# The Diaspora of "Liberated African Slaves"!

In South Africa, Aden, India, East Africa, Mauritius, and the Seychelles.

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Slavery had been a long tradition that dated back to Ancient Egypt and then moved to Europe via Greece. English slaves were sent to the Scandinavian countries and even to Arabic Spain. When William of Normandy arrived, almost 10 percent of the populations of England were slaves. In 1102 William stopped the sales of the exportation of slaves[1] but he did not stop slavery, because he allowed domestic slaves to continue in the form of serfdom. In 1444, the Portuguese were the first to start public sale of African slaves in Lagos. Later in 1482 they opened the first permanent slave trading post in Elmina, Ghana. In 1518, African slaves were sent via Spain en route to the Spanish Colonies in South Africa. It became a productive European trade.

In 1562, Britain re started this lucrative business, this time in African slaves trading, when John Hawkins[2] sailed with three ships. In 1563, he brought the first human cargo from Africa to the Caribbean and sold it with a huge profit. In 1687, during the sugar trade, apart from Brazil, Hispaniola[3] (Haiti) had the highest number of African slaves. Haiti then became France's richest colony; to control the slaves France introduced the "Code Noir"of Colbert[4], there on 6th May 1687 "the most monstrous legal text that was produced in modern times"[5]. That Code which turned the African slaves into "objects" was modified in 1723 for the French territories in the Indian Ocean and the next year for Louisiana. Three "Codes Noir" in thirty-nine years with the same spirit to make black Africans a "worldly goods" On *Duodi 12 fructidor an I* (Thursday 29 August 1793) the French Fraternal Revolution abolished slavery with the strong objection of the Roman Catholic Church. It was only in 1884 that the Roman Catholic Church supported the "Lavigerie Movement".[6] The colonists in the French territories in the Indian Ocean did not abide with the Decree of the French Revolution and the *petit caporal* Napoleon Bonaparte (Napoleone di Buonaparte) reinstated slavery on *Décadi 30 floréal an X* (Thursday 20 May 1802). The French slavers on board their ships were to start their log book with "*Ad majarem Dei glorium",* (In the name of God). After much profit, they sailed for home with coffee, sugar etc… produced by slaves, after they sighted France they sung the *"Te Deum Laudamus"*[7] (You God we praise). Whereas, Captain John Newton[8], a British slaver invented the famous hymn *"Amazing Grace"* after being rich! Before the Fraternal Revolution many French slavers arrived in France with

[1] Britain From Arthur to William of Normandy: www.jsmtha.com
[2] Admiral Sir John Hawkins 1532-1595 son of a wealthy merchant of Plymouth, and died in Puerto Rico
[3] Part of the island was ceded to France by the Spain on 22 July 1795 with the "Treaty of Basel"
[4] Written by Jean-Baptiste Colbert and signed by his son the French minister of finance of the same name.
[5] Louis Sala-Molins: Le Code noir, ou le calvaire de Canaan, 1987
[6] The modern Catholic Antislavery Movement founded by Cardinal Charles Lavigerie primate of Africa. He was born in Bayonne, France on 12 October 1825 and died in Algiers on 26 November 1892.
[7] André Dugasse: Le Négriers ou les trafics des esclaves : 1948 p.100.
[8] John Henry Newton 1725-1807, born in Wapping, London, later became an Anglican clergyman in 1788, 34 years after his retirement he wrote "Thoughts Upon the Slave Trade"

African slaves as domestic servants and symbols of their wealth. But France had a principle based on the Ordinance of July 1315 that 'any slave who sets foot on French soil is free'. Though they were freed French jurists embraced the notion that dark-skinned people were innately inferior to whites.[9]

Ships left British ports fully loaded with firearms, gunpowder, metals, alcohol, cotton goods, beads, mirrors. To be exchanged for slaves. It was the sort of things which Africans Chief did not have. Many of these goods were of poor quality made in Birmingham and were known as "Brummagem ware"[10] At first most of the human cargoes from Africa were sold to plantation owners in the West Indies, America and then later to the Indian Ocean Islands where they spent most of their lives producing cotton, tobacco, sugar cane, coffee etc… Most of their produced goods were shipped back to Britain and other European countries where they were manufactured or refined and used domestically and re-exported with huge profit. The slave trades were very beneficial to Europe.

After becoming very rich, Britain lead the fight to eliminate the slave trade. However, the anti-slavery campaign started by the Dutch and German Quakers in the USA and was signed at Germantown, Pennsylvania in 1688. Their declarations were later taken up in 1787 in Britain by the "Society for the Abolition of the Slave" whose members were mostly Quakers. In 1791, the first Bill introduced by the Yorkshire man, the politician William Wilberforce was defeated in Parliament. A year later, he tried without success to outlaw British ships from supplying slaves to foreign colonies. However, on 25 March 1807, he managed to get the long title "An Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade" approved. In 1815, Britain delegations to the "Congress of Vienna" led by the orator Robert Stewart Castlereagh[11] failed to convince the congress to abolish the slave trade. Their submissions were rewarded only by a moral declaration. They condemned slavery but nothing was done to improve the conditions of slaves. On 26th July 1833, three days before he died Wilberforce was assured on his death bed that the "Slavery Abolition Act" will pass through Parliament. The Act was passed by Parliament on 29th August 1833 and came into force on 1st August 1834. On that day slavery was supposed to be abolished throughout the vast British Empire, however, there were a number of exceptions it did not apply to British protectorates. Its application to the Cape Colony was delayed for 4 months and Mauritius for 6 months. It did not apply to India; it was later in 1860 that the provisions of the Indian Penal Code which effectively abolished slavery in India.

The "Slavery Abolition Act" stipulated that slaves were to become apprentices for a transitional period of seven years and were bound to work for their masters for three-quarters of the day. And that the British Government was to provide £20 million compensation to the slave owners who had lost "their property" and the slaves received nothing. In 1838, two years earlier slaves were granted their freedom in nearly all part of the British territories. However, with no place to go for most of them there were no freedoms. They were legally bound to and obliged to

[9]Race, Slavery and the Law in Early Modern France: Journal article by Sue Peabody; The Historian, Vol. 57, 1995

[10] Marjie Bloy PhD: The Anti-Slavery Campaign in Britain

[11] Robert Stewart Castlereagh, Britain Foreign Secretary born in 1769 in Dublin Ireland, he died by killing himself on 12 August 1822 while still in office.

serve the same owner. After the British implemented the anti slavery law in the Indian Ocean France remained a major obstacle in the area, even though the British allowed them to recruit labourers (*engagés*) from India. When a British Navy ship boarded a French slaver with African slaves en route to La Réunion the French Captain produced an affidavit in French that the Africans are *angagés* and not slaves. Though the British strongly opposed this practice and the misuse of the tricolour legally they could not stop it.

**South Africa**

The anti "Slave Trade Act" of 1807 initially started in the Atlantic with a strong Royal Navy presence in the South Atlantic. In the same year Britain occupied the Cape for the second time. Captured slaves became an important source of revenue for the Royal Navy. The so called Liberated Africans were they were "apprenticed" for 14 years. They were granted to land farmers and tradesmen in another form of slavery in South Africa. In 1839, there was a labour shortage in South Africa and the new arrivals were bound for seven years.

In 1843, the Royal Navy squadron in Simon's Town sailed as far north to Zanzibar. They took a more important task to liberate African slaves from Portuguese East Africa. Slaves caught in the Mozambique Channel were sent to Papendorp and Simon's Town, their settlement in Simon's Town was known as "Black Town." On arrival Britain ordered their "marking" and they were put into auction. The regulation stipulated that families and even ethnic groups are kept together. Children under thirteen were obliged to work for their masters but could not be separated from their mothers. And they had to receive payment from their masters. Those Mozambicans were known as "Mazbeikers" and were very hard workers. In Papendrop they were first employed in carrying goods from the lighters on the beach[12]. Later the most of the Liberated Africans became the vital labour force for the sugar cane industries of South Africa. They were very productive and South Africa wanted more of them.

From 1808 to 1825 there were over 1, 500 Mozambicans liberated slaves in South Africa, and 4,000 of Africans liberated slaves en route to America were landed at the Cape.[13] Later in 1841 when Cape Town businessmen heard about the huge number of Liberated Africans in Saint Helena Island, they were swift to respond by offering money for their immediate transportation to South Africa. In their anti slavery patrols the British Navy recruited a large number of "Kru"-men (Krumen[14]) from Sierra Leone. It is believed that the "Kru"-men were promised by the British and French slavers that they will not be taken into slavery. France recruited nearly three thousand for her Antilles colonies. Britain used many of them in Saint Helena, Fernando Po Islands and in Guyana as labourers. The Kru-men facial tattoo distinguished them from other Africans. Many were in the Navy's ships in the Indian

[12] Clifford Pereira: Black Liberators: The Role of Africans and Arabs sailors in the Royal Navy within the Indian Ocean 1814-1941. 2008.
[13] Peter P. Hinks, John R.Mckivigan, R. Owen Williams: Encyclopedia of Antislavery and abolition: 2007: p.427.
[14] Krumen, an ethnic group living mostly along the coast of Liberia and Ivory Coast and related to (but distinct from) the Kru' people of the interior of Liberia. Kru derived from Kraoh the name of one of their tribes.

Ocean. Later many of them were employed permanently in Liverpool Docks. After slavery, they stayed and formed the own community, which was entirely men, later they had children with British women.

In 1822, Britain started to eradicate Arabic slave trade in the Indian Ocean. In September of the same year a treaty was signed by Captain Fairfax Moresby[15] of the Royal Navy and Sultan Seyyid Said and it was known as the "Moresby Treaty". That treaty forbade the sale of slaves to Christian traders from all ships plying from Zanzibar Sultanate south of Cape Delgado, or east of line from Gujarat to Socotra. Later more treaties were signed to make it easy to enforce the stoppage of this illegal trade. They were the Hamerton and the Anglo-Omani treaties which prohibited slave trading between Zanzibar and Oman.

**Slave rescue off East Africa by HMS *Daphne*.**
**Photo: UK National Archives.**

Later, some slaves captured by Royal Navy were sent to Lovedale in the Eastern Cape Province. The Lovedale Mission was founded in 1824 by the Glasgow Missionary Society and named after Dr. John Love[16]. At Lovedale

[15] Captain Fairfax Moresby born in 1786 in Calcutta and died in 1877, in 1821 appointed chief command at Mauritius for the suppression of slave trade. Later he was promoted to Admiral of the fleet.
[16] Rev. John Love DD 1757-1825 born in Paisley in the west Central Lowlands of Scotland, he became a profound Theologian and an eloquent preacher.

both sexes were given education and also training in various industries such has farming and printing. At the beginning Lovedale had both white and back pupils but this was ended in 1896.[17] That change was the early sign of apartheid. In 1889 Lovedale received its first batch of Librated Slaves originating from the Oromo land near Abyssinia from the overcrowded camp in Aden. They arrived on 20th August, 1890 at East London on the *Conway Castle*. There were 22 girls and 42 boys all very young Oromos around the age of 8 or 9 years.

Oromo's Liberated Slaves in Lovedale South Africa:
Photo: South Africa National Archives.

In 1890, the British cruiser the *Osprey* caught thirty-three Arab slavers with 213 slaves all from Oromo land. There were only four adult men and all the rest were women and children. They were in terrible cramped conditions many could not walk and had to be carried up to the cruiser. Arriving at Aden sickness broke out soon after arrival and twenty percent of them died.

After leaving Lovedale most of Africans girls entered domestic service in white homes in various parts of the Cape. The majority of boys after training became tradesmen or were employed in jobs at stores and other businesses.

[17] Ian Moir: Roots and Fruits.

**Bombay**

In 1534, the Portuguese took Bombay by force. Later in 1661, they gave it to the British Government as part of the dowry of Catherine of Braganza when she married Charles II of England. Later it was rented for £10 per year to the East India Company. African slaves are not new to this part of the world, the first to arrive were in the 11th century. They were the Ethiopians to whom the Arabs called "Habshi" or "Habashi". The "Habshi" later attained high political and military success in South Asia[18]. Another group, which the famous African traveler/historian Ibn Battuta described as "*working as security forces on the Muslim ships*." They also later became powerful and occupied very important posts in India. They were known as "Sidis" from the Arabic word "Syyedi" or lord. Most of their descendents now live in poor conditions in the western state of Gujarat. Even though they have lost touch with their African roots their African remnants remained only in their songs, dance and musical instruments. Their "Malunga" a single string musical instrument is from West Africa and so their circle dances. However, their drums seemed to be from Ethiopia.

From 1824, liberated African slaves landed in East Africa. In the early 1830's liberated slaves captured by the British Navy ships from Arab slavers dhows were taken to Karachi and Bombay, India. At Karachi. We do not know much about what have happened to them and where they were kept. However, in Bombay there is a complete detailed history on their early arrival. This is thanks to Sir Battle Frere then former Governor of Bombay, he said: *"the adults of both sexes were handed over to the police, and generally allowed to go their own way, whilst the children were disposed of among such of the inhabitants as were charitable enough to take them and were judged by the police to be sufficiently respectable to be entrusted with the charge.*[19] No records were kept about their number and their place of origin which was mostly from Abyssinia. After some time most of the females followed their males' counterpart to find work in the harbour of Bombay. Many of the men were employed at the dock and found jobs on board British ships. As for the women they ended up in brothels near the harbour. Many more of the incoming Africans ended in this vicious circle, this business went on until 1855, when it was stooped by Charles Forgett. Mr. Forgett was the Superintendent of the Bombay Police who captured over seventy children in the dens. He sent all of them to the care of the Church Missionary Society's Mission[20] in Nassick founded by Reverend William Salter Price. Nassick is about one hundred mile from Bombay, near the source of Godavari River, India's second longest river.

The Christian mission in Nassick was locally called the establishment of *Saharunpoor* (The city of refuge). It was the first orphanage of this kind to offer shelter and education for young liberated Africans. It is important to note that the Roman Catholic missions at Bandora and Poona were also providing homes for the young Liberated

[18] James De Vere Allen, Swahili Origins: p. 137.
[19] Sir Henry Batle Edward Frere (1815-1884): Eastern Africa as a Field for Missionary Labour. 1874.
[20] Founded in 1799 by Thomas Hobbes Scott, an Anglican clergy, it became the most effective organisation of the Church of England for missionary work.

Africans. Whereas, until now there are no documents to know the fate of men and women, that stayed with Christians missions?

At the missions the Africans learnt English, Hindi and technical skills. There were more liberated Africans that were sent to Bombay than in the Seychelles. Those in Bombay were known as "Bombayans" or "Bombay Africans". In most cases, little is known about the majority of the "Bombay Africans" especially the women and those who went to Karachi, Bandora, Poona and Saint Stanislaus School an orphanage in Bandra. "Bombay Africans" were referred to them because they grew up in Bombay. However, no name has yet been given for those who stayed permanently and their children born in India. Many find employment as masons, carpenter etc in Bombay. History does not say much, for those men who went back, to Africa and those who joined the British Navy. We had to rely mostly in the journals and accounts of European explorers and general historical evidence of African migrations.

**Mombasa**

In 1824, Mombasa became a British protectorate until 1826 when it was taken over by the Sultan of Zanzibar. In 1887, it went back to the British and became the Capital of the British East African Protectorate. In 1873-74, when, he was President of the Royal Society Sir Battle Frere suggested that British explorers seeking to recruit staff for African explorers to do so from men from or associated from the Indian orphanages[21]. From 1850, hundreds of them return to Africa with British explorers, some with the aid of the missionary society to set a branch in Mombasa, East Africa, others joint the British merchant navy and the Royal Navy as cabin crew. In 1880, there were 3,000 "Bombay Africans" in East Africa. The ethnic origins of most of the Bombay Africans that participated in expeditions can be traced to areas in modern day Southern Ethiopia, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique.

The German Lutheran missionaries were the first Europeans to start missionary work in Kenya, East Africa. The first to arrive was Johnn Ludwig Krupt and later Johannes Rebmann. Krupt built his mission in Rabai in 1846 and Rebmann had his near Freretown in 1875. They have been accredited to be the first Europeans to have discovered Mont Kilimanjaro and Mont Kenya. Their work is also thought to have inspired future African expeditions including the selfish explorer Dr. David Livingstone. In 1864, the Christian mission in Nassick sent Georges David a Catechist to East Africa to help the German mission. He stayed and worked with Rebmann.

The Frere Mission in Mombasa known also as Frere Town was named after Sir Frere, and was built exclusively for freed slaves rescued by the ships of the Royal Navy. "Bombay Africans" were sent there and they became

[21] Who were the Bombay Africans? : Unlocking the archives, Royal Geographical Society.

educated elite in East Africa. They also developed Frere Town and around the mission station they built school churches, hospital. They also built railway lines along the old slave's routes and without those railway lines some major cities would never have come into existence.[22] At the mission the liberated Africans learned only Kiswahili and English and their mother tongues were outlawed. The Liberated Africans in the Frere Town intermarried with others and they were known as Freretowners. They had a good school; 'the Freretowners do not identify with their tribes and is not easy to find one who is illiterate'[23]. The "Bombay Africans" in Frere Town had their help in the abolition of slavery. They had helped literally with education, producing leaflets and newspaper in both Kiswahili and English. They had also a settlement in Leopoldville (Kinshasa) which later became the capital of Belgian Congo. They helped the Europeans also in reshaping Africa's destiny. The Europeans combining religious commitments with their interest of mapping and navigating in the interior of Africa was done with the help of the "Bombay Africans". This later led the way to the exploration of natural resources and mass genocide.

**Aden**

The British captured of Aden in 1839 and did not hold back the Ethiopian slave trade, but rather triggered its expansion. When the Europeans arrived in the Kingdom of Shewa they gave the kings firearms as present. To purchase food for its garrison the British had first to gain the friendliness of the inhabitants of the opposite coast for them to reach Shewa. The British in Aden became the source of cash, manufactured goods and firearms, all of which facilitated an expansion in the volume of trade by southern routes[24]. It did also help in arming them when the British tried to interfere with the slave trade, the Shewa kingdom opposed them. However, Aden became a suitable place for the British Navy cruisers operating against slavers in the area. Aden was also used for landing Liberated Africans, and several thousands were put ashore there for a period of twenty years[25].

[22] Clifford Pereira: 2008, Historian and member of the Royal Geographical Society.
[23] Ngumbao Kithi: The Bright side of Slavery and Slave Trade in Mombasa, *East African Standard:* 2nd March 2009
[24] John Ralph Willis: Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa: The Seville estate. P.132
[25] William McAteer: Hard Times in Paradise: 2000 p.86

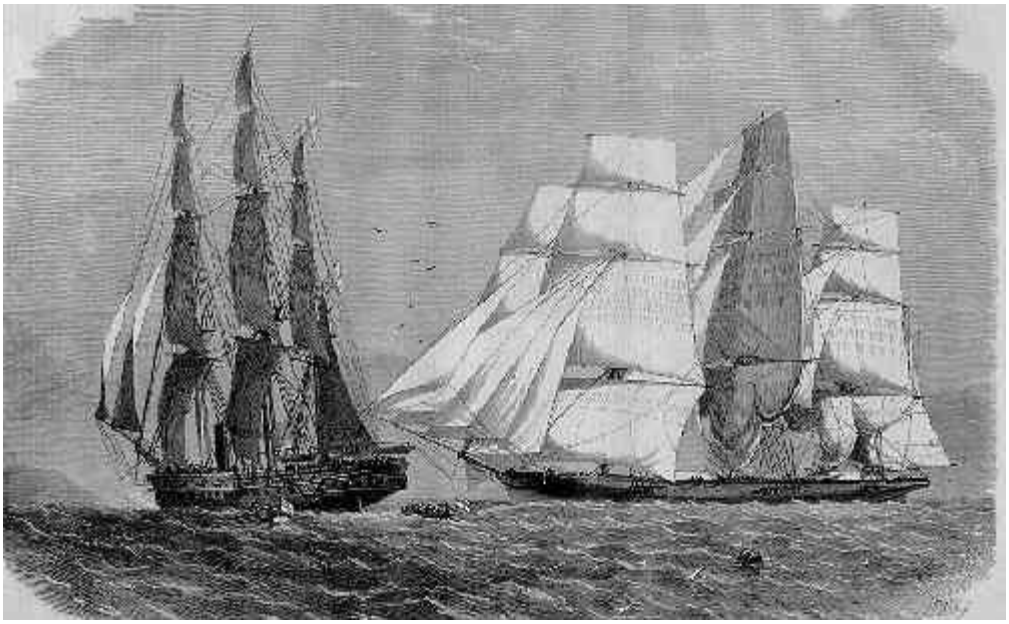
Oromo liberated slaves in Aden:
Photo: Cory Library: South Africa National Archives

But their campsite was not ideally located in the harbour and was known as Slave Island (Swaya Island). Little is known about their fate or if they were taken up by local families. Some were employed at the port, before being transferred to Bombay. In 1886, another camp for the liberated Africans was opened at Sheith Othman an oasis near Aden, by Ion Grant Keith-Falconer. He was an athlete, Arabic scholar, a Scottish missionary of Free Church of Scotland. In 1889, Slave Island with its lack of facilities was getting too crowded with the incoming of Liberated Slaves. Britain's main concern was to find alternative home for the child slaves. They decided to send liberated Africans from Aden to the Lovedale Presbyterian Mission in South Africa.

**Mauritius**

This former Dutch colony became French in 1715 and was known as *"île de France"* the British captured the island in 1810 and renamed it Mauritius. Slavery started under the Dutch occupation, continued with the French and the British. The first group of slaves came from Madagascar, Africa and India. In 1829, the British started importing large number of slaves from India and slavery was stopped in 1835. By 1841, Mauritius had almost 20,000 Indian labourers.

Before 1861, some of the liberated African slaves were taken to Mauritius despite of the great inflow of Indian workers. The biggest single catch was made by the 1474 tons and 14 guns Corvette HMS *Brisk*[26] the flagship of Rear Admiral Henry Keppel. On the 10 August 1860 they captured an American slaver the 776 ton *"Sunny South"*[27] alias *"Emanuela"* with 844 slaves on board in the Mozambique Channel.



The American Slaver "*Sunny South*" alias *Emanuella"* surrendered to HMS *Brisk:*
Photo: Illustrated London News 1860

The *Sunny South* was a clipper built by George Steers in New York. She left New York on 5 November 1859 for Havana she then sailed for Hong Kong under the Chilean flag. En route to Mauritius, 98 of her human cargo died and she was captured without papers or flags. In Mauritius they were put in quarantine on Platte Island where 36 of them died. According to the authorities the reason for their demise was that they have been too well nourished or that they were not accustomed to the new diet.[28] Later 250 were admitted to the hospital where 103 died, when in the "Aapravasi Ghat"[29] half of them were sick. 132 children under 10 years were sent to an orphanage at *Moulin-à-Poudre* where half of them died. 200 men were engaged as ordinary agricultural labour, 62 women and 60 men as domestic, 182 as apprentices. It is sad to note that the plaque unveiled on 4 June 1978 on Aapravasi Ghat by the Prime Minister of Mauritius made no mention of the Librated Africans.

On 20 February 1861, 261 liberated Africans were captured from Arab dhows in the Mozambique by the 1329 ton frigate HMS *Sidon* with 4 guns under Captain Richard Borough Crawford. Later, in 1862, the *Sidon* was engaged

[26] Under Captain Algernon Frederick Rous De Horsey.
[27] After she was confiscated by British Navy in Mauritius she was renamed *Euchantress* and used as a cruiser then as store ship in the African Coast. On 20 February she was wrecked in the Mozambique Channel.
[28] Norbert Benoit: "Des engages Africains" in l'Esclavage et ses Séquelles Mémoire et Vécu d'hier et d'aujourd'hui : 200, p206.
[29] The old "Immigration Depot" (Hindi: Aapravasi Ghat) in Port Louis that building has been declared a World Heritage Site in 2006.

in capturing the *Bashair* (Good News) an Arab slaver with five slaves and seven pairs of irons shackles commonly found on board slavers. *Bashair* was under the command of Captain Saleh Ben Salim. Arriving in Mauritius Captain Salim was taken to justice; in court he said that he was sailing under the flag of the Turkish Empire. But the Captain and officers of the *Sidon* testified that the *Bashair* was flying the flag of the Sultanate of Muscat. The case was dismissed on the ground that the prosecutor could not prove if the Sultanate of Muscat and the Sultanate of Constantinople were signatory members of the abolition of the slave trade Convention. And the court did not specify on the fate of the five slaves, did they stay in Mauritius?

The two main Royal Navy ships that brought the majority of librated slaves to Mauritius were the 477 ton HMS *Lynx* under the command of Lieutenant Commander Henry Berklely. And the 1610 ton HMS *Gorgon* from 27 April 1859 to 25 March 1861 she was under the command of Commander Bedford Clapperton Tryvellion Pim. From 25 March 1861 to 11 February 1864 under John Crowford. They landed apart of the adults, over 900 children of both sexes where most of them were kept at the Industrial School of *Moulin-à-Poudre.* This school was founded by Sir William Stevenson (Mauritius best colonial governor immortalised by his statue in Port Louis done by the famous Mauritian sculptor Charles-Adrien-Prosper d'Epinay) initially for poor Indian children. The Industrial School was under the charge of the Church Missionary Society and was managed by Reverend Paul Ansorgé who had worked previously for the poor children in Bengal. Ansorgé, a friend of Henry Venn[30] arrived in Mauritius in 1856 along with Reverend Stephen Hobbs they immediately started work to help the children of the poor Indians on the sugar estates.

At the Industrial School the African children were much more affected than the Indian children during the cholera epidemic. Most of the Indians with the disease recovered whereas most of the Africans died. It was so bad that when a visitor arrived at Industrial School the first complaint they heard from the Africans was: "Africans get sick, die. Malabar get sick, no die" and later "Indian boy baptise African boy no baptised"[31]. Those who survived the epidemic were later most engaged in the labour market protected by the labour laws, which was improved from the pressure of the Indian Government for the betterment of Indian labour.

## Seychelles

This former French colony became officially British in 1814, with the "Code Noir" as one of its official jurisdictions. The Seychelles was captured by the British in 1811, their subsequent promulgated anti slavery laws were difficult to implement. There were three main factors: a) the scattered islands which were impossible to control; b) most of

[30] See note 44.
[31] Vincent W. Ryan DD: Mauritius and Madagascar 1864: pp 201-203.

the early British representatives were in fact slavers and owner of an island; c) the French landowners opposed the new regulations even though, it was a shadow of the "Code Noir" replacing chattel slavery with bondage[32].

With the event of the slaves' emancipation the landowners received compensations for the lost of their objects (slaves). However, they did nothing for the welfare of their slaves and the improvement of their plantations. The emancipated slaves refused to work with their former masters. With, no place for them to go they remained as "unlawful residents" on the ex-masters plantations. This became a chronic labour shortage and aggravated the ongoing recession that started previously with the downfall of the prize of cotton the main export. During the recession half of the population left mostly for Mauritius and La Réunion. They were the Catholic landowners with their slaves. The main reasons for that are because a) Mauritius and especially La Réunion, was paying more for slaves than in the Seychelles; b) the progress of the Church of England amongst the slaves in the Seychelles; c) to find a better prize for their slaves before emancipation. At the end of the emancipation the Seychelles went into a more serious economic depression. Business had completely stopped, however, the island survived from famine on fish and maize that was growing abundantly on Silhouette, Marianne and some Amirantes Islands[33]

After 1835, the French territory of La Réunion remained a lucrative market for slavery even after the 1848 French abolition. When Sarda-Garriga[34] arrived at La Réunion he addressed the slaves as follows: "*Dear friends, your are free and all equal under the law and you have only friends amongst you…"* At the same time he defended the interest of the proprietors. With the labour shortage for their sugar cane plantations they introduced the *"engagés"* labourers known to be another form of slavery, and the words of Sarda-Garriga were quickly forgotten. Napoleon III ordered the practice to be abolished in 1859. Under pressure from the colonial sugar interests, the trade was renewed.[35] Historians in La Réunion have yet to be specified on really when the African *engagés* officially stopped on the island. And did they take part with the Indian *engagés* in the riots in Saint Denis at the end of 1868? Their conditions were much worse than in Mauritius and most of Indian *engagés* who went back to India on completing their contracts never returned. In 1882, the Indian Government stopped the export of labourers to La Réunion[36].

The Seychelles continued to suffer its economic stagnation through acute labour shortages. In 1860, to eliminate the situation Britain was prepared to allow in 1,000 Indian immigrants from South India. But the landowners refused to pay for their upkeep and the scheme for this generally docile labour force failed.

A year later on 13 May 1861, much to the contentment of the landowners Seychelles received the first batch of 252 Liberated Africans. They arrived on the British Sloop the 448 ton *Lyra,* under the command of Captain Robert

[32] Julien Durup: "Slavery in Seychelles 1770-1976". In « L'Esclavage et ses Séquelles Mémoire et Vécu d'hier et d'aujourd'hui » : 2002. p. 74.

[33] William McAteer: Hard Times in Paradise" 200: p.42

[34] Joseph Napoléon Sébastien Sarda-Garriga alias Sarda-Sarriga a frenchman born on 18 December 1808 at Pizilla-la Rivière, near the Spanish boarder and died at Mesnil-sur-l'Estrée in Haute Normandie on 8 September 1877. He was sent to implement the French Slave Abolition Decree in La Réunion. He opposed the policy of Napoleon III.

[35] McAteer, *op.cit*., p.91

[36] McAteer: *Op., cit*, p.262

Augustus Parr. The first group of 189 disembarked on the 15 May and the second batch of 135 the next day. In the next few days more British Anti-Slavery Patrol ships arrived with more Africans. The reason for their continuous arrival in the Seychelles was that Mauritius due to its cholera outbreak was regarded as unsuitable and they turn to the Seychelles. Where, the British wanted to make a central depot for Liberated Africans in the Indian Ocean. Many more ships continued this operation until September 1874. The biggest group to arrive on 12 October 1868 were 409 mostly Oromos[37] (known in the Seychelles as Gallas). They arrived on the 1081 ton sloop HMS *Daphne* commanded by Captain George Lydiard Sullivan. A fair figure of those who arrived in the Seychelles is 2,900. However this is not the right figure of those captured the Royal Navy ships, because many found employment on board and did not disembark in the Seychelles.

When those poor Africans boarded the British ships that saved them, they were told through Africans interpreters that they were now "free men" and no more slaves. They were bathed, clothed and fed, immediately the British officers started the process of ignoring their African names by giving them new British names for them to lose their ancestries. They were later baptised and given Christian names, first as well as last names. It took decades for them and other groups of settlers to mix with each other to form a distinctive Creole group. Ignoring their original names was the first process of to reduce them to a level no better than animals. Arriving in the "promise land" (Seychelles) it was not freedom. They were taken to prison where they were "classified" by the District Magistrate, the Chief Medical Officer[38], ticketed, numbered, given French names. Later they were photographed.

[37] A very ancient indigenous race found in Ethiopia, northern Kenya and Somalia.

[38] Donald Taylor: "Launching Out into the Deep"2005: p.244

Page of the Register of the Liberated Slaves Seychelles.
Ref. Jean-Michel Filliot : *Histoire des Seychelles* p. 132

Males and Females were separated and tribal groups were not allowed to stay together, for them not to produce a black Spartacus. Landowners were very reluctant to take two Africans who spoke the same dialect. It is worth noting that on one occasion to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee on 20 June 1897 nearly 2,000 of Liberated Africans had a chance to meet. It was the majority of them leaving on Mahé. They were invited to Government House to show their thankfulness at having been liberated by the British Navy and their loyalty to the

Crown. They were grouped by tribes and asked to march behind a Union Jack embroidered with the words "The Flag That Set Us Free". They also were invited to join in singing the Te Deum in both the Roman Catholic and the Church of England. For two of them Jaffa no. 278 and Sooria or Sooliya it was their lucky day they came off the same boat *HMS Colombine* and spoke the same dialect and were from the same tribe and met for the first time since arrival. One was at Anse Aux Pins working for Mr. Nageon and the other one working for Mr. Houdoul at Anse Etoile and they were later married[39]. Their story was later immortalised in a local *moutya* song still vivid in the local hearsay.[40] Reference is also made about them in an article[41] in 1995. Another one Billy 'King' was present. He came on board HMS *Penguin* and became a detailed artist, he drew scenes about their captures by the Arab salvers and the British Navy. His pictures were exhibited during the Jubilee and later taken to England. Billy No 37 arrived at Mahé on 14 October 1867 on the 428ton gun vessel HMS *Penguin* under the command of Lieutenant Commander John George Guham McHardy. He was born in Africa and was only 3 years old with a stature of 3 feet and 5 inches. He was disposed on arrival to Mr W. Warren. On 28 August 1877, he married at 12 years and 10 months to Anna Farrigalle of 13 years and 10 months the daughter of Farrrigalle and Elisa Ceroosie or Ceroose No 65. Elisa was another Liberated African who had arrived previously on HMS *Lyra* on 16 May 1861; Ceroose was in fact her father's name. Billy No 37 presumably was given the surname King to replace his 'number' during his baptism or during his church marriage. Billy King became later the surname of some his children. During his relationship with Anna Farrigalle they had the following seven children that have left many descendents in the Seychelles.

1. Elisa King born on 11 April 1881 at Plaisance. Mahé- Seychelles
2. Ismael King born on 5 February 1883 at Plaisance, Mahé- Seychelles
3. Rachel King born 11 April 1885 at Plaisance, Mahé- Seychelles.
4. Angelina Billy King born on 13 December 1887 at Mont Fleuri, Mahé- Seychelles
5. Angeline Billy King born on 13 December 1887 at Mont Fleuri, Mahé- Seychelles
6. William King born on 3 July 1890 at Plaisance, Mahé- Seychelles
7. Clarisse Billy King born 5 December 1895 at Mont Fleuri and died on 19 December 1895 at Mont Fleuri, Mahé- Seychelles

After inspecting them the landowners bought only the stronger and the young ones and the Royal Navy made an ample profit. The Liberated Africans were "indentured" for 5 years to the landowners a system of apprenticeship more or less similar to slavery. The old and sick remained the property of the Government. The price of that landowners had to pay for the Liberated Africans was set by Ordinance 18 of 1865, and was as follows: Adult

[39] *Ex inf.* Jean-Claude Mahoune

[40] « "Ma Leonie" who came with "Pa Zafa" on *vualye soubwannan…tou le de ser/frer.*

[41] Blut, Scheweib and Tranen=(Blood, Seat and Tears"?) in Geo (Special)-Indischer Ozean(=Indian Ocean?) Hamburg(1995) pp.96-104.

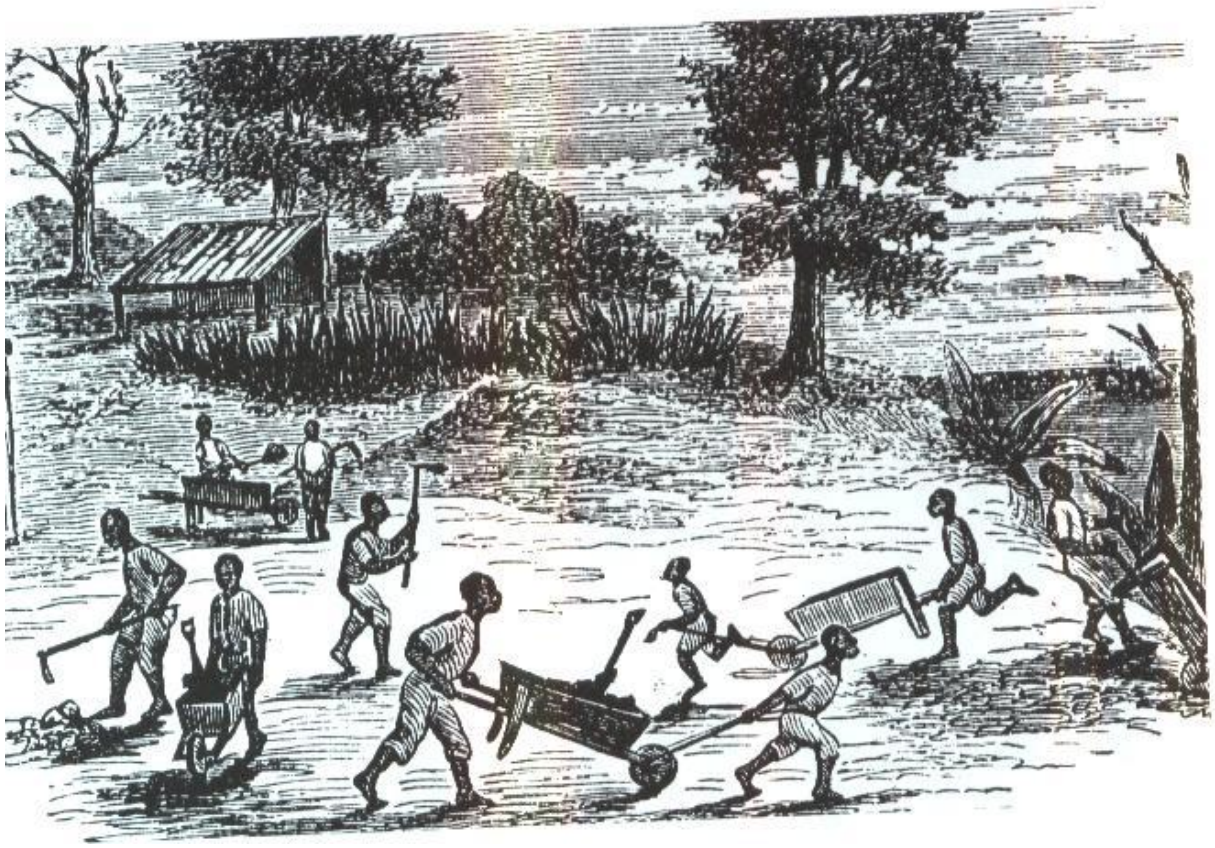
male £5, female over 12 years £4, and £3 male and female under 12 years. After visiting Seychelles in June 1872 the Welshman Stanley (the man who never said 'Dr. Livingstone I presume')[42] the African explorer complained in London about the selling of the Liberated Africans. That money was of course paid to the Royal Navy to defray the cost of their up keep during their journey to the Seychelles. However, the landowners and Stanley thought otherwise, they believed that they had bought slaves and treated them likewise. Most of Liberated Africans were badly treated. Their cruel Seychellois masters expected maximum "labour" from them for the minimum food and general care. Even though they were not accustomed to hard labour and some had never worked, when they complained against their harsh treatments they were sacked and the landowners would wait for the arrival of the next shipment. There were many runaways even amongst the children. Many of the grown up females preferred to become prostitutes than work for their masters.

Later, to combat runaways the authorities made the "Vagrancy Act" more severe. They were treated so badly. The majority who remained in with their master soon as their contracts were over, most begged to return to their native Africa. They preferred to be slaves of the Arabs than working for the white men of the Seychelles. After, so many complaints about the harsh treatment on the Liberated Africans, Britain created the post of "Inspector of Liberated Africans" with little power. We can deduce from their reports that most of the Africans were treated like slaves. In 1880, as "free men" they were not allowed to leave the Seychelles. In the same year the landowners devised a new type of contract called the "Moitie System" whereby the Africans received houses and an allotment of land for crops cultivation. They then placed their labour hours at the disposal of the proprietors under various forms of profit sharing. When the crops were ready for harvest the landowners often sacked the African and no African ever won a case against their master. After the "Moitie System", they invented the "Festins System" involving labour in exchange for spirits and basic provisions, housing and minimal wages.

In 1875, Reverend William Bartlett Chancellor of the Church Missionary Society arrived from East Africa with the backing of the British Government who wanted to make the Seychelles the hub of slaves' depot in the Indian Ocean. Chancellor became the Civil Chaplin of the Church of England in the Seychelles. He spoke Swahili to those poor Africans and especially the children of whom the Roman Catholic did little to help them. The Church of England took a few in their small wooden school in Victoria. Many more young "runaways" arrived "one girl of about 11 years old after running away from her catholic master who just had her baptised was caught and put in prison" Coming out of prison she was taken care by Chancellor and his family. Chancellor negotiated with Charles

[42] Henry Morton Stanley: born in Denbigh North Wales in 1841 and died in London in 1904. The famous quotes "Dr. Livingstone I presume?" is attributed to him, which in fact he never said that. He invented it after he had meet Livingstone he did so by tearing the page of his note book relating to his first communication with Dr David Livingstone at Ujiji, on Lake Tanganyika.

Salmon[43] the Chief Civil Commissioner of the Seychelles for a place to build a Missionary Industrial School especially for the liberated Africans children. In October 1875, an agreement was reached in the present of Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Purves Phayre the Governor of Mauritius during his passage in the Seychelles. The agreement allocated 50 acres of land on the hilly side of Mahé, called "Capuchin" for the Church Missionary Society to build their Industrial School. According to the agreement the lease was to be for 20 years and that no child would be retained there against his or her will after the age of 16 years. After building their Industrial School they named it Venn's Town in honour of Henry Venn a Londoner, the secretary of Church Missionary Society.



Venn's Town- Boys at "Manual". Courtesy CMS Gleaner Vol. IV, No 45 Sept. 1877

It was Venn who lobbied Parliament to send anti slavery patrol ships in the Indian Ocean. Venn was ordained priest in 1749 and became the father of the "Indigenous church principle" of self-supporting, self-governing and

[43] Charles Spencer Salmon 1832-1896 arrived in the Seychelles in December 1874 from Ghana. He left in 1879 to take appointment in St Kits and Nevis. He wrote many interesting books on the Caribbean especially "A Plan for the Union of the Fifteen British West Indian Colonies.

self-propagating. He was also a strong believer of the concept of Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton[44] the "Bible and Plough" would eradicate slavery by providing a legitimate alternative to this illicit commerce.[45]

Salmon, an Irish Catholic who had arrived in the Seychelles in December 1874, assured Chancellor that he was going to be rigid against the landowners who mistreated the Liberated Africans and did nothing. Along with his French wife later sided with landowners, he valued the Liberated Africans as a very potential source of labour for government road projects and wanted 10,000[46] of them. He made regulations to cover their rations, wages and clothes. To stop runaways Salmon made the Anti Vagrancy Act this proves very beneficial to him. The Act forced the Africans convicts to work freely on the constructions of public roads and buildings. Most of the Liberated Africans convicted under this Act were forced to work on government projects along with those Liberated Africans already employed by the State. Together, they formed the main group of workers in building the Mont Fleuri road and the famous very strong arch bridge on the Trois Frères River at the present junction of Bel Eau and Mont Fleuri Road.

Chancellor had the hope that Venn's Town would become self sufficient and the revenue on coffee, vanilla and cinnamon would be sufficient to pay for its out keep. By 1876 there were only 62 children at the Industrial School. As the slave trade stopped the school became less useful and in 1894 the missionaries were called home and the work handed over to the Seychelles branch of the Mauritius Diocesan Society. Chancellor left the Seychelles in 1879 and was replaced by Henry Morris Warry from Somerset who had arrived in 1878 and left in 1880. Another important worker at Venn's Town was Robert Henry Pickwood[47]. He arrived in the Seychelles in 1865 later became a chaplain and served mostly on Praslin. The Church Missionary Society at Venn's Town did not have enough manpower to make progress. They did not receive any help or support from the majority Catholic landowners and the Roman Catholic Church who did not believe that the Liberated Africans could intellectually learn.

Those poor Liberated Africans saved the Seychelles from famine and its economic stagnation. Nothing is said in our history about their immense contribution they have made to the development of the Seychelles. No matter how bad their Seychellois masters were, they did in fact acknowledge privately about the Liberated Africans' colossal involvement in the development of Seychelles. When, they heard that the Royal Navy was about to stop sending Liberated Africans to the Seychelles, the landowners sent a huge petition of 8 pages on 22 November 1868 to the Secretary of State in England[48] in which they gave reasons for Britain not to send any Liberated Africans to Mauritius and Aden and that the Seychelles was the only ideal place. They said also that the Liberated Africans

[44] Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton 1786-1845 Member of Parliament, brewer, abolitionist and social reformer. The place name "Mont Buxton" on Mahé was named after him.
[45] Venn, Henry 1796 to 1873 Anglican (CMS) Great Britain: Dictionary of African Christian Biography Great Britain.
[46] McAteer: *Op. cit*., p.132
[47] Robert Henry Pickwood was born in St Kits in the West Indies and died in the Seychelles in 1915.
[48] Mauritius Archives: MD SD 105

saved the Seychelles from famine and without the continuous flow of them the Seychelles would be reduced to poverty. Due to their harsh treatment on the Liberated Africans they received no positive answer. Two years with the support of Sir Arthur Gordon[49] who was on a visit they sent another petition to the Queen on the same point[50]. Gordon held a mass meeting with over 700 landowners. They agreed on the administration and financial separation from Mauritius and that landing of the Liberated Africans should be resumed[51]. Three years later Gordon was appointed Governor of Fiji and started importing India labour despite the objection of the indigenous Fijian. However, Liberated Africans continued to arrive in the Seychelles until the last batch of 63 disembarked from the 1322 ton Corvette *HMS Thetis* in September 1874, under the command of Captain Thomas Le Hunte Ward.

Later, with the development of the maritime business, at Mahé, the Liberated Africans were more independent. They were engaged as stevedores, porters, and working in the coaling station in the port and some became independent fishermen. The landowners, their former masters were quick to response. They petitioned the authorities saying that all persons claiming to be engaged in such a work should be required to take out a license to pay a heavy fee and be compelled to wear a distinctive badge. And all others found in town should be treated as vagrants.

It is sad that up to now Venn's Town is the only "*Lieu de mémoires »* in the Seychelles that reminds us of the poor liberated slaves' children. Nothing has been done for the majority of them who had to survive under hard labour conditions. All the Liberated Africans landed at Petit Port now the Yacht Club, then they was escorted to the old prison (their Aapravasi Ghat) now part of the Seychelles Police Headquarters. Something should be done to mark the great contribution the Liberated Africans has done for the development of the Seychelles. The UNESCO should help us to do that even though the history of the Seychelles started to suffer from selective amnesia with the appointment just after June 1977 of a Mauritian rent collector of Saint Louis Flat Mahé as the Director of Culture. Since then we have practically lost our identity. The UNESCO should include the tragedy of the Liberated Africans in their *la Route de l'Esclaves* and demanded those who had misappropriate their fund in the Seychelles to refund them immediately. That money can be allocated for a project on the Liberated Africans.

[49] Sir Arthur Hamilton Gordon born in 1829 in London. 1871-74 Governor of Mauritius, 1875-80 Governor of Fiji. 1877-82 Governor of Ceylon: died in 1912

[50] Mauritius Archives MD SD 104

[51] Mauritius Archives MD SD 112, Gordon to Earl Kimberley, Despatches 139 and 142 dated 21 September 1871.