estate in Mauritius. The inspector of immigrants explained how Carpen had "been recruited in India under the impression that he was doing so for the

West Indies, where he had previously worked under a master to whom he was much attached and to whom he intended to return; and that, on his finding himself at Beau Fond, in Mauritius, he lost his head, and finally destroyed himself."[98] Though such statements have been traditionally interpreted as innocent workers being victimized by their employers, an alternative perspective can see this as an example of a worker being denied his choice.

Conclusion

Adam McKeown's influential article of 2004 criticizes Eurocentric perspectives on global migration. His arguments emphasize the sheer volume of intra-Asian migrations, the critical importance of networks influencing migration, and artificial dichotomies of free and unfree migration.[99] This brief essay follows the same tenor of the argument but with certain major qualifications. First, it establishes that the global moments of conflict within capital and massive flows of labor migration influence the very rhetoric of the migration pattern. Rather than locating the disjuncture between the rhetoric of colonial capital and the liberal anti-imperial historians and radical postcolonial critiques, it identifies a continuity between them. This continuity is reinforced by the belief that workers were ignorant and that the domination of capital was hegemonic. From this perspective, workers' agency, understood as resistance, was either absent or did not need to be highlighted.

Rather, workers' mobility across oceans indicated choice. While critically engaging with the argument of resistance, it is clear that the agency of workers could not simply be located within the network of migration on its own. This network of migration operated within a powerful system of global forces of colonial capitalism. Located within the intersections of race, class, and gender, such colonial capitalism sought to create an infrastructure of dominance in extracting the surplus from labor through legally sanctioned economic and, more importantly, extra-economic coercions. Yet such structures of domination were never complete. Rather they were punctured by the contradictions within the global political economy of sugar production and consumption and labor's ability to assert its power to challenge the domination of capital.

Labor challenged the authority of capital at multiple levels. First, in Mauritius, it engaged in circular migration and at times purposeful migration. It operated within the eighteenth century context where there existed slave and labor trades. Its eventual complaints attracted attention and higher-level interventions in the form of Royal Commissions.[100] While such reports need to be read critically—since investigators often carried their humanitarian selves in their opinions—they became a source for historians to excavate the anger of workers and their assertions against the oppression of colonial capital and its allies. Extant literature rightly points out that Royal Commissions played a role in mitigating competition among various groups of employers over the labor of workers. These reports enable us to understand the wider dynamics of migrations from the Indian Ocean to what many Eurocentric historians,

notwithstanding whether they talk about the British or French Atlantic, refer to as the Atlantic World. It is here that workers sought whatever limited options they had to assert their agency and transform the reach of colonial capital and planter Raj. Migration networks among workers within the overarching network of colonial capitalism spanned across the oceans. Boundaries within the oceanic systems did not apply here. Returnees told new stories of opportunities and the resilience of workers both fed into a counterhegemonic information network among workers. India, Trinidad, British Guiana, and Mauritius, disparate locations of peripheral economies, were transformed into integrated networks through the dialectic between the desire of capital to control the spatial and social mobility of labor and the assertion by workers of their agency by exploiting competition between rival colonial employers.

By focusing on the European plantocracy, scholars have tended to homogenize workers and marginalize their agency in terms of resistance and attempts to secure rights. The word "rights" is used here not in the liberal sense of human rights but in the specific sense of being able to exert control over the process of deploying their labor under structural conditions not created by workers themselves. Indeed, the very idea of indentured contracts and the debates around them had their origins in the enlightenment discourse of slavery, specifically trans-Atlantic slavery in the eighteenth century.

While such debates and later historiography provide insights into the structure of domination exercised by colonial capital, recent social science theories also assert that the structures are never complete.[101] The introduction of the steamship, railway, telegraph, and printing press created the infrastructure for labor mobility and strengthened the process of information gathering by workers. But there is a need to locate the development of such infrastructure for the circulation of labor and for information about laboring conditions against the background of changing social and economic circumstances in India and the Afro-Asian colonial world. In India devastating famines and glaring indigenous social inequalities generated by religious, gender, and caste discrimination acted as the primary trigger for migration. Abroad, the direct colonization of the interior of Africa and emancipation of slaves in the Caribbean and Mauritius created needs for new labor. In China the penetration of colonial capital through the lucrative opium trade and acquisition of informal control over territories also generated the need for Indian labor for projects of colonial capital. The dynamic interactions between the oppressive situation at home and demands for new labor abroad changed the very nature of the global movement of workers across oceans. Indeed, employers in different corners of the colonial world competed to recruit Indian workers and sought to tie them to their respective plantations and other civilian projects. Yet the workers also realized the wide nature of the labor market and defied managerial dictates.

Thus, labor mobility was not simply a reflection of the docility of indentured labor to the designs of capital, but it was also symptomatic of their resistance to the attempt to arrest the process of mobility itself and of their choice to reemigrate. In other words, indentured labor in the period between 1834 and

1925 was not a mute victim of colonial capitalism. Indentured workers actively used colonial legal architecture and mobility of infrastructure to advance their interests and sharpen their survival strategies.

NOTES

1. Archival records used for this essay were consulted at the: MNA (Mauritius National Archives) in Coromandel, Mauritius; MGI (Mahatma Gandhi Institute) in Moka, Mauritius, and BNA (British National Archives) in Kew, England. The abbreviations used in this essay are as follows: British Parliamentary Papers (BPP), Calcutta Commission Enquiry (CCE), RRC (Report of the Royal Commissioners Appointed to Enquire into the Treatment of Immigrants in Mauritius, 1875), GRCLEC (General Report of The Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners), WICM (West India Colonies and Mauritius), and Report of the West India Royal Commission (hereafter RWIRC). Subho Basu has presented versions of this paper at the Indian Ocean World Centre, McGill University, Montréal, Canada (October 9, 2013) and at the Annual Conference on South Asia, Madison, Wisconsin, USA (October 17, 2014). The authors express our sincere thanks to Anna Winterbottom, Angela Tozer, Cindy Hahamovitch, Sandeep Banerjee, and Varun Sanadhya for their comments and help.

2. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi Online*, volume 15: May 21, 1915 to August 31, 1915. http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL015.PDF (accessed March 23, 2015). Gandhi to Jehangir Bomanji Petit, June 16, 1915.

3. While "Indian indentured worker" and "coolie" are used interchangeably, we prefer the use of "Indian indentured worker." Dirk Hoerder has suggested that the generic use of "coolie" leads to conflation and blurs specificities of contexts leading to African and Asian migrations. See Dirk Hoerder, "Global Labour Migration and Transnational Communities: Asian Cultures, Images, Resistances, Class Interactions," in *Asian Migrants in Europe: Transcultural Connections*, ed. Sylvia Hahn and Stan Nadel (Göttingen, 2014), 16.

4. Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830–1920* (London; New York: Oxford, 1974).

5. Indentured labor was introduced into the following places: Mauritius (1834), British Guiana (1838), Jamaica (1838), Trinidad (1845), Reunion Island (1862), Guadeloupe (1864), St. Lucia (1866), Danish St. Croix (1870), Surinam (1870), Fiji (1879).

6. For a detailed discussion of the Indian Ocean World and its related historiographies, see Markus P. M. Vink, "Indian Ocean Studies and the 'New Thalassology,'" *Journal of Global History* 2 (2007): 41–62. For a discussion of the Atlantic World and definitions, see Peter A. Coclanis, "Atlantic World or Atlantic/World?" *The William and Mary Quarterly* 63 (2006): 725–42; Alison Games, "Atlantic History: Definitions, Chges, and Opportunities," *The American Historical Review* 111 (2006): 741 – 57. For connections between the Indian Ocean and Atlantic worlds, see Dirk Hoerder, "Crossing the Waters: Historic Developments and Periodizations Before the 1830s," in *Connecting Seas and Connected Ocean Rims: Indian, Atlantic, and Pacific Oceans and China Seas Migrations from the 1830s to the 1930s*, ed. Donna R. Gabaccía and Dirk Hoerder (Leiden, 2011). For epistemological approaches about oceans and seas and possible distinctions in their definitions, see David Lambert, Luciana Martins, and Miles Ogborn, "Currents, Visions and Voyages: Historical Geographies of the Sea," *Journal of Historical Geography* 32 (2006): 479–93; Peter N. Miller, "Introduction," in *The Sea: Thalassography and Historiography*, ed. Peter N. Miller (Ann Arbor, MI, 2013). For this article, we privilege the use of "ocean" over "sea."

7. See the classic work of Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830–1920* (London; New York, 1974); Ranajit Das Gupta, "Structure of Labour Market in Colonial India," *Economic and Political Weekly* 16 (1981): 1781 – 1806; Jan Breman, *Taming the Coolie Beast: Plantation Society and the Colonial Order in Southeast Asia* (Delhi; New York, 1989); Rana P. Behal and Prabhu P. Mohapatra, "'Tea and Money versus Human Life': The Rise and Fall of the Indenture System in the Assam Tea Plantations 1840–1908," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 19 (1992): 142 – 72; E. Valentine Daniel, Henry Bernstein, and Tom Brass, *Plantations, Proletarians, and Peasants in Colonial Asia* (London, 1992), 5.

8. Kissoonsingh Hazareesingh, *Profil de l'Ile Maurice* (Paris, 1976), 35–8; Brij V. Lal, "Approaches to the Study of Indian Indentured Emigration with Special Reference to Fiji,"

The Journal of Pacific History 15 (1980): 66; Ahmed Ali, *Plantation to Politics: Studies on Fiji Indians* (Suva, 1980), 5.

9. For African Indentured workers, see Marina Carter and James Ng Foong Kwong, *Forging the Rainbow: Labour Immigrants in British Mauritius* (Terre Rouge, Mauritius, 1997), v.. For a critique of the Afro-Atlantic model's predominance, see Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, "Rewriting the African Diaspora: Beyond the Black Atlantic," *African Affairs* 104 (2005): 35–68; Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, "African Diasporas: Toward a Global History," *African Studies Review* 53 (2010): 7. Richard B. Allen has emphasized this point here: "Slaves, Convicts, Abolitionism and the Global Origins of the Post-Emancipation Indentured Labor System," *Slavery & Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies* 35 No. 2 (2014): 328 – 29.

10. Madhavi Kale, *Fragments of Empire: Capital, Slavery, and Indian Indentured Labor Migration in the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia, PA, 1998).

11. Hazareesingh, *History of Indians in Mauritius.* Brij V. Lal, "Kunti's Cry: Indentured Women on Fiji Plantations," *Indian Economic & Social History Review* 22 (1985): 55–71.

12. The indentured system (1834 to 1925) in Mauritius was not static. Reasons for migrating changed over time. In the early phase (1834 to 1839), workers were fraudulently recruited. In the second phase (1842 to 1860s), migrant workers followed their relatives or brought their relatives with them. Returnees as early as the 1840s started returning to India to recruit more labor.

13. Marina Carter, *Servants, Sirdars, and Settlers: Indians in Mauritius, 1834–1874* (Delhi; New York, 1995), 2.

14. Indeed in recent work, rather than London, Calcutta appeared to be the center of sub-imperial system of British control over the Indian Ocean region. See Thomas R. Metcalf, *Imperial Connections: India in the Indian Ocean Arena*, 1860–1920 (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, 2007), 1 – 3.

15. We refer to five main colonial governments in this essay: (1) the London Colonial Office, (2) the Indian colonial government (and more specifically, the Emigration Agents based in Calcutta, which regimented outflow of labor to both the Caribbean and to the Indian Ocean), (3) the colonial government in Mauritius, (4) the colonial government in British Guiana, and (5) the colonial government in Trinidad.

16. Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, 2005), 7, 9.

17. Roland Lamusse, "The Economic Development of the Mauritius Sugar Industry—I. Development in Field and Factory," *Revue Agricole et Sucrière de L'île Maurice* 43 (1964): 22–28, 113-27, 354-72. Also see George Richardson Porter, *The Nature and Properties of the Sugar Cane; with Practical Directions for the Improvement of Its Culture, and the Manufacture of Its Products* (London, 1830), 241: "The legislature, having from the 5th day of July, in the year 1825, allowed the importation of sugar from the Mauritius at the same rate of duty as that levied on West India sugar, instead of the higher rate previously imposed; this abatement has given a very considerable impulse to the settling of sugar estates in that Island."

18. Richard B. Allen, "Capital, Illegal Slaves, Indentured Labourers and the Creation of a Sugar Plantation Economy in Mauritius, 1810–1860," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 36 (2008): 154.

19. Carter, *Servants, Sirdars, and Settlers*, 4; *Slaves, Freedmen, and Indentured Laborers*, 16. While immigrant registers in Mauritius indicate 1910 as the last year of arrival of indentured workers, the Protector of Immigrants has stipulated there were arrivals as late as 1924. More broadly, throughout the British Empire, the system ended in 1919. See Tinker, *A New System of Slavery,* 334–66. Fiji was more reluctant to stop the indentured system and did so only in 1921, Tinker, *A New System of Slavery*, 365.

20. British National Archives (hereafter BNA), alternatively known as Public Record Office (hereafter PRO), PRO 30/12/31/5, Enclosure 2, Gillanders, Arbuthnot and Co. to John Gladstone, June 6, 1836, 2 in "British Guiana, Copy of a Letter from John Gladstone Esquire to Lord Glenelg—With Enclosures."

21. Ibid.

22. Most Indian indentured workers employed for agricultural labor had to prepare holes for the cane, plant the cane, weed the ground, and cut the cane.

23. BNA, PRO 30/12/31/5, January 4, 1836, Gladstone to Arbuthnot. The whole quote is, "It is of great importance to us to endeavour to provide a portion of other labourers whom we might use as a set-off, and, when the time for it comes, make us, as far as it is possible, independent of our negro population; and it has occurred to us that a moderate number of Bengalees,

such as you were sending to the isle of France [Mauritius], might be very suitable for our purpose; and on this subject I am now desirous to obtain all the information you can possible give me. The number I should think of taking and sending by one vessel direct from Calcutta to Demerara would be about 100; they ought to be young, active, able-bodied people. It would be desirable that a portion of them, at least one half, should be married, and their wives disposed to work in the field as well as they themselves. We should require to bind them for a period not less than five years or more than seven years."

24. BNA, PRO 30/12/31/5, June 6, 1836, Gillanders, Arbuthnot, and Co. to John Gladstone, 3.

25. Ibid.

26. BNA, PRO 30/12/31/5, June 6, 1836, Arbuthnot to Gladstone, 3.

27. See discussion of colonial anthropometry in Crispin Bates, "Race, Caste and Tribe in Central India: The Early Origins of Indian Anthropometry," in *The Concept of Race in South Asia*, ed. Peter Robb (Delhi, 1995), 219–59.

28. The term "Indian" is not used here to assume or connote ideas about territorial and national attachments during the early phase of indentured labor (1834 to 1838). Rather "Indian" here is used to identify various indentured workers from the Indian subcontinent.

29. British Parliamentary Papers (BPP), 1841 XVI (45) Report of Committee Appointed to Inquire Respecting the Exportation of Hill Coolies (Calcutta Commission Enquiry, hereafter CCE), paragraph 9, 5. From T. Dickens, James Charles, and Russomoy Dutt to G. A. Bushby, Secretary to Government of Bengal, October 14, 1840.

30. Appendix to CCE, 177. From F. W. Birch to H. T. Prinsep, Secretary to Government of India, February 8, 1838.

31. CCE, "List of the Men who went to the Mauritius from various villages, 1838," 185.

32. Ibid.

33. Mauritius National Archives (hereafter MNA), Immigration Department of Mauritius, *Indian Immigration, Arrivals, Births, Departures & Deaths From 1834 to 1st January 1853* (n.p., n.d.). Table 2nd Immigration "Arrivals of Indian Immigrants from 1843 to 31st December 1852"; *Immigration of 1859. Report Thereupon by The Protector of Immigrants. Presented to His Excellency The Governor on the 20th February 1860.* (n.p., 1860); "Table A, Arrivals of Immigrants from each of the Presidencies of India, and the proportion of females to males introduced from each Presidency in the year 1859." From 1849 to 1859, there was an increase of 84 percent in the total number of arrivals from India to Mauritius (including males, females, girls, boys, female infants, and male infants).

34. MNA, RA 1071, Thomas Hugon, Protector of Immigrants to Governor of Mauritius, January 11, 1850.

35. MNA, RA 1071, Memorandum of Thomas Hugon, Protector of Immigrants, February 2, 1850.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

38. BPP 1841 (427) Chapman & Barclay to Colville, Gilmore & Co., Calcutta, November 23, 1840.

39. Carter, *Servants, Sirdars, and Settlers*, 27.

40. MNA, PA 3, January 28, 1856, Emigration Agent at Calcutta to Protector of Immigrants.

41. Between 1840 and 1844, the value of sugar exported from Mauritius was £1,020,386 from "Table 2. Condition of the Mauritian Economy, 1812–1934," *Slaves, Freedmen, and Indentured Laborers*, 29.

42. *Slaves, Freedmen, and Indentured Laborers*, 58.

43. Carter, *Servants, Sirdars, and Settlers*, 88.

44. Ibid.

45. BPP 1847 (325) Grey to Gomm September 29, 1846; PP 1848 (66) Grey to Gomm January 2, 1848, cited in Carter, *Servants, Sirdars, and Settlers*, 231.

46. A. L. Beier, "'A New Serfdom': Labor Laws, Vagrancy Statutes, and Labor Discipline in England, 1350–1800," in *Cast Out: Vagrancy and Homelessness in Global and Historical Perspective*, ed. A. L. Beier and Paul Ocobock (Athens, OH, 2008), 35–63.

47. William Edward Frere and Victor Alexander Williamson, *Report of the Royal Commissioners Appointed to Enquire into the Treatment of Immigrants in Mauritius: Presented to Both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty, 6 February, 1875*

(hereafter RRC) (London, 1875), 16, paragraph 16 under "Chapter II—The Petition of the Old Immigrants and the de Plévitz Pamphlet."

48. For vagrancy in London, see Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship Between Classes in Victorian Society* (Oxford, 1984) 274–276.

49. RRC, paragraph 16, 16.

50. Ibid., 3.

51. RRC, 3

52. RRC, 4.

53. Major Pitcher's Report in the Royal Gazette of Saturday, January 13, 1883, cited in Rev. H. V. P. Bronkhurst, *The Colony of British Guyana and Its Labouring Population: Containing a Short Account of the Colony, and Brief Descriptions of the Black Creole, Portuguese, East Indian, and Chinese Coolies, Their Manners, Customs, Religious Notions, And Other Interesting Particulars And Amusing Incidents Concerning Them Collected From Different Sources, As Newspapers, Etc., And From Sundry Articles Published In The English And Colonial Newspapers At Different Times* (London, 1883), 20.

54. MGI, PL 21, Annual Report on Indian Immigration to, Indian Emigration From, and Indentured Indian Immigrants in the Colony [Fiji] For The Year 1906, July 12, 1907, 5. While this essay focuses on remigrants between the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic Ocean, remigrants did travel from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific Ocean. For example, out of 117 re-migrants to Fiji in 1906, 33 had "worked or lived previously" in Natal, South Africa; 4 in Mauritius, 3 in Rangoon, and 10 in Ceylon.

55. While there was much intramigration within the Caribbean, for this article we are focusing on British Guiana and Trinidad and do not cover French Guiana, Dutch Guiana, and other British West Indies colonies.

56. *Slaves, Freedmen, and Indentured Laborers*, 62.

57. Yoshina Hurgobin, "Making of Medical Ideologies: Indentured Labour in Mauritius," in *Histories of Medicine in the Indian Ocean World*, ed. Anna Winterbottom and Facil Tesfaye (New York, forthcoming), 9–11.

58. T. W. C. Murdoch, C. Alexander Wood, and Frederic Rogers, *Eighth General Report of The Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners* (hereafter GRCLEC) (London, 1848), 20.

59. Marina Carter, *Voices from Indenture: Experiences of Indian Migrants in the British Empire*. (New York, 1996), 21. To stave off labor needs during the temporary stop of the indentured system, Madeiran Portuguese immigrants streamed into British Guiana. See Sr.M. Noel Menezes, RSM "The Madeiran Portuguese and the Establishment of the Catholic Church in British Guiana, 1837–98" in *After the Crossing: Immigrants and Minorities in Caribbean Creole Society*, ed. Howard Johnson (London, 1988), 57 – 78.

60. Murdoch et al., *GRCLEC*, 20.

61. Murdoch et al., *GRCLEC*, 20.

62. Robin Cohen, *The Cambridge Survey of World Migration* (Cambridge, England, 1995), 60. Contract lengths could differ among colonies within the Caribbean region.

63. Ray Kiely, *The Politics of Labour and Development in Trinidad* (Kingston, Jamaica, 1996), 50.

64. P. C. Emmer, "The Importation of British Indians into Surinam (Dutch Guiana), 1873–1916," in *International Labour Migration: Historical Perspectives*, ed. Shula Marks and Peter Richardson (Hounslow, Middlesex, 1984), 90–111 cited in Robin Cohen, *The Cambridge Survey of World Migration* (Cambridge, England, 1995), 60.

65. Calcutta was the port of embarkation through which most indentured workers left between 1845 and 1849.

66. 12th GRCLEC, 1852, Appendix No. 42, Extract of a Report from Mr. White to the Governor of British Guiana, November 8, 1850 cited in Carter, *Voices from Indenture*, 24.

67. Ibid.

68. BPP 1859 Session 2 (31) (31–1) West India Colonies and Mauritius (hereafter WICM). Part I British Guiana, Jamaica, Trinidad; Governor Walker to H. Labouchere, MP, 10th October 1857, para 6, 7. Ship "Hamilla Mitchell" was leaving for Calcutta with: 209 men, 40 women, 10 boys, 10 girls, 8 infants.

69. Spanish dollar is used here.

70. Spanish dollar is used here.

71. WICM, 9, September 30, 1857, C. Williams, Acting Immigration Agent to J. Gardiner Austin, Acting Government Secretary. Spanish dollar is used here.

72. Steven C. Topik and Wells, *Global Markets Transformed, 1870 – 1945* (Cambridge, MA, 2012), 193–5.

73. For British Guiana, sugar exports increased by 270 percent between 1852 and 1908, while for Trinidad, the increase was by 270 percent between 1850 and 1880, in Alan H. Adamson, *Sugar without Slaves: The Political Economy of British Guiana, 1838–1904* (New Haven, CT, 1972), 106, 179; Dwarka Nath, *A History of Indians in Guyana* (London, 1950), Tables 29–30; Bridget Brereton, *A History of Modern Trinidad, 1783–1962* (Kingston, Jamaica, 1981), 84; cited in David Northrup, *Indentured Labor In The Age of Imperialism, 1834–1922* (Cambridge, England, 1995), 33.

74. For beet sugar production in France, see Michael Stephen Smith, *The Emergence of Modern Business Enterprise in France, 1800–1930* (Cambridge, MA, 2006).

75. David Northrup, *Indentured Labor In The Age of Imperialism, 1834–1922* (Cambridge, England, 1995), 31.

76. Raymond T. Smith, "Economic Aspects of Rice Production in an East Indian Community in British Guiana," *Social and Economic Studies* 6 (1957): 502–22; C. O'Loughlin, "The Rice Sector in the Economy of British Guiana," *Social and Economic Studies* 7 (1958): 115–43.

77. Ved Prakash Vatuk "Protest Songs of East Indians in British Guiana," *The Journal of American Folklore* 77 (1964): 220–35.

78. Alan H. Adamson, *Sugar without Slaves*, 106–109.

79. Kiely, *The Politics of Labour*, 55.

80. Raphael Sebastien, "The Development of Capitalism in Trinidad, 1845–1917." (Ph.D. diss., Howard University, 1978), 408; cited in Kiely, *The Politics of Labour*, 55.

81. K. O. Laurence, "Indians as Permanent Settlers in Trinidad Before 1900," in *Calcutta to Caroni*, ed. John Gaffar La Guerre (St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago, 1985), 101.

82. Ibid.

83. Laurence, *Indians as Permanent Settlers in Trinidad Before 1900*, 101.

84. Samaroo, *Two Abolitions*, 26.

85. Clem Seecharan, *Bechu: "Bound Coolie" Radical in British Guiana, 1894–1901* (Kingston, Jamaica, 1999), 13–16.

86. Seecharan, *Bechu: "Bound Coolie,"* 16–17. Bechu was apparently not from an agricultural class and seems to have "enlisted under an assumed name, and such particulars as he has stated with reference to his past history have been found on enquiry to be wholly fictitious."

87. Ibid., 18.

88. Seecharan, *Bechu: "Bound Coolie,"* 33.

89. Ibid., 15.

90. Ibid., 7, 33.

91. BPP 1898 [C.8657] West India Royal Commission, Report of the West India Royal Commission (hereafter RWIRC) Appendix C., Part II, British Guiana, paragraph 1965.

92. BPP 1898 [C.8657] West India Royal Commission, RWIRC, Appendix C., Part II, British Guiana, paragraph 1978.

93. MNA, H.N.D. Beyts, *Immigration of 1859, Report Thereupon by the Protector of Immigrants Presented to His Excellency The Governor on the 20 February 1860*, 1.

94. It is estimated that out of the more than 450,000 indentured workers who arrived into Mauritius (excluding births and mortality rates), more than 22 percent returned to India. Carter, *Servants, Sirdars, and Settlers*, 46.

95. Major Pitcher's Report in the Royal Gazette of Saturday January 13, 1883, cited in Rev. H. V. P. Bronkhurst, *The Colony of British Guyana and Its Labouring Population* (London, 1883), 21.

96. J. Geoghegan, *Note on Emigration from India* (Calcutta, 1873), 15.

97. Ibid.

98. Carter, *Voices from Indenture*, 68.

99. Adam McKeown "Global Migration 1846–1940," *Journal of World History* 15 (2004): 155–89.

100. RRC (Report of the Royal Commissioners Appointed to Enquire into the Treatment of Immigrants in Mauritius, 1875). More commissions would be created to investigate the conditions of labor in Mauritius in 1885, 1909, and 1925.

101. Derek Attridge, Geoff Bennington, and Robert Young, *Post-Structuralism and the Question of History* (Cambridge, 1989).