

“Freedom is a good thing but it means a dearth of slaves”
Twentieth Century Solutions to the Abolition of Slavery¹

“Freedom is a good thing but it means a dearth of slaves”² This remark was made in 1890 by an African slave, soon after he had been freed and appointed headman of a French ‘freedom village’ in West Africa.³ As headman he was expected to produce labor for the French. His words express the dilemma that the abolition of chattel slavery posed for those who were dependent on slave labor at the time and those who would want cheap and fully controlled labor in the future. This discussion will examine some of the solutions to the dilemma. It will also consider very briefly the different and ever changing concepts of slavery and freedom in different cultures, as well as the role of the state in all forms of servitude, and the growing part played by international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the on-going struggle to eliminate what are now called ‘contemporary forms of slavery’. Finally it will consider the question posed by David Brion Davis as to how the present position fits into the conception of ‘human progress’.⁴

Chattel Slavery

The headman quoted above was talking about chattel slavery. At its worst, chattel slaves had no rights, owned nothing, had no control over their labor, or their children. Their bondage was lifelong and hereditary. They could be brutally punished, worked to death and sometimes killed.⁵ They were obtained by capture in raids or wars, by sale, inheritance or trickery. They might be acquired for bad debts, or reduced to slavery as punishment for crime. From Africa to the Philippines destitute parents sold their children or offered themselves as slaves when faced with famine or some other disaster. In India, the gift of food could be a method of enslavement.⁶ In such cases slavery could be seen as a form of social security. Once enslaved, unknown numbers of men, women and children were condemned to a life of insecurity, hard work and degradation. Some labored far from home, others remained in their natal societies but cut off from their roots.⁷ Some societies considered them less than human, just “property with a voice”.⁸

However, chattel slavery took many forms. Even in the United States, where it was particularly harsh, a few slaves had responsible positions and owned slaves themselves. In the Muslim world, where slaves had some protection under Islamic law, although it was not always adhered to, they might be lowly laborers, prostitutes, hired out by their owners, boys forced to dive for pearls at risk of their lives, or the slaves of poor Bedouins living a Spartan life like their owners. Slave eunuchs served the mosques in Mecca and looked after harems. The more

fortunate women were treasured concubines of the rich, or the powerful mothers of rulers.

In many parts of the world slaves were better off than the free poor, who had no value and no protector. Slaves were not always on the bottom rung of the social ladder. In parts of India they were less despised than ‘untouchables’.⁹ In the non-western world, some were royal slaves - officials and soldiers whose powers and privileges might be such that in the Aden Protectorate in 1943, a group rebelled against being freed.¹⁰ These royal slaves were particularly valued because as slaves they had no kinship connections and were thus outsiders loyal to, and dependent on their owners.¹¹

Slaves were not always economic assets. Some were bought simply for conspicuous consumption. In Indo-China, for instance, many were barely occupied.¹² Some were captured, or kept for human sacrifice and were thus a wasting asset.¹³ Slaves were often political rather than economic assets, bought to build up the following of rulers, or ‘big men’, who could use them as gifts to attract free followers, or receive them as tribute.

Examples of this diversity can be multiplied. However, whatever their position, all chattel slaves were in theory legally liable to arbitrary punishment, sale,¹⁴ and in some societies, death at their owners whim.¹⁵ Only their owners, the state or a law court could legally free them.

The picture is further complicated because ‘freedom’, like slavery, means different things in different societies, and it, too, is constantly changing. In Africa and Asia it rarely meant individual autonomy in the western sense. In some cases it meant integration into an owners’ kin group. “How could we free them,” asked my Giryama informants, “they are our brothers and sisters”.¹⁶ They were rarely the equals of those born into the group, but kinship and power relations were fluid and ever changing.¹⁷ In other cases, as in the American South, slaves were freed but deliberately kept apart from the dominant society.¹⁸ In the pre-communist Chinese patriarchal system, the western idea of personal autonomy and the rights of individuals was inconceivable. Every household member was merged into the ‘family’ over whom the patriarch had complete control.¹⁹ In Muslim societies freed slaves and their descendants became clients of their former owners in perpetuity – a bond that is still acknowledged today in some areas. In parts of Senegal, Mali, Niger and Mauritania, for instance, ties between descendants of former slaves and former owners are often still maintained. Persons of slave descent may still be discriminated against when it comes to questions of religion, marriage and inheritance. In recent times descendants of former owners migrating to France have sent descendants of slaves to prepare

their way. Intermarriage between their French born children has led to the ostracism of the former slave families in Africa.²⁰

To European colonial administrators, once slaves could leave their owners, keep their earnings, and start their own kin groups, they were free, but to many slaves, freedom meant complete social, political and ritual equality with the free-born, including rights to land. These the colonial rulers could not give them.²¹ Many cases were reported of slaves freed by colonial officials who insisted on paying their owners. Only by doing so could they be free in their own eyes and the eyes of the community. Thus, in 1958, long after slavery had been outlawed by the French, Robin Maugham bought a slave near Timbuktu in order to free him. The slave could have left at any time of his own volition but as an informant told Maugham: “in his head he knows that he is a free man. But in his heart he does not believe it....if he buys his freedom from his master that is different”.²² This fact alone prevented many former slaves from exerting their rights.²³ It applied also to East Asian girls sold by their parents to brothels or other enterprises, who considered it their filial duty to repay the money paid for them.²⁴

Concepts of slave trading were also culturally determined. To the British in Hong Kong, for instance, any exchange of persons for money was slave dealing. To the Chinese if a patriarch sold one of his dependants it was perfectly acceptable but if someone else sold him or her it was slave trading.²⁵ Even slave raiding is open to different interpretations. In Swaziland students discussing slaving in Ethiopia in the 1920s and 1930s insisted that if an African captured and enslaved another African it was tribalism, but if a European enslaved an African it was slavery.²⁶

Given such disparity in the practice and concepts of slavery, there has been an ongoing discussion among scholars about the definition of slavery.²⁷ The more we know about it the more difficult it is to find an all encompassing definition of either slavery or its essential corollary – freedom, since both are culturally determined and change over time. As a metaphor the term is useful because it conjures up immediately a picture of extreme deprivation. But when we come to actual analysis there is no one cross-cultural meaning of the term. We have to go further and explain exactly what we mean by the word when we use it.

Slavery and Colonialism

By 1890, after a long campaign led by Britain, spurred by the Anti-Slavery Society,²⁸ and as a result of changing world and local conditions, chattel slavery was no longer legal in the western world, or in some European possessions, including, parts of Africa, India, the Caribbean and Indian Ocean islands. In that year the leading colonial and maritime

powers, signed the first multilateral treaty against the slave trade – the Brussels Act.²⁹ Although aimed at stopping the export of slaves from eastern Africa, it gave an anti-slavery complexion to the colonial conquest of Africa, and laid down rules for the protection of fugitive or freed slaves. The suppression of slavery was part of the ideological package, which, with Christianity, commerce, and civilization, made up the colonial mission. Experiences of the results of freeing slaves in the Caribbean led to the misconception that most Africans were savages who would not respond to market forces, but instead would, where possible, rely on subsistence agriculture, and enter the workforce only as target workers.³⁰

Gradually colonial rulers, in the interests of good government and economic development, suppressed raiding, and trading except in the more remote areas such as the Sahara fringe. Open slave markets disappeared and small-scale dealing was driven underground. However, in the period of conquest it was as much in the interests of the colonial powers to keep slaves in place and working, as it was in the interests of African slaveholders. In most cases, as in the US south, slaves were ‘given nothing but freedom’,³¹ and hence many had little alternative but to remain with their owners and negotiate new terms of service. Some became squatters or share croppers. Over time, however, many did leave. Some took jobs in the burgeoning colonial sector of the economy. Some formed their own villages. Others were invited by chiefs or administrators, anxious to build up the population of their own areas, to settle in their districts. In Nigeria for instance many were settled along the railway line.³²

Whatever course they took, freed slaves were important players in deciding their own destiny and colonial rulers often had to abandon their original plans and compromise in the face of African resistance. In Banamba, for instance, a dramatic slave exodus beginning in 1905, forced administrators to give up trying to keep them working for their owners and ended legal slavery in French West Africa.³³

Freeing women slaves was a particular problem, unless they had a kin group to which they could return. African elders, Muslim courts and colonial officials all opposed letting women loose on their own for fear they would be re-enslaved or turn to prostitution. It was taken for granted by both administrators and Africans that a woman must have a male ‘protector’ – a euphemism for the fact that women in African and many other societies were (and sometimes still are) regarded as virtual property, with no rights to land or even to their own produce or earnings. This is today called servile marriage. The ideal way to free a woman in an African patriarchal society was for her to find a man to pay for her freedom under guise of bridewealth leading to marriage. If she sought

refuge from a colonial administrator she could be consigned to a Christian mission or 'a good Christian family,' or she could be sent to a Muslim court and would probably end up as a concubine, under guise of emancipation.³⁴

Children were every slave mother's Achilles heel. Leaving a slave owner usually meant leaving their children. A problem that still exists in Mauritania today³⁵ and indeed applies to free women in much of Africa and all over the Muslim world when it comes to divorce. Children freed without their parents were placed with 'reliable' families or put into the care of missions.

Owners faced with the loss of their slaves tried to fill the gap by demanding more work from their junior kinsmen and their wives. Free wives began to complain that they were being treated like slaves. Where possible they went to court and asked for divorce, particularly at harvest time when more work was needed in the fields.³⁶ In Africa women usually did much of the agricultural work and often had profited from slave labor, since slaves were the only men who did women's work. The more affluent owners whose slaves left often replaced them by marrying more women – the cost was about the same, according to my Giryama informants - and it was more difficult for wives to leave.³⁷

During the conquest the colonial powers often allowed their African allies to take away captives on the field of battle. They also 'freed' slaves to give as rewards to friendly chiefs or to enroll them in their own armies, or police forces. The French also settled them in so called 'villages de liberté, where the work demanded of them caused many to flee. Africans thought the new rulers were simply 'freeing' slaves for their own use. In many cases they did just that.

Forced Labor/State Servitude and Colonialism

Often worse than chattel slavery, in which the slave, once he or she found a final home, was usually a valuable possession, was the forced labor, resorted to by the colonial powers in an effort to make their colonies viable. Cheap labor was wanted for portage, for building railways, docks and roads, for mining, crop growing and domestic service. Although Africa was integrated into the world economy, producing cash crops, ivory and other hunting goods and minerals for export, most Africans were subsistence farmers and herders, who supplied their own needs. They might enter the colonial economy as target workers to get guns, cattle, or other goods, often to pay bridewealth. The colonial powers used various methods to turn them into a disciplined labor force working for the colonial economy on the western model.

In the early days chiefs were often simply ordered to provide workers, enabling them for a while to send their 'freed' slaves and collect all or part of their pay.³⁸ Indentured or contract labor was widely used and abused. Such labor long antedated the end of legal slavery, but the difference was often more theoretic than real. Thus in early 20th century Angola, so-called free contract laborers were captured or arrested up country and sent in chains to grow cocoa on the islands of São Tomé and Príncipe. Few ever returned.

Concessionaire companies were perhaps responsible for the worst form of forced labor. These companies were given large areas from which they had the right to extract certain forest, mineral or agricultural products. The scandals that took place in the rubber producing areas of King Leopold II's Congo Independent State are well known³⁹. The same abuses took place in French Equatorial Africa. Up to 1930 the company ((Compagnie Forestière Sangha-Oubangui) imposed arbitrary quotas of rubber to be collected by a sparse population already ravaged by tripanosomiasis. If quotas were not met, men were fined, imprisoned or flogged, Women and children were taken as hostages.⁴⁰ This type of forced labor, like slavery, lasted a lifetime. Children joining the work force as soon as they were old enough were thus born into virtual slavery.

In Portuguese Mozambique large areas were leased to chartered companies and plantations. Men, women, and children, some as young as six, were forced to work for such companies for 120 days a year for a pittance. If their parents out of pity took their children's place, they were paid children's wages. "Zambesia", wrote a Portuguese official, "looks more like an open slave trading camp than.... Portuguese territory. A lifetime of hard work in horrible conditions left a laborer poverty stricken and dressed in rags."⁴¹

In the Belgian Congo forced labor was not officially allowed, but it was made plain that Africans were to be recruited into the colonial economy and administrators fostered recruitment for companies and state projects to the point that one governor worried that the African population would not be able to reproduce itself with so many young men working far from home. One appalled administrator reported that villagers fled at his approach as though he were a slave trader.⁴²

Governments themselves recruited labor for public works. Between 14,000 and 20,000 Africans died building the French Congo railway in the 1920s.⁴³ In 1929, a French administrator far from the railway line, was so ashamed, that he tried to avoid meeting his British counterpart in Sudan. When finally tracked down he said that, having already recruited all able-bodied men in his district, including one woman for every four men, he had been ordered to send more men, and food, although his

people were starving.⁴⁴ Presumably the women were expected to serve as prostitutes.

In settler colonies the conquerors resorted to land alienation. Access to land was vital to an African's sense of security and its alienation was bitterly resented. In Kenya, the British, who had lost thousands of Africans conscripted into the Carrier Corps during the First World War, and where, after the war, administrators tried to force Africans to work for settlers, forbade forced labor in 1921. Instead they compelled Africans to live in increasingly crowded reservations, or to become squatters on white settlers' farms, for whom they worked for 180 days a year and had no security of tenure. As their numbers increased, more Africans were forced to become wage laborers.⁴⁵ The latter were paid a pittance, it being assumed that their families on the reserves would provide their own food. Land alienation was common policy in settler colonies. Early in the 19th century the French had pushed many Algerians off their land and encouraged French settlement. Late in the century it began in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). In the 1930s Italy was encouraging settlers to come to Libya and Ethiopia. It was carried to extremes in South Africa, first by the establishment of Dutch settlers at the Cape, who moved inland after it became a British colony, and finally after 1948, it reached new heights with the extension of the policy known as apartheid. At one point some 13% of the population owned 80% of the land, and Africans not employed in the white dominated economy were banished to tiny so-called independent scattered ethnically based 'states' known as Bantustans.

The Belgian, French and Portuguese made people grow crops for export and to feed the towns, and paid them a pittance for their produce. The Belgians claimed it was educational. The French conscripted Africans for the army for three - year stints, but nearly half were assigned to labor battalions for public works, where they suffered from ill treatment and poor pay.⁴⁶ The British government allowed 'communal labor' – claiming it was an indigenous custom for chiefs to call out labor for public projects. This enabled them to underpay the chiefs, who could requisition labor for themselves as well as for communal projects.⁴⁷

All these methods were justified as bringing progress to Africa by introducing a 'child race' to the benefits of western civilization.⁴⁸ The more extreme measures, however, sometimes created an outcry in the metropolises.

The League of Nations, The International Labor Organization and Slavery

By 1910 the British Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society (henceforth Antislavery Society) believed that the greatest threat

to indigenous people was no longer chattel slavery but the labor demands of the colonial powers – slavery ‘masquerading’ under other names. At the end of the First World War, the victorious allies abrogated the Brussels Act, claiming it was no longer needed as the slave trade had been much reduced and slavery was dying out. However, one clause of a new treaty signed at St. Germain-en-Lay bound them to end slavery in all its forms. The newly established the League of Nations and the International Labor Organization (ILO) both made commitments to protect labor but it was generally believed that chattel slavery was no longer a significant problem and was being replaced by free wage labor.

However, news arrived in 1919 that in Ethiopia, one of the only two remaining independent countries in Africa, massive slave raids were devastating the west and southwestern provinces. Ethiopia did not have a paid civil service. Governors and their soldiers lived off the land. In the southwest there was a rapid turn over of governors and as each left, he and his retainers seized as many of the local people as they could with their animals and possessions, and carried them away, in order to provide for their own uncertain future.⁴⁹ Some slaves were exported to Arabia, where slavery was freely practiced and said to be sanctioned by the Qu’ran.⁵⁰ In the new little Hashemite kingdom of Hijaz the ruler was supporting the trade and taxing it.

When it was clear that for political reasons the British government had no intention of even publishing this news, John Harris, Secretary of the Antislavery Society managed to get the matter raised at the League of Nations.⁵¹ The League appointed the Temporary Slavery Commission in 1924, to collect evidence on slavery in all its forms. The colonial powers all opposed its establishment but decided not to risk the odium of rejecting it. Instead they tried to cripple it by only allowing it to take evidence from officially approved or published sources. Moreover the British and French warned their members not to discuss colonial labor policies.⁵²

This commission was composed of former colonial governors and officials as well as a representative of the ILO, and a Haitian who was considered to be Black but ‘moderate’ and was appointed as window dressing, but who was able to contribute something of a ‘slave voice’. To the surprise and irritation of the colonial powers the commission extended the definition of slavery to include serfdom, peonage (practiced particularly in the Americas), and debt bondage, which was widespread on the Indian sub-continent. Reflecting the movement for women’s rights, the commission added forced marriage, child marriage, and the inheritance of widows. It stopped short of discussing polygynous marriages or the treatment of women in non-western societies. It condemned the adoption of children for the purpose of exploiting them.

This reflected an ongoing campaign in England against the adoption of little Chinese girls (mui tsai) in Hong Kong, many of whom were abused and overworked domestic servants. Variations of this child exploitation were known to be rife in West Africa, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Haiti and elsewhere.⁵³ Finally and most controversially, the commission, fearing it would alienate the colonial powers, stated that forced labor might deteriorate into slavery and should be curbed. It did not discuss forced prostitution as this was dealt with by another League body.

To force the hand of his government, the British representative, Sir Fredrick (later Lord) Lugard, sent it a draft convention against slavery in what was now considered to be all its forms, and asked for support. Thoroughly alarmed the government asked him not to present it to the commission. They redrafted it to protect British interests and finally presented it to the League.⁵⁴

The result after much haggling was the negotiation of the Slavery Convention of 1926, which is still in force. It banned both the slave trade and slavery. However, the negotiators, like the members of the Temporary Slavery Commission, had trouble agreeing on a definition of slavery and ended by defining it as “the condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the rights of ownership were exercised” – an unsatisfactory definition which is still used by the UN and which did not even cover all the practices the commission had identified as slavery.⁵⁵

This was followed by the ILO’s Forced Labor Convention of 1930 (ILO 29). Forced labor had become a matter for the ILO, which had more powers of investigation and was able to raise questions with member governments, which the slavery committees could not do. Forced labor was defined as “all work and service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person did not offer himself voluntarily”. In theory it differed from slavery because it was neither lifelong nor hereditary and the workers were not saleable. The convention stipulated that it was only to be used for emergencies or for essential public purposes in the interests of the community, and only if voluntary labor was not available. It was to be paid market rates, to be performed near home by able-bodied young men and was not to exceed 60 days a year. No more than 25% of the population was to be conscripted at any one time. Concession companies were to be ended. Forced crop growing and the use of soldiers for any purpose other than military were forbidden. At British insistence, communal labor was to be allowed, provided it was not abused. Prison labor was not to be hired out to private enterprises as was common practice in South Africa and India,⁵⁶ but it was exempted from the other restrictions on forced labor.

The League and, to a lesser extent the ILO, treaties were mere paper tigers. There was no way to enforce them, and, to make them acceptable to the colonial powers, the changes were to be introduced “within the shortest possible period”. Moreover, these treaties did not apply to the kind of discrimination and strict segregation laws, that kept African-Americans, both former slaves and free people, in the Southern United States from exerting their civil rights, deprived them of education equal to that of whites, and doomed them to remain share croppers, peons, or poorly paid, cheap labor, despised, and faced with the constant threat of violence if they stepped out of line. Those who escaped by going north also faced strong racist discrimination in jobs, housing and other areas of life. Similarly the treaties did not apply to the policies in South Africa, where racial discrimination was to be carried, as will be seen, to new heights after World War II, under the name of apartheid.

A second League slavery committee in 1932 was mainly useful because it urged the appointment of a permanent committee. However, it led to an acrimonious discussion between the French and British members as to when an African slave ceased to be a slave. The British insisted that, although legally free, as long as slaves stayed with their owner they were still slaves. The French insisted, more logically, that as they had outlawed slavery, everyone was free – they attached importance to this because if all those who had remained in place were counted as slaves it would appear that France had not ended slavery.⁵⁷ The controversy, of course, begged the question as to how much had been done by colonial administrations to provide a palatable alternative for slaves who still remained with their owners.

The permanent League slavery committee, the Advisory Committee of Experts on Slavery, met between 1934-38.⁵⁸ Like its predecessors it had no power and its sources were strictly limited. There was, as in the past, no ‘slave voice’. Nevertheless it collected a great deal of information, mainly on slavery in the British Empire. This was because, to the irritation of his government, its British member was almost the only one sending in extensive and honest reports - 90 of the 105 reports in 1938 were British. Hence it looked, as the Foreign Office complained, as if slavery was almost entirely a British affair. The active life of this committee ended with the outbreak of war in 1939.⁵⁹

The League committees had some impact. They kept slavery in the public eye. They collected much information, although none of it came directly from slaves. Most importantly from our view point, they had defined slavery broadly and had forced the negotiation of a treaty outlawing it, as well as many forms of forced labor. The publicity caused both the British and French to review their slavery laws and make some amendments. On the other hand it enabled the Italians to use the

suppression of slavery as an excuse for their unprovoked conquest of Ethiopia in 1935.

The League slavery committees focused almost entirely on slavery and other forms of unfree labor in non-western societies. While they were sitting, new forms of forced labor/state servitude were developing in Europe. In Russia, gulags, formed from the time communist rule was established, were described as aiming to re-educate dissenters through labor. During the 1920s and 1930s they were growing into a vast system of forced labor to which dissenters, kulaks, and persons deemed hostile to the regime were sent, together with criminals and many people who had committed no crime. The aim was to produce export goods, such as timber and gold, as cheaply as possible.⁶⁰ Theoretically the victims were penal laborers sentenced to a definite term in prison. In practice many were re-sentenced without trial and many were simply worked to death. During and after the Second World War, these gulags, already holding thousands of people were flooded with prisoners of war, including repatriated Russians.

In Germany, the Nazi government established concentration camps, to which dissidents, Jews, gypsies and others were sent. Many were in fact extermination camps where the fittest inmates were worked to death. During World War II thousands of workers from German occupied territories were forced to work as virtual slave labor, in Germany, on what was conceived to be a temporary basis. The Japanese used prisoners of war and natives of occupied areas as forced labor often working them to death. They also forced thousands of girls, mainly Filipinas and Koreans to serve as 'comfort women' – prostitutes - for their soldiers.

Slavery After World War II

In the post war years the international situation changed dramatically. The world was soon divided into two blocs, the Eastern or Soviet bloc and the Western powers and their allies. The Soviet Union and the USA were the only two great powers, as one by one the colonial empires disintegrated, and the newly independent nations took their seats at the United Nations, which replaced the League. The UN became the forum for the intense competition between the two blocs, each trying to win allies and score points against each other. Slavery and forced labor/state servitude became pawns in this game.

As early as 1946 the Secretary of the Antislavery Society was in New York agitating for a permanent UN slavery committee. Chattel slavery had been outlawed in Ethiopia,⁶¹ but it continued in Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and the British Protectorate of Aden and their small shaykhdoms on the Persian Gulf. The German concentration camps ended with the

war, but the Soviet Gulags were now denounced as huge forced labor camps producing goods for export. Similar gulags sprang up elsewhere in the eastern bloc and in Communist China. Western Trade unions were worried about their competition.

The UN drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Western powers regarded human rights as a set of freedoms, including freedom of speech, of assembly, of information and other components of the rule of law. The Soviets stressed freedom from want and discrimination, and equal opportunity. The United States was particularly vulnerable on these last points because of its rampant racism, and discrimination against African-American and Native Americans. Equally vulnerable were the colonial powers, and South Africa as its apartheid policies became more and more oppressive. The British were particularly embarrassed because chattel slavery was still legal in their Arabian territories. The Soviet Union, on the other hand was most open to attack for its gulags, its arbitrary judicial system, and its strict control of the media and intolerance of freedom of speech.

The End of Legal Chattel Slavery

It was the exploitation of oil that led to the end of legal chattel slavery in Arabia and the Gulf States. In these states oil companies began by hiring slaves from their owners, who naturally demanded a share of their pay. The bolder slaves refused. Owners soon found other sources of investment and slaves soon found paid jobs.⁶² In 1952 oil rich Qatar freed its slaves and paid compensation to owners. Saudi Arabia followed suit in 1962. Yemen ended it after a coup, assisted by Egypt. In 1963, under British pressure, the Trucial states (now the United Arab Emirates) announced that slavery was not legal. They paid no compensation as oil had not yet begun to bring in revenues, but slaves were now free to seek work in the burgeoning oil economy. In 1967 the British left the Aden Protectorate without having ended slavery, but the new communist government outlawed it. In Oman in 1970 a coup supported by the British led to its abolition.⁶³

The payment of compensation by Qatar and Saudi Arabia raises an important question as to who should be compensated. Compensation was always paid to owners and not slaves,⁶⁴ whereas today the question is turned on its head by demands for reparations not only from African-Americans for the suffering of their ancestors, but also by the surviving 'comfort, women forced into prostitution by the Japanese army during WWII, and the European victims of Japanese forced labor on the Siam (Thailand) – Burma (Myanmar) railway and other projects, as well as the victims of Nazi concentration camps and their heirs.

Another question raised when slavery finally became illegal in Arabia as well as elsewhere, was the question of numbers. This was not a new question but it is an important one. It is remarkable that the numbers of slaves actually freed in Qatar and Saudi Arabia fell far short of British estimates. In Qatar, for instance, the British estimated the numbers of slaves at 3,000 out of a population of 15,000-20,000, but the number for whom owners claimed and got compensation was only 650. In Saudi Arabia the British estimated that there were between 15,000 and 30,000 slaves in 1962. The next year Radio Mecca announced that some 10,000 had actually been freed.⁶⁵ There may be a number of explanations for such disparity, particularly in Muslim states where manumitting slaves was believed to be rewarded in the next world. But there were great disparities elsewhere. Thus in Ethiopia the Anti-Slavery Society estimated there were 2,000,000 slaves in the early 1930s, whereas Frank de Halpert, who was the Emperor's slavery adviser, thought there might be some 300,000, out of an estimated population of between eight and sixteen million. The inflation of numbers of slaves is a constant temptation for NGOs today, as in the past, since greater numbers attract more attention.

The Struggle for a Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery⁶⁶

From 1946 the antislavery society pressured the United Nation Economic and Social Council – ECOSOC - to appoint a permanent slavery committee. When the British government failed to support him, the Secretary of the Society, Charles Greenidge, like his predecessor John Harris at the League, persuaded a member of the UN to propose the establishment of a UN committee to inquire into slavery in all its forms. Here the question of definitions came to the fore for political reasons. The British government felt constrained to accept the proposed committee but only if slavery was defined to include forced labor, peonage, child adoption, mui tsai in China, and other forms of unfree labor. This was in order to distract attention from the chattel slavery in the Gulf Shaykhdoms and the Aden Protectorate, and the communal labor still exacted by chiefs in Africa. Their main interest and that of the United States was to expose the Soviet gulags, which were spreading through the Communist world and were seen as a threat to free labor. The Russians on the other hand supported the proposal for a committee because they believed that slavery only meant chattel slavery and other forms of unfree labor practiced in the colonial empires.

In the end, in 1950, after complicated negotiations, the UN appointed a small Ad Hoc committee of experts to consider slavery and practices resembling it, such as peonage and forced labor. Its meetings were curtailed because Peru, Colombia and Chile objected to the

inclusion of peonage. However, it recommended a supplementary convention to forbid debt-bondage, serfdom, forced and child marriage, and sham adoptions. Greenidge forced the hand of his government, as Lugard had done thirty years before, by sending them a draft convention. Like their predecessors they amended it to suit British interests before supporting it at the UN.

The result after intense haggling was the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery of 1956. This simply complemented the 1926 convention by making it clear that debt-bondage, forced marriages and adoption for exploitation were forms of slavery. This convention was followed in 1957 by the ILO Abolition of Forced Labor Convention (105). This outlawed the use of forced labor for political repression, economic oppression and labor discipline – a clear attack on the gulags.

The struggle for a permanent UN committee against slavery was delayed by Cold War politics and the arrival at the UN of more and more former colonies, whose governments had no more desire than the colonial powers had had to interfere with indigenous marriage customs or adoptions, or cult slavery – in which usually a girl was dedicated to a deity and often became the virtual slave of the priest. Moreover, the British lost their zeal for a committee when the newly independent states insisted that colonialism and apartheid be added to the list of ‘slavery like practices’ in 1966.⁶⁷ Colonialism was on the wane, but apartheid in South Africa was becoming more and more brutal until each racial group, designated White, Colored, and Africans – the latter broken down by ‘tribe’ - was forced to live in its own designated areas. Those reserved for Africans were small and scattered mini-states, nominally independent but designed to hold all Africans not employed in the white economy. Families of workers were banished to them, and often the breadwinners came home only once a year. Those Africans permitted to remain and work in the white sector were confined to areas like Soweto, parts of which were large slums.

The Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery

Finally in 1974 after persistent pressure from the Anti-Slavery Society, and a number of reports on slavery, the United Nations authorized a Working Group of five members, supposedly experts on slavery, one from each of the five blocs into which it had divided the world. These were the Soviet and western blocs, Africa, Asia and Latin America. This group has met almost every year since 1975, and is now called the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery. It meets in public and has taken on a new life with the end of the Cold War,⁶⁸ Apartheid, and European colonialism. It has had some success as an ever

increasing number of NGOs, and UN agencies, as well as victims of contemporary abuses come to present their cases.⁶⁹ Some governments have responded to invitations to send representatives to explain or excuse their failure to end various forms of slavery.

However, on the edges of the Sahara, in Mauritania and Niger, for instance, chattel slavery has not completely died out. Debt bondage on the Indian sub-continent continues in spite of laws against it, and like chattel slavery, it is sometimes lifelong and hereditary, and includes entire families. Debt bondage exists almost everywhere in various forms. In the slums of Brazil people recruited to work in Amazonia, find themselves in debt on arrival for the expenses of the journey – a debt they can never repay and hence are forced to work under terrible conditions and women are forced into prostitution.⁷⁰

Similar scams are practiced both within countries and across borders all over the world. The perpetrators are traffickers, often criminal gangs. Trafficking is defined as importing people for extortion, whereas trading is when they are simply smuggled in and left to make their own way. In England, illegal aliens of both sexes arrive from China in debt to the triads, who imported them, and who continue to extort money from their families, although the victims are employed as virtual slaves. Their plight may only become known when a victim commits suicide.⁷¹ In West Africa boys, expecting good jobs, are trafficked across borders to work like slaves without pay in cocoa plantations, in quarries, in the fishing industry and on other projects.

Women and children of both sexes are trafficked into prostitution all over the rich world from the Balkans, Russia and other poor areas around the globe. Prostitution poses a particular problem as it has proved difficult to get agreement between those who consider all prostitution to be slavery, and those who consider that only forced prostitution is slavery, and finally the ‘sex workers’ who maintain that they prostitute themselves to make a living and should have the same social security benefits as other workers. All agree, however, that child and forced prostitution are forms of contemporary slavery.⁷² These are the victims of the growing global sex industry.

Forced marriage, which has a long history, is another form of contemporary slavery. In China where girls, are at a premium as the result of the one child policy, many are trafficked from all over Southeast Asia. Young women are also kidnapped in China itself, forcibly married and kept locked up until they produce a child and are less likely to abscond.⁷³ In parts of Africa and elsewhere girls are betrothed in childhood, without right of refusal. Laws on the age of consent are often useless as no birth certificates are issued. Mail order brides is another method of enslaving the unwary. Many foreign domestic workers, mostly women, are brought

to Arabia, North America and Europe. Forbidden by the terms of their visas to change jobs, some have been abused by their employers, who take away their passports, keep them isolated in homes, and treat them like slaves.

Unknown numbers of Pakistani or Indian girls in Europe are tricked into going back to their parents' home countries on visits, only to find themselves forcibly married. The British Foreign Office has reported rescuing several hundred British-born girls a year usually from Pakistan, and this represents only those who manage to escape and contact British consulates. This raises the question of whether these immigrant groups are willing to assimilate into their host societies or whether they wish to live together in certain areas and retain their own culture and ties with their homelands. The latter means that they are less welcome in the host countries to which they have migrated.

Children are liable to many forms of exploitation. Most tragic are the little girls sold into prostitution whose families will not take them back if they contract aids. Children are also victims of sex tourism, pornography, illegal adoption, and even deliberate mutilation so that they can make money begging. Child soldiers have been forced into warlord and rebel armies as small wars have proliferated. Some have been made to commit atrocities, as in Sierra Leone. Girls are also captured as 'wives' or servants for warlords and their followers. Little boys are imported into Arabia and tied onto camels as jockeys for camel races in the Gulf States. Desperate parents from Roumania bring their teenage sons to Italy and hire them out prostitutes.⁷⁴ Thousands of children work in hazardous and unhealthy conditions – the victims of poverty, debt bondage and sometimes of trafficking. A serious problem is that traffickers are constantly becoming more sophisticated and tapping new fields. Thus whole families in Moldavia are being offered jobs in Poland and end up in servitude in Warsaw.⁷⁵

Sweat shops have proliferated in which people, working long hours for minimal wages, produce goods for international companies for sale in the developed world. The choice may be between these jobs and starvation, or eking out a living scavenging on garbage dumps. Thousands of people have also been lured away from home by promises of good jobs and only to find themselves imprisoned in garment factories, or farms in the US, Samoa and elsewhere.

Some of these abuses are brought before the Working Group, which up to now has been a toothless body – it can only take evidence and suggest further reports or investigations. But it is a body to which an ever-growing number of NGO's bring their evidence in hopes of gaining publicity and acquiring much needed financial aid.

An obvious question is whether or not the term slavery should be applied to such disparate practices. Its value today for the Working Group and for the NGOs that provide most of its information, is that it attracts public attention. ‘Contemporary forms of slavery’ is a compromise, opening the door to wider and wider interpretation, in some cases so wide that it has threatened to become meaningless. Thus the group has discussed at one time or another, female genital excision, the killing of people to sell their organs, and the honor killings of Muslim girls caught in compromising positions. These abuses seem out of place in a discussion of even contemporary forms of slavery but the rationale offered is that the victims have lost control of their bodies.

Many of these modern forms of slavery seem almost intractable, as they are the results of growing inequalities between the rich areas of the world, with aging populations, hungry for cheap labor, and the poor overpopulated areas or war-torn areas, whose people are prepared to take terrible risks in search of jobs in richer countries. Many have died, drowned at sea in overloaded boats, hanging underneath trains traveling across frontiers, or abandoned in locked trucks by drivers fearing customs inspections.

Solutions

The role of the state has been vital in all forms of servitude; whether by abolishing them, by legalizing them, by declaring them illegal but allowing them to continue, or by direct recruitment as in the colonial empires, the gulags and Nazi Germany. Crucial, too, have been the imposition of regressive taxes, and policies such as forced crop growing and conscription. In settler colonies land policies, enforced by Master and Servant Laws and pass systems, have all played their part in forcing reluctant people into an underpaid workforce.

Today states are faced with the problem of carrying out the numerous conventions negotiated by the UN and ILO against the various abuses that make up contemporary forms of slavery. Many governments have signed these but have not ratified them, either because they are too poor, too weak, too corrupt or lack the political will to kick-start change, or because slavery suits their purposes.

An example of the latter is Sudan, which, as a by-product of the war between north and south, armed pastoral militias, who abducted and enslaved women and children. The government admits to ‘abductions’ but denies that these have revived slavery.⁷⁶ These abductions have led to well meaning but misguided efforts by certain NGOs to buy back the victims and re-unite them with their families. Money for this purpose has been collected from school children in the United States as well as other

well-wishers. This has been criticized as leading to scams and encouraging a market for slaves.

A state practicing clear state servility is Myanmar (Burma) which has forced women and children from dissident ethnic minorities to clear minefields, to serve as porters for the army, and as forced labor in various construction jobs. In China gulags still provide cheap labor sometimes for the production of export goods.

Some governments, however, have changed their laws in response to pressure from the UN, the ILO, Anti-Slavery International (formerly the Anti-Slavery Society) and other NGOs. Thus a number of western governments can now prosecute their citizens for crimes, such as sex tourism, committed abroad. Some have changed their laws on prostitution so that clients as well as prostitutes can be prosecuted, and they have changed their methods of dealing with prostitutes in order to help the victims of trafficking. They have also modified their immigration laws so that abused domestics imported on special visas, may change employers. However, these governments are themselves in a dilemma as their own workforces demand protection from the inflow of cheap goods from the developing world, and the inflow of migrants, both of which threaten their jobs.

Some governments in the developing world have also changed their laws and increased penalties for trafficking, forced labor and slavery. Some have introduced new laws to try and prevent their citizens from being trafficked across borders. Mali and Ivory Coast have signed an agreement to cooperate against the trafficking of children. But such laws and agreements are often negated by corrupt officials and border guards.⁷⁷ On the other hand African trade unions and other workers groups have also taken steps to spot and prevent the trafficking of persons across borders.⁷⁸

To see whether discrimination against people of slave descent still continues, Niger has sent out questionnaires asking them such questions as whether they are paid for their work, whether they can choose who they marry, whether they can leave their employment, whether their children go to school like the descendants of slave owning families, whether they can fill religious and political posts, whether they can inherit money from their parents, and so on.⁷⁹

The principal players today are international organizations such as the ILO and the UN, which have negotiated a host of treaties against many forms of slavery, forced labor and other forms of discrimination.⁸⁰ UN agencies, such as UNICEF, conduct surveys and work with NGOs. The ILO invites member governments to discuss problems of suppression with them. But the cutting edge of the attack is coming from the NGOs. They have proliferated in the last decades.⁸¹ They provide the Working

Group, the ILO, UN agencies, and the public with much information. They do invaluable work at the grass roots level to help victims, such as bonded laborers, to help themselves. They have led agitations to force governments to carry out their own laws. They also suggest practical solutions, and often bring victims as witnesses to the Working Group.

Anti-Slavery International (formerly the Anti-Slavery Society) has played a steady role in bringing abuses to public notice and pressuring governments to take action. It has also forged close links with overseas NGOs, and pioneered the boycotting of goods produced by forced and bonded labor. Kevin Bales' new society, Free the Slaves, has come up with imaginative plans to get industries and governments to cooperate by undertaking not to use slave labor, or buying from companies that do

However, corruption and the rise of organized crime, the ease of communications and money-laundering, and international investment all play their part in keeping contemporary slavery and trafficking alive. It is perhaps safe to say that more people are probably held in some form of servility than at any time in the past, partly as the result of rapid population growth, and partly owing to the rise of an increasingly global economy. The abuses are found throughout the world, and the situation seems more intractable than ever.

There is perhaps a ray of hope in that, as more is known about them, demands for action are becoming more and more vocal. Encouragingly, nearly everyone in the western world today and many people in other areas, are aware of contemporary forms of slavery. Efforts are being made in developing countries to warn would-be emigrants of the danger, particularly for women and children, of falling into the hands of traffickers. The Working Group itself which 25 years ago when I first attended its meetings seemed almost moribund, and for many years made recommendations which were ignored by the UN, decided at its meeting this year to hold a joint meeting with the ILO next year to combat forced labor. Hopefully such cooperation will prove fruitful.

To answer the question posed by Professor David Davis as to whether all these activities constitute progress depends as always on one's point of view.⁸² Today there are a whole slew of international treaties designed to prevent contemporary slavery and forced labor, and there are a number of United Nations organizations involved in trying to help free and rehabilitate contemporary slaves and prevent others from becoming victims. There are also NGOs working devotedly to help the victims to help themselves. The problem has been recognized at the international, national and local levels and much effort is being directed towards reducing these abuses. That I see as progress.

However, there may be more people in danger of falling into servitude than ever before, thanks to the structure of the global economy and the unceasing demand for cheap, controlled and disposable labor⁸³ on the one hand, and, on the other, the increasing numbers of people from the poor regions for whom a menial job with low pay may enable them to remit money home and save their families from destitution. It would be to the advantage of both rich and poor areas if a means could be found of legalizing and regulating all immigration and if the public and international companies could be made only to invest in, or buy goods from, enterprises that pay a fair wage and do not tolerate forced, or sweated labor. Already outsourcing is having its impact in bringing greater prosperity to certain groups in say Ghana and India. However this threatens jobs in richer countries and does not touch the problems of forced prostitution – sometimes a woman’s only means of livelihood; child labor often needed for the survival of the family; debt-bondage and large scale unemployment, not to mention wars and warlordism which devastate whole regions. Although legal chattel slavery has ended, there is not as the African headman, quoted above, feared, a dearth of slaves - at least not of ‘contemporary’ ones.

Suzanne Miers

¹ Please note that this is a preliminary paper and the notes are not complete. Most examples are drawn from Africa, which is the area with which I am most familiar.

² Lucien Hubert, 13th Assembly of the League of Nations, 13 Oct. 1932.

³ For these villages see Martin A. Klein., *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa*, Cambridge University Press. 1998; Denise Bouche, *Les Villages de Liberté en Afrique Noire Française 1887-1910*. Mouton, Paris, 1968

⁴ David Brion Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress*, Oxford 1984

⁵ There were often laws against this and public opinion might condemn ill treatment. Islamic law in particular urged good treatment. Slaves were usually valuable property but nevertheless many were killed with impunity.

⁶ Indrani Chatterjee, “Abolition by Denial” in Gwyn Cambell, ed. *Abolition and its Aftermath in Indian Ocean, Africa and Asia*, forthcoming Frank Cass, London.

⁷ These were usually people reduced to slavery for a crime or a bad debt.

⁸ Alaine Hutson ”Enslavement and Manumission in Saudi Arabia 1926-1938”, *Critiques* 11, 1, pp.49-70, 2003.

⁹ For example in Sindh, Michel Boivin, “La Condition servile dans le Sindh colonial – remarques preliminaries” paper presented at the Conference on Slavery and Other Forms of Unfree Labour in the Indian Ocean World, Avignon 2000.

¹⁰ Suzanne Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: the Evolution of a Global Problem*, Altamira Press, Walnut Creek, CA., 2003

¹¹ For a recent study of the role of royal slaves and the difficulties of replacing them in Kano see Sean Stilwell, “‘Amana’ and ‘Asir: Royal Slave Culture and the Colonial Regime in Kano, 1903-26” in Suzanne Miers and Martin A. Klein, eds. *Slavery in Colonial Africa*, Frank Cass, London 1999, (first published in *Slavery and Abolition*, 19, 2, 1998, pp. 167-188.

¹² Andrew Turton, "Violent Capture of People for Exchange on the Karn-Thai Borders in the 1830s" in Gwyn Campbell, ed., *The Structure of Slavery in Indian Ocean Africa and Asia*, Frank Cass, London, 2004, pp.69-82; *ibid*, Peter Boomgaard, "Human Capital, Slavery and Low Rates of Economic and Population Growth in Indonesia, 1600-1910", pp.83-96.

¹³ For some examples see Suzanne Miers, "Slavery a Question of Definitions" in Gwyn Campbell, ed., *The Structure of Slavery*, pp.1-16.

¹⁴ Some like the Basarwa in Bechuanaland (Botswana) were possessions who could be inherited and given away but there was no market so they were not bought or sold.

¹⁵ This was not legal in the Southern United States but happened nevertheless.

¹⁶ Suzanne Miers, fieldnotes.

¹⁷ See for instance, Justin Willis and Suzanne Miers, "Becoming a Child of the House: Incorporation, Authority and Resistance in Giryama Society", *Journal of African History*, 38,1997, pp.479-495.

¹⁸ See James Watson, ed., "Slavery as an Institution: Open and Closed Systems" *Asian and African Systems of Slavery*, James Blackwell, Oxford, pp.1-15 and other articles in this volume.

¹⁹ Elizabeth Sinn, "Chinese Patriarchy and the Protection of Women in 19th Century Hong Kong" in Maria Jaschok and Suzanne Miers, *Women and Chinese Patriarchy: Submission Servitude and Escape*, Zed Books Ltd., London 1994, pp.141-170, p.142. The patriarch, however, could add to his dependants by buying concubines, or mui tsai. The latter were theoretically adopted girls who served the family and were married off when they grew up, but many were treated as slaves, see Maria Jaschok and Suzanne Miers, "Women in the Chinese Patriarchal System: Submission, Servitude, Escape and Collusion" *ibid.*, pp. 1-12, and "Mui Tsai Through the Eyes of the Victim: Janet Lim's Story of Bondage and Escape", pp.108-21.

²⁰ Andrew Clark, "'The Ties that Bind' Servility and Dependency among the Fulbe of Bundu (Senegambia) c. 1930s to 1980." In Miers and Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in Africa*, pp.91-108 and more recent personal communication from Andrew Clark; Yaya SY, "L'esclavage chez les Soninké: du village à Paris," in *Journal des africanistes: l'ombre portée de l'esclavage: Avatars Contemporains de l'oppression sociale*, 70, 1-2, 2000, pp.43-69.

²¹ See for instance Carolyn A. Brown, "Testing the Boundaries of Marginality: Twentieth Slavery and Emancipation Struggles in Nkanu, Northern Iboland, 1920-29", *Journal of African History*, vol.37. 1996, pp.51-80.

²² Robin Maugham, *The Slaves of Timbuktu*, Harper Bros. New York, pp. 164.

²³ Personal communication from Mike Dottridge.

²⁴ James Warren, "Chinese Prostitution in Singapore: Recruitment and Brothel Organization" in Jaschok and Miers, *Women and Chinese Patriarchy*, pp.77-107.

²⁵ Sinn, "Chinese Patriarchy", p.142. Examples could be multiplied, for instance, kin groups in Africa could sell their members, and patriarchs in ancient Rome could sell their dependents.

²⁶ Discussion with students to whom I lectured at the University of Swaziland in 1980.

²⁷ See inter alia Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress*, 8-22; Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: a Comparative Study*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass. 1982; Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Context of African Abolition", Suzanne Miers and Richard Roberts eds. *The End of Slavery in Africa*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, pp. 485-503.

²⁸ There were various British anti-slavery societies, but the one that finally emerged in 1839 and is still in existence has had various changes of name and is known today as Anti-Slavery International – I will call it the Anti-Slavery Society for simplicity. For its various changes of name see Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century*, pp.xvii.

²⁹ Suzanne Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*, Longmans, London 1975, 310 ff. and appendix 1; Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 20-25, 305.

³⁰ For succinct discussion see inter alia see Thomas C. Holt “The Essence of the Contract: The Articulation of Race, Gender, and Political Economy in British Emancipation Policy, 1838-1866” in Frederick Cooper, Thomas C. Holt and Rebecca J.Scott, eds.*Beyond Slavery: Explorations of Race,Labor and Citizenship in Post Emancipation Societies*, University of North Carolina Press, Chappel Hill 2000, pp.33-59. Seymour Drescher, *The Mighty Experiment: Free Labor versus Slavery in British Emancipation*, Oxford 2002.

³¹ Quoted in Eric Foner, *Nothing but Freedom: Emancipation and its Legacy*, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, 1983.

³² For important examples see *inter alia* Richard Roberts and Martin A. Klein, “Banamba Slave Exodus of 1905 and the Decline of Slavery in the Western Sudan” *Journal of African History*, 21, vol.3, 1980.pp.375-94; Paul Lovejoy and Jan Hogendorn, *Slow death for Slavery: the Course of Abolition in Northern Nigeria, 1897-1936*, Cambridge University Press, 1993.

³³ For a brief discussion of this see Frederick Cooper, “Conditions Analogous to Slavery: Imperialism and Free Labor Ideology in Africa” in Frederick Cooper, Thomas C. Holt and Rebecca J. Scott, eds. *Beyond Slavery*, pp.108-49, and for a detailed study, *From Slaves to Squatters: Plantation Labor and Agriculture in Zanzibar and Coastal Kenya, 1890-1925*; see also the studies in Suzanne Miers and Richard Roberts, eds., *The End of Slavery in Africa*, Richard Roberts and Martin A. Klein, “Banamba Slave Exodus of 1905”, Richard Roberts, “The End of Slavery in the French Soudan, 1905-1914” in Miers and Roberts, eds., *The End of Slavery in Africa*, pp.282-307.

³⁴ For the difficulties of freeing women see inter alia *ibid.*; Marcia Wright, *Strategies of Slaves and Women: Life Stories from East Central Africa*, Lilian Barber Press, New York 1993. For discussions of women in Africa see Claire C. Robertson and Martin A. Klein, eds. *Women and Slavery in Africa*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1983 and Magaret Jean Hay and Marcia Wright, eds.*African Women and the Law: Historical Perspectives*, Boston University Papers on Africa, VII, 1982.

³⁵ Boubarcar Messaoud, “L’esclavage en Mauritanie:de l’idéologie du silence à la mise en question” *Journal des Africanistes*, 70,1-2, 2000 pp. 291-337.

³⁶ Richard Roberts, Women, Household Instability, and the End of Slavery in Banamba and Gumbu, French Soudan, 1905-1912, forthcoming in Gwyn Campbell, Suzanne Miers and Joseph Miller, eds. *Women in Slavery*.

³⁷ Suzanne Miers, fieldnotes.

³⁸ Brown, ‘Testing the Boundaries’pp. 62-4

³⁹ Much has been written on this but the most readable recent work on the subject is Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold’s Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa*, Houghton and Mifflin: Boston 1999.

⁴⁰ Andre Gide, *Travels in the Congo*, University of California Press. Berkeley. 1962 trans. First published 1927; C. Coquerie-Vidrovitch, *Le Congo au Temps des Grandes Companies Concessionnaires 1898-1930*, Mouton, Paris, 1972.

⁴¹ L. Vail and L. White, *Capitalism and Colonialism in Mozambique*, Heinemann, London 1980., p.224.

⁴² R.I.Buell, *The Native Problem in Africa*, Macmillan, New York, 1928, vol. 2, p. 542.

⁴³ Denise Bouche. *Histoire de la colonization Française*, vol.II, *Flux et Reflux*, 1815-1962, Fayard, France, 1991, p.193

⁴⁴ Miers, *Slavery in the 20th Century*, p.138.

⁴⁵ Ibid. pp.137-38; Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa*, 2 vols. James Currey, London, 1992; C.C. Wrigley, "Historicism in Africa: Slavery and State Formation" *African Affairs*, 70, pp.279;113-24, 1971.

⁴⁶ Myron Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts: the Tirailleurs Sénégalais in French West Africa, 1857-1960*, Heinemann, Portsmouth NH., .pp.60-61.

⁴⁷ Miers, *Slavery in the 20th Century*, p.139-40.

⁴⁸ For a discussion of the concept of progress and slavery see Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress*.

⁴⁹ Miers, *Slavery in the 20th Century*, pp.66-72.

⁵⁰ Ibid. pp.87-94.

⁵¹ Ibid. pp.72-3, 108.

⁵² Ibid. pp. 106-9,114.

⁵³ Most of my information about the meetings of this committee are based on its minutes in the League of Nations archives in Geneva and on the Lugard correspondence and the papers of the Anti-Slavery Society in Rhodes House, Oxford.

⁵⁴ Ibid. pp.121-33.

⁵⁵ The 1926 convention did not spell out these forms of slavery but it referred to the commission's report. That these were now considered forms of slavery was to be made clear in the 1956 Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions Similar to Slavery

⁵⁶ It had also been used in the Southern states of the USA for some 50 years after emancipation.

⁵⁷ Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 207-8. For this second committee see pp.197-215.

⁵⁸ Ibid. pp.216-238, 278-99.

⁵⁹ Ibid. pp. 216-38, 246-47, 278-99.

⁶⁰ For a recent study see Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: a History*, Penguin Books, London p. 203.

⁶¹ It was outlawed in 1943 after the British had re-conquered Ethiopia from the Italians and restored Haile Selassie I to his throne, see Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century*, pp.300-303.

⁶² Already slavery had ended in Bahrain (1936) and the ruler of Kuwait freed any slaves who appealed to him

⁶³ For the end of slavery in Arabia and the Persian Gulf see Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 339-57.

⁶⁴ A few private slave owners in the American South, particularly Quakers, did sometimes compensate their slaves, by way of atonement, freeing them and giving them plots of land.

⁶⁵ Ibid. pp.239, 350. This last may have been a preliminary figure. Much research is needed on slavery in Saudi Arabia.

⁶⁶ For the discussion that follows see *ibid.*, pp. 317-38.

⁶⁷ For this period see *ibid.*, pp.358-72.

⁶⁸ The Soviet gulags were disbanded, but they still exist in China.

⁶⁹ Ibid, pp.373-91. See the *Annual Reports of the Working Group*. These reports are carefully sanitized to avoid offending governments, therefore the only way to know what has really been said and what disagreements have arisen is to attend the meetings.

⁷⁰ For examples of contemporary slavery see Kevin Bales, *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy*, University of California Press, Berkely, 1999; Kevin Bales and Peter T. Robinson, "No one shall be held in Slavery or Servitude: a Critical Analysis of International Slavery Agreements and Concepts of Slavery, *Human Rights Review*, 2,2 (January to March): pp. 18-45; Roger Botte ed., *Journal des Africanistes: l'Ombre portée de l'esclavage: Avatars contemporains de l'oppression sociale; Anti-Slavery Reporter; Free the Slaves*; For a brief survey see Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century*, pp. pp.415-444. Mike Dottridge, *Kids as Commodities: Child Trafficking and What to do about it*, International Federation Terre des Hommes, 2004. See also various editions of *Human Rights Watch*.

⁷¹ As happened in London not long ago, when a desperate victim jumped out of a window.

⁷² A discussion on this subject was held in Geneva in 1999 organized by IMADR (International Movement Against all forms of Discrimination and Racism, for a brief discussion see Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century*, 00.432-33.

⁷³ See Jaschok and Miers, *Women and Chinese Patriarchy*, pp.264-67.

⁷⁴ [BBC program \(details to follow\)](#)

⁷⁵ Personal communication from Mike Dottridge.

⁷⁶ *Anti-Slavery Report: Is there Slavery in Sudan*, March 2001.

⁷⁷ Personal information from Mike Dottridge.

⁷⁸ Personal information form Mike Dottridge.

⁷⁹ Information sent to me by Roger Botte, and Mike Dottridge.

⁸⁰ There are treaties against racial discrimination (1966), against discrimination against women (1979) and upholding the Rights of the Child (1989), against the Worst Forms of Child Labor, Against Trafficking in Persons,2001, protecting the rights of migrant, contract and illegal alien labor, and a number of others

⁸¹ [For their proliferation and the scope of their work see Claude E. Welch, ed. *NGOs and Human Rights: Promise and Performance*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2001.](#)

⁸² For this discussion see Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress*.

⁸³ For a discussion of this point see Bales, *Disposable People*.