

A stylized sun graphic on the left side of the slide. It features a solid yellow circle at the bottom left, with several yellow dashed lines of varying lengths radiating upwards and to the right, suggesting rays of light. The background is a gradient from orange at the top to white at the bottom, with a large white semi-circle on the right side.

Slave Trade and Emancipation

Muhammad Najm Akbar

makbar@mpc.edu

Somerset v Stewart 1772

The state of slavery is of such a nature that it is incapable of being introduced on any reasons, moral or political, but only by positive law, which preserves its force long after the reasons, occasions, and time itself from whence it was created, is erased from memory. It is so odious, that nothing can be suffered to support it, but positive law. Whatever inconveniences, therefore, may follow from the decision, I cannot say this case is allowed or approved by the law of England; and, therefore, the black must be discharged.

Chief Justice Lord Mansfield, London, June 1772

Slavery in the Empire

- Mansfield's decision did not say anything about the colonies and plantations where slavery existed. He did not recognize it in the law of the mother country.
- The empire had it. How did the empire reach that point?
- The Maritime Revolution of the fifteenth century and the incessant need for labor in the Americas had a key role in scaling the slave trade to levels human history had never seen before although we can track this abominable institution back to Hammurabi's Code 1728 BCE in the First River Valley civilization of Mesopotamia.

The Maritime Revolution

- Africa was the first destination of the Portuguese-led European exploration of the Atlantic.
Western Africa became their first outpost. They established their first base at Cape Verde in 1444.
- The Portuguese crown leased Sao Tome to a private entrepreneur in 1469. He developed it into a sugar plantation using slave labor.
- They reached the Gold Coast in 1471 and requested to build a fort in 1482. We now know this fort as Elmina. Through this, they acquired gold equivalent to one-tenth of the world's production at that time and later also used it for slave acquisition.

The Maritime Revolution

- The Portuguese were not alone in this adventure. The local power brokers had differentiated responses to their initiatives.
- Benin began collaborating, principally to procure firearms. The state monopolized exchanging goods such as pepper, ivory tusks, stone beads, textiles, and slaves, essentially the prisoners of war.
- Benin's dissatisfaction with some of the practices of its partners led to a ban on the trade of male slaves in 1538.

The Maritime Revolution

- In Congo, the Portuguese had a larger imprint. Lacking any commodities for a two-way exchange, Congo relied entirely on the slave trade that, like Benin, the State monopolized. The Congolese adopted Christianity as the state religion and missionaries had some success with Benin as well. Congo paid for the cost of hosting missionaries and Portuguese goods with slaves.
- The monopoly on the slave trade and the bans remained porous. When the state partners of Portugal introduced restrictions on the slave trade and missionaries in 1538, competing centers of the slave trade emerged responding to the lure of European armaments and other products.

The Maritime Revolution

- Inequality accompanied these massive initiatives. Financing royal pursuits in the Middle Ages had remained an issue. The Portuguese throne found a way to fund its initial efforts by selling the captured Africans from the northwest and the islands of Canaries to slavery. By the end of the century, they had traded 80,000 slaves.
- The private entrepreneurs brought further financial resources but also profited from slavery. The beginning of the gold trade provided additional money.

STOWAGE OF THE BRITISH SLAVE SHIP BROOKES UNDER THE REGULATED SLAVE TRADE

Act of 1788.

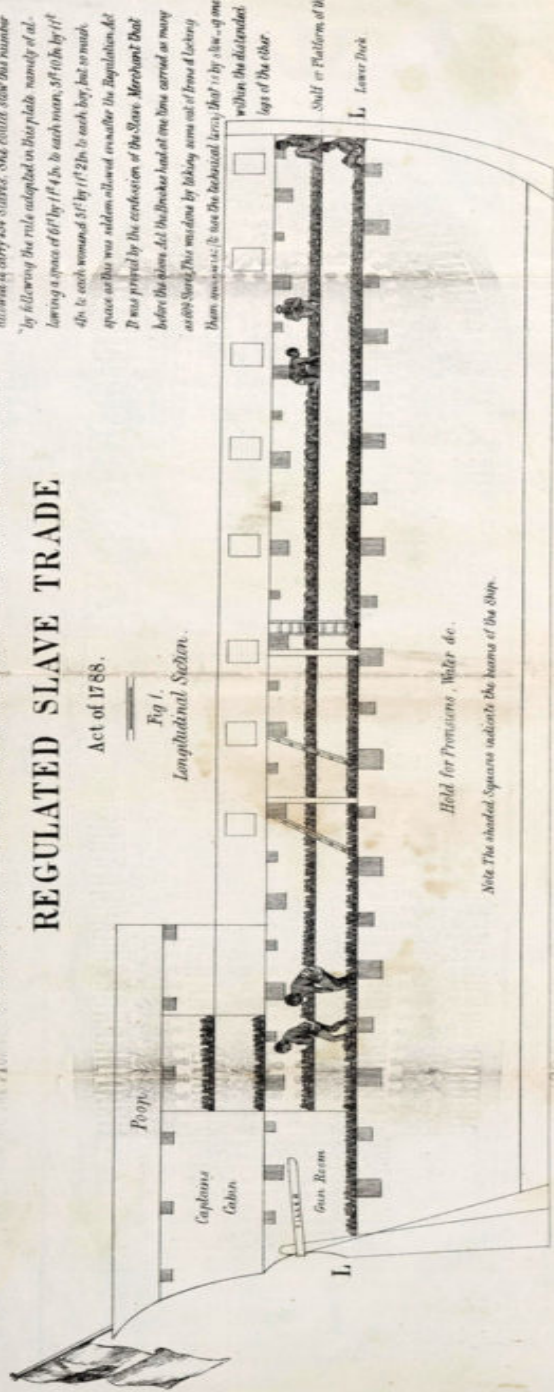


Fig. 1. Longitudinal Section.

Hold for Provisions, Water &c.

Note The shaded Squares indicate the beams of the Ship.

PLAN OF LOWER DECK WITH THE STOWAGE OF 292 SLAVES

130 OF THESE BEING STOWED UNDER THE SHELVES AS SHEWEN IN FIGURE B & FIGURE 3.

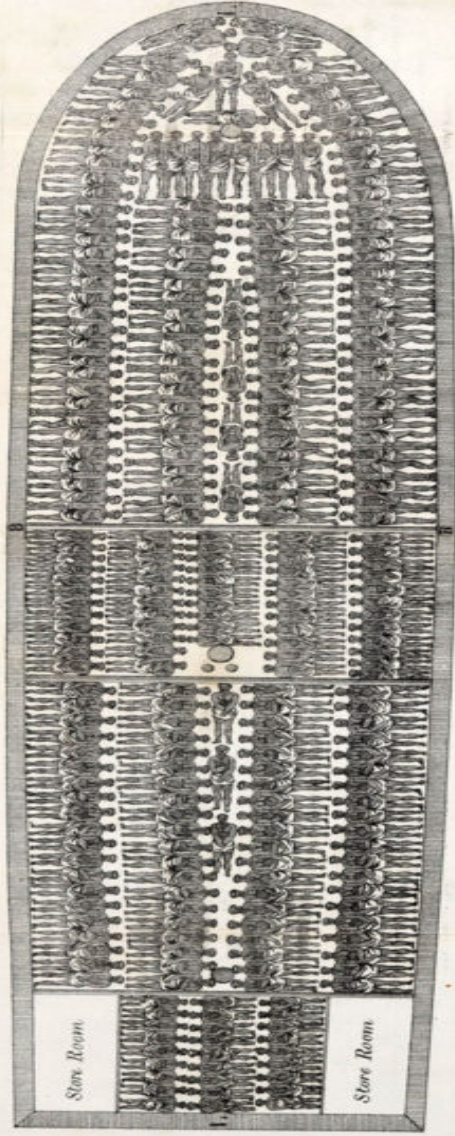


Fig. 2.

PLAN SHEWING THE STOWAGE OF 130 ADDITIONAL SLAVES ROUND THE WINGS OR SIDES OF THE LOWER DECK BY MEANS OF PLATFORMS OR SHELVES (IN THE MANNER OF GALLERIES IN A CHURCH) THE SLAVES STOWED ON THE SHELVES AND BELOW THEM HAVE ONLY A HEIGHT OF 2 FEET 7 INCHES BETWEEN THE BEAMS, AND FAR LESS UNDER THE BEAMS. See Fig. 1.

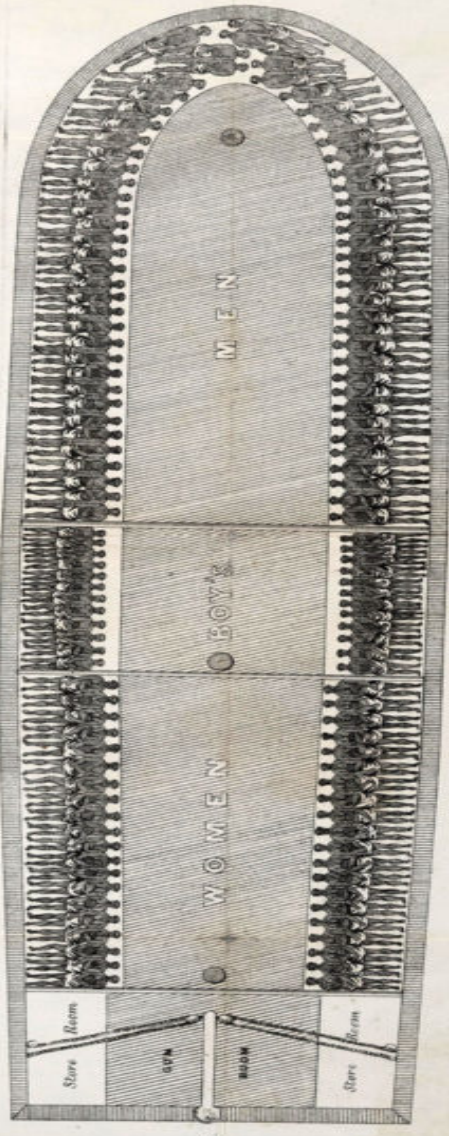


Fig. 3.

Fig. 4. Cross Section at the Poop.

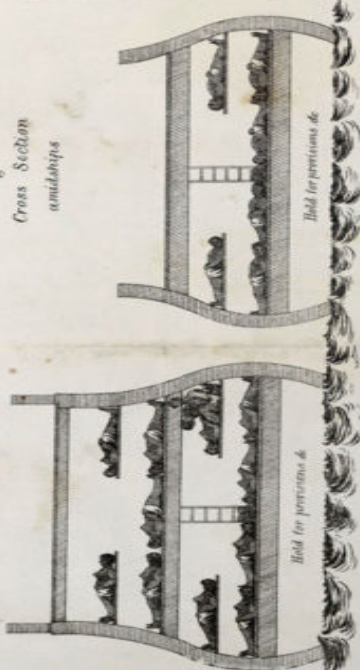


Fig. 5. Cross Section amidships.

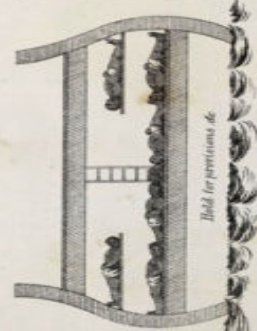


Fig. 6. Lower tier of Slaves under the Poop.

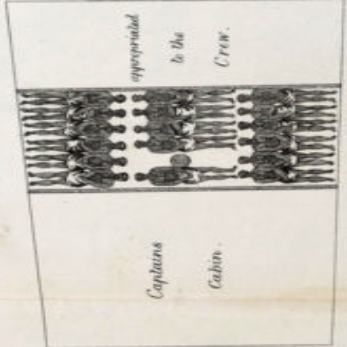
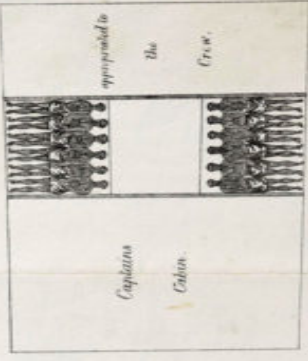


Fig. 7. Upper tier of Slaves under the Poop.



Scale of Feet

Middle Passage

- “Stowage of the British slave ship Brookes under the regulated slave trade act of 1788,” 1789, via Wikimedia.”
- [Slave ships transported 11-12 million Africans to destinations in North and South America, but it was not until the end of the 18th century that any regulation was introduced.](#)
- The Brookes print dates to after the Regulated Slave Trade Act of 1788, but still shows enslaved Africans chained in rows using iron leg shackles. The slave ship Brookes was allowed to carry up to 454 slaves, allotting 6 feet (1.8 m) by 1 foot 4 inches (0.41 m) to each man; 5 feet 10 inches (1.78 m) by 1 foot 4 inches (0.41 m) to each woman, and 5 feet (1.5 m) by 1 foot 2 inches (0.36 m) to each child, but one slave trader alleged that before 1788, the ship carried as many as 609 slaves.

Middle Passage: [Numbers](#)

- “Middle” had various meanings in the Atlantic slave trade.
- For the captains and crews of slave ships, the Middle Passage, [34514 recorded voyages](#), was one leg in the maritime trade in sugar and other semifinished American goods, manufactured European commodities, and enslaved Africans.
- For the enslaved Africans, the Middle Passage was the middle leg of three distinct journeys from Africa to the Americas. First was an overland journey in Africa to a coastal slave-trading factory, often a trek of hundreds of miles. Second—and middle—was an oceanic trip lasting from one to six months in a slaver. Third was acculturation (known as “seasoning”) and transportation to the American mine, plantation, or other locations where enslaved people were forced to labor.

Middle Passage

- King Charles II had conferred a monopoly on the Royal African Company for the slave trade in 1672.
- Royal African ships departed from Bristol, Liverpool, or London carrying rum, guns, iron bars, fetters, glass beads, clothes, and copper pots to trade for slaves. The company used present-day Ghana's Cape Coast Castle as its slaving capital. From there, they will proceed to Barbados or Jamaica.

North American Share

- About 450,000 Africans landed in British North America, a relatively small portion of the eleven to twelve million victims of the trade. As a proportion of the enslaved population, there were more enslaved women in North America than in other colonial enslaved populations.
- Enslaved African women also bore more children than their counterparts in the Caribbean or South America, facilitating the natural reproduction of enslaved people on the North American continent.

Slave Trade and Emancipation

- In the UK, slave trade was abolished in 1807. Emancipation occurred in 1838, with negotiated compensation for slave owners for the loss of their "property," but, as we can say in retrospect, no civil war.
- The US government prohibited the transatlantic slave trade in 1808, prohibited the slave trade in the District of Columbia in 1850, and made slavery unconstitutional altogether in 1865. This was a direct result of the Union victory in the American Civil War.

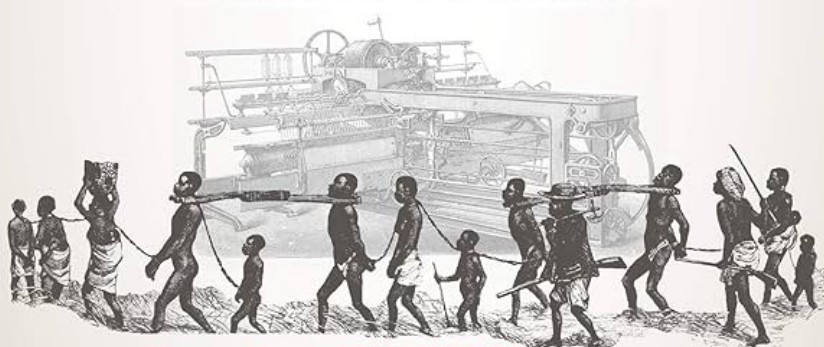
The Road to Emancipation

- How did it happen?
- British capitalists in the West Indies, known as West Indian monopolists had enormously benefited from the Navigation Laws and monopoly on sugar.
- Eric Williams argues that the mainland capitalists began to resent their profiteering and strived to eliminate the monopolies. The attack on the West Indians was more than an attack on slavery. It was an attack on monopoly. Their opponents were not only the humanitarians but the capitalists.

“In 1944 Eric Williams published his classic *Capitalism and Slavery* which sparked a scholarly conversation that has yet to die down. In many ways, the debates it generated are more vibrant now than ever and promise to be a lasting touchstone for historians well into the future.”
—*Black Perspectives*

CAPITALISM and SLAVERY

THIRD EDITION



Eric Williams

with a new foreword by **William A. Darity Jr.**

Introduction by **Colin A. Palmer**

Capitalism and Slavery

- Who was Eric Williams: had his doctorate from Oxford in 1938.
- His dissertation was: *The Economic Aspects of the Abolition of the Slave Trade and West Indian Slavery*, published in book form *Capitalism and Slavery*, 1944.
- Eric Williams held leadership positions in his native Trinidad and Tobago, beginning in 1955 and till his death in 1981.

The Road to Emancipation

- The attack falls into three phases: the attack on the slave trade, the attack on slavery, the attack on the preferential sugar duties. The slave trade was abolished in 1807, slavery in 1833, and the sugar preference in 1846. The three events, in Williams' mind, were inseparable.
- Whereas before, in the 18th century, every important western interest in England was lined up on the side of monopoly and the colonial system; after 1783, one by one, every one of those interests came out against monopoly and the West Indian slave system. British exports to the world were in manufactured goods which could be paid for only in raw materials- the cotton of the United States, the cotton, coffee and sugar of Brazil, the sugar of Cuba, the sugar and cotton from India (Williams, 154).

The Road to Emancipation

- The expansion of British exports depended on the capacity of Britain to absorb the raw material as payment. The British West Indian monopoly, prohibiting the importation of non-British plantation sugar for home consumption, stood in the way. Every important vested interest, the cotton manufacturers, the shipowners, the sugar refiners; every important industrial and commercial town, London, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Sheffield, the West Riding of Yorkshire, joined in the attack on western slavery and West Indian monopoly, (Williams, 154).

Agency of the Enslaved Persons

- Williams also makes a case for the contribution of slaves' struggle for emancipation. Slaves, he contends, were the most dynamic and powerful social force in the colonies. They were not just instruments of production and manifested agency in many ways. Here are a few examples he offers.
- The slave took the scriptures slave owners gave him and adopted them for his purposes.
- To coercion and punishment, he responded with indolence, sabotage, and revolt. Most of the time he merely was as idle as possible. That was his usual form of resistance- passive.

Agency of the Enslaved Persons

- The docility of the Negro slave is a myth. The Maroons of Jamaica and the Bush Negroes of British Guiana were runaway slaves who had extracted treaties from the British government and lived independently in their mountain fastness or jungle retreats.
- The successful slave revolt of Saint Domingue was a landmark in the history of slavery in the New World. After 1804, when the independent Republic of Haiti was established, every white slave owner, in Jamaica, Cuba, or Texas lived in dread of another Toussaint L' Overture (Williams, 202).

Agency of the Enslaved Persons

- The slaves consensually believed that emancipation had been passed in England while their masters had withheld it. In 1807, Jamaican slaves had construed the abolition of the slave trade as nothing less than general emancipation.
- They also viewed the Jamaican assembly as having withheld some rights that the 1816 Act of the British parliament requiring registration of all slaves provided. The planters then recommended a parliamentary declaration that emancipation was not contemplated. A similar misunderstanding existed among the slaves in Trinidad and Barbados.
- Every change (departure) of a governor was interpreted by them as evidence of emancipation, (Williams 203).

Agency of the Enslaved Persons

- The frequency and intensity of slave revolts after 1800 reflect the growing tensions that reverberated in the stately halls of Westminster.
- In 1808 a slave revolt broke out in British Guiana.
- In 1816, slaves in Barbados revolted, (Williams 204).
- In 1823, British Guiana went up in flames, for the second time. Fifty plantations revolted, embracing a population of 12,000. **They had so carefully and secretly planned the revolt that it took the planters unawares.** The slaves demanded unconditional emancipation, (Williams 205).

Agency of the Enslaved Persons

- In 1824, plantations in the parish of Hanover in Jamaica revolted. The slaves as a group could only with difficulty be restrained from interfering with the execution of the ringleaders.
- The executed leaders were fully impressed with the belief that they were entitled to their freedom and that the cause they had embraced was just and vindication of their rights, (Williams 205).
- No state of the Negro mind was so dangerous as one of undefined and vague expectation, surmised the governor of Guiana, (Williams 206).

Agency of the Enslaved Persons

- In 1831, the slaves took the matter into their own hands in Antigua where an insurrectionary movement developed. The slaves believed that in the event of insurrection, the King's troops had received positive orders not to fire upon the slaves.
- During the Christmas of 1831, Jamaica, the West Indian colony with more than half the slaves in the entire British West Indies, revolted in the western district, (Williams 206).
- By 1833, Williams concludes, the alternatives were clear: emancipation from above or emancipation from below. But emancipation. The Negroes had been stimulated to freedom by the development of the very wealth which their labor had created, (Williams 206).

Post-Emancipation

- The British capitalists after 1833 remained involved in the slave trade. They sent British goods from Manchester and Liverpool, cotton, fetters, and shackles directly to the coast of Africa or indirectly to Rio de Janeiro and Havana where their Cuban and Brazilian consignees used them to purchase slaves. By one estimate, 7/10th of the goods used by Brazil for slave purchases were British manufacturers.
- The British were reluctant to destroy the barracoons on the coast because they were thereby destroying British calicoes.
- British banking firms in Brazil financed the slave traders and insured their cargoes, to earn the goodwill of their hosts. British mining companies owned and purchased slaves whose labor they employed in their enterprises, (Williams, 172).

Post-Emancipation

- The Lancashire capitalists opposed in 1843 a bill prohibiting the employment of British capital, however indirectly, in the slave trade on the ground that it would be a dead letter. In that year, British firms handled three-eighths of the sugar, one-half of the coffee, and five-eighths of the cotton exported from Pernambuco, Rio de Janeiro, and Bahia, (Williams, 172).

Compensation £20 million
(app £16 billion, current value).

- The Legacies of British Slavery (LBS) project tracks the slave owners who received compensation when slavery was abolished in the British West Indies, Mauritius, and the Cape in 1833.
- The West India interest still had a powerful voice in Parliament and the City and was able to negotiate a sum of £20 million (app £16 billion in today's money) in compensation for the loss of 'their property' – enslaved men and women.
- The £20 million represented just over 40% of the valuation attributed to the 800,000 enslaved people in the colonies affected by the Abolition Act (Emancipation and the Remaking of the British Imperial World--Catherine Hall, Nicholas Draper, Keith McClelland).

Compensation £20 million
(app £16 billion, current value).

- In addition, the slave owners received interest on the compensation for the period between 1 August 1834 and the payment date, which varied between 1835 and 1845, with the vast bulk of payments made by 1838.
- Furthermore, they received the value of the further period of forced labor known as 'Apprenticeship,' originally intended to be between four and six years but truncated in 1838.
- Economists have estimated it as another 33 to 47% value of the enslaved labor (Emancipation and the Remaking of the British Imperial World--Catherine Hall, Nicholas Draper, Keith McClelland).

The Centre for the
Study of the Legacies of British Slavery

- Legacy of Charles McGarel

Bank of England—Compensation Database

- [The collection of slavery compensation, 1835-43](#)
- The Bank of England administered the payment of slavery compensation to slave owners on behalf of the British government.
- Using records held in the Bank's Archive, a data set of 13,500 unique transactions has been produced which details the collection of £3.4 million of compensation awarded in the form of government stock (3.5% Reduced Annuities).

Bank of England—Compensation Database

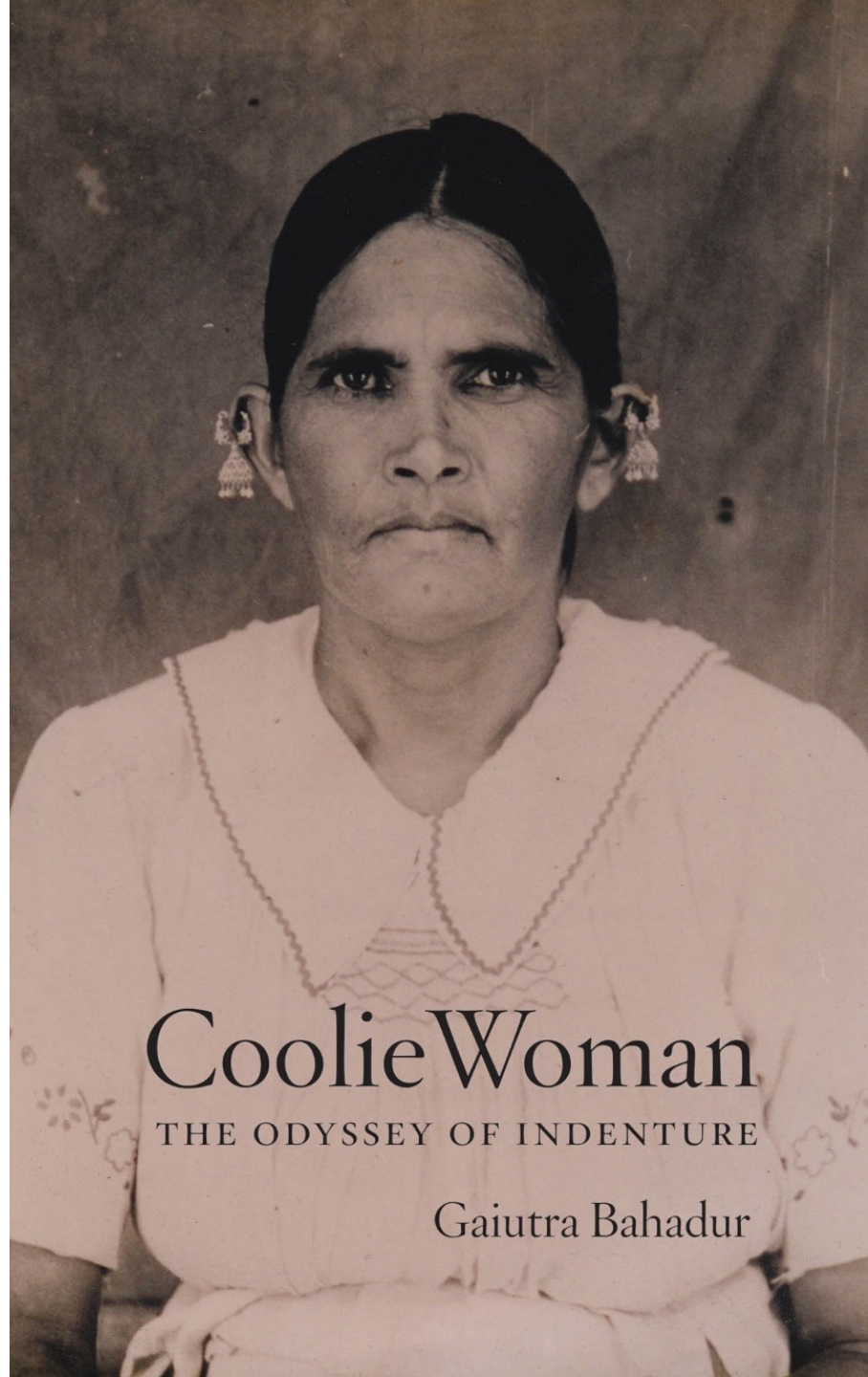
- A BOE study shows that just 10 individual account names had over 8,000 transactions totaling £2.2 million. The largest agents were partners in London banks and merchant firms that had pre-existing commercial ties to the colonies that received compensation in Reduced Annuities (Cape of Good Hope, Mauritius, and the Virgin Islands).
- “.... All of this provides further evidence for the strong links between financial institutions in the City of London, the capital generated through the transatlantic slavery economy, and the compensation process during the 1830s.”

Did it End There? The Indentured Labor

- After emancipation, the planters prevailed on the colonial administration to allow recruiting indentured labor from India. About two million Indians boarded ships as indentured labor up to 1917. They sailed initially to other colonies of the British Empire. Later, with the consent of the British Empire, the French and Dutch Empires also imported indentured labor for their colonies.
- Historically, indenture had been an established form of labor centuries before it reached India in the nineteenth century. Indentured labor, for example, remained the mainstay of the British colony of Virginia in North America from its earliest days until the late seventeenth century when the planters switched to slavery, by then a cheaper and more abundant source of labor.

Did it End There? The Indentured Labor

- Contractually, the South Asian servants collected wages. Their contracts also provided for return passage to the country of origin upon completion of fixed terms.
- Historically, the indenture system in the Americas ended because of economic reasons. Political reasons, on the contrary, put an end to the indenture system in the British colonies in 1917.



Coolie Woman

THE ODYSSEY OF INDENTURE

Gaiutra Bahadur



Coolie Woman

And if caste didn't define her, did place? In rural India, navel strings are buried where babies are born, signifying a sacral attachment to that land. Did it grieve Sujaria that she might never return to the earth that held her navel string? Her descendants would continue to bury the umbilical cords of their children, wherever born. They would retain the folk custom but lose any sense that sacred texts declared the seas would erase their identities. Did my great-grandmother realize that this would really only matter for the returned--and that she wouldn't be among them? (Gaiutra Bahadur, *Coolie Woman: The Odyssey of Indenture*).