From abolition of the slave trade to protection of immigrants

Danish colonialism, German missionaries, and the development of ideas of humanitarian governance from the early eighteenth to the nineteenth century

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Abstract

The focus of the article is the emergence in the eighteenth century of discourses of abolition in the context of bonded labour and the trade in slaves from India. It relates this to the development in forms of unfree labour from slavery to indenture, and to the travels of abolitionism from the Indian Ocean world into that of the Atlantic. The article examines multinational dimensions of this early history of abolition and discusses more particularly how missionary enterprises based in Danish colonies in India contributed to the development of ideas of education, enlightenment, and natural rights that fed into emerging discourses of abolitionism. Further, the article links eighteenth-century debates around abolition to discourses of protection and humanitarianism that became prominent in the last half of the nineteenth century in the context of imperialist competition and campaigns against the illegal slave trade.

Keywords: slave trade; abolition; Danish colonialism; missionaries; humanitarianism

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Introduction

This article discusses the contribution by eighteenth-century German missionaries based in the Danish colonial settlement at Tranquebar to the early development of agendas for abolishing the slave trade in India. The research presented forms part of a larger area of study, which addresses the development in forms of unfree labour from slavery to indenture, and the ways in which abolitionist ideas and agendas travelled from the Indian Ocean world into that of the Atlantic. The article examines multinational dimensions of this early history of the modernisation of colonial discourse, and discusses more particularly how – from the early eighteenth century – the Danish-English-Halle Mission contributed to the development of ideas of education, enlightenment, and natural rights, which fed into emerging discourses of abolitionism. The article discussed the apparent contradiction between the Halle missionaries' acceptance of forms of slavery in the context of their developing engagement with Tamil society and politics, and their active interventions with Danish colonial authorities and the British East India Company to have the slave trade prohibited. To explain this, the article brings out the ambiguities surrounding the meaning and use in the eighteenth-century Indian missionary discourse of notions of "slave" and "servant."

The article thus enters into discussion with findings in the research carried out in the field by scholars like Indira Chatterjee, Richard Eaton, Andrea Major, and Richard Allen.[1] In recent decades, the slave trade of the Indian Ocean has been a rapidly growing field of research interest. Central debates have concerned the differences between forms of slavery and patterns of slave trade in the Indian Ocean compared to Atlantic paradigms, and to what extent notions of abolitionism as they came to be used in Atlantic studies make sense also for the Indian Ocean.

While this has been questioned by Indira Chatterjee and Andrea Major, Richard Allen has maintained that, in terms of abolition, the Indian Ocean led the way. Agendas of abolitionism came to the fore in debates and changes of attitude among British East India officials in the late eighteenth century, before they made their way into debates and policy making concerning the Atlantic.[2] In what follows, I discuss the understanding of notions of "slavery," "slave trade" and "abolition" in early Protestant missionary debates in India, and what ambiguities they involved. In discussing the origins and evolution of ideas of abolition, my article draws upon the longstanding debate about continuities in the development of forms of unfree labour from slavery through indenture to contemporary migrant and contract labour, within which publications by Hugh Tinker in the 1970s and by Marina Carter from the 1990s have represented important alternative positions.[3]

Finally, the article links up eighteenth and early nineteenth century debates around abolition with discourses of protection and humanitarian governance that became prominent in the last half of the nineteenth century. In the context of imperialist competition, the scramble for Africa, and naval campaigns to eradicate the now illegal slave trade, agendas for protection were important ideological weapons in the struggle for legitimacy and moral superiority as demonstrated in research by James Heartfield, Alan Lester, and Fay Dussart.[4] The archaeology of the emergence of notions of "protection" out of debates on abolition takes us back to the "Protectors of Slaves" of the early nineteenth-century Cape of Good Hope, to the "Protectors of Emigrants" established by the British East India Company from the 1830s, and to the "Protectors of Immigrants" set up as counterparts to these in post-abolition plantation colonies in the West Indies, Mauritius, and Natal.[5]

The history of moving from slavery to indenture and from abolition to protection has been a prominent part of narratives of progress from unfree to free labour, as sustained by civil society institutions like the Anti-Slavery Society and the Aborigines Protection Society. In Great Britain in particular, campaigns to end the slave trade and to liberate slaves from their captors were used prominently to justify imperial expansion and to defame French and Portuguese competitors. In the

research literature, abolitionism has also often been represented as having its origins within the setting of British imperial and colonial history. This article points to a more complex – ambiguous, multilingual, and multinational – history of the beginnings of humanitarian and abolitionist discourse in India from the early eighteenth century onwards.

The argument in the article proceeds like this: After a brief overview of the context of Danish participation in the Indian Ocean slave trade from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, the article describes early initiatives of abolition in the Danish colonies in India. Following this, the multinational origins of abolitionism in India are discussed, in particular the work of the Danish-English-Halle Mission and the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge between 1706 and 1820. The ambiguities and contradictions of missionary discourse regarding slavery, equality and freedom are then scrutinized in greater detail. Finally, continuities are highlighted between eighteenth-century debates on "abolition" and the development of ideas of humanitarian "protection" in the course of the nineteenth century.

Danish participation in the slave trade from India

Danish colonial enterprise and Danish traders played a not insignificant role in the slave trade from India, though it is one for which reliable numbers have not so far been estimated, and Danish ships and merchants also participated in the trade in slaves from India to Africa's Cape Colony in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.[6] It is known from the papers left behind by Willem Leyel, who was the Governor at Tranquebar on the Coromandel Coast for the first Danish East India Company in the 1640s, that "a significant portion of the "goods" that passed through Tranquebar consisted of slaves."[7] Slaves were bought and sold locally, and were exported to markets in Aceh in particular, often on commission from French traders or from Indian elite members like the Naik of Tanjore. This so-called "country" trade was of particular importance for the Danes at Tranquebar in periods, when the Company was under pressure at home, and could not send ships to India (like at

the time of the disastrous Danish involvement in the Thirty Years' War in the 1640s). The Leyel papers also make reference to the "privateering war" conducted by the Danish Company already in this period against Bengal and the Mughals, in which Bengali ships were captured and converted into Danish vessels. Cargoes of slaves aboard such ships were registered in Danish records, and the slaves baptised and sold on by the Danes.[8]

In the early eighteenth century, at Tranquebar, a "fairly steady slave trade" was carried on, for which traders had to pay a fee to the Danish East India Company, which had been reorganised in 1668, and had its period of greatest prosperity between 1687 and 1704.[9] When this Company was dissolved and replaced by the Danish Asiatic Company in 1732, it was decided that the trade in slaves would be permissible only as Company trade. Slaves were bought in Sumatra or on the Coast – often the children of indebted families – and either became house slaves (sometimes referred as "Lutheran slaves," as they were christened and sent to missionary school) or sent on for sale to Negapatnam or Madras, or on Asiatic Company ships to Cape Town. The Company trade in slaves was not successful, though, and only survived because the Company's directors in Copenhagen insisted, while the so-called "sekrete Raad" of governance in Tranquebar was against it.

Around 1750 it has been conservatively estimated that 10 to 12 slaves per year were shipped from Tranquebar to Cape Town, but is uncertain to what extent Danish trade contributed to the traffic in slaves from Bengal to Cape Town in the first half of the eighteenth century.[10] Cape Town was a central hub in connecting the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic slave trade, as Patrick Harries has demonstrated, with slaves from the Indian Ocean trade in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries being fed into the Atlantic trade through Cape Town.[11] As for the slave population of Cape Town itself, slaves from Bengal and the Coromandel Coast in India until the mid-eighteenth century may have made out more than 50 percent of the unfree labour imported into the Cape as shown by Ansu Datta and Nigel Worden.[12]

The fact that there is a hiatus between 1717 – when the officials of the Danish East Company made a dramatic escape from Dannemarksnagore – and the foundation of Frederiksnagore in 1755, means there was no functioning Danish colonial establishment on Hooghly during the years when – according to Worden – the trade in slaves from Bengal to Cape Town reached its peak. On the other hand, slaves from Bengal will also most certainly have been fed into the Danish cross-Oceanic trade from Tranquebar, having first been transported or traded through stations along the Coast of the Bay of Bengal, as had been the case also in the mid- and late seventeenth century, as discussed above.

But it was also during the period between 1717 and 1755 that the Danish war with the Mughal Empire – more specifically with the Nawab Nizam of Bengal and Orissa – was most intense.[13] This was largely a naval or pirates' war, in which Danish ships and guns from Tranquebar had the advantage, and which led to the hijacking of several Bengali ships and the taking of a considerable of number of Muslim prisoners. While the ships were re-fitted as Danish East India Company vessels, their imprisoned crews are claimed in earlier accounts of the history to have been baptized and sold off as slaves, and it is possible that some of them were exported as slaves to Cape Town either directly or via Ceylon or Batavia.[14] To find out about the extent of such a Danish trade, it will be necessary to investigate records of Danish ships in at the Cape in Dutch archives, and – most importantly – have access to the primary sources in the archives of the second Danish East India Company, which are not available to researchers for the time being (see further below).

At the same time, much of the trade from India was multinational, which means that Danish ships carried goods on behalf of Dutch, French, British, and American merchants, and that Danish trade took place on ships sailing under the flags of other nations.[15] It would require a transnational research effort to get a comprehensive view of the Danish contribution through studies in different national archives, and with the capacities to analyze the relevant multilingual documents in these archives – such as ships' journals and the correspondence between the administrators of the Danish colonies and their Portuguese, Dutch, French, British, and Mughal counterparts.

We also need to understand how the different systems and circuits of trade interacted with each other in different decades – how the important coastal trade flowed between the colonial settlements on the Hooghly (Chinsurah, Chandernagore, Dannemarksnagore/Serampore, Calcutta) and those on Coromandel Coast (Nagapattinam, Pondicherry, Tranquebar, Madras), and how this trade related to that on the Malabar coast (Cochin, Mahé, Calicut, Colachel). All these three areas of focus for colonial trade are situated as outlets from hinterlands that have ancient histories of bonded labour, debt slavery, and reservoirs of unfree or what has been discussed as "slave caste" labour. We need to know more about the ways in which the European trade in slaves from India linked up with older domestic systems of bonding and the trafficking of unfree labour, and how it interacted with the trade in slaves by Indian merchants from Goa.[16]

Much of the seventeenth century Danish trade in slaves from Tranquebar took the form of "mellemhandel" or "country trade," while Danish Company ships were waiting for cargoes to take home, in which slaves would be taken to Aceh for sale on commission on behalf of the Naik of Tanjore, and slaves would also be traded on commission from French merchants in Pondicherry. Many of the people sold would be "debt slaves" or "tax slaves" – people who were not able to meet their household costs or honour their debts, and would therefore sell themselves or their children into slavery. The number of slaves available would thus depend on the price of rice – there would be more slaves if prices were high, fewer in years of good harvest. E.g. 1696 was a good year, 1698 a bad one in terms of the availability of slaves.[17]

Research on the interconnectedness of colonial trades in labour with local structures of obligation and caste was pioneered by the Danish economic historian, Benedicte Hjejle, who in 1967 published a detailed analysis, based on British and Indian sources, of Madras Presidency from the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries, which showed how the forms of unfree labour were affected by policies of abolition.[18] In his book *A New System of Slavery* from 1974, Hugh Tinker pointed out the continuities that existed in both Bengal/Bihar, Madras/Tanjore, and on the west coast of India

between the areas from which slave, bonded, and convict labour had traditionally been sourced, and the areas from which – in the early nineteenth century – indentured labourers came to be recruited. [19] Such continuities included links back to the important Dutch trade in slaves from Cochin to Ceylon, as well as to the French trade from Mahé to Mauritius and Réunion, with the Mascarenes and British Guiana becoming the central early testing grounds for substituting slaves with indentured labour. Despite the reservations raised by Marina Carter concerning Tinker's neglect of the agency of indentured labourers' families and of "sirdars" as locally based labour contractors in the areas of Indian recruitment, the overall perspective drawn up by Hugh Tinker of continuities from slavery to indenture still appear convincing and inspirational. [20]

Early initiatives of abolition in Tranquebar

The decline in the trade in slaves from Bengal and the Coromandel Coast to Cape Town from the mid-eighteenth century may be an indicator of the effect of early attempts at regulation or prohibition of the slave from India. As shown by Datta and Worden (see above), from the 1750s onwards the sourcing of slaves for the Cape moved from India to East India and subsequently Madagascar and Mozambique. One reason may well have been the increasing restrictions placed on the exportation of slaves from the parts of India, which were controlled by the British. Such restrictions were introduced in 1774 with the passing in Bengal of British East India Company regulations, which "removed the right to trade in persons without a written deed and prevented the sale or purchase of any individual not already in a state of slavery." [21] Another instance was the 1789 Proclamation by the BEIC Governor General, Lord Cornwallis, which banned "the practice of purchasing or collecting natives of both sexes, children as well as adults, for the purpose of exporting them for sale as slaves in different parts of India or elsewhere." [22] Researchers like Andrea Major and Richard Allen have pointed out the importance of the rise of abolitionist sentiment within British East India Company and the influence from late eighteenth-century British Evangelism for the emergence of

such restrictions. As is well known, the issuing of the Cornwallis Proclamation had an interesting Danish angle – again emphasizing the multinational dimensions of the trade in unfree labour. The 1789 Proclamation came just a few weeks after a court case in Calcutta, which attracted much publicity and involved the sentencing of the Danish Captain Peter Horrebow to three months in prison, a fine of Rs 500, and bonding to the amount of Rs 10,000 for three years to guarantee his good behaviour. The Danish Captain's offence was to have "acquired 140 to 150 slaves, some of whom were only five or six years old, at Chandernagore […] who were destined for the Île de France [Mauritius] but were subsequently diverted to and sold at Colombo after smallpox killed 30 to 40 of the ship's human cargo."[23]

Richard Allen thinks that Cornwallis's reference to the "dictates of humanity," which justified Horrebow's sentencing and the suppression of the slave trade, echoed a discourse of abolitionism which had been gaining ground among British East India Company officials in both India and Great Britain from the 1780s – thus reflecting a gradual growth in impact of ideas of humanitarianism .[24] Andrea Major is sceptical about this, and sees British East India Company as being more cynical and self-contradictory in terms of both intervening against and condoning practices of enslavement and trafficking in unfree labour.[25] By contrast Indira Chatterjee sees the discussion concerning the development and timing of abolition as rooted in reified understandings based on Atlantic paradigms of what constitutes slavery, which are adequate to understanding how complex graduations of servitude worked themselves out within different Indian contexts.[26]

Too little attention has been paid, however, to the multinational origins of abolitionist discourse in India and to the prominence of non-British missionary organisations in preparing the ground for it. Pernille Røge has described how – in the context of the Atlantic – the Danes abolished their slave trade well ahead of the British and of other colonial trading powers. The Danish declaration of abolition of the slave trade from the Danish colonies on the West African Gold Coast (or Slave Coast) to the sugar plantations of the Danish West Indies in 1792 was ambiguous, though,

as it would only take effect from 1803, and in the meantime – from 1793 to 1802 – an acceleration took place in the importation of slaves to the Danish West Indies, which brought approximately 25,000 new slaves on to their sugar plantations.[27] Røge emphasised also the "transnational and trans-imperial" nature of both the plantation industry in the Danish islands and of the slave trade through which it acquired slaves from West Africa, as well of the processes that about the eventual abolition of slavery itself by 1848.[28]

In the context of the efforts of abolition in India, preceding those in the Atlantic, something similar seems to have been the case, with multinational interactions playing a no less significant part, and the pioneering role of the Danish colonial establishments in Tranquebar and Serampore being perhaps even more significant. To a significant extent, the Danish contribution towards abolitionism was driven by German missionaries, and it gained its impact through the multinational collaboration networks of the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SPCK). But the point of departure for it was Danish colonialism in India and its interaction with that of other colonial powers, in particular the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French, and the British.

As is known from the existing literature, but also still under-researched, the trade in slaves from the Danish colonial establishments in India from the seventeenth century onwards was significant, but was also controversial. Thus, in the early eighteenth century, a "fairly steady slave trade was" was carried on, for which traders had to pay a fee to the Danish East India Company, which was reorganised in 1668, and had its period of greatest prosperity between 1687 and 1704.[29]. When this Company was dissolved and replaced by the Danish Asiatic Company in 1732, it was decided that the trade in slaves would be permissible only as company trade. Opinion regarding the merits or sinfulness of the slave trade was strongly divided, and by c. 1750 there was increasing local resentment on the Coromandel Coast against slave traders, who were seen as "de arrigste skjælme og gavtyve" and "mennesketyve" – malicious scoundrels, rogues, and kidnappers. They were as "hated

as the plague," and were cruelly tortured and punished, if they fell into the hands of local Tanjorians.[30]

Controversy resulted in a proclamation of abolition, when in 1753 the Danish Asiatic Company directors prohibited the slave trade also as Company trade. Both old and new scholarly literature gives 1753 as the year of Danish abolition.[31] But already on 20 July 1745 a "Plakat" – a public proclamation – was issued in Tranquebar "to prohibit and abolish the accustomed un-Christian trade in slaves." It would still be allowed, however, to buy for private use "those slaves who of their own free will and intention sell themselves, or are put up for sale by their real parents."[32] The purpose of the proclamation is framed in a discourse of evangelical enlightenment, making reference to both natural law and the rights of peoples:

> In order to prevent in the future and completely to abolish a trade and enterprise in innocent
> and freeborn human beings, which by both Christian and Heathens is considered to be
> highly prohibited and intolerable, and in conflict with all natural law and peoples' rights…
> it is prohibited for all and sundry in this place whether in their own capacity or through
> others to buy and acquire for themselves any Slaves, in order to again sell these here or in
> other places, under whichever name this might be carried out.[33]

This means that we should take 1745 (or 1744 when the proclamation was decided upon in Copenhagen) – rather than 1753 – as the year of Danish abolition of the slave trade in India. An illegal private trade continued, however, and in the 1770s, further proclamations were posted in Tranquebar as a reminder that the slave trading had been prohibited.[34] Again on 21 June 1783, the Danish Governor found it necessary to issue a decree, prohibiting slave trade and stating that "punishment would be meted out to those who took slaves out by sea or by land."[35] Like the slave trade, abolition was clearly an ongoing business, rather than a one-off event. Also, as the text of the

1745 proclamation makes clear, the trade that is prohibited – like in the later British proclamations referred to above – is one in people, who are not already slaves. Abolition was thus directed more against kidnapping and abductions than against the trade in slaves as such, and presupposes a colonial society in which the ownership of slaves as servants is commonplace, and where the boundaries between slavery and contractual servitude are fuzzy and negotiable.

The proclamation prohibiting the trading of slaves in 1745 was issued, while the Danish Asiatic Company was still a private enterprise. The Company was taken over by the Danish Crown in 1777, after its monopoly on trade to the Cape and beyond had expired in 1772, and trade was liberalized. Proclamations of abolition by the Danish company on 1744-45 were followed by those of the British East India Company in 1774 and 1789, when the Proclamation by Lord Cornwallis was issued, banning the slave trade in Calcutta (and followed by a similar ban in Madras in 1790), as discussed above.

The multinational origins of abolition in India

In order to take this discussion forward, it is of interest to map out and discuss qualitatively the notions and discourses of humanitarianism, enlightenment, and abolition that came to the fore in India from the early eighteenth century. In such discursive developments, Christian Evangelical thought was undoubtedly important, and voices within the British East India Company were pushing "for the Company to do more to evangelize India," and had links to Wilberforce and the Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, which was formed in London in 1787. Allen sees this as an instance of a complex "pan-regional dialogue between the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic worlds about abolition,"[36] within which abolitionism in India both reflected developments in other parts of the world, but also had an impetus of its own. This came to influence abolitionist agendas more broadly in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including what Allen – somewhat

bombastically – calls "the ultimate recourse to indentured labour after slave emancipation in the British Empire in 1834."[37]

Within this "opening up of the subcontinent to evangelization,"[38] British missionary initiatives have been at the centre of interest, and trans- and multinational dimensions have been underestimated. The Danish Indian colonies in Tranquebar and Serampore played a significant role in furthering the development of abolitionist thinking and discourse within the British East India Company. Serampore – formerly known as Frederiksnagore – has been given much attention as an instance of a benevolent, liberal-minded and enlightenment oriented Danish colonialism in India. The Danes gave shelter to British Baptist missionaries (William Carey, Joshua Marshman, William Ward), and hosted their printing press and College, which became incorporated, famously, into the University of Copenhagen.[39] This progressive image of Serampore and of Danish colonialism is based on an understanding that sees it as unique compared to the Dutch colonial establishment at Chinsurah and that of the French at Chandernagore, though without much serious comparative study. Most importantly, it contrasts Danish colonial governance with that of the British East India Company, which is understood to have prohibited the work of Christian missionaries in British India as contrary to its business interests, until this was changed with the passing of the Charter Act of 1813.[40]

But British East India Company policy was much more complex and sophisticated, and while Carey and Marshman were printing and teaching at Serampore, Carey was also a famous and much appreciated language scholar and lecturer at Fort William College in Calcutta – inside British Company territory. On the whole, the Company in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century seems to have walked on two legs regarding the work of evangelicalism and missionaries. Thus – rather than representing an alternative to British East India Company policies in this respect – the Danish colonies at both Serampore and Tranquebar were rather collaborating with and playing the game of their British counterparts. This was the case also at times when Denmark and Great Britain

were at war, and the Danish colonies in India formally occupied by the British.[41] The important point here is that such ambiguities and interactions worked themselves out within a scenario of multinational and cosmopolitan relations, which cannot be understood within the perspective of a single national historiography, but requires a transnational approach to colonial history.

The volume on India in the new history of *Danmark og kolonierne* from 2017 is helpful in this respect, especially as it brings to the fore new research findings on the history of work of German Protestant missionaries, based in the Danish colonies. The pioneers and most important actors were the Lutheran Pietist missionaries from Halle, who came to Tranquebar in 1706 with the support of Danish royalty – in particular King Frederik IV (1699–1730), who was German-speaking and had strong Pietist sympathies. Important early research on the Halle Mission – or the Danish-English-Halle Mission as it is now most commonly called – in the context of colonial history was carried out in the 1980s by Anders Nørgaard. This has since been substantially extended through the research represented in the three volumes published by Andreas Gross and colleagues in 2006 on *Halle and the Beginning of Protestant Christianity in India*, and not least through the work of scholars like Heike Liebau, combining mission and social history and using methods of "prosopography" and life history research.[42] The Halle missionaries were joined later in the eighteenth century by German Moravian missionaries from Herrnhut – originally of a Hussite orientation – who had applied for permission to establish a mission in Iceland, but were diverted by the Danish authorities to the Nicobar islands, and held up on the way for decades in both Tranquebar and Serampore.[43]

In this period, Denmark was itself a multi-national state, German was one of the languages of government, and it is no wonder that German missionaries took the lead in the evangelization of the Danish colonies. But the Halle missionaries played an even more significant role internationally by acting in India also from 1719 as the primary agents of the London-based Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK). This included the establishment of mission stations in Madras in 1726, modelled on the one in Tranquebar, in Calcutta in 1758, and in several other Indian settings

during the 1760s.[44] The ambiguity – the walking on two legs – of the British East Indian Company in its policies towards evangelicalism and the work of missionaries comes to the fore clearly in its reluctance to allow British mission societies to operate, while at the same time welcoming non-British missions inside its colonial realm.

This meant that the evangelicalism and humanitarianism, which the Halle missionaries propagated – and which they tried out with great consequence in the Danish colony at Tranquebar – also became an influence also within British East India Company India. This was documented in the *Hallesche Berichte* that were published also from 1710 onwards, and which reported on the progress and good works of the Mission. The reports included a strong emphasis on education and an expectation that once proselytes had been educated, the knowledge gained would make them convert to Christianity. By contrast, the Moravians were primarily lay missionaries, who expected their example of virtuous living, diligence, successful farming and craft work to inspire conversion.[45]

The Halle missionaries were strongly egalitarian, and their schools took in pupils from all castes, including both Tamil slaves and "Portuguese" slaves – the latter a mixed-race group that persisted as classification within the strictly segregated worlds and urban geographies of the Danish settlements, and of whom many would have Catholic leanings.[46] The missionaries also focused on women and established girls" schools, and in the 1780s even tried – unsuccessfully, though – to set up an "Integrationsskole" where Tamil and European pupils would be educated together.

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In 1712, the Halle missionaries established a printing press at Tranquebar, financed by the SPCK – nearly a hundred years before the more famous Baptist one at Serampore. The press published books in both European languages and Tamil, and – according to Brimnes and Jørgensen –

became "leading in Asia" and highly important in developing alphabets for and systematizing Tamil and other Indian languages, including the publication of dictionaries and grammars.[47]

Missionary education of this kind – directing itself at both Tamil slaves, "Pariahs," the "Portuguese" mixed-race population, and at women – supported an Enlightenment argument against the slave trade, but also led to conflict with both colonial traders and local Tanjorian elite interests, resulting in complaints that the missionaries made slaves "obsternasige" – stubborn and unmanageable.[48] At the same time, local Tamil elites were made unhappy by slaves running away from villages and plantations in the surroundings of Tranquebar, and given refuge by the missionaries. The work of the missionaries was thus controversial and provided a source of continuous conflict with colonial officials and the European merchants. At the same time, it contributed importantly to the formation of discourses of abolition, and the Halle missionaries lobbied successfully for interventions to restrict the kidnapping and sale of "involuntary" slaves. Outcomes of this was the prohibition of the slave trade in Tranquebar 1744–45, followed by the British East India Company prohibitions in Calcutta and Madras of 1789 and 1790, and subsequent measures on the Malabar coast.

The Halle missionaries put pressure on owners of slaves in and around Tranquebar – including their own "Missionsbeamten" – to send their slaves to school and let them be baptized. They argued subsequently that slaves who were Christians could not be sold, and especially not sold to "Mahometanen" (Muslims), which met with local opposition "da doch selbige sie am besten bezahlten" (as Muslims would pay the best prices). The Danish Proclamation of 1744–45 discussed above was issued as a direct result of protestations made by the Halle missionaries to the management of the Asiatic Company. In these they made the demand "daß jeglicher Sklavenhandel aufzuhören habe außer dem Handel, der in ganz legaler Weise dann geschehe, wenn sich die "Eingeborenen" lieber als Sklaven verkaufen ließen als an Hunger zu sterben" (an end to all other trade in slaves except for the quite legal one, in which "natives" will rather let themselves be sold as

slaves than die of hunger). This was considered a significant victory by the missionaries, who continued to be supported and respected as critical observers of inhuman practices by the Asiatic Company against the resentment of both European and Indian mercenaries.[49]

In what follows, I shall discuss some of the ambiguities contained in missionary discussions of slave, servitude and abolition in India. I shall also describe in greater detail the multinational networks within such debates unfolded, and in particular of those for which channels and support were provided by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPCK). I shall do so with reference to the substantial literature of historical research, which has been published in recent years by Halle Mission and the Francke Foundations. In doing so, I hope to be able to highlight multinational dimensions of the emergence within colonialist settings of abolitionist discourses that are missing or not given sufficient attention in the accounts given by Andrea Major and Richard Allen, which have been dominated by a British colonial history perspective.

The ambiguities of missionary discourse

The Danish-English-Halle Mission was the first Protestant mission initiative to be launched in India, and became a model for later mission initiatives. It got under way in 1706 with the support of the Danish King Frederik IV in the face of theological and political opposition from the Lutheran establishment in Denmark, which was opposed to external missionizing.[50] Absolutism had only recently been established in Denmark, and the King was keen to uphold his international prestige and his position vis-à-vis the shareholders in the Danish East India Company. The first missionaries sent to Tranquebar (having first expected to be sent to the Danish West Indies and subsequently West Africa) were Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg (1682–1719) and Heinrich Plütschau (1677–1751).[51] The initiative came about as the direct outcome of contact and exchanges between the theologian and educationalist August Hermann Francke (1663–1727) in Halle, the Danish Pietist King, and sympathising ministers at the London Court of Queen Anne (1702–1707), whose prince consort was

the Danish Prince Georg. August Hermann Francke directed the Francke Foundations and was professor of oriental languages at Halle University, which was an important centre for the development of German enlightenment thinking.

The Danish-English-German collaboration continued during the reign of the Hanoveran kings, which followed that of Queen Anne. This happened within the framework of the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, which had been founded in 1698 as part of the efforts by "voluntary societies" to bring forward "Christian and moral reformation." The SPCK was the sister society of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, established in 1701 with North America as its field of operation. The collaboration of the SPCK with the Halle missionaries was supported by King George I (1707–1727), especially after Ziegenbalg had paid a successful and widely publicised visit to London in 1714.[52] A central personality within this multinational network collaboration was Anton Wilhelm Böhme (1673–1722), a Halle emissary whose translation of Francke's *Pietas Hallensis* sold more than 4,000 copies in England.[53] Another important personality was Benjamin Schultze (1689–1760), who was first Halle missionary to be employed by the SPCK, and the first European missionary to take the mission beyond the boundaries of Tranquebar into Tanjore, where the local rulers resisted the intrusion of missionaries.[54] Out of this collaboration grew a quite complex network of mission stations and missionary initiatives, which included both Halle missions, Danish missions, and English missions.

It was part of the Pietist obligation of the missionaries of the Danish-English-Halle Mission to be continuously inward-looking and to examine their deeds, behaviour, and moral consciousness. They were expected to write diaries – preferably beginning them before leaving Europe for the mission field – and to communicate diligently with the mission authorities in Copenhagen, London, and Halle by correspondence. They therefore left behind substantial written evidence relating to their individual life histories and soul-searching, much of which also went into the volumes of missionary reports, which were published as the *Hallesche Berichte* (1710–1772) and the *Neue Hallesche*

Berichte (1770–1848).[55] While much of this material was thus written with an external readership and propagation in mind and therefore not un-filtered, it gives insight the dilemmas and ambiguities with which the missionaries struggling in coming to terms with their work in India and with Tamil society and culture. It demonstrates the ways in which their attitudes, approaches, and discourse developed over time, both as regards different groups within the Indian population, and their position vis-à-vis the Danish East India and Asiatic Companies and the Danish King and Government.

Of the many Halle missionaries, whose names, dates, letters, and diaries are known, Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg is the one whose biography has been studied and written about most extensively. Ziegenbalg was the pioneering figure in the establishment of the Tranquebar mission base and already in his lifetime he became a European celebrity, because of his published letters, the controversies he raised, and the Pietist fervour with which the early DEHM activities in India were observed. In his early missionary work, Ziegenbalg adopted a radical confrontational attitude, both towards the Tamil population and culture he was interacting with and with respect to the Danish East Company and its representatives in Tranquebar. In a letter to August Hermann Francke in 1706, soon after his arrival in India, he describes how during a morning walk, he had "knocked down some and broken the heads of [porcelain figures of gods] to show the poor people that these are powerless and unworthy idols."[56] But within a few years Ziegenbalg changed his confrontational attitude into one of accommodation and academic interest that would better serve his missionary interests. This was demonstrated in his books from 1713 on the *Genealogy of the Malabarian Gods* and *Malabarian Heathenism*, which – according to the Halle historiographer, Heike Liebau – are "marked by a high degree of respect for Indian thought and culture."[57]

Similarly, Ziegenbalg started out by challenging the local officials of the Danish East India Company very directly and to such an extent that in November 1708 he was thrown into prison by the Danish commandant, Johann Sigismund Hassius (1664–1729; governor at Tranquebar from 1707 to 1718). Like the British East India Company, the Danish Company was worried about the ways in

which missionary activity within their territory might upset the balances of mutual recognition with local powers and societies, on which they depended. The challenge of Ziegenbalg and the Halle missionaries in this respect was seen as highly risky, as they were addressing the lowest of the low, slaves, and *dalits* (paraiyaars), in their mission work and conversion efforts, thus undermining local hierarchies.[58] In this confrontation, Ziegenbalg appealed to the Danish King, resulting eventually in the establishment with royal support of a "Missionskollegium" to supervise and support the DEHM.[59] In this confrontation with the Danish colonial Company authorities – like in the one with Tamil culture – Ziegenbalg (who died in 1719) and subsequent Halle missionaries changed their ways and became more accommodating and dialogue-oriented. This did not mean, however, that they gave up their efforts at influencing Company policy, or their use of direct access to royal Danish intervention to empower their influence.

The more pragmatic line of DEHM missionary approach showed itself in the way they addressed caste issues. Having started out as radical egalitarians, and directing themselves most energetically at the poorest sections of Tamil society, they won their greatest number of converts and of pupils from among the *dalits* and so-called Portuguese and Tamil slaves. Some of the students trained in mission schools became catechists and important instruments in spreading the gospel – also into inland Tanjore, where the local rulers were no less worried than the Danish company officials about the possible impact of missionary intervention. A famous catechist was Rajanayakkan (1700–1771), from whom letters are preserved in the Halle Mission archives, and who in the 1770s was denied ordination as a minister by the DEHM, because of his *dalit* or "casteless" background.[60] This showed that – while aiming at egalitarianism in principle – the Halle missionaries thought it necessary to acknowledge caste hierarchies in order not to alienate themselves from local establishments. In his letters, Rajanayakkan questioned principles of Halle Mission propagation, and argued in favour instead of the alternative approach of the Moravians, resident in the last half of the eighteenth century in Tranquebar and keen observers of the DEHM's activities and problems.

Rajanayakkan thought that the Halle missionaries focus on the crucifixion and the suffering and victimisation of Christ "would not bring the religion closer to the Tamils." Instead he found that "the method employed by the Moravian Brethren to talk primarily about the deeds and achievements of Jesus was much more promising."[61]

The paradox of being on the one hand dedicated to radical egalitarianism and on the other hand accommodating caste discrimination was difficult to come to terms with for the DEHM. The majority of their converts were "untouchables," but "not a single *dalit* was ordained during the entire period of the Tranquebar Mission." According to Liebau, this "question was never discussed openly and extensively among the missionaries in India, nor with the mission superiors in Europe."[62]

Ambiguities also surrounded the attitudes of the Danish-English-Halle-Mission towards the local population of slaves. As pointed out above, Anders Nørgaard has shown how the pioneering 1744—45 proclamation of abolition of the slave trade by the Danish Asiatic Company – the first of several proclamations of abolition – was the result of pressure brought to bear on the Company by the DECH missionaries. As indicated by the text of the proclamation itself – to bring "an end to all other trade in slaves except for the quite legal one, in which "natives" will rather let themselves be sold as slaves than die of hunger" – it was also a matter of considerable fuzziness what exactly constituted "slavery" in the context of Tranquebar and India, and consequently also what would be the exact meaning and impact of "abolition."

This lack of clarity of definition helps to explain why the attitudes and practices of the Halle missionaries regarding slaves were so apparently self-contradictory. Most striking is perhaps the circumstance that Batholomäus Ziegenbalg himself more or less immediately on arrival in Tranquebar in a letter to Francke of 25 September 1706 suggested that the DEHM mission should be kickstarted by a purchase of slaves, who would be forced to convert.[63] This would not be un-Christian behaviour, he argued, because parents in financially difficult situations would regularly sell

their children to make ends meet. Ziegenbalg explained this further in another letter to Francke of 23 December 1710:

> Since parents, as is the custom here, in any case, wish to sell their children as slaves, it would not be wrong to buy them oneself for a small amount of money so that they could belong to our Church. I remember that we have two such children in our school who are doing well and through them we have also been able to win over their parents.[64]

This was one type of slaves, then, who were Tamils, and whose form of bondage did not remove them completely from their family and background, whose condition of servitude might also not be permanent, and whose own offspring would not automatically become slaves. Another type of slaves would be "Portuguese" slaves, who were often of Indo-European parentage, would often be household servants and Portuguese-speaking, and many of whom were Catholics who had been educated or converted by the Catholic missionaries, who had preceded the Halle Mission Protestants in Tranquebar and Tanjore. Here again the degree of servitude and the dividing lines between servant, serf, and slave would be differentiated and negotiable, and slavery was not something that in absolute terms could be set apart from debt-related, contractual, and more voluntary forms of master-servant relationships. Another important category of slaves were "Portuguese" domestic servants, who would often be attached to the Catholic church and congregation in Tranquebar, established well before the arrival of the DEHM. The catechist Rajanayakkan, who was mentioned above, made his mark through his successful missionary work among such Catholic "Portuguese," and one of the early Indian practical projects of the SPCK was the production and distribution of the New Testament in Portuguese to support such efforts.[65]

Another type of slaves would be Muslim prisoners sold by their captors, who would be forced to convert, and whose religious instruction and education would be insisted upon and taken on board

by the Halle missionaries. A different category of slaves yet again were brought to Tranquebar or neighbouring ports for sale by slave traders – such slaves might come from Bengal or other parts of India, from Aceh and South East Asia (so-called "Maleyans"), or in rare cases they might be Mozambicans, who sometimes "before being sold as slaves, had been baptized by the missionaries there."[66]

It is clear, therefore, that the Halle missionaries were not rejecting slavery in all possible varieties. They would also buy certain categories of slaves for their own use, as they considered this to be a necessary accommodation of local cultural understandings of servitude and of the way, in which servants were attached to masters and households. Though slaves constituted an important proportion of missionary converts and were educated in DEHM schools, they would remain slaves even after baptism. As late as 17 October 1780, a Halle missionary writes in a letter that the ´slaves from various heathen nations, who receive holy baptism in the Portuguese congregation [of the DEHM] are not freed but are urged as Christians to serve their masters even more faithfully."[67] The missionaries did not actively oppose slavery, and in a letter from 1773, the Halle missionary Johann Friedrich König (1741–1795) reflected on the circumstance that

> the lot of the slaves here in East India, at least on our coast, is far more bearable than in West India where slavery continues over generations and where they have the heavy work in the plantations, which is not the case here.[68]

What was opposed and sought abolished seems to have a been a particular kind of slave trade, of which examples have been given above, in which children or other victims were forcefully abducted and taken overseas or to other far-away places to be sold for money. DEHM correspondence mentions victims of the slave trade from India, who had "vanished" and then been found again in Cape Town and Mauritius.[69] Agendas for abolition in India from the 1740s as they were carried forward through the networks of the SPCK appear to have been formulated with this limited

objective in mind. This helps to explain some of the ambiguities and contradictions found within missionary discourse regarding slavery.

As mentioned above, the Halle Mission or Danish Halle Mission has more recently become known rather as the Danish-English-Halle Mission. The DEHM denomination brings together three collaborating frameworks. First, the Lutheran mission set in motion from Copenhagen with the protection of the Danish King Frederik IV in Tranquebar from 1706; secondly the English mission built gradually by missionaries from Halle within the framework of the SPCK from the 1720s with mission stations in Madras (1726), Cuddalore (1737), Calcutta (1758), Tanjore (1762), Trichy (1766), and Nagapattinam (1783); and finally the Francke foundations and the Orphanage in Halle with close relations to the University of Halle, which was a centre of German enlightenment.[70] Here missionaries were selected and trained, and the outcomes of their missionary work archived. It was a complex network with different forms of overlap and combinations of funding, inter-relations, and support. These complexities had to do with the intricacies involved in doing mission work within the territories of trading companies like Danish East India and later Asiatic Companies, and the British East India Company.

The key figure in linking Halle with London was Anton Wilhelm Böhme, a close associate of Francke's based in London, where he was chaplain to the Court of Queen Anne and her Danish prince consort, who became the corresponding secretary of the SPCK. It was Böhme who besides Francke's writings also translated the Ziegenbalg letters from India and had them published as the highly successful booklet *Propagation of the Gospel in the East* in 1709. This Pietist bestseller, which came out in a second edition in 1710, was dedicated to the SPCK's sister organisation, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG), whose honorary chairperson was the Archbishop of Canterbury, the leader of the Church of England.[71]

It was a central strategy for the work of the SPCK in its early period that it did not engage in full-scale missionary work on its own behalf, but only in practical or technical projects to support the

activities of other Protestant missions, such as sending books and materials to "corresponding members" like the Halle missionaries. The publication of Ziegenbalg's letters thus helped to link together in an informal network an "ecumenical partnership that would last a full century," and which was so remarkably successful that one missionary historian thinks that "the Holy Spirit played an active role."[72] The first contact between the Halle missionaries and the SPCK seems to have been initiated by Ziegenbalg, while he was imprisoned by the Hassius, the Danish East Indian Governor in Tranquebar in 1708, and investigated possibilities for having the Halle mission transferred from a Danish to a British colonial setting.[73] This did not happen, but Ziegenbalg succeeded in having the Danish King intervene together with the Mission Board formed in 1714, and instead Tranquebar became the base for the gradual outreach and extension of the SPCK network, whose first activities were in Madras and Cuddalore in 1717.[74] As mentioned above, Benjamin Schultze was the first Halle missionary to employed by the SPCK in 1728, and he was followed by Johann Anton Sartorius, Johann Ernst Geister, Johann Philipp Fabricius, and Christian Friedrich Schwarz.[75] As during the eighteenth century Halle missionaries from Tranquebar were transferred to work for and to be paid either in full or in part by the SPCK, Tamil and "Portuguese" "national workers" came increasingly to the fore in conducting the work of the mission station in Tranquebar, and from the beginning of the nineteenth century European missionaries were no longer sent to work for the DEHM at Tranquebar.[76]

The acceptance of what might be called SPCK "double agents" – i.e. of non-English missionaries – who carried out mission work in British East India Company territory is indicative of the ambiguous strategy pursued by the Company vis-à-vis Christian missions. On the one hand, the BEIC had a proclaimed policy of not allowing English missions to operate and thus possibly disturb the balance of mutual toleration with local cultures and power structures, on which the Company's hegemony depended. By the early eighteenth century, British missionary societies were in any case still in their infancy. On the other hand, the BEIC not only tolerated, but also let its officers actively

support the work of Protestant non-English missionaries and missionary societies in the areas under its control in India through the practical projects undertaken through the SPCK. Thus, British citizens resident in India contributed financially in a private capacity to the work of the SPCK, and the BEIC's own Chaplain, William Stevenson, participated in the work of the SPCK in India from its beginning in 1717.[77] In 1728, when the SPCK station was established in Madras, the BEIC donated the land on which it was situated.[78]

As the century progressed, and Company rule was consolidated, the support for Christian missionary work became increasingly explicit. This was the case especially after the Company's victory in 1799 in the Mysore wars against Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan. This victory coincided in time with a growing influence in England 'of Anglican revival movements and newly-established mission organisations', i.e. of Methodist and Baptist churches and of organizations like the London Missionary Society (1795) and the Church Missionary Society (1799).[79] Thus even before Company policy was formally changed with the new charter of 1813, prominent Company officials gave their moral and financial support to mission activities in India, and to missionary schools. The BEIC also began to increasingly employ Christian Indians, and to encourage Hindu employees of the Company to attend "English schools" run by the missionaries.[80]

The SPCK and the BEIC thus worked more and more in tandem, and the tensions between their agendas diminished. Mission enterprise and activities became British national and imperial concerns, and non-English missionaries and mission societies like the Danish and Halle missions handed over to the British. In 1820, the SPCK took over from the DEHM the Christian congregations in Tranquebar, and in 1825 they were transferred to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG).[81]

Perspectives: From abolition to protection and beyond

In her article on the abolition of the Danish Atlantic slave trade in 1792, Pernille Røge showed that this initiative was part of a larger complex of enlightenment-inspired reforms, proposed by Danish-German members of the gentry and supported by absolutist rulers in the face of global revolutionary upheaval.[82] Most famously in the Danish context, this included the emancipation of the serfs in June 1788 – or in more precise technical terms, the ending of "adscription." A similar connection with earlier enlightenment ventures can be seen in the context of the abolition of the Indian slave trade earlier in the eighteenth century, which coincided with the abolition in Denmark of "villeinage" – an earlier and more restrictive form of serfdom. This was abolished by King Frederik IV in 1702, under the influence of Pietist enlightenment thinking emerging from the University of Halle, but the reform was then defeated for the time being in 1733, when "adscription" was introduced.[83] Legal reform of the relationship between masters and servants at home and in the colonies interacted with each other.

Another parallel between the Danish Indian and Atlantic abolitions was their limited extent, as discussed above – in the case of India and the Indian Ocean trade as regards the limitations in the types of slavery addressed, in the Atlantic case in the form of postponement until 1803 and the consolidation of slavery in the West Indian plantation economies. When it came to the abolition of slavery itself, British efforts then clearly outpaced those of Denmark. Abolition of slavery in the British Empire was agreed in 1833 (in the territories of the British East India Company with the Indian Slavery Act of 1843), while abolition in the Danish Virgin Islands only followed suit, reluctantly, in 1848, when there was both a powerful slave rebellion and strong political resistance in Denmark to pay compensation to slave owners.[84] Abolition in both the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic included several contradictory and concurrent aspects, including the securing of a continued supply of labour within the colonial societies that had relied on slave labour. It also involved the regulation by imperial authorities of local settler governments and their labour policies, the pursuit of agendas of "civilising mission" legitimizing further colonial expansion, and getting the moral upper hand

against imperial competitors in terms of effective governmental control and humanitarian "protection."

In the Western Indian Ocean, the progress of abolitionism coincided with a number of other developments. One was an intensification of imperial competition, in which some contenders were eliminated – Denmark's colonial establishments in India were incorporated into British territory, and were eventually sold to the British East India Company in 1845. This did not include the Nicobar Islands – Frederiksøerne – in which the British East India Company had no interest, which had been the doom of several failed colonization projects, and where only the Moravian missionaries held out against malaria for a while after 1845.[85] The islands were then handed over to the British without compensation in 1868. Another significant development was the replacement of British East India Company rule in India with imperial government after the Sepoy uprising of 1857, and the emergence of British India became as an increasingly important hub for further imperial expansion.[86] A third outcome was that "slave trade diplomacy" and "humanitarian imperialism" came to the fore, and that new types of institutions and officials were introduced to administer labour policies.[87] Finally, it meant that new and different graduations between free and unfree labour came to co-exist and overlap from slave, convict, and indentured through to new varieties of transnationally contracted migrant labour.[88]

Discourses of "humanitarian colonialism" had been given voice in Britain through organizations like the Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery – the Anti-Slavery Society – which was formed in 1823, and The Aborigines' Protection Society, established in 1836, and increasingly notions of "protection" came to take over from notions of "abolition."[89] The new focus manifested itself in the spread of institutions of "protection," which were set up in different contexts to manage the processes of transition that came along with abolition. Early examples of this were the "Protectors of Slaves" in the Cape.[90] "Protectors of Slaves were appointed in the four major sugar-producing Crown Colonies (those recently annexed [by Britain]), Demerara, Trinidad, St.

Lucia, and Mauritius."[91] With the introduction of indentured and *engagé* labour to substitute slaves in settings like the above, the Protectors of Slaves became replaced by Protectors of Immigrants, with colonies like Mauritius and Demerara/British Guiana being as laboratories to try out the new frameworks of regulation.

Since so much of the new indentured labour force came from India – and from areas in India that had a longstanding tradition of slavery and of providing reservoirs of unfree and cheap labour – the British East India Company and the Government of India played a prominent part in giving them shape. In 1842, emigration was approved from Calcutta, Madras and Bombay to Mauritius, and "emigration agents" were appointed in all three cities, who were later to be renamed "Protectors of Emigrants."[92] At the same time, it was decided that a Protector's office should be set up at the receiving end of migration in Mauritius, and the plan was that this "Protector of Immigrants" – like his counterparts in India – should be appointed also by the Government of India. The practice, however, became for the Protector of Immigrants to be appointed by the Mauritius Government with a strong representation of settler interest, and this arrangement became common also in other British colonies that followed the example of Mauritius in relying for their labour supply on the importation of indentured labourers from India.[93]

As these systems of labour supply were developed further during subsequent decades, an elaborate system of communications and interaction developed around the surveys and annual reports, which were exchanged between the Protectors' offices. Networks became important, through which prominent officials came together for meetings and conferences, and moved from one position to another within a nineteenth-century cosmopolitan world of empire. Other important institutional actors included the labour agents, who represented the interests of employers in the receiving colonies, and who moved in the same circles as the Protectors and their staff, and sometimes came to join them. Following the Indian uprising of 1857, a military aspect came into the recruitment and administrations of the Protectors as well, and a growing concern with discipline, hygiene, and risks

of insubordination became associated with the recruitment of indentured labourers. Clare Anderson has described the administrative worries surrounding those of the 1857 rebels, who were not rounded and sent off for incarceration and forced labour in the new penitentiaries of the Andaman Islands, but escaped India instead as indentured labourers.[94] Danish colonialists had earlier had similar plans for the Nicobar Islands, where they hoped to set up a penal colony could for Danish convicts and African slaves. The plans were given up, however – not because of ethical concerns, but because the costs of transportation from Europe and West Africa was estimated to be too high.[95]

In South Africa's Natal colony, the appointment of a Protector of Indian Immigrants in 1872 came into place in response to complaints of ill-treatment from a first contingent of Indian labourers, who had come to Natal in 1860. On their return to India, their complaints led the Government of India to refuse permission for further shipments of labour to Natal, until guarantees of protection had been improved.[96] Several of the early Natal Protectors had an Indian military background, and three of them – Banastyre Pryce Lloyd, Frederic Elton, and Murdoch McLeod – had fought with the Bengal Army in 1857–58, when the Sepoy uprising was repressed.[97] McLeod had a history also of having worked as a labour agent for Natal in Calcutta, prior to being appointed Protector of Indian Immigrants in Pietermaritzburg and Durban, thus demonstrating the mobility and permeability between positions within the system of labour recruitment regulation.

Yet another set of important actors with whom the Protectors of Emigrants and Protectors of Immigrants interacted during the last half of the nineteenth century were the British consuls, who together with the Royal Navy represented the Empire at the forefront of the anti-slavery campaigns. If we take Natal again as our example, the Protectors of Indian Immigrants were situated right at the interface between Imperial and settler government. The Protector of Immigrants was appointed (and could be dismissed by) the British Government's Secretary of State for the Colonies in London. At the same time, in Pietermaritzburg, he was a full member of the Legislative Council and the Executive Council of Natal (which went from "representative government" under a British-appointed

Lieutenant-Governor from 1856 to "responsible government" under a Prime Minister from 1893).

An important objective of his Protector's work was therefore to reconcile colonial settler interests

with British imperial government ambitions of legitimacy and efforts to gain the moral upper hand

within the fierce competition with Portugal, France, and the Dutch Afrikaner Republics for colonial

expansion in Southern Africa. In the period before and after the Berlin conference of 1884–85,

contestations around the capacities of the respective colonial governments to end the illegal slave

trade thus played a prominent part.[98] The Western Indian Ocean border zones between the Cape,

Natal, Portuguese East Africa, and Transvaal, as well as around Madagascar, were particularly

important in this respect.

Apart from Indian indentured labourers, the Protector of Immigrants in Pietermaritzburg had

the administrative responsibility for the groups of freed slaves – "liberated Africans" – who were

brought to Durban in the 1870s and 1880s. These had been taken off slave *dhows* boarded and

destroyed by British Navy ships in the Mozambique Channel *en route*, typically, from Northern

Mozambique to Madagascar. The anti-slavery campaign was coordinated by the British Consul in

Zanzibar, who also distributed the "liberated Africans" as indentured labourers alongside the Indian

immigrants, coming across the Ocean to South Africa during the same period. Dr John Kirk – one of

Livingstone's companions on his second 1858–63 Zambezi expedition – was the most famous and

longstanding British Consul in Zanzibar, serving for 20 years from 1873. Among the most important

information underlying the anti-slave trade campaigns were the reports submitted from British

consuls at Mozambique Island – sometimes published as reports submitted to the Royal

Geographical Society, and feeding into a multitude of British Parliamentary Papers dedicated to the

illegal slave trade, for which the French and the Portuguese were accused of being responsible.[99]

One of the most active and articulate consuls in this field, James Frederic Elton, who died on the

Mozambique-Nyasaland border in 1877, had been previously the Deputy Protector of Immigrants in

Natal in 1873, and from 1873 to 1875 Vice-Consul for John Kirk in Zanzibar.[100]

With a special focus on the Indian slave trade and on multinational dimensions in the development of abolitionism in India, this article has attempted to point out historical continuities between changing forms of more or less unfree labour in the Western Indian Ocean from the early eighteenth to the late nineteenth centuries. These continuities emerged in complex patterns of interaction between multinational sets of actors. To explore them more fully would require team work, collaboration, and access to sources across national linguistic and archival boundaries, and a transcendence boundaries of national colonial history writing.

Further study will show how the graduations and continuities between forms of free and unfree labour led to new understandings of identity and citizenship aspirations among the labourers involved and their families, and how these were influenced by the traditions of abolitionism and humanitarianism that we have been discussing. Among Indians who came to South Africa, for example, as indentured labourers from the 1860s, or as trading "passenger Indians" to accompany them, different strategies and discourses were developed to fight for rights of residence, as these were denied them by European settlers from the 1890s. One such discourse was that of "imperial citizenship" as propagated by Gandhi at the turn of the twentieth century, which would give Indian immigrants the rights of Europeans, but place them above their less civilized African fellow subjects. Another discourse a few decades later would place Indian South Africans at the forefront of Congress non-racialism. In any case, we find today among the new aspiring middle classes of post-apartheid South Africa descendants of not only "passenger Indian" families from Gujarat, but also descendants of Biharis, Santals, Dhangars, and poor Tamils who came across the *kali pani* – the dark and dangerous waters – in the late nineteenth century.[101]

At the same time, we find descendants of freed slaves – of "liberated Africans" like the Durban "Zanzibaris" – who have negotiated their legacies, identities, and aspirations by framing themselves as non-African Indian Ocean "Arabs" during the time of segregation and apartheid. But who have

after 1994 returned to the investigation of their past as freed Amakhuwa slaves from Northern Mozambique, and – instead of seeing this as stigma – basing their claims to citizenship upon it.[102]

Notes

[1] Chatterjee and Eaton, *Slavery and South Asian History*; Major, *Slavery, Abolition and Empire*; Allen, *European Slave Trading*.

[2] Chatterjee, "Renewed and Connected Histories"; Major, *Slavery, Abolition and Empire*; Allen, *European Slave Trading*, 206–220.

[3] Tinker, *A New System of Slavery*; Carter, *Servants, Sirdars and Settlers*.

[4] Heartfield, *The Aborigines' Protection Society*; Heartfield, *The British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society*; Lester and Dussart, *Colonisation and the Origins of Humanitarian Governance*.

[5] Kaarsholm, "Indian Ocean Networks and the Transmutations of Servitude."

[6] Gøbel, *The Danish Slave Trade*, 57.

[7] Bredsdorff, *The Trials and Travels of Willem Leyel*, 148–149.

[8] Ibid., 96.

[9] Struwe, *Dansk Ostindien 1732–1776*, 59

[10] Ibid., 59–64.

[11] Harries, "Middle Passages of the Southwest Indian Ocean"; Harries, "Mozambique Island, Cape Town and the Organisation of the Slave Trade."

[12] Worden, "Indian Slaves in Cape Town," 396. Cf. Datta, *From Bengal to the Cape*.

[13] Olsen, *Dansk Ostindien 1616–1732*, 223–224.

[14] Larsen, *De Danske Ostindiske Koloniers Historie*, Vol. 1, 35-37 and 56; Vol. 2, 19.

[15] On the cosmopolitanism of the Indian Ocean trade, see Thiebaut, "The Role of 'Brokers" and "Pre-19th Century Slave Trade" as well as Mbeki and van Rossum, "Private Slave Trade in the Dutch Indian Ocean World."

[16] See Allen, *European Slave Trading*, 140, and Machado, *Ocean of Trade.*

[17] Olsen, *Dansk Ostindien 1616–1732*, 207–212.

[18] Hjejle, "Slavery and Agricultural Bondage." Cf. Allen, *European Slave Trading*, 195.

[19] Tinker, *A New System of Slavery*, 39–60.

[20] Cf. Carter, *Servants, Sirdars and Settlers*, 1–2, 35–36.; Allen, *European Slave Trading*, 138–140, 177.

[21] Major, *Slavery, Abolition and Empire*, 52.

[22] Cassels, *The Social Legislation*, 178; Cf. Tinker, *A New System of Slavery*, 44; Major, *Slavery, Abolitionism and Empire*. 53; Allen, *European Slave Trading*, 185; see further below.

[23] British Parliamentary Papers PP 1828 XXIV (125) on "Slavery in India," 13–21, quoted in Major, *Slavery, Abolition and Empire*, 54–55 and also in Allen, *European Slave Trading*, 311, n. 22. Cf. ibid., 185 and 207.

[24] Allen, *European Slave Trading*, 188–189.

[25] Major, *Slavery, Abolition and Empire*, 59, 234.

[26] Chatterjee, "Renewed and Connected Histories," 20, 31.

[27] Røge, "Why the Danes Got There First," 588.

[28] Ibid., 577.

[29] Struwe, *Dansk Ostindien 1732–1776*, 59.

[30] Ibid., 62.

[31] Ibid.; Mentz, "Handelsstationen Tranquebar," 109.

[32] Larsen, "Danmark og Slavehandelens Ophævelse," 108; Cf. Krieger, "Der dänische Sklavenhandel," 21; Gøbel, *The Danish Slave Trade*, 57.

[33] Larsen, "Danmark og Slavehandelens Ophævelse," 107 – my translation. The Danish original reads: 'Da paa det nu saadant hos Christne saavel som hos Hedninger høyt forbudne og intollerable Handel og Tilverkgaaende med uskyldige og fribaarne Mennisker, tvertimod ald Natur og Folcke

Rætt, kand for Fremtiden blive forebygt og aldeles afskaffet… forbyder [vi] alle og enhver her paa Stedet enten directe eller indirecte ved sig selv eller ved Andre, at tilkiøbe sig nogen Slaver, for samme igien her eller paa andre Steder at selle, under hvad Navn det have kand…'

[34] I am grateful to Simon Rastén for alerting me to these proclamations, and for sending me a copy of Kay Larsen's article in *Historisk Tidsskrift* from 1937, which contains the full text of the 1745 proclamation, and has a complete reference to the primary source used by Larsen (the 1744–1745 "Rapportbog" from Tranquebar in the Danish National Archives). The importance of the Proclamation is discussed in Krieger, "Der dänische Sklavenhandel," 21–22).

[35] Neue Hallesche Berichte 29. St, 531, quoted in Liebau, *Cultural Encounters*, 155.

[36] Allen, *European Slave Trading*, 211.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Major, *Slavery, Abolition and Empire*, 251.

[39] Lauritsen, *Serampore*. Cf. also Staffolani, *Denmark by the Ganges* – a recent film about the National Museum of Denmark's "Serampore Project," which emphasizes the alternative and benevolent nature of Danish colonialism in India.

[40] Rasch, *Dansk Ostindien 1777–1845*; Rastén, "Serampore, det nye handelscentrum"; Rastén, "Serampore i briternes skygge."

[41] Rasch, *Dansk Ostindien 1777–1845*, 168–182; Mentz, "Britisk ekspansion og dansk tilpasning," 207.

[42] Nørgaard, *Mission und Obrigkeit*; Liebau, *Cultural Encounters in India*; Liebau, ed., *Geliebtes Europa*; Gross et al., *Halle and the Beginning of Protestant Christianity in India*, I–III.

[43] Rastén, "Den umulige kolonisering," 340.

[44] Brimnes and Jørgensen, "Lokalsamfundet i Tranquebar," 150f.

[45] Brimnes and Jørgensen, "Tranquebar under forandring," 244.

[46] Beautiful colour prints from the Halle missionary reports from Tranquebar of "Portugisische Sklaven" and "Sklavinnen" and "Portugisische Schulknaben" and "Schulmädchen" are reproduced in Brimnes and Jørgensen, "Lokalsamfundet i Tranquebar," 143 and 150. I include two of them as examples in Figure 1 and Figure 2 below.

[47] Brimnes and Jørgensen, "Lokalsamfundet i Tranquebar," 151.

[48] Olsen, *Dansk Ostindien 1616–1732*, 231-239; Struwe, *Dansk Ostindien 1732–1776*, 113–116.

[49] Nørgaard, *Mission und Obrigkeit*, 159–161. The translations from German into English are mine. Cf. Liebau, *Cultural Encounters*, 153.

[50] Nørgaard, "Die Anfänge der Mission 16–17.

[51] Scherer, "Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg," 490.

[52] Sames, "Beziehungen zwischen Halle, Kopenhagen und London."

[53] Ibid., 31. Cf. Liebau, *Cultural Encounters*, 311; Scherer, "Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg," 492.

[54] Liebau, *Cultural Encounters*, 70–71.

[55] Ibid., 24, n. 45.

[56] Quoted in Liebau, *Cultural Encounters*, 86.

[57] Ibid. Cf. Jeyaraj, "Missionsalltag," 78.

[58] Liebau, *Cultural Encounters*, 66.

[59] Ibid., 179.

[60] Ibid., 136, 142.

[61] Ibid., 340.

[62] Ibid., 143.

[63] Ibid., 152.

[64] Quoted in Liebau, *Cultural Encounters*, 152.

[65] Liebau, *Cultural Encounters*, 148–149; Scherer, "Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg," 492.

[66] Liebau, *Cultural Encounters*, 148–154.

[67] Quoted in Liebau, *Cultural Encounters*, 154.

[68] Ibid., 154–155.

[69] Ibid., 155.

[70] Liebau, *Cultural Encounters*, 90, 102.

[71] Scherer, *Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg*, 492; Liebau, *Cultural Encounters*, 311.

[72] Scherer, "Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg," 492.

[73] Nørgaard, "Die Anfänge der Mission," 21.

[74] Liebau, *Cultural Encounters*, 71.

[75] Ibid., 72.

[76] Liebau, *Cultural Encounters*, 73.

[77] Ibid., 312–13.

[78] Ibid., 313–14.

[79] Ibid., 314–15, 320.

[80] Ibid., 317.

[81] Ibid., 321.

[82] Røge, "Why the Danes Got There First,"

[83] On the links between Halle Pietism, the DEHM Mission, and German enlightenment, see Jensen, "The Tranquebarian Society," 547–548.

[84] For an effective and well-informed literary account of this, see Hansen, *Islands of Slaves*.

[85] Rastén, "Serampore i briternes skygge," 333.

[86] Metcalf, *Imperial Connections*.

[87] For the notions of "slave trade diplomacy" and "humanitarian imperialism," see Heartfield, *The Aborigines' Protection Society*, 6 and 303.

[88] Stanziani, *Labor on the Fringes of Empire*, 317–323.

[89] See Lester and Dussart, *Colonization and the Origins of Humanitarian Governance*, 23 and 269ff. For the further development of notions of 'the right to protection', see also Benton and Cludow and Attwood, "Introduction: The Long, Strange History of Protection," 1–9.

[90] Worden, *Slavery in Dutch South Africa*, 126; Dooling, *Slaves, Emancipation and Colonial Rule*, 85ff.

[91] Tinker, *A New System of Slavery*, 14.

[92] Ibid., 74f.; Allen, *European Slave Trading*, 193–203.

[93] Cf. Carter, *Servants, Sirdars and Settlers*, 45–46.

[94] Anderson, *The Indian Uprising*, 85–86.

[95] Rastén, "Den umulige kolonisering," 356.

[96] A similar ban was placed in 1865 by the Government of India on exports of indentured labor to plantations in St. Croix in the Danish Virgin Islands, following reports on the first group sent there of high mortality, and that "[a]lmost all the terms of the Indians' indentures had been broken by the planters" (Tinker, *A New System*, 104). This ban was never lifted. The Danish colonies in the West Indies in the aftermath of the Civil War also tried unsuccessfully to recruit laborers from among freed slaves in the American South (Rasmussen, *I krig for Lincoln*).

[97] Kaarsholm, "Indian Ocean Networks," 445–446, 451.

[98] Stanziani, *Labor on the Fringes of Empire*, 254–57. On French abolitionism, see ibid., 178–181. Cf. Kaarsholm, "Review of *Labor on the Fringes*."

[99] McLeod, *Travels in Eastern Africa*; McLeod, *Madagascar and Its People*; Elton, *Travels and Researches*; Palmer and Newitt, *Northern Mozambique in the Nineteenth Century*.

[100] See Horace Waller's "Preface" in Elton, *Travels and Researches*, v–xii

[101] Hofmeyr, *Gandhi's Printing Press*, 25–29; Vahed and Bhana, *Crossing Space and Time*, 31–79; Desai and Vahed, *The South African Gandhi*.

[102] Kaarsholm, "Zanzibaris or Amakhuwa?" 209–210.

Acknowledgements

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