

ESSAYS

Part I

**“le caractère d’une traite d’esclaves déguisée
(the nature of a disguised slave trade)”?**

**Labor recruitment for La Réunion at Portuguese
Mozambique, 1887-1889**

Edward A. Alpers

Abstract

*This paper examines the final moments of the French *libres engagés* system of labor recruitment from Mozambique to La Réunion in the late 1880s. Rather than simply regarding this system as a form of disguised slave trade, it seeks to understand how these workers were actually recruited and the conditions of their employment on the French colonial island. It draws upon both French and Portuguese archival sources to place this brief chapter in the longer context of post-abolition labor recruitment in the southwest Indian Ocean.*

In response to the closing off of indentured labor from British India in the 1880s, the French colonial administration of La Réunion sought to revive the recruitment of labor from the Portuguese colony of Mozambique. Despite its earlier nineteenth-century history of masking the illegal slave trade through the “*libres engagés*” or “free labor emigration” scheme, French authorities sought to meet this sudden need for labor by extending to La Réunion already existing agreements with Portugal to recruit labor for its Mozambique Channel colonies of Mayotte and Nossi-Bé. Ever wary of British abolitionist criticism, they regarded their situation to be no different from the 1875 agreement between Great Britain and Portugal to supply labor to Natal. The flurry of activity surrounding this brief episode in the history of labor recruitment to the French Indian Ocean island-colony produced a body of documentation that suggests that this latest episode was neither exactly what the British claimed it was nor what the French hoped it would be.

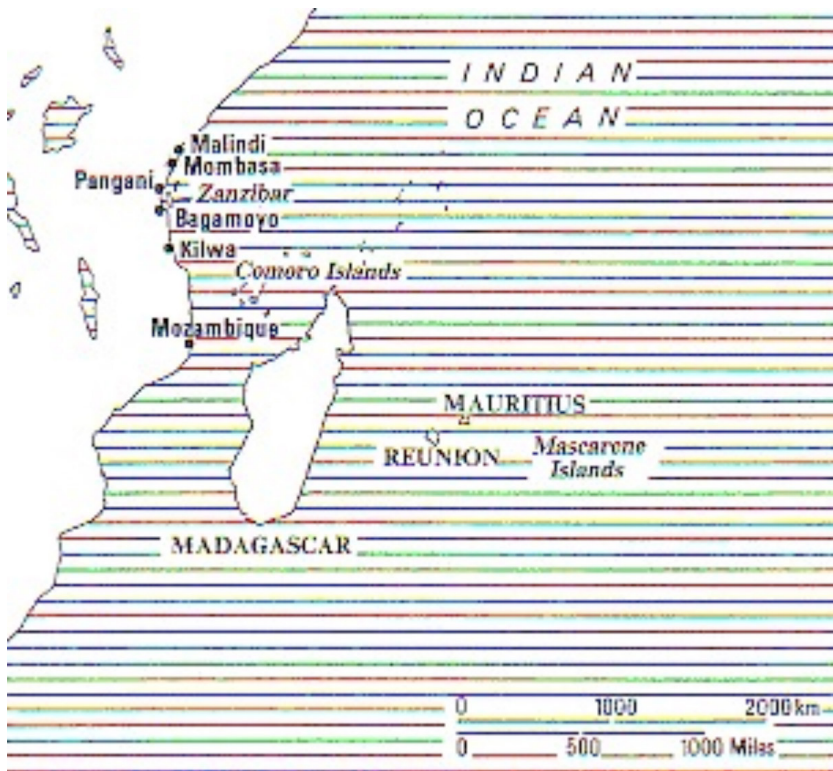
In this paper I ask exactly how freely these particular “*libres engagés*” were recruited and suggest that in order to answer this

question it is critically important to study the African side of recruitment. Students of the slave trade have paid close attention to the African (or supply side) of this traffic in Africa, but those who have studied the recruitment of African indentured labor in the southwest Indian Ocean have generally not asked this question, assuming that the *engagés* were simply enslaved captives by another name. I also want to make one additional point about the pivotal role played by interpreters and translation in the recruitment process and our understanding of how the entire system of indentured labor worked on the ground. As I will demonstrate below, the French understanding of the business of recruitment depended on the language ability, and honesty, of a single, unnamed interpreter at Inhambane, Mozambique while their ability to assess the conditions under which men were recruited to La Réunion in the late 1880s was stymied by lack of anyone who could understand their language(s). Finally, I want to endorse Pier Larson's comment to the 2011 Truth and Justice Commission conference on "Slave trade, slavery and transition to indenture in Mauritius and the Mascarenes, 1715-1848" held at the University of Mauritius about the challenge of "fragmented archives" in the study of these issues in the Indian Ocean by pointing out that one obstacle to completing this paper had been my lack of access to the relevant Mozambican archives for Inhambane. With the collegial collaboration of Chapane Mutiua at the Centro de Estudos Africanos of the Universidade Eduardo Mondlane in Maputo I am now able to integrate these complementary materials to the body of French documentation around which the paper is constructed.¹

Demand for labor had dominated the economic history of the Mascarene Islands from the moment the French determined to establish plantation economies there in the eighteenth century. This demand was first met by developing the traffic in enslaved labor from both Madagascar and the coast of eastern Africa.² The loss of the Île de France to Great Britain in the Napoleonic Wars marked the beginning of the end of the slave trade in the southwest Indian Ocean, as the British struck anti-slave trade treaties with King Radama I of Madagascar in 1817 and Sultan Said b. Sultan of Muscat in 1822 to end the slave trade to Europeans from Zanzibar. Treaty-making did not, of course, end the slave trade, and a flourishing illegal traffic continued to the Mascarenes until

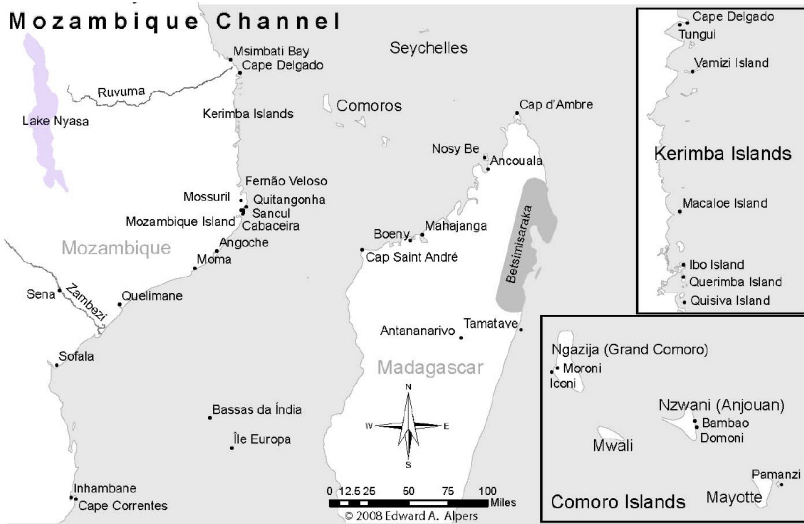
abolition of slavery at Mauritius in 1835 (extending to the end of apprenticeship in 1839) and the renamed La Réunion in 1848.³ The French acquisition in the early 1840s of new island-colonies on Nossi-Bé (modern Nosy Be) (1840) and Mayotte (Maore) (1841) in the Mozambique Channel further augmented and complicated the demand for labor at this time. Meanwhile, a second Anglo-Omani treaty in 1845 further restricted the slave trade at Zanzibar and emphasized the coast to the south of Cape Delgado, in territory claimed by Portugal, as the principal source of enslaved labor for both the Comoro Islands and western Madagascar. For the most part Portugal was neither willing nor able to respond to British pressure to end or even restrict the slave trade along the coast until after the mid-nineteenth century.⁴

A solution to what Richard Allen has aptly called “the constant demand of the French” for labor on its Indian Ocean and Mozambique Channel island-colonies was identified in the so-called “free labor emigration” scheme. This system of indenture was immediately singled out by British abolitionists and the British Government for what it was: a poorly disguised variant of the illegal slave trade. In particular, the British denounced the method of acquiring indentured labor through *rachat préalable* or the repurchase of slaves, which the French had initiated in Senegal in 1839-1840 and subsequently extended to eastern Africa and the Indian Ocean. During the heyday of the “free labor emigration” scheme in the southwest Indian Ocean from about 1850 to 1870 the French therefore found themselves regularly having to defend a system of labor recruitment that the British, who by this time exercised complete hegemony over the Indian Ocean, harshly criticized. A number of distinguished scholars have examined this system of “slave redemption,” itself a phrase pregnant with meaning in light of the Christian ideology of British abolitionism, and all have reached the same conclusion as the British abolitionists that it was little more than a disguised slave trade. Thirty-five years ago, in his pioneering study of emancipation and indenture, François Renault noted that it was “therefore impossible to consider recruitment on an actual voluntary basis” (*impossible donc d’envisager un recrutement sur la base d’un véritable volontariat*).⁵ A decade later, Hubert Gerbeau stated of “the redemption of slaves followed by their engagement” that “the recruitment often took place in an atmosphere of terror and violence reminding us



Map 1. The Southwest Indian Ocean

of the slave trade.”⁶ More recently Sudel Fuma observed at the beginning of this millennium: “The solution for the French was to purchase slaves from a slave trader, to liberate them and to engage them under contract to work in the colonies. This system of repurchase of slaves is in reality one of disguised slave trading.”⁷ In a similar vein Virginie Chaillou[-Atrous] echoes Fuma’s assessment in the following terms: “One must thus conclude that the recruitment of so-called free African workers was only a disguised return, although mitigated by a certain number of juridical constraints, to the system of the slave trade.”⁸ So when the French sought to revivify the system of “free labor emigration” from Portuguese East Africa in the late 1880s it is no wonder that this decision was met with skepticism by Great Britain.



Map 2. The Mozambique Channel

What were the circumstances that caused the French to return to this roundly denounced scheme? According to economic historian Hai Quang Ho, the most fundamental cause was a demographic crisis that saw the population of La Réunion decline from 182,200 in 1877 to 163,900 in 1887. “During this entire period,” he writes, “reproduction being incapable of providing a sufficient number of workers, the planters sought to import them.”⁹ The more immediate stimulus, however, was the suspension of immigration of indentured workers from British India to La Réunion in 1882, which caused the French authorities to explore the possibility of recruiting engaged labor from the ports of Portuguese East Africa. In fact, France already had an agreement with Portugal to recruit laborers from Mozambique for the plantations of Nossi-Bé and Mayotte that dated to a ministerial declaration from 23 June 1881.¹⁰ The process by which this arrangement was extended to La Réunion on 24 November 1887 merits a more detailed look than it is usually accorded.¹¹

In September 1886 orders were prepared to dispatch Pierre-Auguste Dol from La Réunion to Mozambique to engage with the Governor-Governor, then Augusto Vidal de Castilho Berreto e Noronha, of the Portuguese colony for the recruitment of labor.

The interim Governor of the French island-colony, Jean Baptiste Antoine Lougnon, was particularly eager to know if the Portuguese could supply a large number of workers right away. For his troubles, DoI was allocated a subvention of 5000 Francs.¹² The 1881 Franco-Portuguese agreement had identified the old slaving port of Ibo, the Portuguese administrative headquarters for the Kerimba Islands to the south of Cape Delgado, as the center for labor recruitment to Nossi-Bé and Mayotte, but before long Ibo proved not to be entirely suitable, even though the terms of the contracts were more favorable now than they had been at mid-century. According to the French declaration of 10 May 1858 all foreign workers were subject to contracts of five years duration, with a maximum period of service fixed at ten years.¹³ In the optimistic language of Article XI of the Portuguese Government's official announcement of 23 June 1881, "The natives who contract their services are like all other Portuguese subjects, entirely free, and therefore, as such, they are bound to comply with the conditions to which they may have agreed, and said conditions should be clearly explained by means of a competent interpreter to each native."¹⁴ By October of the following year the Portuguese had established a set of formal steps to implement this new labor emigration regime.¹⁵ Despite the effort of the Portuguese to make the new system conform to post-slavery sensibilities, the British could not accept this arrangement, rejecting out of hand the Portuguese response that it was no different from the 1875 declaration allowing for the British recruitment of African workers from Mozambique for Natal.

British protests notwithstanding, the recruitment scheme faced more serious problems on the ground at Ibo, where the French agent was a local resident (*morador*) who was previously a large slave owner. French efforts to demonstrate that engaged laborers would be well treated and returned home by bringing former enslaved workers from Mayotte to Ibo in January 1882 were categorically rejected by local Africans. No one believed that only volunteers would be taken to Mayotte and in the ensuing gathering local police fired upon the crowd, killing some two dozen individuals and wounding countless other protesters. As a consequence of this show of force, large numbers of Africans fled Ibo Island to the mainland, and the French man-of-war and the French ship intended to carry *libres engagés* to Mayotte departed.

As British Consul at Mozambique Henry O'Neill commented, the French decision to focus recruitment on Ibo was based on "an entire misconception of the native mind, and the condition of native affairs, in the district of Ibo. The recollection of slavery and the slave trade in that district is far too vivid, as well as the well-known fact that even now it is the terminal point of a great slave route, to permit the native to accept the idea of 'free emigration.'"¹⁶ Not surprisingly, only a few dozen workers were ever recruited for Mayotte from Ibo, not least because, according to O'Neill, the Governor of Ibo "was very strict about having the terms of the contract explained."¹⁷

This was the situation that Dol encountered when he undertook his mission to Mozambique early in 1887: the unsuccessful fulfillment of labor recruitment at Ibo and the persistent opposition to the *libres engagés* system by both the British and observant Portuguese officials. Dol expressed special interest in the operation of the recruitment system for the plantations and railway construction of South Africa that operated at Lourenço Marques (Delagoa Bay), noting its control by the Portuguese authorities, the transportation of recruits by the Castle Line, and the role played by the labor recruiter who was in charge of the operation. An outbreak of smallpox in 1885, however, followed by a quarantine at Natal contributed to ending recruitment from Lourenço Marques.¹⁸ In his report dated 15 February 1887, Dol indicated that its revival depended entirely on the British. He next inserted the full text of the 1875 Anglo-Portuguese Agreement for labor recruitment to Natal, implying that it might—or perhaps should—serve as a model for a parallel agreement for La Réunion. He also noted the unwavering opposition of the British to French aspirations and the failure of the Ibo scheme. Nevertheless, he was convinced that Mozambique could easily supply all labor needed at La Réunion since "trade and local cultivation are not sufficient to occupy the populations directly subject or tributary to the Portuguese."¹⁹ Accordingly, he recommended that France seek "an identical treaty" with Portugal to the 1875 agreement with Great Britain.

Dol was apparently undecided on where French labor recruitment should be centered, suggesting Mozambique Island and Mossuril, on the mainland opposite the colonial capital, or Inhambane, on the southern coast. He seems, however, to have

favored focusing the operation at Mossuril, stating that the area of Matibane, stretching north and south from Mossuril into the hinterland, could supply an annual target of 400 workers for La Réunion. Dol's notion reveals his lack of both knowledge of prevailing conditions along this stretch of the coast and historical sensitivity. First, the slave trade still flourished from this region at ports lying outside Portuguese control. Second, the Mossuril hinterland was centrally involved in the notorious incident of the French vessel *Charles et Georges* in 1857, which precipitated an international crisis between France and Portugal following seizure by the Portuguese navy of the ship carrying enslaved Africans who were alleged to be *libres engagés*.²⁰ Should Mossuril not be viable, Dol next suggested Inhambane as a possible site for a labor recruitment depot. He reasoned that "this place offers the advantage of providing contract workers more accustomed to [plantation] work" (*ce point offrirait l'avantage de fournir des engagés plus habitués au travail*),²¹ although he also noted the added transportation expenses of having to carry them from Inhambane to Mozambique, presumably to clear formalities with the Portuguese Governor-General.²¹ It is not clear from his report how Dol arrived at this opinion, but the fact is that overland labor migration from Inhambane to Natal had begun as early as July 1875.²² It may also be that Dol was aware of the fact that "Nyambanes" constituted an established African colonial ethnicity at La Réunion as a consequence of the slave trade.²³

Dol noted that the Portuguese would not permit contracts of more than three years' duration. Yet even this limitation could work to the advantage of French planters, he rather hopefully suggested. "The black from the coast of Mozambique who readily acclimates and accustoms himself to Réunion does not leave his homeland without difficulty. He will leave it much more easily if he anticipates returning to it at the end of a shorter period of time."²⁴ He added further that enabling women and children to emigrate with their men "will contribute powerfully to deciding the blacks to emigrate (*contribuera puissamment à décider les noirs à émigrer*)," although he did not anticipate that these would be numerous because "among primitive people the family scarcely exists (*chez les peuples primitifs la famille n'est guère constituée*)."²⁵ He continues to reveal his ethnocentric views on the African men he hoped the French would be able to entice

to work at La Réunion in his discussion of salary, commenting that Mozambique Africans had little concern for ordinary needs except for “cash wages (*le salaire en argent*).” He recommended a salary of 15 francs per month to attract volunteers, while suggesting cynically that this figure could be renegotiated at 12⁵⁰ at La Réunion. This stratagem would not work at Inhambane, however, where nothing less than 15 francs would suffice, because “the blacks from this part of Mozambique are more used to work (*les noirs de cette partie de Mozambique sont plus habitués au travail*),” as well as to the higher salaries they can earn working in the South African mines, presumably meaning Kimberly, even allowing for the harsh working conditions in the mines. With respect to the work for which they were to be recruited at La Réunion, Dol comments: “The work of their farms is clearly not comparable to the kind of plantation agriculture for which they will be employed on Réunion. But at the time they are contractually engaged, they will not know about this kind of labor for which a real expatriation will be required.”²⁶

To make a success of this proposed business, Dol recommended that the entire process be assigned to the Vice Consul of France at Mozambique, Alfred Lombard,²⁷ who would report to the Portuguese authorities and appoint “an effective recruitment agent who will at the same time be director of the depot (*un agent effectif de recrutement qui serait en même temps directeur de dépôt*),” adding that there was no shortage of experienced individuals whom the Vice Consul could employ in this position. “This agent will be particularly charged with recruiting workers, facilitating the process of getting them to the depot, and taking care of their good maintenance until their embarkation.”²⁸ He further suggested a fee of 10 francs for each man embarked for La Réunion. Additional expenses associated with recruitment would probably be twice as much at Inhambane as at Mossuril because of the cost of coastal transportation up to Mozambique.

Dol’s recommendations were taken up by the Governor of La Réunion, who sought approval for this enlarged labor recruitment program from France and simultaneously pressed the French Vice Consul at Mozambique to seek approval from the Portuguese authorities. Thus, on 5 November 1887 France declared that it was permissible for the Réunionnais to recruit workers from Mozambique and on 24 November 1887 an official declaration

by the Portuguese Government extended the 1881 agreement to Mozambique and Inhambane. The first efforts to implement the new arrangements at Mozambique were, however, unsatisfactory. Only four men embarked on a French transport ship in February 1888 while a month later the Messageries Maritimes steamer “Ebre” carried only seventeen *libres engagés* to La Réunion “because of the great difficulties caused by the reluctance of the blacks (*à cause des grandes difficultés occasionnées par l’hésitation des nègres*).”²⁹ More to the point, in January 1889 the Governor of La Réunion wrote to the Minister of the Navy and Colonies that at Mozambique, “recruitment is frequently rendered difficult, not to say impossible, because of the insurrections that often prevail there (*le recrutement est rendu le plus souvent difficile, pour ne pas dire impossible, à raison des insurrections qui y règnent fréquemment*).”³⁰

When Great Britain discovered the new Franco-Portuguese agreement, however, it led immediately to the usual recriminations by the British. In a stern letter dated Paris, 13 April 1888 Lord [Robert Bulwer-] Lytton, British Ambassador to France, conveyed to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs reports from the British Resident at La Réunion raising the alarm that it was the intention of a French agent from the island-colony “to induce” African traders from the interior coming to Mozambique “by means of a bounty to engage themselves as labourers for Reunion.”³¹ Unaware that an agreement had already been concluded between France and Portugal permitting this recruitment, the British Resident reported that “in the present circumstances of the labour question in Mozambique and Reunion it is almost unavoidable that a recruitment such as that proposed must be tantamount to a traffic in slaves.” In the internal cover letter dated 23 April 1888 to the French Minister transmitting Lytton’s message, the position of the British Government was described as regarding this scheme as having “the nature of a disguised slave trade (*le caractère d’une traite d’esclaves déguisée*).”³² Despite these concerns, O’Neill, whose credentials as an abolitionist cannot be disputed and who was still British Consul at Mozambique, wrote to the British Foreign Office in May 1888 that he was convinced that the new French system was legitimate.³³ Meanwhile the French continued to seek to defend the new *libres engagés* project by comparing its conditions to the 1875 Anglo-Portuguese recruitment program

for Natal. Taken together with the concomitant lack of success to recruit workers at Mozambique, then, it is not surprising that they turned their attention to Inhambane.

Over the course of a twenty-month period from May 1888 to the end of 1889, five different shipments (one on a British vessel, four on French ships) from Inhambane yielded a total number of 1,495 workers recruited to La Réunion.³⁴ How did this system work at Inhambane? Was this yet another example of a disguised slave trade? The best account we possess is a forty-page report written by Dr. Santelli, ship's surgeon on the second voyage of the three-masted bark "D'Artagnan" (based at Nantes) to Inhambane in October 1888.³⁵ This was the second recruitment assignment that the 317 tonnes "D'Artagnan" had made to Inhambane in 1888, the first having occurred in July.³⁶ The ship took ten days to sail on 18 September from Saint-Denis to Mozambique, where official formalities were conducted, including the Governor-General's noting that the presence of a ship's surgeon assured him that "the immigrants will be well treated (*les immigrants seraient bien traités*)."³⁷ Three days later the ship sailed to Inhambane, which it reached on 12 October. Recruitment began on 17 October in the following manner described in great detail by Santelli:

Here is how we proceeded: Each man was brought into a room of the Government palace in which were found the Governor, his Secretary, the immigration agent, two witnesses of which one was an interpreter and myself.

I was not to participate in any active capacity in the operations of recruitment and engagement. I assisted however by taking notes of the questions posed to the men, the responses that they made, and indicating those who appeared to me to be ill, too young or too old. It was a quick inspection made easy by their manner of dress, most having only a piece of linen or skin cut to cover their genitals.

Four sessions of four hours each were required during which, before the individuals whom I have enumerated above, the following questions were successively posed to each man.

"Are you going to Réunion to work voluntarily?"

"Your engagement (contract) will last three years.

"You will be held (obliged) to work for six out of seven days, for nine-and-a-half hours per day.

“Your salaries will be 12 shillings per month or about £22 for the three years.

“You will be fed and housed at the expense of your employer.

“Your employer is equally responsible for medical care.

“You will receive two changes of clothing each year.

“The cost of your return sea passage is charged to your employer.

“In case of bad treatment by your employer you have the right to lodge a complaint with the Consul of Portugal.

“Do these conditions satisfy you? Do you intend to go ahead with your initial determination?”

More extensive information was given to those who demanded it, then all the conditions having been accepted, the contract was drawn up and submitted for the signature of the Governor, the immigration agent, the Captain of the ship representing the syndicate (recruitment agency) and the two witnesses.

Voici comment on procéda: Chaque homme était introduit dans une salle du palais du Gouvernement dans laquelle se trouvait le Gouverneur, son Secrétaire, l'agent d'immigration, deux témoins dont un interprète et moi.

Je ne devais pas prendre part d'une façon active aux opérations de recrutement et d'engagement. J'y assistai cependant prenant note des questions posées aux hommes, des réponses qu'ils faisaient, et indiquant ceux qui me paraissaient infirmes, trop jeunes ou trop vieux. C'était une inspection rapide que rendait facile la façon sommaire dont ils étaient vêtus; la plupart n'ayant comme tout vêtement qu'un morceau de linge ou de peau coupée en barrière devant les parties génitales.

Quatre séances, de quatre heures chacune, furent nécessaires et au court desquelles, devant les personnes que j'ai énumérées plus haut, les questions suivantes furent successivement posées à chaque homme.

“Allez vous de votre propre volonté à la Réunion pour travailler?”

“Votre engagement durera trois ans.

“Vous serez tenu de travailler six jours sur sept et 9h ½ par jour.

“Vos salaires seront de 12 shellings [sic] par mois soit environ 22£ pour les trois ans.

“Vous serez [sic] nourri et logé aux frais de votre patron.

“Votre patron vous doit également les soins médicaux.

“Vous recevrez deux rechanges par an.

“Vos frais de passage d’aller et de retour sont à la charge de votre patron.

“En cas de mauvais traitements de sa part vous avez le droit d’aller vous plaindre chez M. le Consul du Portugal.

“Ces conditions vous satisfont-elles? Persistez-vous dans votre première détermination?”

Des renseignements plus étendus encore étaient donnés à ceux qui les demandaient, puis toutes les conditions ayant été acceptées, le contrat était dressé et soumis à la signature du Gouverneur, de l’agent d’Emigration, du Capitaine du navire représentant le syndicat et des deux témoins.³⁸

This elaborate and precise procedure certainly would appear to meet all the requirements of an honest recruitment process freely entered into by the *engagés*, but the highly juridical nature of the reported interviews makes one wonder if the recruits genuinely understood what they were being asked and even where their destination was located. Above all, one recognizes how the entire process—façade, the British might have called it—depended on the linguistic ability and trustworthiness of the lone, unidentified interpreter. In their dealings with slavers and liberated captives in East Africa during this period we know that the British were often at the mercy of unscrupulous interpreters who were not always competent translators, often pursued their own interests, and were not above bribery and extortion.³⁹ Might not the same problem also have existed at Inhambane?

By 1888, of course, overseas labor recruitment was already well understood at Inhambane, but the usual source of demand was for sugar plantations and railway construction in Natal and the mines of South Africa. In his important study of migrant laborers in Mozambique and South Africa during this period, Patrick Harries emphasizes the degree to which the legacy of slavery and the domination of the Gaza Nguni in the hinterland provided

a context of coercion for labor recruitment at Inhambane in the 1870s.⁴⁰ Although in November 1879 the Portuguese Government prohibited labor recruitment from Inhambane, the main British recruiter from Natal managed to ship more than 500 workers from there in 1881-1882 without any government supervision. As Harries notes, “this labour emigration scheme, from a seedy colonial backwater with a long history of unfree labour, seems to have been built on a strong element of compulsion.”⁴¹ More recently he has written about labor recruitment for both the Cape and Natal in these terms:

If men living within the Portuguese dependency at Inhambane had little say over the conditions under which they were recruited, those beyond its sway of influence were similarly bereft of influence over their conditions of employment. The large numbers of Chopi recruited under the scheme were, more than likely, the product of the relentless raids mounted by the Gaza on their stockades southwest of Inhambane.⁴²

Harries notes further that the Natal trader’s agent at Inhambane “sent envoys into the interior who, it was claimed, press-ganged workers by ‘all sorts of pretences.’” When they reached Inhambane, they were chained or placed into stocks until they were embarked for Natal. From the capitation fee that the organizer of this scheme in Natal received, “an undisclosed amount went to the governor of Inhambane, who made out exile [sic] passports with false names,” plus a head fee to his agent.⁴³ These coerced workers had no medical inspection at Durban and were herded off to work in miserable conditions. This scheme was, not surprisingly, short-lived, as workers deserted their employers as soon as possible “and slipped into the locations and backyards of Kimberly.”⁴⁴

In January 1885, however, with Portuguese control slowly extending inland from Inhambane and overland labor migration raising the cost of labor there with no revenues coming to the colonial government, the Portuguese reopened the port to labor emigration and arrested unlicensed labor recruiters. In October of the same year the Gaza Nguni became formal Portuguese vassals, which, as Harries points out, “provided them with the guns needed to seize slaves and provisions from the independent Chopi chiefdoms south of Inhambane.” Consequently, Gaza

king Ngungunyane—scarcely acting like a Portuguese vassal—“demanded that he be the recipient of all ‘passport fees’ gathered at Inhambane and Lourenço Marques.” A year later Ngungunyane defeated a Portuguese attempt to subdue him and consequently controlled all commerce in the hinterland of Inhambane so that “labour migration from Gazaland was less responsive to economic factors than emigration from the chiefdoms south of the Limpopo River.”⁴⁵ Thus, Harries concludes that although recruiters provided passage and protection to those who engaged their services, these became bonded to the mine to which their contract was sold, but “because of their enmity with the Gaza, [the Chopi] had little choice but to engage themselves with a recruiter.”⁴⁶ In 1888-1889 Portuguese authorities again complained about clandestine recruitment of laborers from Inhambane district for the South African mines.⁴⁷

By 1888, the year in which the first three shipments of engaged workers from Inhambane embarked for La Réunion, Ngungunyane continued to exercise his hegemony over the different chiefdoms that occupied the immediate hinterland of the Portuguese port, and had a precarious relationship with the Portuguese authorities there. A year later, in June 1889, Ngungunyane moved his capital and many thousands of followers from the north of his realm in Mossurize, at the edge of the Zimbabwe plateau, to a new capital (Mandlakazi) in the hinterland of Delagoa Bay and Lourenço Marques (now Maputo), in the far south of modern Mozambique. Determined to maintain control of the Inhambane hinterland, he waged war against the Chopi and, in particular, destroyed the chiefdom of one of his vassals, Bingwane Mondlane, who had sometimes allied himself with the Portuguese at Inhambane against another group over which Ngungunyane claimed sovereignty.⁴⁸ To be clear, Ngungunyane’s migration south, with all of the violent disruption that it caused in the interior of Inhambane, occurred after the second voyage of the “D’Artagnan,” but before the two shipments of *libres engagés* in late 1889.

Here, then, was the deeper history and immediate context for the revived *libres engagés* scheme to La Réunion in 1888-1889. Not only did the integrity of the recruitment process depend on the linguistic ability and character of the interpreter, it also depended on the probity of the Portuguese Governor of Inhambane and his officials, as well as the pressures exerted by the Gaza state on the

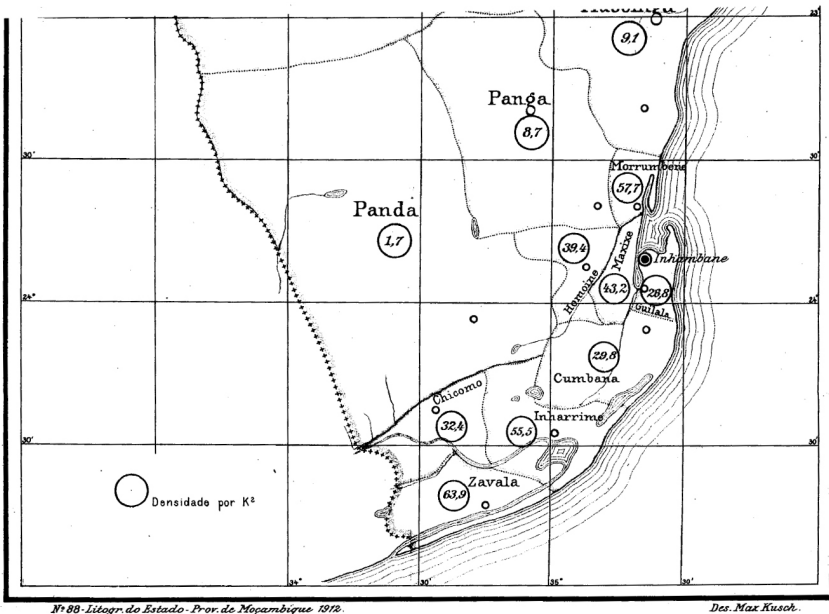
subject and dominated indigenous peoples of the Inhambane hinterland, the so-called Nyambanes of La Réunion.

Because there was no depot at Inhambane in which to hold the recruits, each group was loaded directly onto the “D’Artagnan” after each day’s interviews until the last session on 20 October 1888. In the end, 250 men were embarked but no women, although a handful had expressed interest before disappearing into the hinterland. Santelli also reported, and clearly believed, that the British labor recruitment agent at Inhambane was spreading rumors about the French project that Africans who signed on “were destined to be eaten at Réunion and on board, and that upon their embarkation the doctor would prick them all in the arm to choose those who, by reason of the tenderness of their flesh, were destined to be the first sacrificed.”⁴⁹ Such tales of cannibalism were commonplace in the operation of the slave trade, so it is interesting to see the same trope employed strategically, whether or not successfully, in the context of this last phase of the *libres engagés* scheme.⁵⁰ One wonders what those recruits whom Dr. Santelli sought to vaccinate against smallpox on board the “D’Artagnan” thought was happening to them.

We are fortunate to have a complete register of all 250 men who were recruited and embarked on the “D’Artagnan” in October 1888.⁵¹ The names are registered on a printed form “VOLUNTARY EMIGRATION OF African workers from . . . for the French colony of the island of Réunion (*EMIGRAÇÃO VOLUNTARIA De trabalhadores africanos de . . . para a colonia franceza da ilha da Reunião*).” Each individual is numbered in the order recruited from 1 to 250, and is identified by name, sex, likely age (*Idade provavel*), “Tribe or District,” and “Observations,” none of which are noted. As all the recruits were men, the only salient data are personal names, ages, and tribe or district. Since their ages ranged between 21 and 39, but mostly in the twenties, and these ages were surely approximations, I do not attempt any analysis of this factor. Similarly, since only given names were recorded, besides the question of how well they were understood, as well as the orthography by which they were transcribed, I am only interested in those who had Portuguese names, which might indicate that they were *libertos*, i.e. recently “liberated” slaves, as mandated by Portuguese legislation that took effect in 1878.⁵² As it happens, only eight individuals recruited for the “D’Artagnan”

appear to have such names, including a man named Sixpence (#86), which suggests that he may previously have migrated to work in South Africa.⁵³ Accordingly, my focus here is on the information about “tribe or district” as indicators of the area of recruitment of these men.

The first thing to note from the list of “Voluntary Emigration” is that recruitment was apparently dominated by men from Guilala, a Tonga village located immediately to the south of Inhambane on the peninsula that forms Inhambane Bay. (See Map 2) These men numbered 107 individuals or 42.4 percent of the total of 250 *engagés*.⁵⁴ The next largest source of recruits was Mucumba, which thirty-four men (13.6 percent) apparently gave as their “Tribe or District.” Although identification is not certain, Mucumba may derive from the Vacumba/Vakumba who Gerhard Liesegang indicates were one of two categories of Tswa/Landin immigrants to Inhambane.⁵⁵ Their settlement was probably located to the west of Inhambane. Only two other sources sent more than ten recruits to the “D’Artagnan.” These were Rumbana, with fifteen men (6 percent) and Nhamussua, with thirteen (5.2 percent), neither of which I am able to identify. One or two other names on the list suggest that, as with many of these names, they probably reflected the names of villages and/or headmen/chiefs rather than ethnicities. Thus, Nhacohango [modern Nyakohongo] was possibly a Chopi chief allied in about 1840 to the Portuguese at Inhambane or the area of Nhacoongo under Chief Cumbana, located south of Inhambane beyond Guilala, before Nguni expansion.⁵⁶ Similarly, Nyambio [Nyambiu], a district mentioned by four recruits, was a chief with Makwakwa origins located to the north of Maxixe, across the bay from Inhambane, while Inhampossa [Nyamposa] was a Tonga settlement with Nyai origins “to the south of the city of Inhambane.”⁵⁷ The one man who gave Guilundu as his “Tribe or District” was, by contrast, apparently providing an ethnic identity, which Liesegang notes is “now regarded as an offshoot of the Khosa” and may be equivalent to Chilundu.⁵⁸ The only other possible place name identification that I am able to make is that the one man who hailed from Macinga may have been from Massinga, located in the so-called Portuguese “Crown Lands” lying to the north of Inhambane.⁵⁹ In the end, what becomes clear from this list is that the political and ethnic composition of the Inhambane hinterland was exceptionally complex in the late nineteenth



Map 3. Inhambane District: Population Distribution by Administrative Unit, 1912

Source: Esboço geografico do Distrito de Inhambane mostrando a distribuição aproximada da população por circumscrições, in José Ricardo Pereira Cabral, *Distrito de Inhambane. Relatório do Governador, 1911-1912* (Lourenço Marques: Imprensa Nacional, 1912).

century as a result of both regular population movement over centuries and the disruption of more recent Nguni invasions. It also reminds us that the colonial identity of Nyambane at Réunion lumped together African people of very different ethnicities.

One further note about recruitment that merits our attention is that in many cases groups of men signed up together. Whether they were recruited by force or traveled to Inhambane voluntarily we cannot decipher, but the list indicates clearly that men from the same background engaged to become migrant workers in Réunion at the same time. Thus, six men from Rumbana (#43-48), six from Mucumba (#98-103), eight from Tingatinga (#197-204), eleven from Nhamussua (#205-215), and six from Nhamalala (#245-250) are listed consecutively in the ship's register, as was also the case with a number of the many recruits from Guilala.⁶⁰

Once the full complement of 250 recruits was completed, the “D’Artagnan” was forced to remain in port for another week as a result of unfavorable winds, finally setting sail on 31 October. Santelli provides a detailed register of the daily routine on board ship, the recruits’ diet, and their medical treatment that is designed to indicate how the immigrants, as he calls them, were cared for during the voyage. The only negative note in his account of the voyage concerns the suicide of a man named Mabassu, who jumped overboard on 1 December. Mabaço (#121), as his name is recorded in our list, gave his age as 24 and his “Tribe or District” as Mucumba, so he was part of the second largest group of recruited workers aboard the “D’Artagnan.” Santelli devotes a long paragraph to explaining the circumstances leading up to Mabassu’s suicide. Mabassu had been hospitalized with malarial fever, but had protested his confinement and sought to be with his shipmates and on deck, at which moment he leapt into the sea to his death. Santelli did not believe Mabassu was delirious, but does ask “Must one attribute it [Mabassu’s death] to the desperation brought about by the anxiety of a long voyage, complicated by illness? It is certain that at this moment the men had been on board for forty-three days and that they made me understand that they were desperate to arrive.”⁶¹ He then suggests that the circumstances surrounding this suicide might have been avoided “if we had an interpreter on board. This is an indispensable measure and I do not believe that the wish I express is unrealizable (*si on avait eu un interprète à bord. C’est une mesure indispensable et je ne crois pas que le voeu que je forme soit irréalisable*).”⁶² Dr. Santelli’s frustration at the lack of an interpreter on board the D’Artagnan reinforces my previous question about the role of the lone interpreter involved in the recruitment process and the accuracy of his translation with respect to what the recruits themselves understood to be the conditions of their future employment.

Finally, on 8 December 1888 the “D’Artagnan” weighed anchor at Saint-Denis after a voyage of 38 days. For the initial batch of *engagés*, however, they had been on board the ship for 52 days. The following day all 249 men were disembarked at the lazaret at La Grande Chaloupe, the quarantine center that had previously been the initial landing place for Indian *engagés* at La Réunion.

Santelli's conclusions to his lengthy memorandum, numbering seven, are quite positive, but it is his "Desiderata," which are based on the two voyages of the "D'Artagnan," that reveal more about the problems that faced recruitment from Inhambane. First and last, he notes that the length of the voyages by sail, 32 and 38 days, was too long and recommends that sailing vessels should be replaced by steam ships. He also recommended the construction of a depot at Inhambane so that early recruits would not need to be held on board to wait for the full complement of workers to be engaged. This concern reminds one of the problems involved in making up cargoes of enslaved Africans on the west coast of Africa.⁶³ He also notes that during the cold season, when ships leaving Inhambane need to sail to the south, it is necessary for recruits to be supplied with warmer clothing. Further, he indicated that the number of 250 "immigrants" was too high for a ship the size of "D'Artagnan," and should be no more than 200, which amounts to an argument against a version of "tight packing." "It would be anti-hygienic and inhumane to permit sailing ships to embark so many men that they gauge as barrels plus 25 percent (*Il serait antihygiénique et inhumain de permettre aux navires à voiles d'embarquer autant d'hommes qu'ils jaugent de[sic] tonneaux et 25% en plus*)." ⁶⁴ In addition, he observes that the water available at Inhambane, as all along the east coast of Africa, is of poor quality so that water should in future be provided from Saint-Denis. Finally, Santelli reiterates that "the presence of an interpreter on board is a necessity. The almost absolute impossibility of understanding or being understood otherwise than by signs, is becoming for matters, but above all for medical treatment, a source of real problems."⁶⁵ Once again, the language barrier and the great difficulties the mutual lack of comprehension posed suggest that there may have been real limits to the freedom of engagement in the renewed *libres engagés* system and that there were definitely linguistic barriers to meeting the needs of the recruits.

As it happens, Dr. Santelli's emphasis on communication had already been identified as a significant problem on Réunion in a report to the Governor by the Protector of Immigrants six months previously on his "Visit to the establishments where the new Kaffirs are employed (*Visite sur les établissements où les cafres nouveaux sont employés*)." ⁶⁶ These *engagés* would have included the twenty-one men who had been recruited at Mozambique in

April 1888 and the 277 who arrived from Inhambane in May 1888 aboard the British steamship “Florence” of the Castle Mail Packet Company line.⁶⁷ The Protector’s visit was precipitated by reports of “*certain troubles*” from several employers. In order to understand what the problems were, and to explain to the *engagés* both their obligations and their rights, the Protector enlisted the interpreter of Lombard, the French consular agent at Mozambique. He visited workplaces all around the island-colony and, in general, found that the recently arrived Africans were well treated and gradually being integrated into their work regimes. Indeed, most employers were satisfied with their work. Nevertheless, he wrote, “The absence of an interpreter on the plantations, and consequently the impossibility of making the new arrivals understand what one asks of them, is also for them an insurmountable obstacle to making themselves understood. For it has to be noted that their language is neither understood nor spoken by the older Kafirs; one scarcely finds one or two who speak it.”⁶⁸ What this plea indicates is that not only were Réunionnais employers unable to speak the language(s) of their new workers, but even the creolized Africans who had been brought to La Réunion years before could not speak their language(s).⁶⁹ The Protector continues by noting that food differences were also problematic, as were cold weather and working to the clock.⁷⁰ He therefore recommended providing them with a supplement of manioc and more appropriate clothing. Furthermore, the Africans did not trust paper money and wanted to be paid in either gold or rupees “in order to carry them back to their country to buy guns and powder (*afin de les remporter dans leurs pays pour acheter des fusils et de la poudre*).” Salary levels were also an issue. Above all, it seems, “returning to their own country is their greatest preoccupation . . . they only dream of returning (*la retour dans leur pays est leur grande préoccupation . . . ils ne songent qu’au retour*).”⁷¹ For employers this desire to return home as soon as they could was really the greatest problem, since it meant that no workers would be willing to sign on for a second contract.⁷² (Indeed, what brought an end to this labor-recruitment scheme was a revolt in 1891 by the Mozambican *engagés* because they had been refused the repatriation that was promised after three years according to the terms of their contracts.)⁷³ Overall, the Protector believed that the Africans were reasonably satisfied with their lot, but he concluded his short report by emphasizing

that what problems had emerged principally centered on communications and “the difficulty, not to say the impossibility, of communications being absolute, their language being understood by almost no one in the colony.”⁷⁴

There is one further report by a naval physician, Dr. Chédan, who served on board the three-masted “Alsace Lorraine” which engaged 361 laborers at Inhambane in November 1889, returning to Saint-Denis on 24 December 1889. Recruitment of workers occurred over an eight-day period, from 17-25 November. Eager to leave port, like the “D’Artagnan,” the French ship was kept in the harbor by contrary winds, which Chédan describes in some detail because of his conviction, which he shared with Santelli, that sail was inappropriate for labor recruitment. The recruitment itself was difficult because many men did not want to work in La Réunion and did not like the length of contract or the terms of salary. In addition, during the week in which the French were actively recruiting, a British steamer was taking on workers for Natal and attracting the strongest men with higher salaries. Chédan complains bitterly about how the British do not observe the same formalities of interviewing with an interpreter as do the French, do not have a ship’s doctor on board their steamers, and then deduct passage and other costs from the workers’ 1£ per month salaries. He then details at some length the diet provided for the French engaged workers, including water from La Réunion (as Santelli had recommended), as well as the clothing distributed to them. His account of health issues, including medications recommended for a ship’s pharmacy, is equally meticulous. In his brief conclusion Dr. Chédan recommends the promulgation of a set of regulations for African immigration that paralleled those in place for Indian immigration. Interestingly, he says nothing about the need for interpreters in his report.

Both of these meticulous medical accounts from the brief period of labor recruitment from Inhambane to La Réunion in the late 1880s appear to reflect a serious official French effort to avoid the worst abuses of the earlier period of the *engagé* system. Absent further primary evidence it seems advisable—at least for those Africans recruited from Inhambane—to modify Sudel Fuma’s conclusion regarding this last gasp of the engaged labor scheme that “a majority of them [Mozambiques, Malagasy, and Comorians] were only ransomed slaves according to the

procedure of ‘*rachat préalable*’ (*une majorité d’entre eux n’étaient que des esclaves rachetés selon le procédé du ‘rachat préalable’.*)⁷⁵ Nevertheless, if the revival of the *libres engagés* scheme to meet the labor requirements of the French colonial plantocracy at La Réunion was not simply a disguised slave trade, the conditions in southern Mozambique that compelled African men—especially those from the Inhambane hinterland—to engage themselves as migrant laborers suggest that they were not entirely entering into this new system of labor procurement of their own free will. The history of slavery and the slave trade in the southwest Indian Ocean, not to mention the complicating factor of apparent mutual unintelligibility that impressed two astute French observers of the scheme in operation, as well as my own emphasis on the fundamental need to understand the role of translation in the individual recruitment of workers at Inhambane in 1888, argue for a level of coercion that made the history of this form of labor recruitment less than completely free if something other than another form of slavery.

Notes

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Truth and Justice Commission conference on “Slave trade, slavery and transition to indenture in Mauritius and the Mascarenes, 1715-1848” held at the University of Mauritius, Réduit, April 2011. On the practical application of fragmented archives, see Pier M. Larson, “Fragments of an Indian Ocean Life: Aristide Corroller Between Islands and Empires,” *Journal of Social History* 45 (2011): 366-389. I am grateful to Patrick Harries for his careful reading and insightful comments on this much expanded version, which he shared with me just before his untimely passing on 2 June 2016.

² Edward A. Alpers, “The French Slave Trade in East Africa (1721-1810),” *Cahiers d’Études Africaines*, 37 (1970): 80-124; J.-M. Filliot, *La traite des esclaves vers les Mascareignes au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: ORSTOM, 1974); José Capela and Eduardo Medeiros, “La traite au départ du Mozambique vers les îles françaises de l’Océan Indien, 1720-1904,” in U. Bissoondoyal and S.B.C. Servansing (eds.), *Slavery in South West Indian Ocean* (Moka, Mauritius: Mahatma Gandhi Institute, 1989), pp. 247-309; Pier M. Larson, “The Route of the Slave from Highland Madagascar to the Mascarenes: Commercial Organization, 1770-1820,” in Ignace Rakoto (ed.), *La route des esclaves: Système servile et traite dans l’est Malgache* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2000), pp. 119-180; Richard B. Allen, “The Mascarene Slave-Trade

and Labour Migration in the Indian Ocean during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” in Gwyn Campbell (ed.), *The Structure of Slavery in Indian Ocean Africa and Asia* (London: Frank Cass, 2004), pp. 33-50; Allen, “The Constant Demand of the French: The Mascarene Slave Trade and the Worlds of the Indian Ocean and Atlantic during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” *Journal of African History*, 49 (2008): 1-30; and Allen, *European Slave Trading in the Indian Ocean, 1500-1850* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014), pp. 63-107.

³ Hubert Gerbeau, “Quelques aspects de la traite illégale des esclaves à l’Île Bourbon au XIXe siècle,” in *Mouvements de populations dans l’océan indien* (Paris: H. Champion, 1979), pp. 273-308 and Gerbeau, “La traite illégale aux Mascareignes des années 1810 aux années 1840. Le cas de l’île Bourbon,” in Vijaya Teelock and Thomas Vernet (eds.), *Traites, esclavage et transition vers l’engagisme: Perspectives nouvelles sur les Mascareignes et le sud-ouest de l’océan Indien* (Réduit: Centre for Research on Slavery and Indenture, Université de Maurice, 2015), pp. 46-57 (this is a much condensed version of the paper that Gerbeau presented at the 2011 Truth and Justice Commission conference at Mauritius); Allen, “Licentious and Unbridled Proceedings: the Illegal Slave Trade to Mauritius and the Seychelles during the Early Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of African History*, 42 (2001): 91-116.

⁴ Edward A. Alpers and Benigna Zimba, “British Abolition in Southeast Africa: the first 50 years,” *Quarterly Bulletin of the National Library of South Africa*, 63, 1 & 2 (2009): 5-15.

⁵ François Renault, *Libération d’esclaves et nouvelle servitude* (Abidjan & Dakar: Les Nouvelles Éditions Africaines, 1976), pp. 18-91, quoted at 29. I owe many thanks to my UCLA colleague Professor Ghislaine Lydon for checking, correcting where necessary, and improving my translations from French. Nearly all translations from French in the paper reflect this combined effort.

⁶ Hubert Gerbeau, “Engagees [sic] and coolies on Réunion Island: slavery’s masks and freedom’s constraints,” in P.C. Emmer (ed.), *Colonialism and Migration; Indentured Labour Before and After Slavery* (Dordrecht/Boston/Lancaster: Martinus Nijhoff, 1986), pp. 220-223, quoted at 221.

⁷ Sudel Fuma, “Le servilisme à la place du concept d’engagisme pour définir le statut des travailleurs immigrés ou affranchis après l’abolition de l’esclavage en 1848,” November 2001, originally available online at the defunct www.historun.com, but now available at <https://histoire974.wordpress.com/2016/01/19/le-servilisme-a-la-place-du-concept-dengagisme-pour-definir-le-statut-des-travailleurs-immigres-ou-affranchis-apres-labolition-de-lesclavage-en-1848-sudel-fuma/>, accessed 22 March 2016 : “*La solution consiste pour les Français à acheter des esclaves à un marchand d’esclave, à les libérer et à l’engager [sic] sous contrat pour travailler dans les colonies. Ce système du rachat préalable est en réalité une opération de traite d’esclaves déguisée.*”

⁸ Virginie Chaillou, “L’engagisme africain à La Réunion: entre ruptures et résurgences d’un système condamné,” in M. Dorigny & M.-J. Zins (eds.), *Les*

traites négrières coloniales. Histoire d'un crime (Paris: Éditions Cercle d'Art, 2009), p.137: "Force est donc de conclure que le recrutement de travailleurs africains dits «libres» ne fut qu'un retour déguisé, quoiqu'atténué par un certain nombre de contraintes juridiques, au système de la traite des esclaves."

⁹ Hai Quang Ho, *La Réunion (1882-1960), Histoire Économique: Colontage, salariat et sous-développement* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008), pp. 58-61, quoted at 61: "Pendant toute cette période, la reproduction étant incapable de fournir suffisamment de travailleurs, les planteurs ont cherché à en importer."

¹⁰ For the history of engaged labor at Nossi-Bé prior to this agreement with the Portuguese, see Jehanne-Emmanuelle Monnier, *Esclaves de la Canne à Sucre: Engagés et Planteurs à Nossi-Bé, Madagascar 1850-1880* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2006).

¹¹ The best short account is Renault, *Liberation*, pp. 143-146, although it is possible that there is a more complete treatment in Chaillou, "De l'Afrique orientale aux Mascareignes, Histoire des engagés africains à La Réunion au XIXème siècle," unpublished Ph.D. thesis defended 15 October 2010, Université de Nantes: <http://www.esclavages.cnrs.fr/spip.php?article61>, accessed 10 January 2011. See also José Capela, *O Tráfico de Escravos nos Portos de Moçambique* (Porto: Edições Afrontamento, 2002), pp. 54-63.

¹² Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence, France (hereafter ANOM), Réunion 350/2461, Immigration africaine. Recrutement de travailleurs dans le Province de Mozambique, Mission de M. Dol. I am indebted to Dr. Tiffany Gleason for photographing the ANOM documentation on which this research is based. For an important discussion of Dol's mission from a French colonial perspective, see Virgine Chaillou-Atrous, "La reprise de l'immigration africaine à La Réunion à la fin du XIXème siècle: de la traite déguisée à l'engagement de travail libre," *French Colonial History*, 16 (2016): 27-54. I am grateful to Dr. Chaillou-Atrous for sharing a pre-publication proof of this article.

¹³ Fuma, "Le servilisme"; Renault, *Libération d'esclaves*, p. 143.

¹⁴ Quoted in James Duffy, *A Question of Slavery: Labour Policies in Portuguese Africa and the British Protest, 1850-1920* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 88.

¹⁵ "Regulamento para execução da portaria regia de 23 de junho de 1881 pela qual foi permitido o contrato de trabalhadores livres para as colonias de Mayotte e Nossi-bé," in Ministerio da Marinha e Ultramar, *Relatorios dos Governadores das Provincias Ultramarinas. Provincias de S. Thomé e Príncipe e de Moçambique, anno de 1883* (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1889), pp. 122-123.

¹⁶ F.O. 541/25, Confidential Prints, Slave Trade, No. 44, O'Neill to Granville, Mozambique, 15 February 1883, also quoted in Duffy, *A Question of Slavery*, p. 89.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Patrick Harries, *Work, Culture, and Identity: Migrant Laborers in Mozambique and South Africa, c. 1860-1910* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1994), p. 46. The same smallpox epidemic ravaged Ibo and its mainland settlements in April 1883

and January 1884, as well as the Makua hinterland of northern Mozambique in 1883; see Carlos Lopes Bento, “Surto de varíola na vila do Ibo, no ano de 1883,” Blog posted on 27 April 2010 at ilhasquerimba.blogs.sapo.mz/2010/04/; F.O. 541/25, No. 57, O’Neill to Granville, Mozambique, 12 May 1883.

¹⁹ ANOM, Réunion 350/2461, P.-A. Dol to Governor, undated, but following Governor [Étienne Antoine Guillaume] Richaud to Ministère de la Marine et des Colonies, St. Denis, La Réunion, 17 January 1887: “. . . *bien que le commerce et les exploitations locales [sont] insuffisants à occuper les populations, directement soumises, ou tributaires du Portugal.*”

²⁰ Duffy, *Question of Slavery*, pp. 47-50; Renault, *Liberation d’esclaves*, pp. 85-87. For an extended lusocentric interpretation of this incident, see Eduardo dos Santos, “A Questão da Barca *Charles et Georges*,” *Studia* (Centro de Estudos Históricos Ultramarinos da Junta de Investigações Científicas do Ultramar), 45 (1981): 131-283 and 46 (1987): 1-131. For a different perspective on this incident based primarily on French naval documentation, see Monnier, “Litiges entre le Mozambique et La Réunion au sujet du recrutement de travailleurs, seconde moitié du XIX^{ème} siècle,” *Tsingy*, 18 (2015): 63-73.

²¹ ANOM, Réunion 350/2461, P.-A. Dol to Governor [of La Réunion], undated.

²² Harries, *Work, Culture, and Identity*, pp. 24-25, 241 n.88.

²³ For Nyambanes at La Réunion, see Alpers, “Mozambique and ‘Mozambiques’: Slave Trade and

Diaspora on a Global Scale,” in Benigna Zimba, Edward A. Alpers, & Allen F. Isaacman (eds.), *Slave Routes and Oral Tradition in Southeastern Africa* (Maputo: Filsom Entertainment, 2005), pp. 39-61 and sources cited therein.

²⁴ ANOM, Réunion 350/2461, P.-A. Dol to Governor [of La Réunion], undated: “*Le noir de la côte de Mozambique qui s’acclimate et l’habitue facilement à La Réunion, ne quitte pas sans difficulté son pays natal. Il le quittera d’autant plus aisément qu’il aura la perspective d’y retourner au bout d’un laps de temps plus court.*”

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*: “*Le travail de ces exploitations n’est évidemment pas comparable à un travail de culture comme celui auquel on les emploierait à La Réunion. Mais ils ne le connaîtront pas ce travail au moment où on leur fera contracter un engagement dont l’exécution demandera une expatriation réelle.*”

²⁷ ANOM, 350/2461, Alfred Lombard, l’agent consulaire de France à Mozambique à Governor[-General] of Mozambique [Augusto de Castilho], Mozambique, 12 June 1888.

²⁸ ANOM, Réunion 350/2461, P.-A. Dol to Governor, “*Cet agent serait spécialement chargé de recruter les travailleurs, de leur faciliter les moyens de se rendre au dépôt et de veiller à leur bon entretien jusqu’à leur embarquement.*”

²⁹ ANOM, Réunion 350/2465, L’agent consulaire de France à Mozambique à M Bellot, Ministre de la République à Lisbonne, Mozambique, 2 April 1888; ANOM,

Réunion 350/2465, Note sur l'immigration africaine à La Réunion, post-24 December 1889.

³⁰ ANOM, Réunion 350/2465. For details on the long and difficult military conquest of northern Mozambique by the Portuguese, see René Pélissier, *Naissance du Mozambique: résistance et révoltes anticoloniales (1854-1918)*, 2 vols. (Orgéval, France: Pélissier, 1984).

³¹ ANOM, Réunion 350/2465. Lytton's letter is in the original English in this file.

³² Ibid.

³³ Quoted in Renault, *Libération d'esclaves*, p. 145.

³⁴ ANOM, Réunion 350/2465, Note sur l'immigration africaine à La Réunion, post-24 December 1889.

³⁵ ANOM, Réunion 350/2477, Rapport à Monsieur le Ministre de la Marine au sujet du voyage du Trois-mats de commerce le "D'Artagnan," affreté pour le service de l'Immigration sur la côte orientale de l'Afrique, par le medecin de 2.e classe de la marine Santelli, délégué du Gouvernement à bord [hereafter Santelli report]. Dr. Santelli's report is undated, but was clearly composed after the "D'Artagnan" arrived at Saint-Denis on 8 December 1888.

³⁶ For the first voyage see ANOM, Réunion 350/2465, Les différents convois d'introduction la Réunion de travailleurs recrutés dans la province de Mozambique sont les suivants, followed by table that includes seven voyages, five from Inhambane and two from Mozambique Island that added only 21 men to the figure given in the text above. The tonnage of the "D'Artagnan" is included in Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique, Maputo (hereafter AHM), Governo Distrito de Inhambane, Caixa 27, Tradução: Extracto da carta do Snr [Charles] Clain ao Snr Bang, 9 May 1888.

³⁷ Santelli report, p. 5.

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 6-7. It is worth noting that these questions closely mirror the conditions of contracting laid out in the 1882 Portuguese implementation regulations for the Ibo to Mayotte and Nossi-Be labor emigration scheme. See "Regulamento para execução da portaria regia de 23 de junho de 1881," Capítulo 1, Artigo 3.

³⁹ See Edward A. Alpers and Matthew S. Hopper, "Parler en son nom? Comprendre les témoignages d'esclaves africains originaires de l'océan Indien (1850-1930)," *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 63, 4 (2008): 799-828; a slightly revised version of this article is now available in English as "Speaking for Themselves: Understanding African Freed Slave Testimonies from the Western Indian Ocean, 1850s-1930s," *The Journal of Indian Ocean World Studies*, 1 (2017): 60-88. See also specific complaint in F.O. 541/25, No. 196, S.B. Miles to Granville, Zanzibar, 21 July 1883.

⁴⁰ For the slave trade at Inhambane, see also Capela, *O Tráfico de Escravos*, pp. 226-228. For the violent Portuguese conquest of the northern Chopi chiefdoms of Zavala that were closest to Inhambane, see Alfredo Augusto Caldas Xavier, "Provincia de Moçambique, Distrito de Inhambane – O Inharrime e as guerras Zavallas," *Boletim da Sociedade de Geographia de Lisboa* (1880), 2/1: 479-528.

⁴¹ Harries, *Work, Culture, and Identity*, p. 54.

⁴² Harries, "Slavery, Indenture and Migrant Labour: Maritime Immigration from Mozambique to the Cape, c.1780-1880," *African Studies*, 73/ 3 (2014): 335.

⁴³ Harries, *Work, Culture, and Identity*, p. 54. Harries, *Butterflies & Barbarian: Swiss Missionaries & Systems of Knowledge in South-East Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007), pp. 87-89, 167-68, notes that the American Board missionaries were printing passports for migrants being shipped out of Inhambane in the 1880s.

⁴⁴ Harries, *Work, Culture, and Identity*, p. 54.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.108. Eric Axelson, *Portugal and the Scramble for Africa 1875-1891* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1967), p. 129 mistakenly refers to the October 1886 encounter between the Portuguese and their allies and Ngungunyane's army as a defeat for the Gaza Nguni and is followed in this error by Malyn Newitt, *A History of Mozambique* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 350; Axelson's misinterpretation is corrected by Pelissier, *Naissance du Mozambique*, vol. 2, p. 568 and n. 151.

⁴⁶ Harries, *Work, Culture, and Identity*, p. 118.

⁴⁷ A. Rita Ferreira, *O Movimento Migratório de Trabalhadores entre Moçambique e a África do Sul* (Lisboa: Junta de Investigações do Ultramar, 1963), p. 121. For the later history of official labor recruitment from Inhambane to South Africa, see Ruth First, *O Mineiro Moçambicano: Um estudo sobre a exportação de mão de obra em Inhambane* (Maputo: Centro de Estudos Africanos, Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, 1998).

⁴⁸ Gerhard Liesegang, *Ngungunyane: A figura de Ngungunyane, Rei de Gaza 1884-1895 e o desaparecimento do seu estado*, Coleção Embondeiro no. 8 (Maputo: ARPAC, 1986), pp. 26, 45-49; Orlando João Nhancale, *Mandlakazi* (Maputo: ARPAC, 1995), pp. 11-15; Pelissier, *Naissance du Mozambique*, vol. 2, pp. 567-570; Maria da Conceição Vilhena, *Gungunhana no seu Reino* (Lisboa: Edições Colibri, 1996), pp. 106-114 and *Gungunhana: Grandeza e Decadência de um Império Africano* (Lisboa: Edições Colibri, 1999), pp. 72, 84-85, 89.

⁴⁹ ANOM, Réunion 350/2477, Santelli report, p. 8: "étaient destinés à être mangés à la Réunion et à bord et que dès leur embarquement le médecin les piquerait tous au bras pour choisir ceux qui, en raison de la tendreté de leur chair, étaient destinés à être sacrifiés les premiers."

⁵⁰ For other nineteenth-century examples from the southwest Indian Ocean, see Gerbeau, "La traite illégale . . . Bourbon," original 2011 conference version, p. 37; for the Atlantic see, i.a., Rosalind Shaw, *Memories of the Slave Trade: Ritual and the Historical Imagination in Sierra Leone* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 227, 230-232; Robert Harms, *The Diligent: A Voyage through the Worlds of the Slave Trade* (New York, 2003), pp. 252-254, 299-300; Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York: Viking, 2007), pp. 108, 117, 266-267.

⁵¹ AHM, Governo Distrito de Inhambane, Caixa 27, completed printed official form “Numero total dos emigrantes,” dated 20 October 1888 and signed by the agent of the French Consulate, Cosmo Dias and the delegate of the Réunion syndicate, whose name I cannot decipher.

⁵² José de Almada, *Apontamentos Históricos sôbre a Escravatura e o Trabalho Indígena nas Colónias Portuguesas*, Edição reservada para uso official (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1932), pp. 40-1.

⁵³ The others bearing Europeanized names include João (#13), presumably a corruption of João; Dinize (#18); França (#19); Rangel (#84); Domingo Rupia (#161); Lenço (#178), a name meaning “handkerchief” in Portuguese; and Bazar (#215). Another name worth noting is Muzila (#107), no doubt after the father of the Gaza king, Ngungunyane; he gave his “Tribe or District” as Nhambio, for which see the next paragraph.

⁵⁴ Of course, we have no way to know whether some of these recruits simply repeated what they overheard the men interviewed before them state as their “Tribe or District.” In the early twentieth century the entire peninsular district was known as Guilala, although by the 1920s the administrative name had disappeared from contemporary Portuguese colonial records.

⁵⁵ Gerhard Liesegang, “East and Northeast of the Borders of the Southeastern Bantu: Partly visible population movements and invisible lineage states: Interdisciplinary approach to political organization, archaeological and linguistic traces and memory in southern and northern Mozambique ca. 400-1900 AD,” July 2014, p. 26, downloaded from Academia.edu on 14 March 2016.

⁵⁶ Liesegang, “Reconstruções de Complexos Políticos no Sul e Centro Sul de Moçambique cerca 1250-1850,” Sections 4.3 and 4.5, downloaded from Academia.edu on 14 March 2016. If there was any confusion between Rumbana and Cumbana it cannot be resolved without on the ground fieldwork.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Section 4.5.

⁵⁸ Liesegang, “East and Northeast,” p. 26 and “Reconstruções,” Section 4.3.

⁵⁹ Augusto Cabral, *Raças, Usos e Costumes dos Indígenas do Distrito de Inhambane* (Lourenço Marques: Imprensa Nacional, 1910), map between pp. 48 & 49, “Inhambane Distribuição das Raças”; Alf Helgesson, *Church, State and People in Mozambique: An Historical Study with Special Emphasis on Methodist Developments in the Inhambane Region* (Uppsala: Studia Missionalia Upsaliensia LIV, 1994), p. 439, “Sketch map of the Inhambane Region.” Thanks to Cal Margulis for research assistance in accessing these sources.

⁶⁰ AHM, Governo Distrito de Inhambane, Caixa 27.

⁶¹ ANOM, Réunion 350/2477, Santelli report, p. 35: “*Faut-il l’attribuer au désespoir occasioné par l’ennui d’une longue traversée, accru même par la maladie? Il est certain que les hommes étaient à ce moment, à bord depuis 43 jours et qu’ils me faisaient comprendre qu’ils désespaient d’arriver.*”

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ See Herbert S. Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 92-93.

⁶⁴ ANOM, Réunion 350/2477, Santelli report, p. 38, “Desiderata No. 4”: The reasoning here is that each man weighed roughly as much as one barrel plus 25 percent.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 39, “Desiderata No. 6”: “*la présence d’un interprète à bord est de toute nécessité. L’impossibilité presque absolue de comprendre ou de faire comprendre autrement que par signes devient, en toutes choses, mais surtout pour l’exercice de la Médecine, une source de réelles difficultés.*”

⁶⁶ ANOM, Réunion 350/2465, Saint-Denis, 29 July 1888.

⁶⁷ ANOM, Réunion 350/2465, Note sur l’immigration africaine à la Réunion; for the Florence and the Castle line, see <http://www.theshipslist.com/ships/lines/castle.html>, accessed 4 April 2011.

⁶⁸ ANOM, Réunion 350/2465, Note sur l’immigration africaine à la Réunion: “*L’absence d’interprète sur les habitations, par suite, l’impossibilité de faire comprendre à ces nouveaux venus ce qu’on leur demande, [est?]de même (check original word mission) pour eux un obstacle insurmountable à se faire comprendre. Car il est à remarquer que leur langue n’est ni comprise, ni parlée par les anciens cafres; c’est apeine [sic] si l’on trouve un ou deux qui la parlent.*”

⁶⁹ For a similar situation involving the translation of Malagasy, see Eloise Finch-Boyer’s paper for the 2011 Truth and Justice Commission conference, “Dangerous language: inventing creolisation and the threat of African bilinguals in the 19th century Indian Ocean.”

⁷⁰ For a comparative study of African problems adjusting to working according to Western time, see Keletso E. Atkins, “‘Kafir Time’: Preindustrial Temporal Concepts and Labour Discipline in Nineteenth-Century Colonial Natal,” *Journal of African History*, 29/2 (1988): 229-244.

⁷¹ ANOM, Réunion 350/2465, Note sur l’immigration africaine à la Réunion.

⁷² This point is made equally by Ho, *La Réunion*, p. 62.

⁷³ Monnier, “Litiges entre le Mozambique et La Réunion”: 73. For more on the final throes of this scheme, see Chaillou-Atrous, “La reprise de l’immigration africaine à La Réunion.”

⁷⁴ ANOM, Réunion 350/2465, Note sur l’immigration africaine à la Réunion: “*la difficulté, pour ne pas dire l’impossibilité, de communications étant absolue, leurs langue n’étant comprise d’apeuprés [sic] personnes dans la colonie.*”

⁷⁵ Sudel Fuma, “La traite des esclaves dans le basin du sud-ouest de l’océan indien et la France après 1848,” in Rakoto (ed.), *La route des esclaves*, p. 260.