The Expansion of the External Enclaves

In the eighteenth century, Europeans and their Euro-African descendants owned slaves at scattered points along the coast. The greatest concentrations were near Luanda, Cape Town, and the Zambezi valley. Despite the relative isolation of these holdings from the main developments in the institution of slavery in African societies before 1800, these European enclaves were the basis of a new order in central, southern, and eastern Africa in the nineteenth century. As these European enclaves expanded, a modified version of the slavery of the Americas expanded too. Despite the presence of a few plantations owned by Brazilians in Dahomey and Angola and the attempts at plantation development in Sierra Leone and elsewhere on the upper Guinea coast from the 1790s to the 1820s, slave masters in West Africa generally developed slavery into a productive system without the American example. Slave masters adapted the practices and traditions of their own societies – Akan, Yoruba, Igbo, or otherwise – so that European conceptions of slavery continued to be marginal, even as the economic importance of slavery increased. The situation in the southern third of the continent, therefore, was different from the experience of West Africa.

A parallel can be found in the adaptation of Islamic views of slavery in the northern savanna, where slavery was reinterpreted over the centuries in terms of Islam. The consolidation of slavery in the Muslim context represented an ongoing adjustment to the spread of Islam, the continued trade across the Sahara and the Red Sea, and the use of slaves in a variety of functions – the military, administration, domestic service, concubinage, and production. This kind of transformation had been largely absent along the Atlantic shores of Africa where Christian Europeans were present. In the nineteenth century, this situation changed.
The expansion of the external enclaves was related to the development of plantation agriculture on the islands in the Indian Ocean and in the Gulf of Guinea, which provided an example for Europeans, Euro-Africans, and others on the mainland. Thousands of slaves were shipped to the offshore islands, initially as slaves and then as indentured workers, often under conditions tantamount to slavery. Because these islands were relatively close to Africa, their importance as plantation colonies continued longer than many places in the Americas. Efforts to patrol the waters of East Africa and the lower Guinea coast came relatively late, and consequently it was feasible to continue plantation slavery until the end of the century.

The Mascarenes were the first islands to benefit from this new attention. After the Napoleonic wars, sugarcane, cotton, indigo, cloves, and other spices were grown for export. Sugarcane was by far the most important crop. Great Britain had seized these islands in 1810 and kept Mauritius and the Seychelles archipelago, but Réunion was returned to France. Planters on Mauritius and the Seychelles imported slaves from Africa during the second and third decades of the nineteenth century, even though the trade was officially abolished to British possessions. Perhaps 20,000 slaves were imported between 1810 and 1820, but the trade gradually declined, until in the 1830s, the British islands looked to India for indentured labor and no longer sought African labor, although a few liberated slaves seized from slave ships in the Indian Ocean were landed on the islands. Reunion, by contrast, continued to receive slaves and engagés à temps throughout the first two-thirds of the century. The French added Nossi Bé and Mayotte in the Comoros in the 1840s, and although these islands never became as important as Réunion, sugarcane and other crops were grown there too. Nossi Bé and Sainte-Marie had an estimated 12,000 slaves in the early 1840s; Mayotte had 2,773 slaves in 1846. After the annexation of these islands, the French passed an emancipation decree that prompted many local Muslim slave owners to immigrate to other islands in the Comoros, especially to Anjouin, where a plantation economy already existed. This displacement enabled the French to grant concessions to planters from Réunion and also to substitute the engagé system for slavery, so that the importation of labor from East Africa and Madagascar continued in the middle decades of the century. While these engagés were technically free on the French islands, they were slaves when they left Africa.

The heritage of European settlement in the southern third of Africa was also a component of the transformation in slavery that occurred in the nineteenth century. The mainland Portuguese communities in Zambezia and Angola expanded, whereas São Tomé and Príncipe once again became a focus of plantation agriculture after two centuries of stagnation. In South Africa, the Dutch settlers at Cape Town spread inland to the high veld. The abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the emancipation of slaves in the Americas encouraged the intensified use of slaves in these places. In effect, the locus of plantation agriculture and other ways of exploiting slaves shifted nearer
to the source of slaves in Africa because of the greater risks in transporting slaves across the Atlantic and because slavery itself was abolished in one place after another. As was the case with the Mascarenes and Comoros, farmers and planters on the mainland could compete because the cost of labor was cheaper than in the Americas. A peculiar hybrid emerged that was neither American nor African.

Despite the distant roots in the Americas and Europe, there were a number of unique features of the new slavery in its African context. First, the most important sector was on the East African coast and the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba, where Omani and Swahili slave owners developed a plantation economy to produce cloves, coconuts, and grain. In this sector, while largely external in origin (the Omanis came from Arabia; capital came largely from India; the inspiration for plantation agriculture came from the Mascarenes and Comoros, and thus indirectly from the Americas), the form of slavery was Islamic, not European or Christian. Nonetheless, this plantation system was similar to the other sectors on the Mascarenes, Comoros, São Tomé, Príncipe, and the mainland Portuguese enclaves in that production was primarily for foreign markets – in this case principally India – and most slave owners had non-African origins.

Secondly, abolitionism influenced the form of slavery in the European sectors; this new slavery was not a simple copy of earlier forms of American slavery because the rhetoric of abolition required that slave masters should disguise the nature of their exploitation under a variety of new terms. Among the Boers, slaves were called apprentices, as a means of satisfying British laws of emancipation that allowed a period of apprenticeship after the ending of slavery in 1834; except that the movement of the Boers inland beyond the effective control of British rule resulted in the continuation of the apprenticeship system until the Anglo-Boer war in 1899–1902. Similarly, the French and Portuguese purchased slaves for use in agriculture and other economic activities but called them *engagés*, *libertos*, or other names. In all these cases, the presence of the British at Luanda, Cape Town, Zanzibar, and other places required the adaptation of slavery to appease British diplomatic pressure. The new ideology – European in origin – was paternalistic and capitalist. Slavery was perceived in terms of protecting “primitive” Africans as they experienced the transition to civilized life; the new labor systems were intended as a related transition toward the establishment of wage labor, with the abolition of slavery as an inevitable by-product.

Thirdly, many slave owners, particularly in Portuguese areas, were Euro-Africans or non-European immigrants. These included Ambakistas, Indians, and others. Hence the presence of Omanis and Indians in Zanzibar and Pemba was not so different, in that these slave owners also identified with an alien origin, although there were differences between those who associated with Europe, the Islamic Middle East, and India. The Ambakistas spoke Portuguese and were nominally Catholic; the Indians came from Goa, the Portuguese port
in India, and other places. These varied ethnic origins among the entrepre-
neurs of this new slave economy fell on a continuum from those who were
Europeans, Omanis, or Indians to persons of mixed Afro-Omani, Afro-Indian,
or Afro-European ancestry to African slave owners whose origins were con-
nected with the external presence as mercenaries, commercial agents, or
slave descendants. Groups like the *achikunda* (who were associated with the
Portuguese *prazo*-holders in the Zambezi valley), the Yao (who were agents
for the Swahili and Omani plantation sector of the East African coast), and
the Merina (who provided many of the slaves for the Mascarenes) developed
plantations of their own that were linked to the external-centered systems of
the Portuguese, Omani, and French.

Lineage slavery still existed, but in the context of commercial expansion
its relative importance decreased. Lineage-based societies continued to serve
as a source of slaves for raiders; they were the prey for marauding bands and
consequently incorporated slaves when possible as a means of enlarging kin
groups. Nonetheless, lineage slavery was not the most dynamic institution in
the nineteenth century, although under some circumstances a partial transfor-
mation of slavery occurred, especially when slavery was adapted to military
ends or for hunting purposes. Thus the Cokwe and the warrior bands of the
dicane used slaves as a means of incorporating women and soldiers on a scale
that prevented the functioning of real kinship structures, even though slavery
was interpreted in the context of kinship.

The Omani-Swahili Sector

The first clove plantations on Zanzibar were in production by the early 1820s,
primarily as the result of experiments by Saleh b. Haramil al-Abraiy, born in
Muscat in 1770. He traveled to Seychelles, Ile de France (Mauritius), and
Bourbon (Réunion) and observed the French plantation economy. Saleh and
other Omani merchants experimented with sugarcane and other crops first, but
cloves proved most successful. Sultan Sayyid Sa’id of Oman saw in the clove
industry the possibilities of a personal fortune. He moved to Zanzibar in 1828
to promote his own interests in clove production. This included the confisca-
tion of Saleh’s plantations and the purchase of other rival estates. Thus Sayyid
Sa’id became the largest clove producer on the island, and despite the entry of
other planters and merchants into the industry, the sultan’s family never lost its
preeminence in the trade.³

After the modest beginnings in the 1820s, the clove industry grew dramat-
ically in the 1840s. Exports rose from 280,000 pounds per year in 1840, to
more than 1 million pounds per year in 1843–1844, to almost 5 million pounds
per year in the 1850s. By 1845, private estates outproduced the royal estates
by almost two to one, and clove production spread to the neighboring Pemba
Island. The expansion on both islands continued for the next few decades, until
a hurricane destroyed many of the trees on Zanzibar in 1872. Because of this
disaster, Pemba exported more cloves than Zanzibar, reaching two-thirds to three-quarters of clove sales by the 1890s.4 The slave population of Zanzibar Island rose from about 15,000 in 1819, before the boom in clove production, to significantly more than 100,000 by the 1830s. For the rest of the century, estimates, some of them partial calculations, indicate that the slave population remained at this level or higher. Mortality rates among slaves were extremely high – 15–20 percent per year – which meant that 9,000 to 12,000 slaves had to be imported each year to maintain the slave population. In 1860, estimates indicated that the majority of slaves arriving at Zanzibar, perhaps 15,000 out of 19,000 people, came from the area of Lake Malawi. The other 4,000 came from the Mrima coast, opposite Zanzibar.5

By the 1870s, the sultan had some 4,000 slaves on his plantations, and other wealthy planters had 1,000 to 2,000 slaves, all supervised by overseers. A large plantation could contain 10,000 trees, and some planters owned more than one. In 1895, one planter, Abdalla bin Salim, owned 6 plantations with 3,000 slaves. His wife owned 7 smaller plantations with 1,600 slaves. Five other planters at this time owned more than 250 slaves each. In Pemba, Mohamed bin Juma bin Said had seven plantations and 2,000 slaves, and he had holdings in Zanzibar too. Other planters on Pemba reputedly owned as many as 500 slaves each. By 1860, Indians owned 8,000 slaves in Zanzibar, two-thirds of which were on plantations. The rest were domestic servants, porters, and menial laborers in the Indian commercial firms. The largest owner was Jairam Sewji, who owned 460, although most Indian households had only a few slaves. Despite the scale of some holdings, there were many with fifty or sixty slaves, and the average size was about 30 slaves per plantation.6

There were two clove harvests, the heaviest in November and December and a protracted, smaller one from July to September. The clove buds had to be broken off from the tips of the branches without damaging the delicate limbs. Each tree had to be picked several times, and because the major harvest overlapped with the rainy season, working conditions were unpleasant and the task of drying the cloves was difficult. Supervision of slaves had to be carefully arranged to prevent damage to trees. Female slaves were responsible for separating the buds from the stems and spreading the cloves on mats to dry. Then they were packed in sacks for transport to town. Masters hired out their slaves during harvests when they could afford to do so, and many slaves were paid according to the amount of cloves they picked. Because of the delicate nature of the labor, piece-work provided an incentive for careful and thorough attention that might seem inconsistent with plantation slavery but is logical in the context of this particular system. Slaves who were careless or lazy were beaten and deprived of holidays. Slaves were provided with food, clothing, and accommodation, and in most cases they also received a small plot of land for a garden.7

The plantation sector spread to the mainland opposite Pemba and Zanzibar, especially along a 110-km stretch of coast from Mtwapa to Mambrui, but
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including other places as far north as the Banadir coast and as far south as Mozambique. Grain, coconuts, and oil seeds were the principal exports, although some other foodstuffs and gum copra – used to make varnish – were somewhat important. The earliest developments began in the 1830s, with the major expansion occurring in the 1850s and 1860s. The peak of the plantation economy was reached between 1875 and 1884, when there were 43,000 to 47,000 slaves on the Kenyan coast, which represented 44 percent of the population; the largest concentrations were in the Malindi-Mambrui region, near Takaungu, and in the area of Lamu and Pate, although there were smaller numbers of slaves at Mombasa, Vanga, and other places.

One of the earliest centers was Takaungu, founded in 1837 by the Mazrui family who had fled Mombasa to escape Zanzibar rule. In the 1840s, gum copra – gathered in the Watamu area – was the main export; thereafter foodstuffs were more important. The period of greatest expansion occurred in the 1860s when such slave villages as those at Konjora were founded. Slave villages usually had 300 to 400 slaves, organized under an overseer. Now maize and millet were grown for export, and by the 1880s, the Takaungu area was exporting 5,400 tons of grain, sesame seed, rice, and beans per year.

Some of the largest plantations were established in the Malindi-Mambrui region after 1861, when Malindi was resettled. Malindi had been an ancient town but was abandoned in the late eighteenth century. Immigrants from Zanzibar moved to the mainland to grow grain, and by 1884, exports were almost 13,500 tons per year, twice the output of Takaungu. By this time, there were several hundred individual farms, with the size of slave holdings averaging from ten to twenty slaves. Some masters, however, had several locations, with one owner having ten farms. Suleiman bin Abdallah al-Mauli was one of the largest planters; in the 1890s, he owned 261 slaves who worked 2,500 hectares of grain as well as several coconut groves. He was one of six planters owning more than 2,500 hectares. There were many other planters with holdings that ranged from 24 to 120 slaves. In fact, the 13 largest planters, each of whom had over 1,200 hectares of land, accounted for 56 percent of the cultivated land at Malindi. The total slave population reached 4,000 to 5,000 by 1873, reaching a peak of 6,000 in the late 1870s.

The other large concentration of slaves was on the coast opposite Lamu and Pate; in 1897, 9,624 slaves were counted, although the slave population was probably larger in the 1870s before the coastal area was hit by raids from the interior. Lamu exported grain to Arabia, the Persian Gulf, India, and other parts of the coast. By 1859, sesame was also a major export. The 3,900 tons exported in that year exceeded the volume of sesame sales from the rest of the coast combined. Rice, millet, maize, sorghum, beans, and coir completed the list of crops grown by slaves.

There were fewer slaves at Mombasa, Gasi, Wasini, and Vanga, although slaves were involved in production at these centers. Of these, Mombasa was the most important. Agricultural holdings there averaged about 3 hectares – in
sharp contrast to the large plantations elsewhere. Only 3 landlords at Mombasa had more than 250 hectares each. Because Mombasa was older than Malindi, Takaungu, and other centers of plantation development the pattern of small holdings was already established before the years of economic expansion after mid-century. Farmers at Mombasa responded to the demand for grain as the market grew, but there was not sufficient land to develop extensive plantations. In 1884, almost 1,800 tons of millet were exported, which was only a tenth of the combined output of Takaungu and Malindi. The slave population was still relatively large, however. In 1897, there were 4,667 slaves in Mombasa. Vanga and Gasi were even less important as centers of slavery. Not only were exports smaller, but there were only 2,153 slaves in the area in 1897.13

On the larger plantations – if the estate of Suleiman bin Abdallah of Malindi can be taken as representative – slaves worked in gangs of five to twenty under a headman who was also a slave.14 The hours of work ranged from 8.00 A.M. to 5.00 P.M. during slack periods in the dry season and from sunrise to late afternoon during planting and harvesting, although the average workweek on the master’s fields there and elsewhere usually did not exceed forty to fifty hours per week even during peak periods of the agricultural season. On the estates, slaves had Fridays off during the rainy season and Thursdays as well during the dry season. Each slave received a daily grain ration while working for the master, but slaves also were given their own plots to grow additional food for themselves. The men were assigned a fixed piece of land to work during clearing and weeding. Women took produce to market, scared birds away from the fields, and prepared food. Unlike the men, they did not have free days.

The Muslim push into the interior of East Africa involved a combination of “legitimate” trade, slave raiding, and political consolidation. The first Arab merchants reached the commercial center at Tabora, halfway between the coast and Lake Tanganyika, in the 1830s, and thereafter the Muslim presence in the interior grew at a phenomenal rate. Muslims, including Arabs, Swahili, and converts among the Nyamwezi and Yao, dominated a vast network of trade routes that stretched beyond the lake country to the basin of the Congo River by the 1870s.15 Arabs were operating at Ujiji, the main port on the eastern shore of Lake Tanganyika, in 1840. They moved across the lake and, under the leadership of the colourful Tippu Tip, occupied territory along the upper Congo (Lualaba). Tabora, Ujiji, Kirando, Kasongo, Riba-Riba, and Mtaka were some of the towns that dotted the trade routes over which copper from Katanga, salt from Ivuna, Uvinza, and elsewhere, textiles and other imports from the coast, and other goods moved. The Muslims were after slaves and ivory, particularly the latter, which constituted the most valuable export from East Africa. Few slaves reached the coast through Nyamwezi country; they were incorporated into the local economy and society instead.

In the internal sector, many slaves were needed at the commercial centers, particularly on plantations that supplied the caravan trade with provisions. Given that porters were the principal means of transporting cargo, it was necessary
to acquire food at staging points along the caravan trails. Plantation output provided much of this market at the major centers. At Ujiji, for example, slaves constituted the great majority of the local population by the 1880s. The model for Ujiji society was fashioned after the Swahili-Arab coast. Tippu Tip followed in his father’s steps as a trader in the interior, investing in plantations both on Zanzibar and in the interior.\textsuperscript{16} Along the river, north of Kasongo, Tippu Tip established at least twenty plantations in the early 1880s, thus assuring adequate food supplies for the riverine trade. At Kasongo, on the Lualaba River west of Lake Tanganyika, slaves assembled at the sound of a gong and marched together to the fields, where they worked in gangs.\textsuperscript{17} Slaves were found not only on plantations, but also in the harems of wealthy merchants and among the domestic staff of commercial establishments. Some dependants of the merchants and other petty traders were themselves descendants of slaves or had purchased their own freedom. These were known as Ngwana, and they often traded along the less frequented routes, handling small quantities of goods that they bulked for the bigger firms.

The Southeastern Coast and the Lake Malawi Corridor

The Muslim network extended down the East African coast, where it overlapped with a rival Afro-Portuguese network. Both networks pursued the slave trade, branched into the ivory trade, and invested in slave labor. Like elsewhere, slave owners shifted to the production of “legitimate” goods when market demand made it profitable to do so, but they continued to export slaves as long as possible. Kilwa, for example, was the main port for the shipment of slaves to the plantation areas of the northern coast, as well as a supply area for more distant places. Even when British intervention made shipping difficult, the merchants at Kilwa still exported slaves, only now the slaves were sent overland.\textsuperscript{18} The other Muslim towns to the south – Angoche, Sancul, and Kitangonya – served the important function of smuggling centers once British pressure on the Portuguese closed the Mozambique Island and Quelimane to the slavers.\textsuperscript{19} Despite competition between the Muslim and Afro-Portuguese networks that sporadically flared into violence, the two networks were part of the same expansion of slavery.

The Swahili communities began to produce goods for export by mid-century. At Kilwa, slaves gathered gum copra, rubber, and sesame seeds, and they grew grain for export too. The production and collection of “legitimate” goods encouraged the immigration of Indian merchants. There were 87 in 1873; by 1886, the number had risen to 242. Sugarcane and rice were the staple crops in the Pangani valley; gum was common at Lindi, and copra also came from Dar es Salaam.\textsuperscript{20}

The Afro-Portuguese communities experienced similar development. At Ibo, slaves were also used to separate the tiny sesame seeds for export. In 1880, the estates near Ibo ranged in size from 120 to 1,200 hectares, each employing
20 to 50 slaves. By the end of the century, there were also 6 to 10 coffee plantations. At the Mozambique Island, more than half the population was slave (total population: 5,800) in 1875, whereas in the mainland district across from the island, there were 12,000 slaves registered with the government at the time Portugal officially “freed” slaves in 1875. Another 9,000 slaves were registered at Quelimane, although at both places there were many masters who did not bother to declare their slave holdings or who did not declare all their slaves. Further down the coast, Inhambane had 3,116 slaves in 1861, whereas Lourenço Marques had 276 in the same year.

The Portuguese community comprised a mixed population of Goans, Portuguese, and mulattos, who were primarily involved in the sale of slaves under various guises and other commodities grown along the coast and in the immediate interior. Even in the 1850s, the Portuguese armed forces at Mozambique Island relied on slave levies, and local officials often had large holdings of slaves. Candido da Costa Soares, for example, was one such official; he and others like him owned as many as 200 slaves. Like their Swahili counterparts at Sancul, Kitangonya, and Angoche, they became involved in the production of “legitimate” goods as the market for oil seed, grain, and other goods became important in the 1860s and 1870s. Frederic Elton, the British consul at Mozambique in 1875, provided an eyewitness account of the importance of slavery at the Mozambique Island, the year Portugal nominally freed slaves by decreeing that henceforth slaves would be libertos:

All the owners of property on the mainland hold libertos and slaves. Slave discipline is still carried on. Slave punishments are not discontinued, such as working with a heavy log attached to the leg by a chain. Slaves are let out to work for hire – are lent to foreign commercial houses for consideration and whether termed libertos or slaves fall under the English interpretation of the word slave. For in the case of the liberto the equivalent of his labour is never received by him – he is not in the position of a man engaged for a term for certain work. He can be put to work for any person whom his master chooses to hire him, on the terms his master chooses to agree to.

Elsewhere in the Portuguese domain, slaves continued to be as important as they were at Mozambique and Quelimane. The prazos in the interior still organized large slave armies of achikunda, who terrorized peasants into supplying produce, and these armies seized slaves for the export trade that flourished in the first half of the nineteenth century. In 1806, the prazo-holders owned some 20,000 slaves on their Zambezi estates, but most of these were soldiers and their families. Achikunda were now employed in caravan trading and elephant hunting, which were natural extensions of their warrior functions from the previous century. They journeyed far into the interior in search of ivory, which they purchased or hunted. Because of the journeys they became virtually autonomous. Portuguese estate holders had to secure the permission of the “slave” leaders before punishing or selling individuals; it is perhaps at this time that destitute men in search of a protector voluntarily enslaved themselves.
The conditions of servitude were hardly onerous, and the opportunities for adventure and commercial success were relatively great. Increasing numbers of *achikunda* severed their ties with the *prazos*, establishing their independence as hunters and traders.

This steady dispersion of *achikunda* was part of a larger transformation in the Zambezi basin. *Prazo*-holders were able to replenish their warrior bands without much difficulty, at least until the 1820s; the export trade in ivory and slaves was sufficiently rewarding for the *prazo*-holders to abuse the free commoners on their estates, extracting agricultural surplus and even enslaving people for export. In the early 1820s, famine and drought hit many parts of the Zambezi valley; between 1826 and 1830, contenders for the Barue throne devastated a number of *prazos*, and in the 1830s, the *dificane* struck the Zambezi valley. Nguni invaders effectively established control over most of the lower Zambezi by 1840. The consequence of these disasters was that *achikunda* fled the region in greater numbers, taking with them a commitment to slavery. Some successfully established bases further up the Zambezi; others traveled into the area west of Lake Malawi; still others went further inland.26

Along the Zambezi itself, this population displacement eventually made it possible to reorganize production in scattered locations so that slavery became even more important than it had been. Some slaves were still employed in gold prospecting, as they had been in the eighteenth century and earlier. In 1831, for example, the Italian agent Gamitto observed how slaves were organized by the *prazos* to exploit the gold deposits of the Zambezi valley:

> The slaves employed at the mine are divided into *Insakas* as usual, but each of these has six negresses, it being ... only women who mine. Each *Insaka* is under the charge of a *Nyakoda* who gives a weekly account of the work of her people. These weeks are of four days, and each woman has to account for six *tangas* a week; this satisfied, the rest is hers. It often happens that a woman gets enough on the first day to pay the quota and in this case she is not required to turn up on the following days. Owners of the *Bares* mines usually have imported cloths, beads, etc., [sent to] them to sell to their slaves at exorbitant prices; and so these slaves buy from any passing merchant, secretly, what they need.27

Gamitto reports a sexual division of labor that may have operated in some places. More often, however, men were employed in the mines too.

By the end of the century, slave-based agriculture became more common along the Zambezi, just as it was expanding along the coast. Portuguese farmers – often mulattos – relied on slave labor at many places along the river. Sir John Willoughby visited one master, Araujo Lobo, who had an estate at Matakania, 25 km below Zumbo. Willoughby’s description of working conditions demonstrates that Araujo Lobo, at least, worked his slaves hard:

> [T]wo gangs of slaves, each consisting of a dozen women, mostly with little children on their backs, and all chained together by means of heavy lengths of chain attached to iron rings around their necks ... were being employed in porterage between the
stockades and the river. ... They were the result of Araujo Lobo’s latest raid up the Zambesi for men and women.18

Women were particularly valued in the regional trade of the Zambezi valley, as Willoughby’s observations make clear. Achikunda and other merchants bought slaves in the lower Zambezi, took them inland to sell for ivory, and then sold the ivory for export. Some Tonga in the Gwembe valley of the Zambesi are remembered as especially large slave owners, buying women and girls who could be attached to their lineages without the usual reciprocal exchanges involved.29 There is no question that one dimension of owning large numbers of women involved their economic exploitation. The mulatto prazero Araujo Lobo was probably not much different in his actions from the Tonga masters of the Gwembe valley.

Along the Shire valley between the Zambezi and Lake Malawi, a similar concentration of slaves took place. Yao, achikunda, and others settled slaves in villages to grow crops. The Kololo porters in David Livingstone’s antislavery expedition even participated in these developments in the 1880s. Once these Kololo left Livingstone’s service, they defeated some local achikunda and established themselves as overlords of the Manganja. Captives were set to work in large fields to grow sesame; the seeds were exported to the coast. Yao, Swahili, and other merchants had similar slave villages further north, as the area that had been the great slaving ground for the export trade from southeastern Africa in the early nineteenth century was transformed into a center of slave-based production. Only high transport costs limited the consolidation of a plantation economy.30

Until the second half of the nineteenth century, the Yao were centered in the area east of Lake Malawi, where successful merchant-princes began to consolidate territorial rule on the basis of clientage and slavery. To achieve political power, a Yao merchant had to convert wealth into a personal following. In part this was done by purchasing slaves from the proceeds of ivory sales, the manufacture of cloth, and other commerce; in part slaves were obtained in slave raids. Free people attached themselves to successful men to avoid raiding, both from Yao strongmen and from bands of the dificane that plagued the whole area. By the last few decades of the century, there were at least nine Yao strongmen; one of the most powerful, Mataka I Nyambi (who died in the late 1870s), reportedly had 600 wives scattered in eight villages. A third were housed in his capital at Mwembe, where there was also a substantial free population in addition to his slave women and male slaves, whose numbers are unknown. When Mataka Nyambi died, thirty boys and thirty girls were killed at his funeral.31

The Portuguese Enclaves in West-Central Africa

The transfer of plantation agriculture to west-central Africa was different from the development of plantations in the Indian Ocean basin. The Portuguese began to discuss the necessity of adjusting to the inevitable collapse of the
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trans-Atlantic trade even before that trade actually declined. As Lopes de Lima argued in the early 1840s, slave-based agriculture should be promoted in Angola:

Slavery today is general there [in Angola] in the amount of 12 to 40 per cent among permanent settlers; but the number of slaves will rise as soon as the inhabitants of our cities and presidios decide to establish and cultivate lands which can rival those of Brazil ... and when the allied sovas [native chiefs] in the interior are convinced that they cannot sell their vassals and prisoners to a foreign country, and who decide that it is better to employ them in extracting profit from their own lands by sending colonial products to markets.\(^{32}\)

In 1850, there were 6,020 slaves in Luanda alone, out of a total population of 12,565; by 1854, there were 26,000 slaves registered in the whole of the Portuguese colony of Angola.\(^{33}\) The size of this population was relatively stable throughout the first half of the century. Despite Lopes de Lima’s prediction, therefore, a boom in agricultural production had not taken place by the middle of the century, although there was a sizeable slave population.

São Tomé and Príncipe were revitalized in the 1850s, precisely at the time when the export trade from west-central Africa began its final decline. As was the case in the Mascarenes, sugarcane was the main crop, and contract labor was substituted for slavery, even though this substitution did not affect the process of enslavement and slave trading in Africa and hardly affected the nature of servile relationships on São Tomé and Príncipe. Coffee soon replaced sugarcane as the principal crop; then, in the 1880s, cocoa began to replace coffee.\(^{34}\)

A small plantation sector in coffee and, to a lesser extent, sugarcane developed in west-central Africa. Near Ambaca, for example, a group of slave owners of mixed Portuguese and African origins, known as Ambakistas, developed their commercial and plantation interests; the Ambakistas were more or less Portuguese in dress, religion, and manners, but like the mulattos of southeastern Africa, they represented a mixture of cultures.\(^{35}\) The same was true in the Cazengo district along the Kwanza River inland from Luanda. The first plantation was established in the 1830s. A Brazilian immigrant bought twenty-five slaves at the Dondo market for use on his farm. By 1850, local African farmers and European settlers were collecting coffee in the forest and planting trees. In 1870, several large-scale European plantations were using slave labor. Within a decade, much of the fertile land along the river had fallen into the hands of white owners. Nonetheless, the plantation sector in Cazengo remained relatively modest; there were never more than a few plantations until the 1870s and 1880s, and even at the peak of development in the 1890s, there were only 28 coffee plantations with a total slave population of 3,798.\(^{36}\)

To the south, another small plantation colony was established at Moçambe in the 1840s, with sugarcane as the main crop. Cotton was tried in the 1860s and 1870s, when American production was low, and this was the period of Moçambe’s greatest prosperity. The growth of the colony was limited by
the environment, however. The area included only four coastal oases and one inland oasis at the foot of the escarpment, and cultivation depended on irrigation. The slaves, who numbered between 2,000 and 4,000, worked from sunrise to sunset, with a two hour break in the middle of the day and Sundays off. Men and women performed the same tasks, working in teams under overseers and drivers who were usually slaves themselves. At Moçamedes, slaves were also used in the fishing industry. Fishermen arrived in the 1860s, and they quickly bought slaves, who did most of the manual labor. Men crewed the ships; women dried and salted fish. Some planters produced foodstuffs for the industry, which by the 1890s was the most important part of the local economy. Fish were exported to São Tomé and Príncipe, among other places.\textsuperscript{37}

**Apprenticeship in South Africa**

The most significant development in South Africa was that the expansion of slavery in the enclaves associated with the movement of the Afrikaner population into the interior. The Dutch community accepted British rule begrudgingly at the best of times, but in the 1830s, the Boer trek onto the high veld marked a new era of resistance. In part this expansion was related to the slavery issue, for Dutch society was based on slavery and the exploitation of the nonwhite population. British abolitionist sentiments only fueled discontent that was already strong for other reasons. It is no coincidence that the great trek began just as the emancipation of slaves in British colonies was to take effect.

In 1807, there were 1,134 free blacks and 30,000 slaves in the Cape colony, which demonstrates the importance of slavery to this European community of 25,000 whites.\textsuperscript{38} The agricultural economy – particularly wine and wheat – continued to depend on the labor of slaves, just as it had in the eighteenth century. The port at Cape Town relied on slave workers who performed menial tasks in the commercial firms and small shops of the town. But the institution of slavery underwent a fundamental change in the first three decades of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{39} The campaign against the slave trade and slavery in Great Britain had repercussions in Cape society. When the trade was abolished, the import of slaves into Cape Town virtually ceased. From then on it was possible to obtain relatively few new slaves; they came primarily from skirmishes on the frontier in which captives were taken, but also through intermittent and relatively small-scale trade with African traders across the frontier. As in other slave societies, the slave population at the Cape was not demographically self-sustaining; consequently, the termination of arrivals from overseas and the inability of the interior to compensate for the import trade meant that the relative importance of slavery would inevitably decline.\textsuperscript{40}

Indications of change were first evident in Cape Town; some slave owners there sold some of their slaves to farmers in the interior, because the collapse of the slave market drove up prices, so that individual owners found it profitable to sell their slaves at the inflated prices. This shift was reflected in the
proportion of slaves in the population of the colony; whereas there were still 32,046 slaves in 1817, they no longer formed the majority of the population in Cape Town and gradually they declined as a percentage of the population of the colony as a whole.41

Because slavery could no longer satisfy the labor requirements of the colony, reforms were instituted between 1812 and 1828 that were designed to produce alternative sources of labor. The principal source was the Khoikhoi and San population – identified as coloreds – of whom there were 17,000 people in the colony by 1817. Khoikhoi and San were already an important component of the rural labor force, particularly in areas of livestock production. San and Khoikhoi children were incorporated into the workforce through a system of apprenticeship, which lasted until they were twenty-five. These children and young adults could not be sold and were technically free, but they received no wages for their labor, and once they reached “maturity” they were supposed to be paid and could even seek alternative employment, although in fact it was difficult to do so. Furthermore, adults were required to have passes that allowed them to be employed for specific periods: passes were instituted in reaction to uprisings among the Khoikhoi and their alliance with Xhosa and others outside the colony.42

The pass system of contract labor, which underwent many modifications after it was introduced in 1809, laid the foundation for alternative supplies of labor, but it took several decades for migrant, contract labor to fill the needs of the expanding South African colony. Between 1809 and 1834, the pressures of an insufficient labor supply, the disappearance of land that could be developed, and friction with both the British government and African people on the frontier of Boer settlement created a situation that was potentially explosive. As the economy expanded – the major development involved the growth of wool production – Boers felt that their interests were not protected sufficiently to warrant their loyalty to the British regime; indeed, many Boers were ready to move beyond the frontier and seize new territory. Cattle and sheep required extensive land, and although slaves and Khoikhoi were available, the frontier seemed to offer better opportunities. First, some slaves were obtainable through raids and purchase, although the government tried to suppress slave raiding and trade. As late as 1828, the five eastern districts reported 6,598 slaves, in a slave population for the colony as a whole of 32,243.43 Even though the number of slaves had remained relatively constant since the early years of the century, these figures suggest that the proportion owned in the eastern areas – from where many of the Voortrekkers came – had increased, reaching about 20 percent of the slave population.

The beginning of the Great Trek coincided with the emancipation of slaves in the British Empire, and the two were hardly unrelated. Between 1834 and 1838, slaves were considered to be apprentices; in effect, the British government attempted to impose a new labor regime, derived from the experience of Khoikhoi and San apprenticeship, on the white settlers. In the long run, the
emancipation of slaves and the further consolidation of the apprentice system were important steps toward the evolution of a migrant labor force, based on the issuance of passes to control settlement and employment. In the short run, however, many Boers took their slaves and Khoikhoi apprentices and moved inland to seize land for livestock and agriculture, for the devastation of the diícane wars had left the best land for settlement. Beyond the British colony, the apprenticeship system functioned as a thinly disguised form of slavery. The Boers who had left by 1837 took with them perhaps 4,000 apprentices and supposedly former slaves who continued to be treated as servile. The Trekkers also continued to seize children or buy them for the rest of the century; the Nguni at Delagoa Bay became one source of “apprentices,” who were slaves in the eyes of the Nguni. As late as the 1890s, this modified form of slavery continued in the Transvaal, the Orange Free State, and Natal, although by then free migrant labor was more important as a source of manpower than slavery.

Expansion of an Indigenous Slave Mode of Production

The developments in the external enclaves had important repercussions in some parts of the interior. Merchants and warlords associated with the trade to the coast were able to take advantage of the foreign market for “legitimate” goods and the continued demand for slave labor. Except for ivory and rubber (late in the century), transport costs were usually too high for the successful development of agriculture, except to support the major corridors of trade. Hence along the Zambezi and such tributaries as the Shire, or overland to Lake Tanganyika and Lake Malawi, Swahili, Nyamwezi, Yao, and other slave owners created a locally important plantation sector. In west-central Africa, by contrast, the Cokwe and Bobangi, among others, amassed large numbers of slaves who invariably were used in production too, but the cultural and economic links with the coast and the external enclaves were not as pronounced as in East Africa, where the Muslim and Afro-Portuguese penetration of the interior left identifiable traces. On Madagascar, the rise of the Merina state was associated with a similar intensification of slavery: The link with foreign enclaves – the French and British investment in the Mascarenes and Comoros – possibly provided an incentive to use slave labor on a massive scale, but the productive employment of slaves soon became significant in its own right and without much connection to the external enclaves. Finally, there were isolated places – the Zambezi flood plains of the Lozi and the equatorial basin of the Congo – where slavery increased in scale, although the links with the external world were either marginal or not important at all. These cases indicate that economic and political conditions in central Africa could involve the transition to a slave mode of production based on indigenous developments.

The Cokwe were farmers and hunters in the interior of Angola. In the first decades of the nineteenth century, the Cokwe were only marginally involved in the commercial patterns of the region; but, as the demand for ivory, beeswax,
and rubber affected the area, their skills and location put them in a favorable position. By the 1850s, they were exporting these “legitimate” commodities. They were also enslaving many people, particularly women and children, whom they incorporated into their villages, even founding whole villages with such captives. Cokwe elephant hunters acquired as many wives and small children as they could to swell their households. They bought slaves, participated as mercenaries in raiding expeditions, and extended loans in return for pawns, who were often treated as slaves. Here was a means of shifting population from those who were weak militarily to those who were strong, from those who were suffering from famine to those who had sufficient food, and from those who wanted capital and had only their kin and slaves as security for a loan to those who could supply the loan. Early-twentieth-century reports indicated that 80 percent of the women in Cokwe villages were “slaves,” a term used by A. A. Mendes Correa in 1916 to include captives, women purchased as slaves, and pawns.

Slave and pawn women who formed the bulk of the servile population were treated similarly. Once they were acquired, they became wives in one of the polygamous households in a small village that had as its core a number of men who were related through the maternal line. When the Cokwe men were hunting for elephants, engaging as mercenaries in the internal conflicts of neighboring states, or collecting beeswax or rubber for export to the coast, the women stayed in the villages and farmed. Kinship lost its significance, as children, regardless of their mother’s status as slave or pawn, were full members of their father’s lineage. For women and children who entered Cokwe society as slaves or pawns, therefore, emancipation was virtually guaranteed upon marriage, and it was fully assured for the second generation. The status of slave was effectively confined to those individuals who were born outside Cokwe society. Slavery was an institution that was tied to enslavement in war, raids, kidnapping, judicial punishment, and debt. The Cokwe claimed that they never sold their own slaves or pawns; hence, slavery here was seen as a means of augmenting the number of dependents and not as a source of wealth through the slave trade.

The division of labor in Cokwe villages reveals the essentially integrative features of slavery as a method of recruiting women without confining them to an inferior social category that is usually associated with slavery. The men cleared the land for planting, but otherwise agricultural work was done by women. The men, forming small hunting or raiding parties, then left the villages for long periods. In this situation, dissatisfied slaves could flee, but there was no class of slaves. Slavery and pawnship among the Cokwe related more to a division of labor based on sex than to a class structure based on slave and free.

Modifications in the general pattern of slavery also occurred along the trade routes elsewhere, from Benguela in the south to the Loango coast and the Congo River basin. Ivory, wax, cotton, coffee, and rubber became important
activities after 1850. The population expansion in Caonda after 1850 was linked to the establishment of plantations along the coast. The commercial network in the north included Tio and Bobangi. The Tio kingdom, which controlled the area near Malebo Pool, had a number of important market towns. In 1852, Mswata on the Congo River contained 8 or 9 free men, 85 wives of the chief Ngobila, and more than 190 slaves. The largest merchants and chiefs in Ntamo had hundreds of slaves and perhaps twenty or more wives. The slaves acted as retainers and manned the caravans to the coast. The women were often related to other chiefs and helped consolidate political and commercial alliances. The concentration of slaves indicates that slavery in Tio society was an essential element in the economic and social differentiation of a prosperous group of merchant-princes. This pattern was essentially the same one that had prevailed throughout the history of the area’s involvement in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, as the discussion of the coastal Vili reveals. The transformation of slavery into a productive institution was only partially achieved along the trade routes. In general, slavery remained a factor in social and political consolidation but only marginally became a factor in production.

The Bobangi of the Congo River followed a similar pattern, although slavery became more basic to social organization and the domination of river traffic. Slave women became wives and farmers, whereas slave men became canoe men and commercial agents, with the opportunity for promotion, de facto emancipation, and full access to the upper sections of Bobangi society. Slave men could even establish independent commercial firms. By the late nineteenth century, Bobangi society was essentially a loose federation of competing trading firms. Relations between master and slave had become the common form of interaction, not kinship. Merchants amassed large numbers of slaves, who lived in a separate ward with their master. Slaves formed the bulk of the population. At one settlement, at the end of the nineteenth century, there were 290 slaves and only 8 free men—a pattern common at all the Bobangi towns. Male slaves paddled canoes and otherwise performed manual labor, whereas female slaves did most of the agricultural work, thereby providing food for the firms.

The first years of enslavement were the most dangerous for a slave. The death of an important person resulted in the sacrifice of up to eight slaves. Slaves were also killed to seal pacts between chiefs, such as price fixing and market agreements, and sometimes just to remind slaves of their position. Masters substituted slaves in compulsory poison ordeals related to witchcraft accusations. Guilty people died during the ordeal; innocent people vomited the poison. Nonetheless, despite these risks, individual slaves could become important and occasionally were allowed to split off from the main firm to found a separate ward. When the master died, the firm did not necessarily pass to a son but rather to the most successful merchant, unless the firm was divided into several segments. Hence the two main features of Bobangi society were the acquisition of large numbers of slaves and the emergence of a few talented subordinates, often slaves themselves, who founded their own firms. Still
slavery was only partially associated with production. Slaves were the main fieldworkers in growing cassava and other crops, but these functions remained subordinate to commerce. The structure of society relied on slavery, especially because Bobangi society was only self-sustaining demographically through the acquisition of new slaves. Here slavery was transformed more fully than in most parts of the interior, but its productive potential was only partially realized in the sense that the focus of the economy remained centered on trade.

Elsewhere in the equatorial basin of the Congo River, other slave owners began to acquire slaves for the purpose of agricultural labor. The people in the region of the upper Ngiri and Moeko employed slaves to cultivate fields that had been constructed in the swamps. Manioc was grown in the Alima region, sugarcane in the area of Lukenye and Lake Mai Ndombé, and vegetable salts were made elsewhere. Some Bapoto masters on the river around Lisala had as many as 100 slaves each. Slaves lived on islands in the river where they gathered palm kernels and made palm oil. The owners visited these islands to bring food and collect the palm produce. By the last decades of the nineteenth century, slaves were used to cultivate the fields along the river at Wangata, Ilebo, Lokolela, and Bulobo.

Another relatively isolated transformation occurred in the interior flood plains of the Zambezi valley, where the Lozi state was divided into a landlord class, an exploited peasantry, and a large number of slaves. Many tens of thousands of people lived in the flood plains, with estimates for the number of slaves ranging between a quarter and significantly more than half of the population. The peasantry was obliged to render corvée labor and pay taxes and rent. Because the peasantry was usually related to the dominant class through ties of kinship and ethnicity, traditional claims could be invoked that provided some protection from extreme exploitation. The brunt of oppression fell on the slaves, who probably constituted a majority of the population as early as the 1880s, and perhaps earlier still.

These slaves farmed, herded livestock, repaired and constructed houses, fetched wood and water, and performed a host of other menial tasks in the Lozi economy. The best lands in the plains were reserved for the masters, and these had to be tended before the small plots relegated for the use of slaves could be worked. Furthermore, slave gardens were most apt to be on poorer soil or lower lands that tended to be flooded first. Slaves were also expected to pay a portion of the produce from their own plots, which amounted to a rent on the land. There were many other restrictions for slaves. They could not eat millet or sorghum, nor use wood and mud for their huts, nor wear certain clothes or jewelry. In addition, slaves had to perform the most labor-intensive corvée projects for the state, including the construction and repair of irrigation ditches, settlement mounds, and royal buildings. They also had to cultivate various royal fields, supply government officials with provisions whenever they were on state visits, and furnish slave children to the state as a form of tribute.
The type of exploitation that characterized Lozi was also found to a lesser extent elsewhere in central Africa, particularly in Lunda and Kazembe. The capital districts depended on slave labor not unlike that in Lozi, though there was no dependence on irrigation and royal projects. Slaves, particularly women, were the main workers in the countryside. The population of the capital districts usually numbered several thousand people, and the impression of various nineteenth-century observers was that a significant proportion was slave.

As in Lozi, slavery had been transformed into a means of political domination. Despite the relatively weak market forces, slaves could be used in an economic sense to buttress state power. Both slaves and free peasants paid tribute, but neither produced for market exchange on a significant level. In the early nineteenth century, Lunda and Kazembe still supplied the external slave trade, but when that trade declined, the state faced serious problems of adjustment. The aristocracy fought over access to increasingly scarce resources. Civil war and Cokwe incursions led to political disintegration and the decline of state slavery.

The expansion of slavery in Madagascar was related to the political expansion of Imerina, which conquered most of Madagascar in the course of the nineteenth century. Imerina had been one of the major sources of slaves for the Mascarenes in the late eighteenth century, but foreign trade was only one dimension of Imerina’s success. The monarchy organized huge irrigation projects around the capital of Tananarive. Marshes were drained and dykes constructed, and the land was turned into rice fields. In the late eighteenth century, work levies consisted of free men, but by the early nineteenth century, slave labor became the basis for the maintenance and extension of these public projects. Slaves also became increasingly important in farming the rice fields because free men had military duties that prevented their involvement in agriculture.

In 1817, King Radama of Imerina signed a treaty with Britain that allowed the interception of slave ships in exchange for an annual subsidy in the form of firearms. This gave Imerina a monopoly of firearms on Madagascar, which facilitated military expansion and the enslavement of people for use in the irrigation schemes of the capital district. Even though Radama had to sacrifice the income gained from exporting slaves, the political advantages gained from military supremacy proved to be considerable. By the middle of the century, the slave population had increased to the point where society was divided into two classes, slave and free. By the end of the century, considerably more than half of the population was slave. Slaves did virtually all productive activities: they were used in mining and smelting; they transported wood from the forests; and they were household servants and concubines. The monarchy had a large group of royal slaves to carry out public works, farm the royal fields, and maintain the palace. The slaves worked in gangs under overseers, and they lived in barracks. Strict endogamy was practiced to maintain the distinction
between slave and free: Marriage between a free man or woman and a slave reduced the status of the children to that of slave.\textsuperscript{55}

**The Transformation of Lineage Slavery**

Fundamentally, lineage slavery involved social reproduction. Actual practice varied. In some cases, slavery was a means of military recruitment; in others, slaves were valued more for their productive capacities; in others still, slaves were killed in symbolic demonstrations of social solidarity. The significant difference between these forms of slavery and the plantation slavery of the East African coast was that slaves were not primarily exploited for their potential as producers. Even when slaves performed economic functions – and slaves usually did – these were secondary to their subordinate position in a social unit. The limited extent of market development prevented the transformation of slavery into a productive system. Slave trading and enslavement continued in the interior. While slaves could be sold to places where labor was needed for production, the affected areas of this vast region remained part of an international system of slavery. Hence until mid-century, west-central and southeastern Africa sent slaves to the Americas, and for this period slavery in the domestic sphere remained a dimension of a larger system. Once the export trade was cut off, and despite the resurgence of slave plantations on São Tomé – and, to a lesser extent, Príncipe and the Angolan coast – the foreign trade began to collapse after the 1850s. Then the system of slavery began to disintegrate. In contrast to the West African coast, the domestic economy did not experience the kind of transformation to “legitimate” trade that could result in the exploitation of slaves in a productive capacity. Consequently, slavery in many parts of the interior reinforced a social order based on dependency but not on the exploitation of slaves to produce commodities.

Among the Ila, for example, early-twentieth-century reports show that 40 percent of the population was of slave descent, which was as high a proportion of slaves as in many places where slaves were important in production. Nonetheless, the Ila had little that could be sold on the market; transport costs were too high for Ila slave owners to become involved in the export economy. Slavery was relatively benign and involved the assimilation of people to a great extent, even when their ancestry was remembered. Slavery was a means of augmenting lineage membership.\textsuperscript{56} Kinship relationships were redefined to incorporate slaves, particularly women. Slavery broke the link of reciprocity that underlay the normal functioning of kinship, but it did not lead to exploitation as an institution. Instead, slavery remained embedded in social structures and was not transformed into a mode of production.

Throughout much of the interior, slavery continued to be firmly associated with a kinship framework, just as it was among the Ila.\textsuperscript{57} Slaves were valuable because they had no kinship connections and could be incorporated despite customary norms. In many matrilineal communities, for example, slave
women and slave children could be married or “adopted” without acquiring the obligations that were connected with people who could turn to a lineage in times of trouble.\textsuperscript{58} There were no labor demands from kin. There were no meddlesome relatives who might intervene in marital disputes or who might offer advice on child-rearing practices. Nor were there costly visits from family who would expect to be fed and entertained. In matrilineal societies in which brothers-in-law were a force to reckon with, it was often desirable for men to marry women who had no brothers. In this way, their children had no uncle from whom they inherited or to whom they could look for access to land and communal protection. A man’s children were his own if a slave woman bore them. It is no wonder, then, that women were “assimilated” and children were “adopted.”

On the surface, this system of slavery appears far from onerous. Because women, with the help from children, did most of the farming, there was little differentiation in agriculture between slave and free. In fact, marriage effectively emancipated slave women in matrilineal societies, and children also became free as they grew older. They were initiated into the customs and obligations of their master’s society in ways very similar to the biological children of their master. Hence slaves, especially those purchased or enslaved in their youth, often became full members of society with the passage of time.

Certainly there were societies in which slavery remained closely associated with marriage and kinship structures and was relatively mild. The Tawana, on the borders of the Kalahari Desert, had few slaves. The roots of slavery in the dependent relationships associated with kinship still could be found there, as A. Schulz observed in the 1890s: “When talking of slaves amongst natives, the term slaves does not bear the same import as to the European mind …. [The] position between master and slave is more one of relative domesticity than actual slavery.”\textsuperscript{59} Here was a society relatively far from the main currents of change, only marginally affected by the wars of the dijicane, beyond the activities of Portuguese and Muslim merchants and raiders, and only beginning to feel the presence of Europeans. The Tawana lived off a mixed economy of cattle herding and farming. There was certainly need for menial labor, but there was little domestic pressure to exploit slaves in a manner that had become common in many parts of the continent by this time.

The means of assimilating slave women into the family among the Kongo in the late nineteenth century are characteristic of many situations in which slaves were “incorporated” into kinship groups. As Weeks makes clear, the terminology of kinship was adapted to allow slaves to be perceived in a manner that was meant to be more legitimate, but full integration could only be achieved through a collective failure in memory of slave origins or a significant blurring of slave ancestry through complicated intermarriage and descent:

The children born of family slaves are frequently called grandchildren (ntekolo); and when one of these “grandchildren” is given as a wife in exchange for a female member
of the family, a present is given with her to “wash her blood” (nsukula menga), and thus remove the slave element, that she may be treated as a proper wife, and not as a slave. Her children will belong to the family of her owners, but will be called ana akwa Kinkenge – children born of a freed woman of the Kinkenge clan, and not esi Kinkenge – clansmen.60

This process of emancipation occurred over three generations for female slaves in this matrilineal society. The family slaves that Weeks refers to were at least the first generation born into slavery, and hence their children were in fact the grandchildren of newly acquired slaves and fully acculturated to Kongo society. Yet only through marriage and public ceremony could a female be granted the status of freedom in the context of the lineage, and even then her children were still recognized as different from full lineage members.

The Kongo society that Weeks observed was far different from the sixteenth-century Kongo Kingdom that the Portuguese had first encountered. Where once powerful warlords had amassed large slave establishments, there were only memories that whole villages were slave in origin. Portuguese missionaries had also acquired slaves in those early centuries, and villages descended from these slaves could still be identified at the time Weeks was in Kongo. In both cases, the memory of slave ancestry is a striking testimony to the failure of Kongo society to incorporate slaves fully into the lineages, despite the persistence of a myth that slaves could be assimilated. Even when economic realities eliminated any significant distinction between free peasants and those tainted with a distant slave origin, the heritage of slavery still cast its shadow over Kongo society, revealing ample evidence of the long and tragic history of slavery here. The most onerous tasks were reserved for newly purchased individuals, not those born into the household. Slaves were still subject to death at funerals, and slavery was still the penalty for sorcery, crime, and sometimes debt. No system of plantation agriculture or military conscription through slavery operated in Kongo in the nineteenth century, however; slavery remained a key institution in this poor society, although only incidental to production. Those people of slave ancestry in the second and third generations faced the risk that their “lineage,” on whose sufferance they obtained land and the right to take part in community affairs, might find itself in debt or in a difficult political or legal situation. These were the conditions in which pawns and slaves were needed, and slave ancestry meant that unless a more likely candidate was available, second- or third-generation slaves were sold or otherwise transferred, with a corresponding fall in status. Free members of a lineage could be pawned or sold, but usually this happened only in the case of suspected sorcery, crime, or physical or mental disability. There were also cases of men pawning or selling free children and other relatives, even when slaves were available, but this was done to protect personal wealth at the expense of the lineage.

Although slavery was a means of bypassing kinship in a social framework that emphasized the rights and obligations of lineage membership, the actual pressures of the economy and political institutions often undermined
this theoretical model. People knew how society was supposed to function with respect to land, labor, marriage, religious ceremonies, and the reciprocal exchange of goods between kin. Customary law provided a means of settling a wide variety of problems and of preventing an equally diverse range of potential disputes. People who had military or financial means often twisted custom, and over the course of time they effectively changed legal traditions. Thus, people were supposed to operate on the basis of kinship, but those who could acquired slaves and pawns. In terms of the model of society that prevailed in the nineteenth century, customary law determined how the rules of kinship were adjusted to make allowance for pawns and slaves. The manipulation of legal traditions could work both ways, and often slaves were able to gain full lineage rights. The struggle in these societies was between those who acquired slaves and pawns in such numbers that customary law regarding kinship could not function smoothly and those servile people who did not have rights under traditional laws to establish a claim to lineage affiliation. Free children could be pawned or even sold as well. Kinship relationships remained the model for how society should function, but individuals caught in the web of slavery or pawnship were not fooled by a theoretical construct. They had to live in the real world.

The various dificane groups sustained the myth that society was based on kinship structures, but the reality was that many people were incorporated as slaves. Whether it was through military conscription or polygamy, large numbers of slaves found themselves in dependent relationships that had little to do with real kinship ties. The language of social intercourse was often based on kinship terms, however. Slaves called their master “father,” and the legal rights of slaves were often compared with those of other dependents, particularly children. One can say that the dominant ideology was based on this model of social organization. Such small groups of warriors as the 300 followers of Zwide captured youths for the military and women for the soldiers. As they swept north from southern Africa, they integrated captives through artificial kinship structures. The social myth disguised the violent exploitation inherent in the marauding army. Captives had no freedom. Their choice was to conform to the regimentation of the band or face punishment, death, or sale. Through this technique of expansion, Zwide could transform a force of 300 men into a new society, many thousands strong, and splinter groups founded new societies of their own.61

Slavery in this setting was a means of recruitment that carried with it automatic emancipation through incorporation. The exploitation in this system rested on the initial act of enslavement and the indoctrination that was required before integration was recognized. As an army on the prowl, the dificane bands were similar to the Cokwe, ruga ruga, and other warriors, such as those formed in the Benguela highlands in the second half of the nineteenth century, although their military technology differed. The ratios of slave to free were extremely high among these groups, except that the adoption of new
cultures and languages was relatively easy, and hence slaves ceased to be slaves in reality. Three hundred men could not maintain a separate culture unless there was a rigorous form of indoctrination of captives. People were forcibly removed from other societies and incorporated into a new social order that had to allow for social mobility and effective emancipation. The survival of these groups depended on finding women. They depopulated whole regions – selling new captives when necessary but incorporating many others – in the search for new homes. The *dikane* was truly the “crushing”; cattle were stolen to replenish the herds that had been lost in migration, and food was taken wherever it was found. Enslavement was a logical part of a movement based on looting.

In core areas of the *dikane* – Zululand, Swaziland, and the Gaza Kingdom inland from Delagoa Bay – slavery underwent a partial transformation that was not characteristic of the northern portions of the *dikane*. In the Gaza, Swazi, and Zulu Kingdoms, slaves were as numerous as in the northern bands, but the effort to assimilate slaves was overcome by the encroachment of the Boer economy. Slaves did not constitute a class, because the children of slave women were accepted as free with automatic rights to kinship status, and slave men were seldom allowed to marry, thereby limiting the number of children born of slave parents. As elsewhere, slaves were involved in agricultural labor and the herding of livestock. Fieldwork freed the wives of the elite from the normal responsibilities for women, who generally did most of the farming, and, because virtually all cattle belonged to the political elite, the employment of slaves in this sector was an important dimension of their economic position. Slavery reinforced the kinship system, allowing the Nguni and Swazi elites to maintain their political and economic power. By the 1870s, however, slaves became more important in production because they enabled the freeborn to seek employment as migrant workers in Kimberley and Natal. As the movement of migrants increased in the 1880s and 1890s, the importance of slavery in the domestic economies of Gaza, Zululand, and Swaziland appears to have increased too, but unlike in other places where a transformation to a slave mode of production occurred, slavery here facilitated the consolidation of capitalism by facilitating the evolution of a migrant-labor system. Slave production was not intended for the market; instead, slaves filled the subsistence needs of the domestic sector.

There were many places in central Africa where slavery was an important institution, but not in production. This is particularly clear where slaves were sacrificed at funerals or eaten by cannibals. Again the significance of these actions highlights social relationships. Among the Kuba of the Congo River basin, the proportion of slaves in society was only about 10 percent at the end of the nineteenth century, and yet Kuba had been a major market for slaves for several decades at least. Slaves were most heavily concentrated around the Kuba capital, but most households had one or two slaves at most, and many had none at all. The proportion of slaves in society remained small, despite continuous purchases, because a major function of slavery here was to provide
sacrificial victims for funerals. In a metaphorical sense, these slaves were assimilated into Kuba society, but their incorporation was in the next world, not this one. A similar phenomenon, on the metaphorical level, prevailed in cannibal rituals, in which human beings were consumed as a means of strengthening the social organism. Such practices were common in the northern equatorial forest, particularly in the Ubangi River valley. Once more, slavery was not transformed into a productive institution. Rather, the destruction of slaves was a type of exploitation that required a constant supply of slaves, but for purposes that helped consolidate social institutions that were not themselves based on the productivity of slavery.

When the developments in central, southern, and eastern Africa are compared with developments elsewhere, it is apparent that slavery sometimes became essential to production, but not everywhere. As has been shown earlier, slavery existed in a relatively mild form at the edge of the major political units and economic regions, and in these peripheral places slavery often allowed for incorporation on the basis of near equality. The striking feature of slavery in the northern savanna and along the West African coast was the division between the military and commercial sectors. This dichotomy was most fully developed for the Islamic areas, but it seems that a similar pattern prevailed along the coast as well. This split between a sector based on enslavement and a sector based on the use of slaves in production widened very rapidly in Bantu Africa during the nineteenth century. Moreover, enslavers and producers tended to be more separated geographically than was the case in the other regions. Elsewhere, slaves were concentrated at the centers of the states responsible for the acquisition of the greatest number of new captives. In central Africa, most productive activity was on the East African coast, along the trade routes that supplied the external trade, and in the European enclaves. The greater isolation of productive slavery from enslavement highlights the most impressive difference that distinguishes the region from the rest of the continent, which experienced more social and economic integration. Despite the tremendous increase in the numbers of slaves everywhere in the nineteenth century, slave raiding and war in central and eastern Africa caused more destruction, particularly considering that no new political order, comparable to the Islamic states of the northern savanna, emerged to offer the possibility of a new stability. People were transferred, as slaves, into productive activities in central Africa. It is unlikely that the resulting output approached the productive potential that could have been realized if people had been left alone, because of the extreme waste of the enslavement process. This scale of destruction brings into focus the overall negative effects of the long history of enslavement, the slave trade, and slavery on African society and economy.